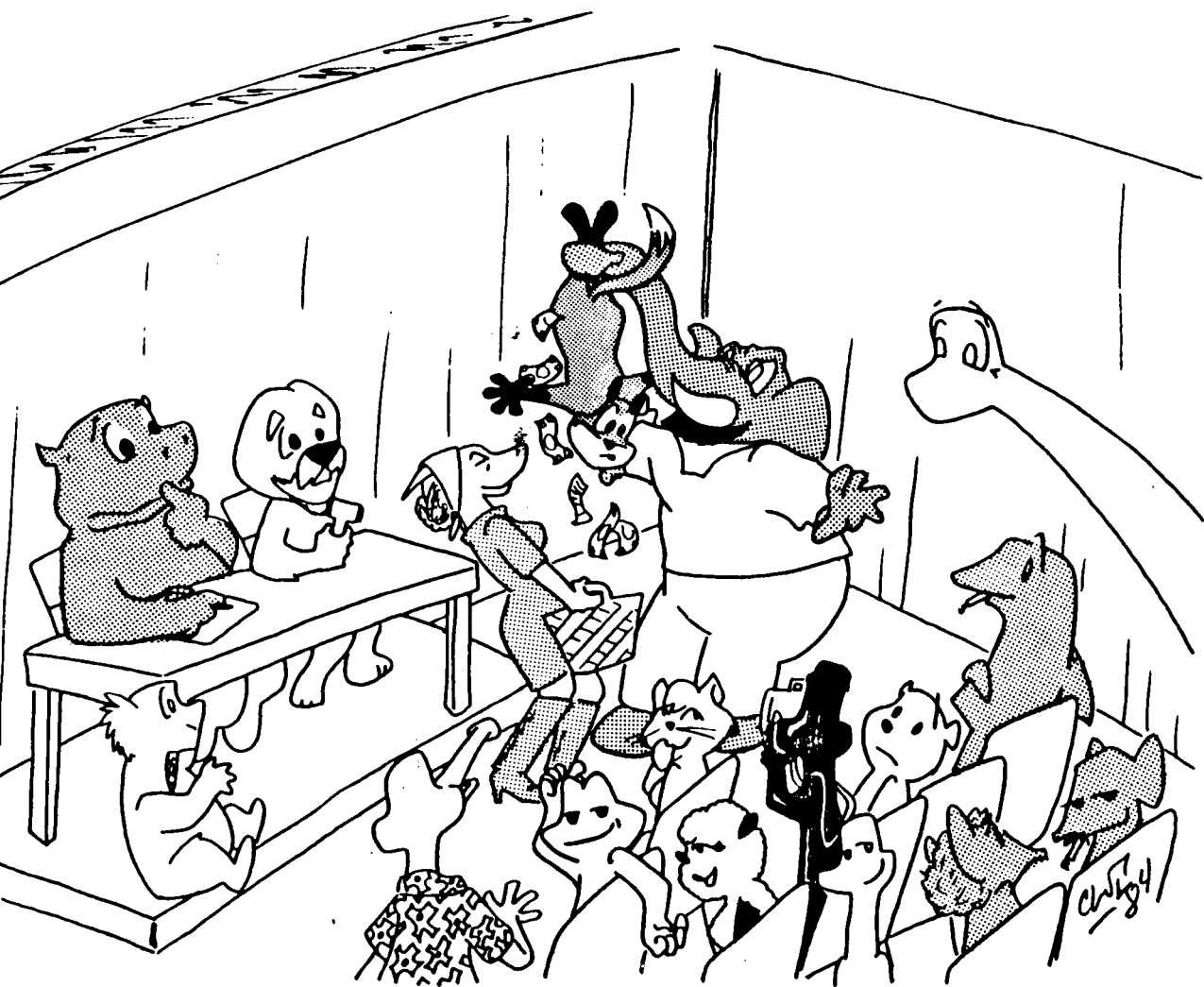


SHANGRI L'AFFAIRES





Well, here we are again. This is Charles Lee Jackson, the Second, with another issue of *Shangri L'Affaires*, the official fanzine of LASFS. If it seems like a long time since the last issue, well, it has been a long time. Not as long as you might think, though. You may never have seen the previous issue -- over one hundred copies which were mailed out just disappeared! In reponse to numerous requests, we produced the magazine in a larger size, which (so I was later informed) required special postage and handling; Yeah, right. Some time was spent trying to decide whether it would be worth the effort to re-print and re-mail, but I decided the risk of losing another batch was too great.

About this same time, the old Diablo Printer, which had produced originals for Shaggy, bellied up, and a new printer had to be

secured: fortunately, the LASFS acquired, at that same time, the Ventura Publisher programme, and a LASER printer.

So here you have the new *Shangri L'Affaires*, with print-out from Ventura Publisher and Bannermania. The material published in the "lost" issue will be re-printed in these pages, one or two pieces an issue. LASFans Matthew B. Tepper and Rick Foss join our staff this time, and our regular columnists from the previous string of issues should be returning next issue.

I won't make any promises about that issue, but between the continuing installments of the Lost Horizon piece, and re-prints, it shouldn't be too long until next issue,

CL-ater,

Editor

CHARLES LEE JACKSON, THE SECOND

Managing Editor
THE EMPEROR

Art Director CLJII

Associate Editor
RICHARD FOSS

Assistant Editor
MATTHEW B. TEPPER
Production Assistant
GALEN A. TRIPP

Contributing Writers

SAM FRANK * GALEN A. TRIPP * CLJII

Contributing Artists

WILLIAM ROTSLER * CLJII

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Contributing Typesetters

GALEN A. TRIPP * RICK YOUNG * CLJII

Circulation

HEATHER MCKENZIE

Computer Nerd

BOB NULL

Ventura Assistant

MARTA STROHL

Publication Expeditor

GALEN A. TRIPP

Printer

COPYMAT

Produced in the Hollywood Studios of **CLJII Presentations**

SHANGRI L'AFFAIRES

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BACOVER by William Rotsler

SHANGRI L'AFFAIRES

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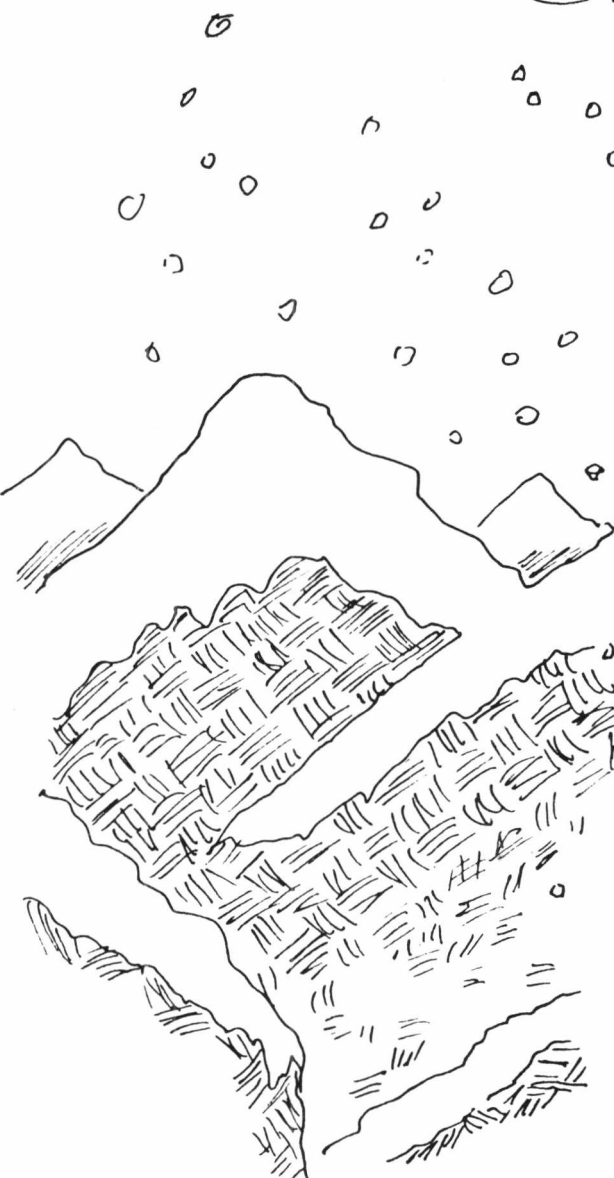
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Shangri-La



LIKE MOST writers who eventually become celebrated authors, British-born James Hilton struggled for years to make a name for himself. Success finally came with *Goodbye, Mister Chips* in 1933, but only after the publication of eight books including *Lost Horizon*, which was a commercial failure initially.

Lost Horizon became a best seller in America in 1935, two years after its publication, as a result of Alexander Woollcott's going "quietly mad" over the book on his CBS radio show, "The Town Crier".

The story concerns a minor British consul, Hugh Conway, and three other people who are hijacked from a rebellion in China to Shangri-La, a lost valley in Tibet. There the inhabitants live to be impossibly old and the cream of Mankind's cultural heritage is preserved in a Utopian monastery. The High Lama, a Belgian priest named Perrault, is looking for someone to take his place as overseer of Shangri-La's legacy. Conway is that someone, a closet mystic who senses a kinship with all that Shangri-La stands for. But his hot-tempered subordinate, Mallinson [in the film the character becomes Conway's younger brother], falls in love with a seemingly young and fragile Manchu woman named Lo-Tsen who also wants to leave. Mallinson persuades Conway to give up his new-found life. Away from Shangri-La, Lo-Tsen reverts to her real age of sixty-four and dies. The amnesiac Conway, while being returned to England, regains his memory. He disappears as the ship docks, determined to return to Shangri-La.

Part One: Paradise Discovered

Affaires

Best sellers usually end up on the screen, but this one was made up of ingredients unlikely to ensure box-office success -- fantasy, philosophy, introspection.

The studio seemingly least likely to film *Lost Horizon* was Columbia, a Poverty-Row outfit at the heart of Gower Gulch. The president was the burly, tactless Harry Cohn, specialist in making low-budget potboilers since 1924.

Cohn and Columbia might have continued in this profitable but artless direction forever but for an ebullient Italian named Frank Capra, who was the living embodiment of the Horatio Alger "rags-to-riches" stories. Capra came from an impoverished immigrant family and had worked his way through school, earning a degree in chemical engineering from Cal Tech.

Capra had come to Columbia by way of a stint as a gag man with Mack Sennett and directing two popular feature comedies starring Harry Langdon: *The Strong Man* (1926) and *Long Pants* (1927). His movies at Columbia during his first four years there were characterized by fast pacing, strong story-lines, and solid craftsmanship. It wasn't until he started making talking pictures in a populist vein that Capra made a name for himself.

Much of the success of these movies was due to a soft-spoken New Yorker named Robert Riskin, a former Broadway playwright whose forte was snappy, street-smart dialogue. They met when Riskin was assigned to write the dialogue for a Jean Harlow movie Capra was directing called *Platinum Blonde* (1931),

which became a hit. Capra was as impressed with Riskin as a person as he was with the man's obvious gift for writing. They became fast friends as well as collaborators.

Platinum Blonde set the tone for the earthy, working class social comedies for which the Capra-Riskin team would become famous.

This run of commercial successes made Capra the top director at Columbia, giving him the clout to make the movies he wanted with little or no interference. Ironically, it was Cohn who provided the catalyst for making *Lost Horizon* when he invited Capra to attend a USC/Stanford football game in Palo Alto in the autumn of 1934.

The idea was to spend a relaxed weekend away from preparing *Mister Deeds Goes to Town* for production. At the Union Station newsstand, Capra bought a hardback copy of the Hilton novel. That night he read the book and dreamed about it.

Capra showed the book to Cohn next morning in the train's dining car, telling the mogul it would be the next Capra movie after "Deeds", would star Ronald Colman, and would probably cost two million dollars.

Cohn hit the roof -- most Columbia movies at the time cost one hundred thousand apiece, with *It Happened One Night* and "Deeds" being their most expensive at a combined seven hundred fifty thousand dollars -- but agreed to finance pre-production on *Lost Horizon* even before Capra had begun shooting "Deeds". Preparing two movies at once was quite a burden on Capra, but the sort of double load he

by Sam Frank

Previously published in *American Cinematographer*; reprinted by permission of the Author.

thrived on.

Capra and Bob Riskin settled in at the La Quinta Hotel near Indio, California in November of 1935 to plot the script and plan production values.

Capra quickly discovered that the world's foremost authority on Tibet was an explorer-writer-photographer named Harrison Forman, who had come to national attention with *Life* magazine articles and a best-selling book about his travels called *Through Forbidden Tibet*. When Capra learned that Forman had returned to the States from his latest trip with trunkfuls of trinkets and costumes and thousands of photographic negatives depicting the way Tibetans looked and lived, he hired the man at once. The Tibetan memorabilia was

invaluable for making a filmic Shangri-La authentic-looking to the last detail, and the pictures were a Godsend for fine details about set decorations, Tibetan hairstyles and costumes and the layout of a typical Tibetan village.

The construction department had its hands full duplicating religious artifacts, particularly "eight twenty-foot-high *chortens* I had photographed in Kum Bum lamasery. *Chortens* are mausoleums for the ashes of departed lamas. They look like giant chessmen."

The topper was a full-sized Tibetan village recreated forty miles from Hollywood at Lake Sherwood, known today as Westlake Village. In 1936 it was isolated acreage with a natural basin that could be used for an artificial lake and level heights that could pass for Tibetan



Harrison Forman, one of the few explorers allowed to view the secret rites of the priests of Tibet.

plateaux.

Work on the Tibetan village began on March 1, 1936, with a hundred-fifty workers spending two months creating a lake, constructing a full-sized log bridge across that lake, erecting primitive houses, and placing hundreds of props, including the *chortens*. By late April, Sherwood Forest was transformed into Shangri-La's Valley of the Blue Moon, the village below the lamasery, using almost every element Forman had captured in his photos.

The costumes were the work of illustrator Dan Groesbeck. Ernest Dryden, head of the wardrobe department, supervised the making of costumes for the leading players. Costumes for extras supplied by Western Costume Company had to be altered by Forman for desert

scenes involving Chinese bandits.

One of Forman's other tasks involving extras was casting Tibetan villagers, a difficult chore because even though Tibet is adjacent to China, Tibetans don't look like Chinese.

At first, Forman cast extras from a group of Oriental types -- Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, Hawaiians, and Eskimos -- because there was a shortage of Tibetan extras at Central Casting. "Then I had a hunch," Forman wrote. Recalling some books he had read about "the probability that the American Indians were descendants from Mongols who wandered northward from their desert home across Siberia," Forman cast the bulk of his natives from a group of Indian extras.

"The call went out for American Indians and



Henry Eichman, whose Tibetan musical instruments lent an air of authenticity to the production.

A Tibetan refueling village, one of the set sketches by Cary Odell, then brand-new at Columbia.



I was agreeably surprised by the turn-out. Features, pigmentation, average heights, physiques, and even temperaments were just what I wanted...When they actually got into Tibetan costumes, believe me, they looked as if they really belonged in those garments."

While the village was being built, art director Stephen Goosson was overseeing the construction of the lamasery set at Columbia Ranch. His assistants were Columbia veterans Lionel Banks and Paul Murphy. The set drawings were by a new artist at Columbia, Cary Odell. To emphasize Shangri-La's detachment from the real world, Odell based his squared-off Art Deco design on the work of architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Critics complained, but Capra loved it, feeling it gave his Shangri-La a

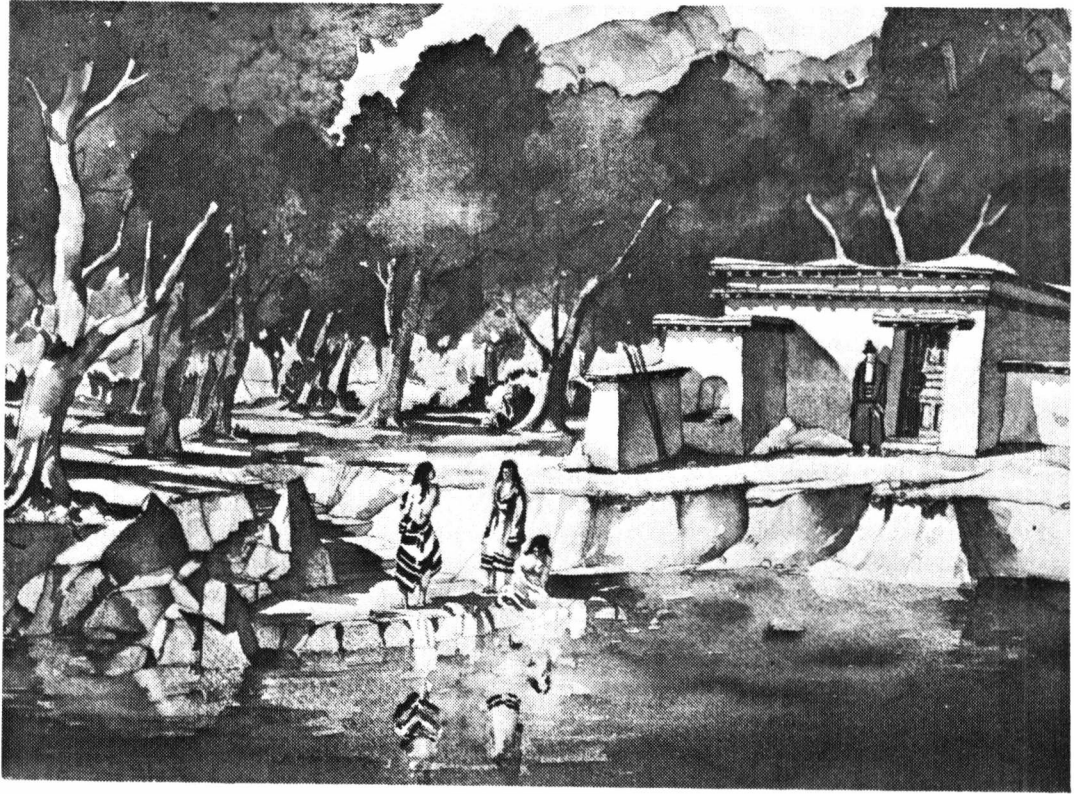
bold look of fantastic unreality.

"*Lost Horizon* was the beginning of a happy career in the industry," Odell recalls. "I made innumerable sketches, mostly watercolors, of how the sets would look when constructed. The designing of the sets went through a long evolutionary period, starting with the realistic Tibet and ending with the stylized and idealized Shangri-La."

When it was completed, the reported cost of the huge white facade, including side buildings, was two hundred fifty thousand dollars -- the budget of two Columbia quickies. The facade measured one thousand feet by five hundred feet, one of the largest sets ever built for a Hollywood movie.

The lamasery interiors weren't neglected

Another work by Odell, a Mongolian nomad village, more realistic than his Art Deco Shangri-La.



either. What was required was nothing less than the inside of a mansion that looked as though it might belong to Henry Huntington. A library, music rooms, dining room, bedrooms, gigantic hallways and staircases -- both straight and spiral -- were built to order. Furniture, wall hangings, tableware, paintings, musical instruments and hundreds of sumptuously bound books were gathered. Babs Johnstone, head of interior decorations at Columbia, orchestrated these lavish appointments with an eye to tastefulness and authenticity. What couldn't be rented or borrowed was made to order by an extra department of ten people hired to fashion over seven hundred props, including those for the lamasery exterior and the village at Lake Sherwood.

One set of props that couldn't be duplicated were the musical instruments, loaned to the production by Henry Eichman, whom Capra described as a "California collector of rare, authentic Tibetan trumpets and horns... Some of the trumpets were as long as eight feet; one rare, battered horn came from the sacred temple of Lhasa." One of these long horns was actually used during the desert refueling sequence.

Besides the full-scale lamasery and furnishings, a miniature lamasery was constructed by E. Roy Davidson of Columbia's special effects department under the heading of a "special camera effect." It was used twice when the lamasery had to be shown surrounded by mountains, a painting of which was made by

artist Alfredo Valente. The matting of the miniature onto the painting -- for two five-second shots -- was co-ordinated by Davidson with the help of Ganahl Carson.

The job of creating an authentic-looking Shangri-La and populace was a thorough one, except for the yaks and horses. "To badly simulate yaks," Capra writes, "we covered yearling steers with long-haired, hoof-length blankets. To better simulate small Tibetan horses, we 'haired-up' the legs and chests of Shetland ponies."

While Capra and Forman were taking care of the milieu for *Lost Horizon*, Riskin was laboring at its drama. Acting on instinct -- and with collaborative help from Capra -- he overhauled the basic story so that the characters and their motivations would be more convincing and sharply defined, making the film's utopian theme more compelling: Riskin improved upon the novel. He imbued its worldly idealism with sorely needed warmth, humor, adventure and romance, and with a great deal more spiritual optimism in the face of its predicted global holocaust.

The final screenplay was a hefty one hundred ninety-two pages (later cut to one hundred seventy-five after production began), though dozens of changes would be made on the set and after two sneak previews, mainly for the better. For Capra and Riskin, screenplays were merely a guideline, not a Holy Writ to be slavishly adhered to. In the end, *only a third of Lost Horizon was filmed as written* with scenes and sequences added and improvised as production wore on.

Capra had no doubt about whom he wanted for Conway.

"Had the High Lama been able to scour the whole world for a man to carry on his vision of Shangri-La," Capra wrote, "he would have selected Ronald Colman."

Except for Colman's role, casting was an open matter. There would be scores of audi-

tions and a few automatic choices but few problems finding the right actors to fill lesser roles. Casting the High Lama would prove to be the biggest headache. In fact, the role went unfilled until the final week of production.

The first pre-production footage shot was aerial scenes of the Sierra Nevada mountains for the plane hijacking sequence. The cinematographer was Elmer Dyer, ASC, a man with a reputation for dare-devil angles since shooting the dogfight scenes for Howard Hughes' *Hell's Angels* (1931). He had worked for Capra before on an early talkie called *Dirigible* (1931), so he was the natural choice to film winter scenes of snow-capped mountains and other high altitude terrain.

These aerial shots were later processed with shots of a Douglas airplane. (These process shots look as obvious today as they did then.)

While pre-production phases were humming along, Capra turned his attention to his biggest worry: the score. Russian composer Dimitri Tiomkin got this plum assignment after Capra heard him playing piano at a Hollywood party.

So that Tiomkin could get a feeling for the kind of movie *Lost Horizon* would be, Capra encouraged him to visit the set as often as possible. Throughout four months of principal photography and several months of editing and retakes, Tiomkin was almost perpetually at work, composing themes and variations on themes -- some of it based on Oriental music -- for almost every scene in the movie. Aiding him in coordinating this huge task was Max Rabinowitsch, pianist in the film's original opening reels.

As top director at Columbia, Capra had the luxury of working with his favorite crew for all his movies. His principal co-workers included: Joseph Walker, ASC, director of photography; Ed Bernds as sound mixer; Buster Libbott on

the microphones; and George Hagar as head electrician. Walker had his favorite camera crew: Victor Scheurich and George Kelley, operators, and Alfred S. Keller and William Jolly, assistant cameramen.

Bus Libbott says, "Capra was relaxed and easy-going. If something screwed up technically that couldn't be helped, he had all the patience in the world. But, if you screwed up, God help you because he bawled you out something fierce and it was a lesson you never forgot. You had to be fast and accurate with Capra, but if you knew what you were doing, there were never any questions."

The contributions of all the crew members were important, but Joe Walker's most of all. He was much sought-after for his superior artistry and worked largely by instinct born of long experience. He had his own set of ninety-eight lenses custom-made to suit his needs, and custom carrying cases for them.

Because he was an intuitive craftsman, Walker felt little need for formal discussions of camera set-ups prior to production. The few discussions there were, he recalled, had to do with the Shangri-La set and the lighting of the High Lama. "Before it was built," he says, "I discussed the Shangri-La set placement at Columbia Ranch with Stephen Goosson and Lionel Banks. Correct orientation was important in order to take full advantage of the sunlight." To that end, he made extensive camera tests of the set with and without filters for day shots and with filters for night shots.

Keller kept a daily log of camera set-ups, filters and lenses, adding up to a complete record of how the movie was filmed. Various filters were used throughout to contrast the fantasy world of Shangri-La with the reality of the outside world and diffusion and neutral density were used sparingly. According to Keller, the filtration used was very conservative, the main goal being to achieve a silky look for the Shangri-La scenes while ensuring

that everything matched within a certain range of that look. The filters used ranged from light yellow-green for Shangri-La day exteriors to deeper yellow-green for day interiors to deep-red in day-for-night shots. A neutral-density filter, Keller says, "was used on the medium long shot of Jane and the kids at school when Colman enters the scene. This graduated filter, from Density point two-five to Clear, was used to balance the bright sky through the trees to the shaded foreground where the action took place."

Walker achieved the look that Capra was after, managing the astonishing feat of matching shots throughout with multiple camera set-ups in temperatures that ranged from one hundred-twenty degrees in Palm Springs to eight degrees at an ice house.

After six months of exhaustive pre-production work to ensure that Columbia's first multi-million dollar movie would at least look authentic, principal photography finally began on March 23, 1936.

The first sequence shot was the prologue aboard the SS *Manchuria*. Robert Conway (Colman) is returning to England with Lord Gainsford (Hugh Buckler) and is having trouble remembering where he's been the past year. As he plays an unpublished Chopin melody at the piano in the ship's lounge, his memory begins to stir. . . .

AND IN THE NEXT INSTALLMENT YOU WILL SEE...

*How Capra brought the script to life!
Why Cast and crew spent two weeks in
an ice-box!
What tragedy brought on rumors of a Lost
Horizon "jinx"?*

All This and more in
"Paradise Produced"
part two of "Shangri-La Affaires"
In this magazine, next issue!

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CLYDE BEATTY
KING of JUNGLELAND
 Formerly entitled "DARKEST AFRICA"
 with **MANUEL KING**
 REPUBLIC'S THRILL-PACKED SERIAL IN 15 CHAPTERS



COMMANDO CODY SKY MARSHAL OF THE UNIVERSE
LOST IN OUTER SPACE
 featuring **JUDD HOLDREN**
 ALINE TOWNE RICHARD CRANE A Republic Picture



ALL TOGETHER!
 ALL NEW
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 The Mightiest of all Screen Monsters!
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LON CHANEY • MARTHA O'DRISCOLL
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JANE ADAMS • LUDWIG STOSSEL
 MONSTER
 DRACULA
 WOLF MAN
 MAD DOCTOR
 HUNCHBACK



CHAPTER
 "FLAMING D"
FLASH GORDON CONQUERS THE UNIVERSE
 with **LARRY "BUSTER" BROWN**
 From the ALEX RAYMOND newspaper and copyrighted by King
 A NEW UNIVERSE

ZOOMING OFF THE EARTH!

New Thrills...
New Marvels
New Wonders

FLASH GORDON CONQUERS THE UNIVERSE

with **LARRY "Buster" CRABBE**
as FLASH GORDON

CAROL HUGHES as Dale Arden

ANNE GWYNNE as Sonja

CHARLES MIDDLETON as Emperor Ming

FRANK SHANNON as Dr. Zarkov

12 NEW
DYNAMIC
EPISODES

Screenplay by **GEORGE H. PLYMPTON**, **BASIL DICKEY** and **BARRY SHIPMAN**
Directed by **FORD BEEBE** and **RAY TAYLOR** • Associate Producer: **HENRY MacRAE**
A NEW UNIVERSAL PICTURE

From the **ALEX RAYMOND** newspaper feature owned and copyrighted by King Features Syndicate

CLASH OF THE TITANS

During the reign of a recent President of LASFS, Thursday nights were enlivened by a series of unusual Openings for the meetings. Each was a parody of the opening of a well-known (at least to some people) television series, radio programme, or other work.

Several LASFans wanted these openings preserved for posterity, and, since a few of them didn't make it into the minutes (and since the then-Pres and the now-Ed are in collusion), They've been brought to these pages.

All were spoken by The Emperor, unless noted as having been sung. Other performers assisting are noted with their lines.

Therefore, we present for your edification and enlightenment...



by Charles Lee Jackson, the Second

The "Raven" Opening

CL sings: Once upon a midnight dreary, as I pondered, weak and weary, over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore;

Suddenly there came a tapping, as of someone gently rapping, calling the LASFS meeting to order...

The "Dragnet" Opening

The Meeting you are about to attend is true... and we're sorry.

This is the city, Los Angeles, California. I was working the mid-watch out of North Hollywood division when the call came in, a four-five-nine w.t., criminal waste of time.

My partner's Mike Glyer, my name's Jackson. I bang a gavel...

The "Gilligan's Island" Opening

CL sings: Oh, sit right back and you'll hear a tale, a tale of a sci-fic group, that meets here in North Hollywood, here's the inside scoop.

The scribe was a mighty writin' man, the skipper bold and brash, fifty people showed up that night, for a three hour bash (a three hour bash)

The minutes started getting rough, the membership got riled,

If not for the courage of a fearless crew, the meeting could run wild (the meeting could run wild)

The members finally settled down, and had a lot of fun, with The Emperor; Mike Glyer too; The millionaire, and his wife; The elephant, and the rest,

'Cause Fandom's a way of life!

The "Star Trek" Opening

Science Fiction; the Final Frontier. These are the meetings of the L.A. *Esseffess*.

Its continuing mission, to explore strange new genres, to seek out new fans, and new faannishness...

To boldly go ahead and start the meeting.

The Max Fleischer "Superman" Opening

In the endless reaches of the universe, there once existed an organisation known as the Science Fiction League, a club that burned like a gleaming star on the eastern seaboard. There literacy was far advanced, and had brought forth a race of Trufen, whose mental and stfnal powers were developed to the peak of human perfection.

But there came a day when waves of *ennui* threatened to destroy the League forever. One of the group's leading scientists, sensing the approach of doom, placed its fourth chapter in a small rocket ship, and sent it hurtling in the direction of California, just as eofandom exploded!

The rocketship sped through star-studded space, landing safely in Los Angeles with its precious burden, the SF League's sole survivor.

As the years passed and the club grew to maturity, it found itself possessed of amazing powers:

*FASTER THAN A DIABLO PRINTER
MORE POWERFUL THAN A MEDIA CLUB
ABLE TO BUY SINGLE BUILDINGS IN A
TALL BOUND!*

The infant of eofandom is now the Science Fantasy Society of Los Angeles -- LASFS!



The "The Man from U.N.C.L.E." Opening

Narrator: In Los Angeles, California; in North Hollywood, there's an ordinary clubhouse... or, is it ordinary?

We've entered through the SMOFs entrance, and are in the headquarters of the L.A.S., F.S. That's the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society. LASFS is charged with maintaining silliness and faannishness throughout the world.

Drew: My name is Drew Sanders. I'm Vice-president here at LASFS.

Mike: I am Mike Glycer. Like my friend Drew, I show up and I put up with the activities of our chief.

CL (distracted): Eh? Oh, Charles Lee Jackson, the Second, here; in charge of these, our Los Angeles headquarters. It's from here that I conduct these meetings...

The "The Shadow" Opening

Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of fen?..

The LASFS knows!

The "The Lone Ranger" Opening

A fiery gavel with the speed of light, a crowd of fen, and a hearty "Hi-yo, Fandom!"

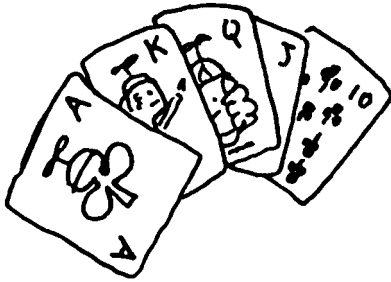
The LASFS President rides again. With his faithful Celtic companion Glycer, the daring and resourceful unmasked leader of the club leads the fight for fun and adventure in the modern West.

Come with us now to those thrilling days of this evening:

The LASFS gavel bangs again!

The "The Whistler" Opening

CL (Whistler whistle): ...This is the LASFS, and it knows many things, for it meets by night.



The "Highway Patrol" Opening

Whenever the laws of science fiction are broken, a duly authorised organisation swings into action. It may be called the WSFS, SCIFI, the Central L.A. Club, C/FO, or the LASFS.

These are the meetings of the fen whose literacy, computer skills, and bossiness have enforced and preserved our club rules.

The "Maverick" Opening

CL sings: Who is that guy all dressed in black?
CLJIF's the name;

Starting the LASFS meeting now, Glycer's
his companion, Ain't ya glad ya came?

Best president we've had in months, CLJIF's
the name;

Charmin' the femmefans with a smile, mak-
ing LASFS merry, Fun times are his aim.

Minutes will now be read, later we'll hear
from Fred,

And some announcements you won't care
to know.

Glendale to Hollywood, SMOFFing just like
he should,

CLJIF's about to start the show...

CLJIF's about to start the show...!

The "The Beverly Hillbillies" Opening

CL sings: Come and listen to my story 'bout
Ackerman,

A poor little guy, didn't know he was a fan.

Then one day he was looking through a
book,

And he found some weird stuff, and he went
"ook-ook!"

Fantasy... and Science Fiction.

Well the first thing you knew, ol' Forry was
a fan,

And he became a prophet to the land.

Said, "Science Fiction is a genre that is
keen",

And then went out and published him a
zine--

Fan-, that is. Lettercols, stupid puns.

Then he helped to found the LASFS, right
here in L.A.,

And that is why we're still here, to this very
day.

The "Petticoat Junction" Opening

CL sings: Come ride the MetroRail that is
coming down the track, to the clubhouse,
(LASFS clubhouse)

Forget about your cares, it is time to relax,
at the clubhouse, (LASFS clubhouse)

And there's Sideburns Joe, with his pipe all
aglow, at the clubhouse...

LASFS clubhouse!!



The "Green Acres" Opening

CL sings: Free-hafer is the place to be; StF livin' is the life for me.

Fans spreadin' out so far and wide; You keep Boston, just give me that LA side.

Alison Stern sings: NES-FA is peaceful in the fog, I get allergic breathing smog,

I just adore a back-bay view, Loscon, I love you but Boskone is better for you.

CL: --The Fans!

Alison: --The slans!

CL: --Good books!

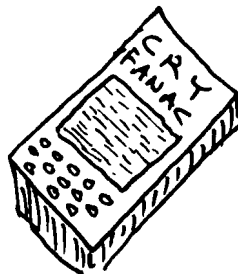
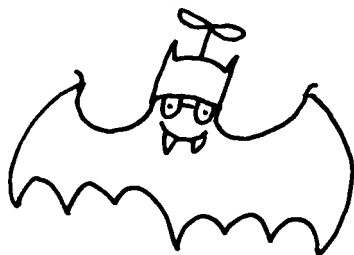
Alison: --Great cooks!

CL sings: CL's the pres, And CL says, It's LASFS time right now!!

The "Dark Shadows" Opening

My name is not Victoria Winters... Discontent has settled over the Hall of Freehafer. Victoria has vanished, catapulted through time and space to be replaced by her cousin Katy, who confounds the Society with her Ice Blue Secret -- a secret she withholds from the members. The Vice-president has sprouted hair and fangs, and has loped off to the Hell table in search of a Tree. Ominous clankings come from the APA-L room, and strange apparitions appear with obscure warnings. The members listen in vain for the words that will end their suffering, the words, "meeting adjourned" -- but the President instead adds insult to injury, torment to suffering as he raises the Gillis gavel and says,

"I call the meeting to order..."



The "The Hitchhikers' Guide to the Galaxy" Opening

This is the story of *The Hitchhikers' Guide to the Galaxy*, perhaps the most remarkable, certainly the most successful, book to come from the publishing giants of Eilay Minor. More popular than the *Celestial Home Mimeo Omnibus*, better than *Fifty-three Ways to Get CorFlu Back into the Bottle in Zero Gravity*, and more controversial than Harlan Ellison's trilogy of philosophical blockbusters, *Where Ackerman Went Wrong*, *Some More of Ackerman's Greatest Mistakes*, and *Who Is This Ackerman Person, Anyway?*, and in many of the more relaxed fan-centers on the outer eastern rim of the continent, the LASFS Guide has already supplanted the great *Encyclopedia NESFA* as the standard repository of all knowledge, for though it has many omissions, contains much that is Apocryphal or at least wildly inaccurate, it scores over the older, more pedestrian work in two important respects: First, it is slightly cheaper, and secondly, it has the words, "Cry Fanac" inscribed in large friendly letters on the cover.

To tell the story of the book, it is best to tell the story of some of those whose lives it affected, assorted young fans and true, most of them, though, as our story opens, they no more know their destinies than a mink jacket knows the history of the Hudson's Bay Company. They carry on, while forces converge to wreak havoc in their lives; vis: the President is trying to start the meeting!...

The "Eighth Man" Opening

CL sings: There's a prehistoric monster, who came from outer space, created by the PSFS to destroy the human race.

The C/FO is helpless, it's twenty stories tall, what can we do, who can we call?

Call LASFS to order

Call LASFS to order

Bang the Gillis Gavel, meeting time is nigh, we'll defeat that monster, or know the reason why,

Call LASFS to order

Quick call LASFS the oldest SF club of them all!

The "The Twilight Zone" Opening

You're traveling through another fan dimension, a dimension not only of zines and SMOFs, but of film.

It is a dimension as vast as space and as infinite as tedium; it is the middle ground between fanzines and media, between science fiction and crap,

And it lies between the pit of fens' fears that the programme is a Western, and the summit of his knowledge of an aftermeeting.

It is the dimension of imagination -- It is an area we call ... the LASFS meeting.

The "The Flintstones" Opening

CL sings: LASFS, Meet the LASFS, it's a modern science fiction club,

From the, town of Ellay, they're a noisy bunch and there's the rub.

Someday, when the members are polite, we'll all, have an early Thursday night

When you're, at the LASFS, Have an ook-ook slobber drool time, act like a fool time,

You'll have a sci-fic time.

The "Red Dwarf" Opening

This is an S O S distress call from the science fiction club, LASFS.

The membership are dead, killed by a radiation leak from a video monitor.

The only survivors were Tim Merrigan, who was in suspended animation in the Apa-L room during the disaster, and the club's spider, who was safely dead and sealed in the loo.

Revived three million years later, Merrigan's only companions are a lifeform who evolved from the dead spider, and Ed Green, a hologram simulation of one of the dead officers.

Additional: We have begun receiving signals from another club, operated by a RexAllen 3000 computer, a brain with the I.Q. of the smartest human who ever lived -- or three thousand telephone sanitizers.

It has suggested that we start the meeting...

The Shakespearean Sonnet Opening

Shall I compare thee to a Westercon?

Thou art more spiffy and less crowded;

Rude fans do shake the and 4sJ's wall hath too many a plaque;

Sometime too loud the gavel of LASFS bangs and often is its wood complexion dinged;

And every square for fair sometimes declines by chance or nature's changing course deadbeated,

But by thy eternal meeting shall not fade nor lose possession of the property thou ownst,

Nor shall Death brag thou releas'd be by his shade when in eternal lines to Thursday thou goest;

So long as fen can party or eyes can read So long lives Fandom and Fandom gives a way of life to thee.





The Story of a LASFS Project

by Galen A. Tripp

FOR NINE YEARS now, I have been the Lord High Janitor of The Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society. This means that every week, sometime before the LASFS meeting, I must see to it that the clubhouse has some modicum of cleanliness in which to hold the meeting. This sometimes daunting job requires an average of three hours a week, fifty-two weeks a year.

As an indirect result of this volunteer work I recently received a letter addressed to me personally at LASFS from Barbara Bush, wife of the President of the United States of America. In the letter she thanked me and the club

for our efforts in support of literacy in America.

"What the hell", you may ask, "are you talking about?"

O.K., fair question (and watch your language).

Some years ago, I think it was June of 1988, I was elected to what turned out to be two six-month terms as President of the LASFS. I had been Lord High Janitor for six years at that point. And, for over six years, I had gone to every LASFS meeting and every meeting of the society's board of directors that was held at the clubhouse. Also, I was (and am) distributor of

the club newsletter, *De Profundis*. In other words, I was, as I am now, active in the club. This is the activity that gradually got me known to the club, and eventually resulted in my being elected president.

As President of LASFS, I did not have to take any shit from club members. After all, I had the gavel. But as Lord High Janitor, I still had to clean the toilets. I was top and bottom (so to speak) of the club. Everybody else was just filler (and mess makers).

I was at the clubhouse alone one day, cleaning up, when we got a phone call from an editor with Gareth Stevens Publishing who had heard about us from Forrest J Ackerman. Her company, a Wisconsin-based children's-book publisher, was putting together a series of books about science, for children ages nine to twelve, called "Isaac Asimov's Library of the Universe". One of the books was going to be about science fiction. Her idea was to put, in the back of the book, some addresses of places their readers could write for more information about science fiction. She thought maybe LASFS could be one of those places. I thought to myself that since I am the president of the club, I could make that decision. So I told her I'd ask someone and get back to her.

At the next meeting I brought up the subject. The reaction of the general membership was something like "Yeah sure, Galen. Do whatever you want." The reaction of The Powers That Be was, "Sounds O.K., but who's going to do it?" That is to say, who was actually going to answer the kids who write in with questions? To which I said, "I will." I mean, the book would probably never make it to print anyway, right? I did, in fact, have some offers of help. The most notable was from Carol Ann Cranston, assistant LASFS literary librarian.

Two years passed.

Suddenly we started getting letters from kids in places like Utah and Wyoming, with requests like "Send me some information about

science fiction." Some had specific questions, to which we responded with specific answers. I wrote the letters with the help of Carol Ann Cranston. Then she typed them and I sent them out. But what could you say to "send me information about science fiction"?

I knew that there would be people at LASFS who would not want to be involved. Early on, I had hoped to get assistance from author Larry Niven. I thought I could ask him a question or two if a child sent in a specific question that would best be answered by a professional and successful writer. Mr. Niven was at the club almost every week and so was accessible. Unfortunately, he would have none of it. He felt that answering questions for one child at a time was an inefficient use of his time. I approached no one else. Instead, I answered the questions from my own personal knowledge or opinion.

If people wanted to help, however, I felt there should be a way they could assist the suddenly active Children's Literature Committee. That was when I got the idea for the LASFS Recommended Reading List for kids ages nine to twelve. (Nine to twelve was the target age for the children's book containing our address.) A list like that would give me something to send in response to "send me information about science fiction". (Several kids, after asking for "information about science fiction", would say, "Send pictures." Now, what does that mean?) Anyone who wanted to help could do so with a very small output of time and energy.

Carol Ann made up a form with blank lines for people to write in the names of books they felt the LASFS should recommend to children. All told, about ten percent of the attending membership, and none of The Powers That Be, took part in the making of recommendations over the four months that I pushed the forms on the club. This was the summer of 1990.

Carol and I put the titles into alphabetical

order by author. Then Carol typed up the list. I called that the first draft.

I took the first draft to LASFS and had the membership make suggestions on what should be added and removed. Carol typed up the second draft and I took it back to the club for more input. Everyone had many opportunities to make their suggestions known. No one was left out who didn't work at being left out.

When making up the list, I purposely did not consider availability as a factor in deciding whether or not to include a suggested title. I have no problem with recommending a book that has been out of print for thirty years if it is a good one. It remains good, in print or out. I felt my task was to make a list of good books the club recommends. Availability is someone else's problem. After all, just because a book is out of print today in no way means it will still be out of print tomorrow.

(There were a very few books the club suggested that I thought should not be put on the list. One of these was *Dracula* by Bram Stoker. I consider *Dracula* to be a Victorian sex fantasy aimed at adults of another culture and time. I felt it did not fit on a list for nine- to twelve-year-olds. Yet more than one person suggested it. It made me worry about what other books these perverts might be suggesting. I have not read most of the books on the list. Some of them I had never even heard of before. I relied on the input of club members to ferret out the inappropriate titles.)

One thing that became obvious to me was that the list was, in many ways, above the level of the average nine- to twelve-year-old. So I just started calling it a list for young people ages nine and up. Now, a sixteen-year-old who gets the list won't simply throw it away; it isn't just for Little Kids.

I typed the final version of the list myself. I wanted it done in the exact fashion that I felt was most correct. Also, I was learning the word processing system WordStar on the club

computer and I wanted to use it.

Now that I was finished with it, that list looked very nice. I'd put a lot of work into it. It's a good list. It felt good to have done it. It would feel even better to use it. I would send a copy to every kid who wrote in . . . when they wrote in . . . if they wrote in.

They were not writing in.

Between January and September of 1990 almost two dozen people had written to the LASFS as a result of seeing our address in "Isaac Asimov's Library of the Universe" *Science Fiction, Science Fact*. About two thirds of those people were children. The rest were teachers and librarians. After about September no more letters came.

All along, as I responded to the queries, I had included a copy of the list in whatever unfinished form (drafts one or two) was most recent. Now the list was done (and damn, but it looked good), but no one was writing in anymore. So there it sat.

I felt the list was useful, too useful to just gather dust. Maybe more importantly, I put too much work into it for it to go to waste. I thought there were people out there who would want and could use a list like this, if only they knew about it.

If only they knew about it.

How could I tell them about it? How could I get the word out? Maybe a press release? O.K., a press release!

I wrote a press release. I showed the draft around the club and made some minor changes. So, who do I send it to? And how many do I send?

I talked this over with the then-current president of LASFS, Charles Lee Jackson, II. He suggested that we have the Post Office print up some spiffy pre-stamped envelopes with the LASFS return address on them. We could get five hundred of them for one hundred and sixty dollars.

O.K., five hundred was a nice number.

That's how many would be sent. But what about paying \$160 for nice printed and stamped envelopes? Would the club do it?

The LASFS had lots of envelopes; thousands of envelopes that club treasurer Elayne Pelz had gotten for free from her place of employment, Ashton-Tate. They all had the Ashton-Tate logo and (incorrect) return address on them. I was afraid she would balk at the idea of LASFS paying \$160 for envelopes.

So I lied.

I told her the money was for stamps. I felt this was an acceptable lie because it was mostly true: \$145 for postage, and \$15 for the envelopes and the printing on the envelopes. I thought that was a reasonable price.

Actually I had been given \$200 by a vote of the club for the purpose of producing and mailing a press release. In putting out the release, I could spend the money any way I wanted. I chose to spend \$160 on envelopes and postage, and \$40 for printing the release itself. It worked out fine.

To where should these press releases be sent?

Back at the beginning of this year, 1991, I had sent out notices of the availability of the LASFS list to big name fan publications like *Locus*, *Science Fiction Chronicle* and *File 770*. That had produced a handful of requests for the list. But most fans already know what they like. They don't need to be told by us.

No, I felt the real need for our list would be in the mundane world, outside fandom. Chil-

dren, parents, teachers, librarians all could use, and might want, a recommended reading list of imaginative literature for young people.

I went to the library and did research. I spent two dozen hours there copying addresses for newspapers in every state in the union, and, in addition, newsletters for libraries, parents organizations and magazines for children. I did most of the research at the North Hollywood branch library. I also did some work in the library on the campus of the California State University at Northridge. I ended up with four hundred and eighty addresses. About seventy percent of them were newspapers. Ten or twelve went to television stations in L.A.

I spent ten or fifteen more hours hand copying the addresses onto the envelopes, then stuffing the envelopes.

I had no idea what would come of all this (I still don't, for the most part), but it was exciting. Something was going to happen!

If every publication receiving a release published that information, I knew I would be deluged. I did not expect to be deluged. I also did not expect that nothing would happen. I expected to get requests for the list. I got them . . . only a few at first from some people who had received the press release.

The release announced that the list exists and is free to anyone who sends us a self-addressed stamped envelope. (If they don't give us an envelope, they will get the impression that the list came from Ashton-Tate. Boy, will they

If you want a copy of our list as it stands now, send a self-addressed, stamped long envelope to:

Recommended Reading List

c/o LASFS Inc.

11513 Burbank Blvd.

North Hollywood, CA 91601-2309

be confused!) The release told a little about LASFS and why the list might be useful.

On April 22, 1991 I mailed them out.

Boom!

A week or two after the release went out, Charlie Jackson told me about a phone call from Roger McBain, a newspaperman in Indiana, who was trying to reach me. I talked with the reporter by phone the next day. The result was a very good, informative and factual article that appeared in *The Sunday Courier* for Evansville, Indiana on Sunday May 5, 1991 (page F-3). This article was better than anything the local press ever did on us.

Next was a paragraph-length notice that appeared in the *Nebraska Library Commission Communicator*. It used information from the press release only.

In the first month after I mailed the press release, I received over seventy requests for the list. The most I have received in any single day was fifteen. In most cases I have been able to send the list back in the very next day's mail. More than half of these requests came from Indiana and Nebraska, the centers for fan activity in the twenty first century!

By the first of June, I had started getting requests for the list from Virginia and New Mexico. Something has happened in those two states, but I don't yet know what.

I expect that more publications will print information about our list. I don't expect any of those publications to be newspapers. Sending the press release to newspapers was like throwing them at a black hole: They go in, but nothing good comes out. (To carry the simile further: Like a black hole emitting X-rays, the *Ventura Star - Free Press* emitted a condescending and insulting little fart, written by Peter B. Smith, that resulted in two or three requests for the list.) Evansville was a fluke. I expect even less from TV. It is with the library system in-house publications that my hope lies. School librarians and other librarians for chil-

dren can see the use for such a list.

Currently, I am again attempting to involve the LASFS in the Children's Literature Committee. I want to expand the list with more young adult titles.

For all the people who complain that titles they feel *should* be on the list are *not* on the list, this is yet another chance to get the titles in question *on* the list. But this does not mean they will do it. Oh, no! Too many members of the club find it much easier to complain that a title is missing from the list than to write the author and title down for me so I can include it.

It's their choice. I beg and whine and cry, and explain over and over again that if they just write the title and author on the form, I can put it in the expanded list. The ten percent that helped before are helping again. The complainers refrain from assisting but not from complaining.

I plan to have the expanded list out before 1992.

--Oh yes! We got that note from Barbara Bush.

As I understood it, one of the pet projects of Barbara Bush, wife of the President (of the United States), was the campaign for literacy. One of the reasons that I gave in the press release for the list's usefulness was that reading imaginative literature was fun. Kids who find reading fun will read, and so will not be illiterate. In other words, the list is useful in the campaign for literacy. So I wrote Barbara a letter telling her what we were up to. I mailed that a day or two after the press releases were sent.

She was *so* happy to hear we have a recommended reading list for young people. She said "...Having a good reading list of interesting books is helpful." She wished us "continuing success".

Well, if she's happy, I'm happy.

XXX



SHANGRI L'AFFAIRES

Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society
11513 Burbank Boulevard
North Hollywood
California
91601
U.S.A

Larry & Fuzzy Pink Niven
3961 Vanalden Avenue
Tarzana
California 91356-5640

P