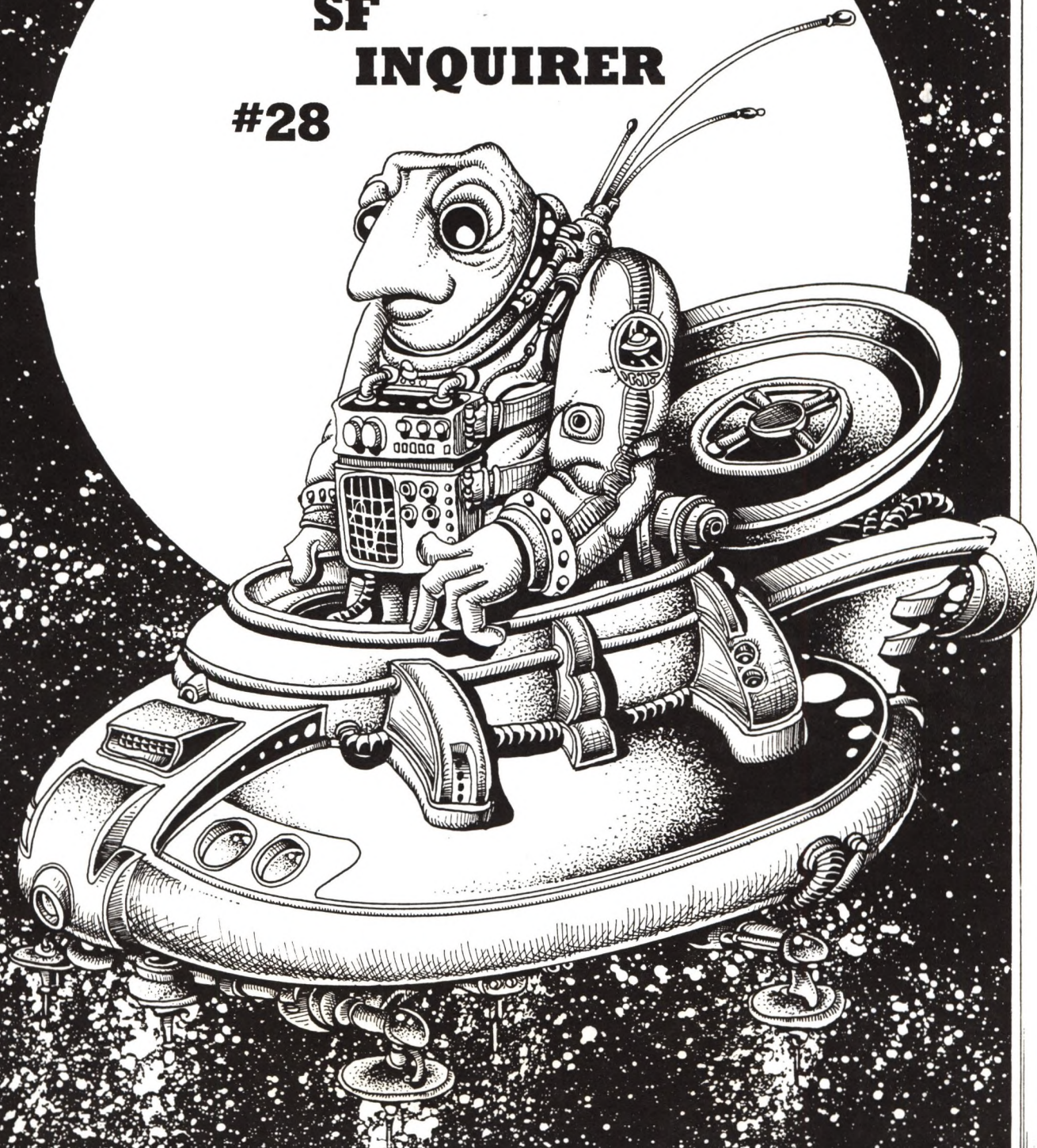


**THE  
TEXAS  
SF  
INQUIRER  
#28**



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# THE TEXAS SF INQUIRER

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**This Issue:** *Letters of Comment* — Shelley Corzine, Debbie Hodgkinson, David Thayer. *Art* — Brad Foster, Alexis Gilliland, Sherlock, Mel. White.

## From the Editor

A lot has been happening in fandom lately. By the time you read this, FACT's annual meeting will be over and we will have a new board of directors. I hope that the new board is satisfied with what Monica and I (and all of you contributors) have done with *The Texas SF Inquirer*, and let me continue to serve FACT as Editor-in-Chief.

There are several conventions coming up in the next few months — Aggiecon, Dallas Fantasy Fair, Amigocon, RocKon, and Galaxy Fair. All these conventions deserve your support. It is not an easy thing to put on an SF/F convention. It requires countless hours of time, sweat, and money. There is a big controversy in media fandom right now. What it seems to boil down to is the virtues and vices of the so-called "professional conventions" vs. "fan conventions." There is a lot of right and wrong on both sides. Unfortunately, most people are only being exposed to one side of the argument, from a letter being reproduced widely in the fan press.

There is a certain amount of validity to some points in the letter, particularly as to conventions run by the Creation people out of New York. However, I have seen a reply by the actor taken to task in the letter. The reply calls many of the so-called facts presented in the first letter into question, but it is not being widely reproduced in the fan press. I appeal to our readers not to make snap judgments without possession of all the facts. The only person to benefit from the dissention that the original letter is trying to incite is the letter writer.

Why be concerned about this in the pages of *TSFI*, whose readership is not heavily dominated by media

fans? Because here in Texas, we have seen how debilitating fan wars can be. All of the Texas-area cons, "fan" or "professional," are trying to serve the fannish interests in their particular area, whether it be literary, media, or art. It can only hurt Texas fandom if we don't support our local cons.

But what can be done about poorly managed or fly-by-night cons? You can join the staff and try to change the con so that it meets your needs (or your group's). If that doesn't work, let them go their way and you go yours. Start your own convention if that's what it takes. If your approach has merit, it will succeed. But don't start a fan war — that doesn't benefit anyone.

Enough from the soapbox. We are cranking out several issues of *TSFI* out in a very short time. This will hopefully bring our backlog of reviews and articles to the point where we will be reviewing things still on the stands. But we can't do it alone. Your input is both desired and needed if the *Inquirer* is to continue to meet the membership's needs. This is not *my* zine. *The Texas SF Inquirer* exists to educate and entertain the membership, and to provide publicity for FACT. Your articles, reviews and letters of comment are always welcome. Even phone calls to me at (817) 572-5547 [no collect calls please] from 4-8 p.m. Tuesday through Friday are welcome. I can't continue to meet your needs without your input. So, if you can, why not take 5 or 10 minutes and let me know what you think?

# Andre Norton – Weaving the Web of the Witch World

Profile by Ann Miller

From *Star Man's Son* to *Gate of the Cat*, Andre Norton's career spans some 50 years of writing science fiction and fantasy, crowned by being named the first woman Grand Master of Science Fiction by the Science Fiction Writers of America. When she began writing in the SF field, women weren't even expected to read it, let alone write it. Thus, she metamorphed from Alice Mary to Andre, the name she goes by now even in everyday life.

"Science fiction wasn't respectable," she says of those early days. "Libraries refused to carry it, reviewers and readers ignored it, because it was trash — pulp. Not worthy literature." She argued this point with many people who admitted they'd never read SF, but were prejudging only from what they'd heard about it.

Ms. Norton, herself a librarian for twenty years, struggled hard along with other pioneer SF writers to legitimize the SF and fantasy genres. Now, just when that goal seems accomplished, she shudders to see a burgeoning threat to that hard-won respectability by the new sub-genre "science fiction and fantasy romances." Since SF/F has proven profitable, publishers are becoming more attracted to the opportunity of widening the field of readers.

"I'm no Puritan," she states firmly, "but the samples I've seen appear to be romances of the lusty type so popular today, with entirely *inept* SF/F backgrounds sliced in."

She isn't declaring such books are "wrong." "As romance novels they have a place and avid followers. I object to labeling these books SF/F, leading novice SF/F readers to perhaps pick up one and judge our entire field by it."

Meanwhile, her own contributions to the field continue to grow. The most famous of her numerous books are the Witch World novels,

now numbering fifteen. She recently completed editing a four-volume anthology series for Tor, *Tales of the Witch World*, of stories by fellow writers invited to share in that unique universe.

"The response really pleased me," she said of her contributors. "They all had their own projects and busy schedules, but eagerly set about writing their Witch World stories. And the quality of the stories was excellent."

Did she need to edit much?

"I do not edit. I merely point out, suggest, and ask the author to make any changes."

Only one story disappointed her. "It was a plot outline directly taken from an out-of-print novel of an English writer. If I didn't collect that writer's works, I'd never have recognized it." She quickly rejected it.

*Tales of the Witch World* isn't the first anthology series Andre Norton has collected. She and Robert Adams co-edited the successful *Magic In Ithkar* series. But mostly she does her own writing, moving with ease between science fiction and fantasy, sometimes melding them the way she does so successfully in the Witch World books. She doesn't write "hard" science fiction. "Unlike many science fiction writers, my science background isn't extensive," she says candidly. "I need to get them off the starship and onto the planet as quickly as possible."

Her career didn't start in science fiction, but writing adventure novels, "... much along the lines of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. This genre is now found almost exclusively in films." She has done other out-of-genre writing, such as mysteries, and presently is collaborating with Susan Schwartz on a Chinese Historical, based on the life of Lady Chao.

"It's a very romantic story," she

explains. "I've wanted to write it for a long time, and have done tons of research towards that end. But I simply don't have the stamina any more to take on such a project alone. Working with Susan will help me fulfill this dream."

Ms. Norton has collaborated with other writers, one being a *Star Trek* author, A.C. Crispin (*Yesterday's Son*). Together they wrote the Witch World novel *Gryphon's Eyrie*. Though Ms. Norton has never written a *Star Trek* novel, she's a loyal fan and treasures a photo of the Enterprise crew autographed by Gene Roddenberry.

This prolific outpouring takes place in "the house that looks like a cat" in Winter Park, Florida. And indeed it does. Two slitted windows under the eaves of the barn-shaped roof look out from above a picture window mouth, open and ready to gobble up unwary mice. Cats play a large part in Andre's life. She is owned by several of them, from majestic purebreds to lonely strays who wander up and find a home.

Cat pictures, drawings, and paintings adorn the walls of her home, and cat sculptures, glass cats, stuffed cats and living purring cats can be found in any sunny nook or secluded corner, perched on shelves and window sills. She writes books containing cats and about cats, such as *Star Ka'at*, a beautifully illustrated children's SF novel.

She worked until recently on a vintage typewriter that finally reached the point of no repair. Dismayed, she attempted to write on a new one that "had lots of extra buttons and keys that only confused me." Fortunately, she located another one of the same model as her old one, and quickly snapped it up. A typist does her final drafts, leaving her free to indulge her fondness for the typewriter she enjoys using.



Bookshelves — filled — line the walls. In the library, books she has written fill an entire wall; first editions, foreign editions, even foreign *language* editions. Copies of every book she's written.

And there are more to come. The

sequel to *Flight in Yiktor* is out, as is *Gate of the Cat*, her latest Witch World novel. A second collaboration with A.C. Crispin is in the works, a follow-up to *Gryphon's Eyrie*. She is slated to write a three-way fantasy novel with Marion Zimmer Bradley

and Julian May. Of course, don't forget the Chinese Historical, plus an SF/fantasy anthology of cat stories, *Cat Fantastic*, edited with Martin Greenberg for DAW . . .

This First Lady of Science Fiction is not through yet!

## Name the Native Arizona Wildlife

by Karen Boehler

The trip to ArmadilloCon in Austin was for one reason and one reason only: to throw a party for the Phoenix in '93 Worldcon bid. And I guess I should say from the outset that it was a smashing success. I met a lot of friendly Texans (and others) who not only listened to my spiel but ante'd up dollars for pre-supports and T-shirts. I thank you, the Chair thanks you, and all the other myriad souls working so hard on the bid thank you.

But when I started to organize this party (my first ever), I wasn't sure what the reaction might be. In hopes of getting the kind of support we did end up getting, I was determined to do something special.

All along, the Phoenix in '93 theme has been southwestern: If you've been to one of our parties, you've seen blow-up Saguaro cacti, Mexican Blankets, stuffed road runners, and other Arizona and southwestern trinkets. Since I was traveling a goodly distance for ArmadilloCon and couldn't take too much decorative stuff, I decided to make the food the highlight of the event. We served tortilla chips with salsa, homemade guacamole and queso, four different Mexican beers, and fondue made with Mexican chocolate. However, I didn't realize that what I brought to dip *in* the fondue would become the highlight of the evening — and the reason behind this article. (And no, Monica, I'm *not* talking about the mandarin oranges.)

Back home, while wandering Kmart looking for supplies, I came upon an approximately three-foot-high bag of animal crackers. Im-

mediately seeing the possibilities vis-à-vis fondue, I took it home purely intending to use these crunchy little critters as dippers. My mind, you see, operates on a fairly level track; not so others. While discussing just what *might* be done with several thousand or so animal crackers, the idea was raised to take one of each, glue them to a poster board, and have a "Name the Arizona Wildlife" contest.

And so it came to pass.

At the party, the animal board was posted. The headline **Arizona Wildlife Quiz** was atop thirteen strange-looking creatures, each numbered for easy identification. We asked each entrant "Can YOU correctly identify each indigenous Arizona animal?" And we added a kicker: a free pre-supporting membership in Phoenix in '93 for the best answer. As the night wore on, a number of people decided to try their hand. When asked, I explained that creativity was as important as correctness in naming these beasts.

Well, to get to the best part of this story, there were a number of wonderful entries. But one was head and shoulders above the rest. So as not to keep his warped creativity to myself, I hereby present for your edification the winning entry by Dr. Cat, of Austin, Texas:

1. **Ted Bear** — Currently embroiled in court battle over unauthorized stuffed toys in his likeness, thus unavailable for comment.

2. **Guido the Reindeer** — Forced into "early retirement" from Santa's

staff over an incident involving several thousand Barbie dolls mysteriously being swapped with "Bondage Betty" dolls shortly before takeoff one Christmas Eve. Now lives in a trailer park outside Tucson selling "Chattering Teeth" for a living.

3. **The Masked Buffalo** — Gaining unique powers in a freak accident involving radiation and darned low humidity, he streaks through the sky seeking wrongs to right. He hopes this will boost his reputation so he'll do better when he goes cruising at the local watering holes.

4. **Lou the Midget Circus Lion** — The only animal represented in 1-to-1 scale on the display, Lou used to work for a flea circus. He's unemployed now, after one day absent-mindedly putting on his flea collar before heading to work.

5. **Xerxes the Mutant Polar Bear** — Xerxes and his kin are the descendants of a group of polar bears who crossed an ancient land bridge that connected Antarctica with downtown Phoenix in prehistoric times. Stranded when the continents drifted apart, they managed to evolve into a new species of bears with the necessary trait for survival in their new environment — fur that would blend in with the color of sand.

6. **Karina the Smoking Camel** — Nominated by Ripley as one of the Seven Weird Wonders of the Modern World, for the last 37 years her fur has been slowly smoldering away. Nobody knows why.

7. **Alexander J. Cougar** — Lives near a beach. Likes to strap a fin to his back, hold his breath, and swim

around biting people so he can hear them yell, "Shark, shark!" and rush for shore. His parents refuse to admit they're related to him.

**8. Edgar the Elephant Who Never Remembers** — Actually a native of Spokane, Washington, Edgar forgot the way home one evening, and has been in Phoenix for eight years now.

**9. A Horse** — Yeah, that's all, just a horse. Do you know how hard it is thinking up all this weird stuff? You should be glad you don't have to do it for a living, like I do.

**10. Tony the Tiger** — Though most people aren't aware of it, this star of innumerable cereal commercials was replaced in the '70s by his son Tony, Jr. These days his hours are spent playing shuffleboard, watching *Wheel of Fortune*, and tell-

ing people stories of his years of fast living in Hollywood.

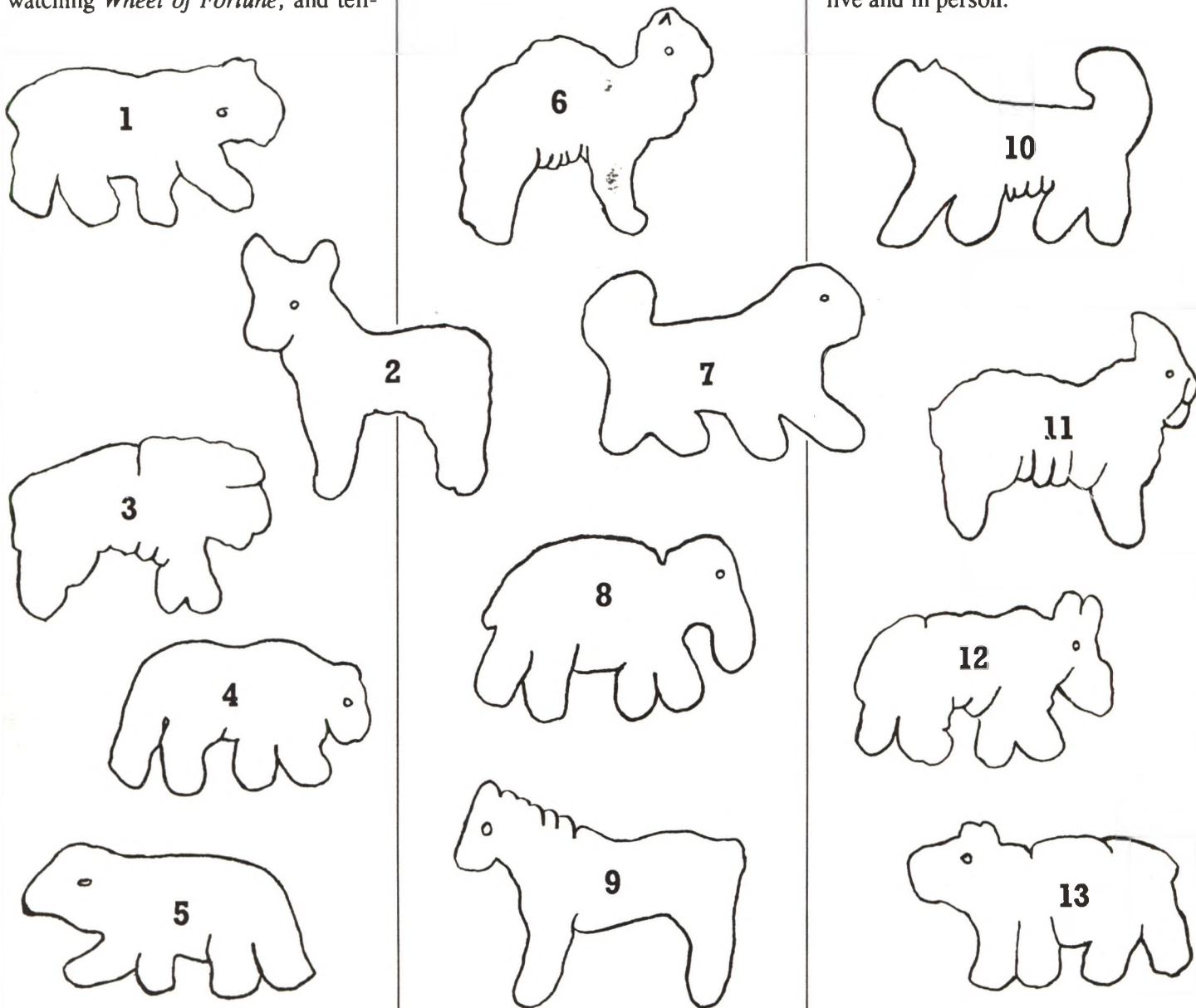
**11. The Snuffleupagus from Another Planet** — Not much is known about this mysterious extraterrestrial visitor. Many sightings have been reported, all remarkably similar. While walking through a lobby, those who have had this experience say, a hairy trunk reaches out and taps them on the shoulder from somewhere behind a potted plant. Just before losing consciousness, they hear a strange voice say, "Pardon me, but could you loan me some paper clips? I need them to repair my spacecraft." When they wake up, they find themselves in Ohio.

**12. Henrietta the Hippo** — One of the cast of the original *Fantasia*, she hasn't had a role since (other than

a cameo in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*) despite the thousands of letters and phone calls to the Disney Studios she has made lobbying for *Fantasia II*.

**13. The Electric Mail Pig** — This is one of those things you see in toy stores and novelty shops that will walk a few steps, pause, then wiggle its nose and make disgusting noises. The less said about these the better, don't you agree?

If you think you can top that, stop by the next Phoenix in '93 party you see. If I'm throwing it, you'll get your chance. Even if I'm not there, you'll get to meet a lot of nice people, eat a lot of good food, and support a fine bid. And who knows, you may even get to see some of our native wildlife, live and in person.





# INSTACON 3

## You Shoulda Been There

by Cl. Crouch

Thanks, guys, whoever got me to come to this little "con." Not only did I have a great time, I learned something (actually, a lot of somethings, but one thing in particular). I learned that I have it in me to be in the big leagues. Sure, I've dipped my toe into condom before — babysitting the odd table, chairing a few panels, even helping to throw a couple of cons. But Worldcon is the BIG one. And until this seminar, I never imagined I might have what it takes to swim in the same waters.

Instacon 3 (IC3) had a smallish attendance — about half of what was expected — but it didn't lack vibrancy. Friday night was an open party,

which bothered some FACT members, since FACT funds were used to fund the munchies. At first I wondered about that, too, but two things set my mind at rest. First, there *were* fewer people than expected. Second (and more important), FACT has an image problem (left over from the previous administration, apparently), and food is notorious for winning friends, if it's good and plentiful. The Eternacon crew who ran the con suite made sure it was. (Thanks again, to the appropriate persons.)

Saturday was when the real business began. Robert ("The Sexiest Man in Southwest Fandom") Taylor gave the keynote speech, and then the

fun started. It wasn't 'til Sunday evening, when we were down to talking Decisions, that the gloves came off, and that ugly old nemesis, politics, showed its face.

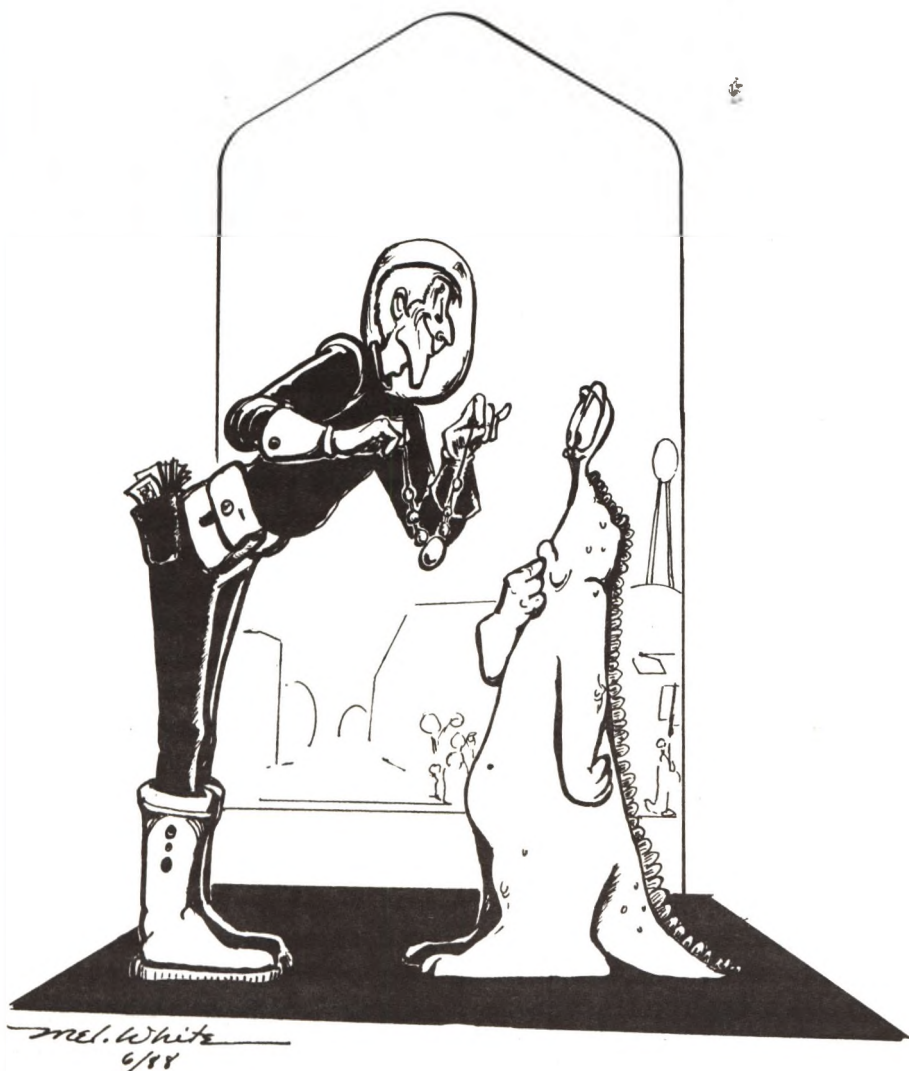
Fandom is riddled with factions, and condom is worse. Egos get in the way of communication, lack of communication makes the best plans crater, and lack of planning collapses the best conventions. Worldcon is a chance to see the best and worst examples of fannish behavior.

But someone pointed out that Worldcon is a business as well as the planet's biggest party in celebration of SF and fantasy, and those who want a business — or a humongus party — to come out well must learn to work with those whose interests, prejudices and personalities may not agree with their own.

To my amazement, after tempers ran close to the edge that Sunday night, I saw people get past their own desires and try communicating concern for understanding others'. It was like magic. Texas' opportunity to throw a Worldcon seemed, one moment, about to be flushed, and the next, we coalesced into a workable unit.

A few select comments about the running of IC3 are in order here. I was on one panel where I felt somewhat misplaced; I was under the impression there would be more loose discussion about my topic, which I took to be an overall view of friendliness to all kinds of fen. Instead, it focussed on media, "fringe" and filker fen, and the like. Since I am a "literary" fan as well as being interested in some "media" (how I loathe these misleading, and technically incorrect, labels), I really don't feel comfortable being asked to represent "media" fandom.

At the panel, I barely had time to read my outline, though I had made



"The color is you."

copious notes. Too, Robert barely had time to give us more than his outline. I had understood my input on handicap access, the particular needs of filkers, media fen, etc., would be needed. However, Mike Wright wound up discussing, in detail, the problems and needs of running a video room. I think he should've been given his own panel, and maybe I should've been given one, as well. Perhaps we could've been allowed to do more panels Friday night, along with the party. Some might have been interested, and there certainly wasn't enough time in one panel to make people comprehend why such "fringe" interests must be seriously considered. Afterwards, there were few questions, and almost zero discussion, a sure sign people wanted to get on with the "real" panels.

Never mind, though. I was happy enough with the information gleaned from other panels. And along the way, I made notes about things I heard, and things I thought of that might make the next Instacon work better.

1. First, and maybe most important — **TAPE THE PROCEEDINGS!** Some of us don't have perfect memories, and probably even fewer have steno training! It's a shame how much of this stuff will be forgotten. Furthermore, there might actually be a profit in selling transcriptions or duplicates of the tapes, and what fanish sector is so rich it can ignore this? The money could be used to fund future ICs!

2. Have formats. One for lectures and one for intense discussion. The "theatre" was fine for lectures, but I noticed that the wrap-up, especially, turned into a brainstorming session, for which the terraced room was not only no longer useful, but downright hampering.

3. More microphones. Not all of the participants could be heard — even from right in front of the podium.

4. Since IC3 was underattended, perhaps more attention should be given to contacting participants, and doing so earlier. I doubt the inexpen-

sive cost of \$20 put most non-attendees off, though I do think a less expensive site could have been chosen, given the smaller crowd. I saw no need for a hotel conference center, though of course members from out of town need hotel rooms. Still, there are free facilities for meetings which, if booked far enough in advance, could have saved each member \$20.

5. Techies should be more familiar with their equipment, and the equipment should be in better shape. There was a persistent buzz — at times very loud — and occasionally the tinny strains of some rock station underlined speakers. All tapes or films should be run prior to actual showing, so as to find any problems.

6. Schedule more time for each subject, or have excess discussion tabled (or moved to another location), or keep to schedule. Not wanting to miss anything, I sat through hours without a break, while the schedule was "caught up." I suspect I wasn't the only one whose eyeballs turned yellow during the "wrap up," or who heard her stomach snarl.

7. Have the hotel (or con suite) set up a coffee/tea urn(s) outside the conference room for the short breaks between panels.

Finally, some stray observations on the subjects that arose during IC3.

Fandom and condom (stop giggling — there really is a need for the differentiation!) are unique in several respects when it comes to our gatherings — cons. But we should keep in mind that certain functions and designs of all conventions share common ground. Has anyone thought of taking a basic course in mundane conning, and applying what *can* be applied to condom? For example, while mundane cons lack a masquerade contest, they *do* have all the same problems with getting airtight contracts with hotels, or arranging banquets, panels, and so on.

The triplet sisters Communication, Planning and Humor are the basic necessities for all concons. Without their presence, kiss your con goodbye.

Fandom is aging. This subject was repeatedly mentioned, in various ways — not the least of which is handicapped access, and maybe the most important, programming and child care for young fen.

One more subtle thing kept eluding people; that is that we *must* go outside our own kids to recruit if fandom is to survive and grow. Find those people who understand and deal well with kids and send them into the schools, the highways and byways — get those kids' attention! Sure, they know there are movies and games, and they watch *Star Trek*, *Beauty and the Beast* and *Doctor Who* (when they're lucky enough to get it), but what school teaches them about the books? Even if they luck across the books, how are they to know there are huge gatherings where they could meet and talk with the authors of their dreams? I would have given my right grandmother to know this stuff when I was 13, picked up *City and the Stars* (A.C. Clarke) and devoured it, and then discovered there was more stuff like it! It wasn't till I was about 28 years old that I stumbled into fandom! What a waste!

Many, many other things emerged in IC3, far too many to list here. So next time (we're talking sometime early April — stay tuned), if you are fortunate enough to catch the notice for IC4 — don't blink and miss it! It's little, but the best things come in . . . oh, you know that one.





# The Polyhedral Universe

by John Manning

The obvious question is: What is a "polyhedral universe"?

In this instance, it is a column devoted to the universe of gaming — all kinds of games. Polyhedral means many-sided, and since gaming is a multifaceted universe, it seems an appropriate title. In this column will be views, reviews, events (past and present), and anything else related to gaming. Opinions expressed are my own, and you are free — nay, encouraged — to write and let me know if you agree or disagree. I will try to respond. Who knows, maybe you can change my mind about something.

Since I was given a rather short deadline (I'm typing as fast as I can, Scott), this article will be short on editorial and long on review — specifically, for GDW's *Sky Galleons* and TSR's *The Hunt for Red October*.

**Title:** *Sky Galleons of Mars*

**Manufacturer:** Game Designers' Workshop (GDW)

**Price:** \$19.95

**Type:** Board Game/Miniature

**Setting Type:** Alternate History Science Fiction

"When Thomas Edison crash-landed on Mars in 1870 in the ether flyer, of his own invention, it opened the portal to an ancient and exotic civilization."

This opening sentence, on the cover of the rulebook, sets the scene for the adventure. *Sky Galleons of Mars* is the first game of what appears to be an upcoming interrelated series designated *Space 1889* using the pulp settings of pre-1950 science fiction.

*Sky Galleons of Mars* comes as a boxed set. It contains a history booklet entitled "Space 1889," a rules booklet (39 pages, amply illustrated), two four-page reference charts, a booklet of ship record sheets (with permission to photocopy), two colorful maps, a sheet of cardboard markers, dice (six-sided) and 15 plastic ships (some assembly required).

A minimum of two people are required to play, but many scenarios are multi-player (as many as there are ships). The reference sheets are simple to use and helpful. The historic booklet is entertaining and informative. I recommend reading it before tackling the rules booklet — it makes the rules clearer and easier to understand. The rules, however, are presented in an easy, straightforward manner. The basic game is explained in detail, after which the player is urged to play scenario one. As more advanced rules are introduced, the player is given appropriate scenarios until the game is mastered and the gamer is ready to create his own scenarios and ships.

*Sky Galleons of Mars* is an easy game to learn and play, a good rainy-day diversion. A note that will make playing easier and more enjoyable — read the books and rules sometime before you want to play. Let the information settle, then review when you're setting up.

**Title:** *The Hunt for Red October*

**Manufacturer:** TSR Games, Inc.

**Price:** \$19.95

**Type:** Board War Game

**Setting Type:** World War III Naval

*The Hunt for Red October* is based, loosely, on the novel by Tom Clancy (only one scenario actually deals with the situation in the novel). Although the game is fun to play, it has some minor problems.

The boxed set contains a 29-page rule/scenario booklet, a large game board, two task force boards, a battle board, and many punch-out ship markers. The rules are mostly clear, but are hard to reference during play. Ship markers and task force markers are sensible, but the advantages of submarine warfare are lost because the submarine markers are clearly visible on the board. The game employs a "detection" marker, so it is possible to be in the same space as a sub-

marine and not detect it. Yet both players know there are one, two or three subs in that space because the markers are there. Another problem concerns the task force boards. The opposing player can readily see that a task force consists of x number of ships and can see if ships are added or dropped during the course of play. This problem can be eliminated by ignoring the setup shown and placing the boards out of sight.

Despite these problems, the game is enjoyable and the scenarios balanced and challenging. There does not seem to be any bias to either side. I have played the game several times, as the Soviet commander and as the NATO commander, and the difference in Soviet vs. NATO wins was negligible.

## Upcoming Events

### April 7-9: Dallas Fantasy Fair

Originally (and still, to a large extent) a comics and collectors' convention, Larry Lankford has, in recent years, expanded his programming to include an art show (best in the West!), guests from all genres, movies, Japanimation and gaming. This is the first of six Texas-wide shows, three in Dallas and one each in San Antonio, Houston, and Austin. Gaming is refereed by Darryl Myers' "Toss of the Dice" crew from San Antonio as well as local Game Master talent. The first Dallas show will be at the Marriott Park Central, LBJ and Coit Road. For more information, contact Bulldog Productions, P.O. Box 820488, Dallas, Texas 75382, or call (214) 349-3367.

### May 26-28: Galaxy Fair/ArtCon II

A combined Art/Science Fiction/Fantasy convention, this gala event will be held at the Hyatt Regency at the DFW Airport. There will be lots of *free parking*, guests from all media, a *fantastic* masquerade and



dance, parties, filking, an awards ceremony (for presentation of the coveted GREMLIN awards and prizes from the gaming tournaments), and much, much more. There will even be panels near the open gaming room pertaining to *gamers'* interests. Gaming guests will include Steve Jackson of SJ Games and Darwin Bromley of Mayfair Games. Roleplaying tournaments (RPGA-sanctioned and -provided) include *AD&D* Individual, *AD&D* Team, *Autoduel*, *GURPS*, *Paranoia*, *Call of Cthulhu*, *D.C. Heroes*, *RuneQuest* and *Champions*. Boardgame competitions include *Battletech*, *Star Fleet Battles* and *Battle for Moscow*. More will be announced as the schedule firms. For information on the schedule, pre-registration or being a Game Master, contact John Manning, P.O. Box 852188, Richardson, Texas, 75085, or call (214) 272-3319. Among other things (rewards) available to those who serve (and dish it out?) will be full, three-day membership to the convention with time to enjoy it.

## In Brief

### June 10-11: San Antonio Fantasy Fair

Dealers, masquerade, workshops, con suite, dance and 24-hour gaming.

### June (exact date not announced): DalCon

A *total* gaming convention. If you play it, it will probably be here. Watch for further details.

### July 14-16: Dallas Fantasy Fair

Bulldog Productions' biggest show of the year. All a Fantasy Fair has ever been and more! Details in later columns.

### August 12-13: Houston Fantasy Fair

Small, fun convention with Dealers, Masquerade and 24-hour gaming.

### September 8-9: Austin Fantasy Fair

The Bulldog travels to the capital for another small, two-day Con! Lots of fun and 24-hour gaming.

### October 13-15: ArmadilloCon in Austin

A good convention, but gaming is low-key and low profile.

### November: DalCon

A gamer's paradise. Details as soon as they are available.

### November 24-26: Dallas Fantasy Fair

Bulldog Productions winds up its season with its most popular convention, returning home to the Marriott Park Central.

## More of Interest

For those of you who like to play FASA's *Battletech*, don't miss the Dallas Minicons held at the Marriott

Park Central. These one-day events feature a Dealers room, Japanimation room, and all-*Battletech* gaming. Prior to the game, which is played on a huge 3-D map, there is an open meeting of the Mech Warriors' Guild in a room provided by Bulldog Productions. The dates for these Minicons are March 18, May 20, June 17, August 19, September 16, October 21, and December 16. You missed the ones on January 21 and February 18 already.

That about wraps up this column. Next time, in addition to a review or two and a calendar of events, I will write about the Role Playing Gamers Association (RPGA). Believe it or not, it's not a TSR extension anymore. Well, not *just* that, anyway. 'Til next time: "Keep them dice a-rollin'!"



# The Printed Word

**Marco Polo and the Sleeping Beauty**  
by Avram Davidson and Grania Davis — Baen Books \$3.50

**Silk Roads and Shadows**  
by Susan Shwartz — Tor \$3.95  
reviewed by K.D. Whitworth (reprinted from the ASFS Newsletter)

These books, historical fantasies of the "quest" genre, are set in an Orient inhabited by mythical beasts, demons and gods; but that is their only similarity.

*Marco Polo and the Sleeping Beauty* is set in the late 13th century. The aging Kublai Khan, hearing of a "Sleeping Beauty," believes she must know the secrets of immortality. Marco, his father Niccolo, and his uncle Maffeo are unwilling guests who need the Khan's passport to travel back to Venice; they cannot refuse the Khan's "request" to find the Beauty. The story concerns their efforts to find her, and what happens when they do.

The plot is promising enough, and even delivers, somewhat. But the method of telling! I found it difficult and extremely frustrating. In the opening chapter, Maffeo and his companion are attacked by a griffin (not described other than that it "in no way resembled any safe and familiar animal"). We then leave Maffeo listening to the beast eating his companion, and go to Niccolo, holed up in a crevice as a giant snow-leopard, pawing just at the edge of his coat, discovers that it can shift the rock. Then . . . let's have about 13 pages of combined flashback and what-is-happening-to-Marco before we get back to Maffeo and Niccolo.

It doesn't get better. The authors simply cannot stay with the plot. (Too much late-night TV? Three minutes of interruption for every nine minutes of story!) Throughout the book we have action/flashback/change point of view

## Book Reviews

(POV), action/flashback/change POV, action/flashback/change POV, ad nauseum.

Another problem is the use of *deus ex machina*. The Monkey-god's interferences are foreshadowed. The other two supernaturals have no motivation other than plot advancement.

Description is poor — I brought away almost no imagery. Characterization is almost nonexistent. Unless character tags were used (Maffeo thinks of food, Niccolo of gemstones), I had to look at the name to tell who was speaking.

Overall this is poorly written, poorly plotted, and poorly visualized. I was disappointed since I've always liked Marco Polo. Not recommended.

I went next to *Silk Roads and Shadows*. I had been doubtful about this book, having read too many "beautiful princess on quest" fantasies, but I found it excellent.

Set in the mid-ninth century, it begins in Byzantium, travels out of the Roman Empire through Tibet to China, then back by way of Shambhala. On her quest to steal silkworms, Princess Alexandra also embarks upon the Diamond Path of Buddhist teaching. I found both her actual and her spiritual travels fascinating. Described well and convincingly, it is an intriguing look at an alien culture.

Susan Shwartz drew heavily on both the history and the mythology of the regions. The book is complex, richly detailed, and full of unexpected twists. Her characters are memorable and believable, from the Emperor's sister and cousin, the Nestorian heretic priest and the Varangian guard, to the other travellers along the Silk Road.

If you like historical fiction, if you like fantasy, if you like travels in distant lands, if you like strong char-

acters, complex plots, and excellent wordsmithing, you should certainly read this book. Highly recommended.

**Pestis 18**  
by Sharon Webb  
reviewed by Larry Tagrin

If there is such a thing as a "formula mainstream suspense novel," this is it. All the standard elements of the current fad in this genre are here:

The evil CIA sponsoring illegal biowarfare experiments;

Mercenary-terrorists;

The "plain folks" who defeat the evil government agencies which are bent on destruction;

The impossible, last-minute endings arranged with a trail of equally impossible links.

All in all, if you want to read yet another political polemic on the evils of the CIA, and you want to believe they would create a disease for which no vaccine or cure had been developed in parallel research, this book will fit your preconceptions just fine.

**Psychodrome 2: The Shapechanger Scenario**  
by Simon Hawke

reviewed by Samuel Mize

This is a fun book — if you like ideas and characterization in a book full of fast action, read it. Having read the first book, *Psychodrome*, helps but is not necessary.

*Psychodrome* is a TV roleplaying game show. The experiences and hazards on the show are real. (This fragment of the concept is similar to *The Running Man*, but the series is *not* a derivative work from anything.) The broadcast is more than a video image. Players get a biochip implant that broadcasts their perceptions and emotions. The home audience doesn't just watch; they live the experience.

Playing the game is expensive, but anyone can win a chance in the lottery. Arkady O'Toole, a hustler on the run from the Japanese mob, wins a



chance and joins the game to evade his killers. Lottery winners don't get their choice of scenarios, though, and he finds himself in battle. He can't retire, because now the Yakuza — heck, the whole planet — knows where he is. The Yakuza problem is settled in *Psychodrome*, which sets up the series problem.

A planet Man has been mining, hunting, and generally raping holds a race of shapechangers. Despite a planetary quarantine, some have escaped and started a guerilla war. From their side, humans have invaded, damaged their planet and killed them for food (not knowing they were sentient). From our side, we could never be sure they'd recalled all their invisible terrorists, even if we gave in. We can't detect and destroy their agents, but we could fry their home planet, so they won't do anything too big just yet.

In the meantime, so as not to create panic by announcing the truth, the government is preparing the public by broadcasting the war as a *Psychodrome* series. Since the *Psychodrome* company has pulled publicity hoaxes before, they hope the media will assume any reports of the shapechangers to be part of an elaborate PR stunt.

In the midst of all this, Arkady is learning to be an effective warrior while trying to keep his humanity. His closest companion is Rudy Breck, a genetically engineered soldier who literally cannot feel fear. Arkady envies his cool and courage. He tells Arkady that he, Rudy, has no courage. Courage is not a lack of fear, but going on in spite of it. "You can be courageous. I can only be fearless."

Much of this future looks like the present. Rather than trying to predict everything, Simon Hawke takes a few developments and projects their impact on society. This is a valid form of SF future, with a long tradition.

Simon's books read more like action pulps than like Great Literature. However, they're not mindless slugfests. They examine humanity under stress. Two of his series — this and *Time Wars* — involve groups at war, neither wanting it but with no way to end it. He asks hard questions about

being human. He sometimes drops a character into a moral-lecture mode, but the plot kicks back into high gear before you lose patience. His books are enough fun that they'll be around decades after most current attempts at Great Literature. Their questions will still be valid.

Simon has made a habit of creating interesting and believable settings, filling them with well-thought scientific developments and their consequences, then showing them off in an exciting action story about people you come to care about. What more could you ask for?

### ***Time Wars 8 : The Dracula Caper***

by Simon Hawke

reviewed by Samuel Mize

That fun-loving gang from the future protecting the past, the Time Commandos, is back. This time, the evil Nikolai Drakov is trying to disrupt time by setting loose genetically engineered werewolves and vampires in Jack the Ripper's London. Read it over a red carpet, or a bathtub. Wear a raincoat.

Actually, the Ripper is several years in the book's past. The Time Commandos meet Arthur Conan Doyle, Bram Stoker and H.G. Wells.

There are two time wars going on. One is against an alternate timeline; the other is a guerilla action against the future by a mad genius.

This books deals with the ongoing attacks of Nikolai Drakov. He hates the future and wants to bring both timelines down into screaming chronological chaos. He's trying to make the past inconsistent with history by bringing mythology to life. His werewolves and vampires are victims of a viral infection, which is communicated to their surviving victims. He is NOT a nice person.

That bare outline makes this book sound like cliché-ridden hack work. Part of the fun of reading Simon Hawke is in watching him take ideas that seemed old when they were new, twist them until they're fresh and original, and make you really care about both the concepts and the people involved with them. The Time Com-

mandos are well-drawn characters you care about, although frankly that is partly carry-over from the previous books. They're a bit sketchy in this volume. Dracula is not the historical Count, but an ultimately sympathetic product and victim of Drakov.

*The Dracula Caper* reads as if it were written more quickly than the others in the series. It doesn't have nearly the texture and background of the other books. Also, explanations and polemics by characters are repeated almost verbatim from chapter to chapter. It could have used a more careful editor.

However, it's a fun book. If you're already reading *Time Wars*, it's definitely worth your while.

### ***Dover Beach***

by Richard Bowker

reviewed by Richard Tucholka

The time is twenty years after a limited nuclear exchange between the U.S. and the Soviet Union; we're now a third-world country barely able to support our remaining population. A few eastern cities are returning to life and things are slowly rebuilding.

Wally Sands is a young private eye; in fact, he's probably the last private eye in Boston.

His first case is Dr. Charles Winfield, a scientist with strong suspicions that he is one of a number of clones created before the war by Dr. Robert Cornwall. He wants to locate Cornwall no matter what. Sands quickly discovers the cost is very high. Many scientists and educators were evacuated to the virtually untouched British Isles after the war. To immigrate to Britain, the promised land, is the stuff of dreams for the post-war American; and Sands has the chance of a lifetime even though it means leaving his love, Gwen.

The job takes Sands to London where he meets the elusive Dr. Cornwall and his daughter Myra. The mystery deepens into a web of murder, clones, and insanity.

It's a strange and sad mystery that borders on science fiction in its best traditions. This is an outstanding book that I recommend to everyone,

though not everyone will like it. *Dover Beach* gives you the feeling this is the aftermath of Whitley Streiber/James Kunetka's book *Warday*. Little by little, you're caught up in the gut-wrenching realization of what has been lost because of the war, and how it has affected the survivors who have gone back to living in the shadow of what America was. But that same shadow creeps into England to create a post-nuclear depression and set the mood of the book. It's a chilling scene as Sands walks into a British McDonalds, a first-time experience, and orders, to his delight, fast food.

The end is bittersweet, slightly surprising, and will leave you smiling. It's a very good book by a new SF talent that deserves a serious look. He has a second book called *Replica* that I'll be hunting for.

***Tommyknockers*  
by Stephen King**

reviewed by Richard Tucholka

Stephen King has written a handful of outstanding SF stories. *The Mist*, *The Stand*, and *The Running Man* were probably his best. Now in the running is *Tommyknockers*.

Bobbi Anderson, a writer, stumbles across a bit of metal buried on her property. This odd fragment catches her curiosity and she decides to dig it out. What she's found is the edge of a long-buried starship, a huge saucer-

shaped craft with some unusual, if not sinister, properties. Digging it out becomes an obsession and soon the ship is changing her and the townspeople of Haven, Maine.

She is joined by Jim Gardener, an alcoholic poet and lover from her past who feels something is very wrong. Gardener is partially shielded from the effects of the starship due to an accident that left a metal plate implanted in his skull. Unsure at first, he also joins in the dig, half immune to the power of the Tommyknockers. He agonizes over what is happening around him and the changes in the woman he loves.

At first subtly, the people in Haven begin getting "ideas" and building high-tech gadgets such as never seen before. Many of the inventions are useful; the horror begins when they start to kill — by accident or by the design of those who have become mentally unbalanced. The townspeople slowly become a mass mind, a telepathically linked team with one purpose: dig up the ship. They are becoming the new crew.

*Tommyknockers* is an outstanding and disturbing book that creates a fine fusion between SF and horror. To any SF reader, the plot is seriously predictable, but the handling of the story and characters gives it a unique charm and readability. If you like SF and horror, this one's for you.

***A Death of Honor*  
by Joe Clifford Faust**

reviewed by Richard Tucholka

Payne is a bioengineer who comes home one night to find a dead body in his apartment. He gets the blame, but there's nine months to handle the investigation himself before police backlogs allow them to get to the case.

Payne begins the methodical and monumental task of ferreting out the facts that led to the death of a girl called Honor. His quest is hampered as he discovers something far more sinister. There's a bio-engineered bug, a deadly one, being spread through the population. As he learns far more than he should, a crumbling political structure takes notice. The notice bodes no good. There is little he can do except expose what is happening to save the woman he loves and his son.

*A Death of Honor* is another dark future where America is heading down the social slide into hell. War is imminent and the people couldn't care less, lambs to a slaughter in a party atmosphere. It's frighteningly believable and a very good mystery/SF story. Faust's characters are realistic and his look into designer genes superb. The end is a roller-coaster ride of action that will leave you horrified and then cheering. Of the newest generation of SF writers, Faust stands out. I look forward to more from him.

## Fanzine Reviews

*Unless otherwise noted, reviews are by SM.*

***De Profundis* #195**

This is the clubzine of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society. It contains minutes of the weekly meetings as transcribed by the Once and Future Secretary, Mike Glycer. It has a monthly calendar, book reviews, history by Walt Daugherty, and some typically fannish illos. Missing from this issue was Harry [when does he sleep] Andruschak's fanzine review

column. Available from LASFS, 11513 Burbank Blvd., North Hollywood, CA 91601, for the usual or a membership in LASFS.

***Empties* #8**

This British genzine really wasn't (if you'll pardon the expression) my cup of tea, as the fan writers chose to write about mostly mundane things. There was a semi-coherent review of Conspiracy, and an interesting telling by the editor, Martin Tudor, of how he'd gotten mugged on a bus. This

would probably have been much more interesting if I knew more about the fans involved. Good mimeo repro on white bond, no interior illos. Available from Martin Tudor, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, England B66 4SH.

***FOSFax* #127**

Another month, another *FOSFax*. In a way, it's depressing to see a zine this good coming out this regularly. The print is still microscopic but legible. But the contents! A review of



Wordstar 4.0, the obligatory editorial, book reviews, a science news column, zine reviews, political commentary on this nation's energy policy (or rather, lack thereof), and locs. Any zine that has Piers Anthony, Gene Wolfe, Poul Anderson, Lawrence Watt-Evans, Harry Turtledove, Harry Warner, Jr., Harry Andruschak, and others as regular correspondents is definitely doing something right. Topics as usual were interesting. This zine deserves a Hugo. Available from FOSFA, Box 37281, Louisville, KY 40233-7281, for \$9/year, \$1/issue, or the usual.

#### **FOSFAx #131 and #132**

reviewed by Alex Slate

Edited by Timothy Lane and Janice Moore, *FOSFAx* is published monthly by the Falls of Ohio Science Fiction Association. According #132, FOSFA is experiencing severe membership difficulties. I wish them well and hope that *FOSFAx* will survive.

The articles are well written; of particular note are the three Nolacon reports in #131. The letter columns are long, which is nice, but I have a problem with the book reviews — as a rule, they are simply plot summaries.

Technically, these zines are uneven. The print is cramped and sometimes not clear. #132 had some repro problems, and the type fades in places. The layout is uneven but mostly pretty good; the use of graphics is very effective, and the covers are striking and impressive. Occasional goofs include starting "And Down Will Come Baby" so far down on page 7 of #131. Head styles continually change; consistency would be a plus. Question: why so many plant graphics, particularly in the loccol?

Did *FOSFAx* deserve its Hugo nomination last year? Yes and no. In my opinion, this zine has some problems. But it is better than the majority of zines, and FOSFA's ability to produce a zine of this size and quality every month does deserve recognition. Rating:

Content: 7.5 (both)

Technical: 6.5 (both)

Interest: 7.5 (both).

#### **FOSFAx #133, 134**

Here are another couple of issues with interesting articles, some short reviews, and lots and lots of letters. We get a particularly nice Japanime-influenced cover on #133 by Paul Young. Layout is still erratic and the reduced type is still hard to read, but this continues to be one of the zines I read first each month.

#### **Hyper-Tension #22**

This is an unusual item, a "New Zealand/Australian SF, Literary, Media Information Zine." Actually, with the exception of the cover, the entire issue is advertisements for conventions, fan clubs, and various fan-nish merchants. Available for \$8/3 issues from Hyper-Tension, c/o Lana Brown, Box 4188, Wanganui, New Zealand.

#### **The Insider May, 1988**

This is the almost-monthly newsletter of the St. Louis SF Society, and this month's issue didn't really have a whole lot to it. The usual editorial, calendar of events, radio review column, a pair of locs from Harry Warner, Jr., and nominating ballot for the Tucker Awards (given for distinguished SF partying). Available from St. Louis SF Society, Box 1058, St. Louis, MO 63188.

#### **Low Orbit #39**

This is one of those older items, dated Nov.-Dec., 1987. The cover features a spaceman in a low-gravity, airless environment. Would that the typesetting (or lack of) matched the quality of the printing and paper. We have locs, an editorial, a con calendar, book reviews, a short interview with George Takei, a couple of mediocre comic strips (though "Shabbatman" is a cute idea and in completely poor taste), some convention reports, some short fiction, an article on High Tech, puzzles, and some media reviews. The artwork ranges from excellent to very crude. Available for \$1.99 from Low Orbit, c/o R'ykandar Korra'ti, Transylvania Univ., Lexington, KY 40508.

#### **Journal of Mind Pollution #202**

*JOMP* is a perzine edited by Richard and Heidi Dengrove. This issue led off with a comparison of Atlanta and Washington, D.C. The first real article debunks the "new age" in a very convincing manner. The next calls for the return of travel shows on TV and travel hoaxes. A couple of very short items precede an article on why James Earl Carter was the greatest President in the 20th century.

Piggybacked onto *JOMP* for this one issue is the last issue (for now) of Irv Koch's reviewzine *Maybe*. Some of the entries were extremely dated, but this was interesting nonetheless. *JOMP* is available from Richard Dengrove, 7524 Republic Ct. #202, Alexandria, VA 22106, for the usual or a couple of bucks.

#### **Eldritch Science #1**

This has one of the most striking covers I've seen in a long time. It brought back memories of some of the early covers for *War of the Worlds* and the like. Inside, the print was well reproduced but a little small. We get a number of works of fiction, including an excellent alternate worlds/Holmes (sorta) pastiche. Very well done, though it would be nice to see interior illos in future issues. Available from The Greater Medford & Suburbs SF Society, c/o George Phillies, 87-6 Park Ave., Worcester, MA 01605, for \$2.50/issue.

#### **NASFA Shuttle, May, 1988**

Produced by the North Alabama SF Association, the *NASFA Shuttle* is very informative for those interested in Southeast Fandom. This issue had club news, notes and minutes, a few book reviews, and lots of locs. It also continued the debate on lists of best or most influential books in the field. Offset printed from laser-set type, this looks good, though I do miss interior illos. Available from NASFA, Box 4857, Huntsville, AL 35815, for \$10/year or the usual.

*NASFA Shuttle*, October, 1988  
reviewed by Alex Slate

How do you review a fanzine that's seven pages long (let's not count the essentially empty back cover) in which the loccol takes up 4¼ pages? Page 1 has news. Page 2 contains a well-written report on LibertyCon and a standard set of serious meeting minutes. Three-fourths of page 3 is info on an upcoming Orson

Scott Card project, *Spicy Zeppelin Stories*. From there on, it's locs.

It's very readable, crisp type. There are no graphics other than the banner. Rating:

Contents: ??

Technical: 9.0.

Interest: ??

*NASFA Shuttle*, Nov. and Dec., 1988  
*NASFA Shuttle* has turned into an

excellent zine while I wasn't looking. In addition to what you'd expect in a clubzine — news, a calendar, etc. — this has interesting articles (November has an especially controversial article on censorship and cigarette advertising), reviews, and a letter column second only to *FOSFAX*. Add to this the professional look from their desktop publishing package and you've got a winning combination.

## Filk Reviews

All reviews are by Naomi Pardue.

### *Lovers, Heroes and Rogues* by Michael Longcor

My first contact with *Lovers, Heroes and Rogues* came while sitting behind a friend's huckster table on the first day the tape was available. After helping Bill insert the liners, I watched all 35 copies get snatched up in less than six hours. I assure you that I bought my own copy in a hurry.

Michael Longcor, better known in fandom as Moonwulf, is one of the Midwest's finest filkers, and he has turned out one of the best filk tapes that I have ever heard. Longcor does not write a great deal; of the 21 cuts on this tape, only six are original ("Privateers," "Silver Bullet Blues," "Pillar of Hell," "Unicorn Song," "The Dancing Bear" and "Chainmail Mama"). He wrote the music to seven more, borrowing the lyrics from Kipling and Keller. The rest of the songs are a mixture of traditional pieces, borrowed filk, and mainstream.

Longcor recorded the vocal and guitar tracks in Indiana, then sent them to Off-Centaur for instrumental tracks and final mix. The results are sometimes . . . interesting. But while the backups occasionally border on overwhelming, they are never offensive. (Well, almost never. I could easily do without the flute in "Privateers.") Longcor's voice is strong enough to hold its own over the many layers of flutes and strings and drums.

One of the best cuts is certainly "Mary O'Meara" (lyrics by Poul

Anderson, music by Ann Passavoy). Always lovely, during filks it tends to get drowned in 17 different harmonies. Here, done simply with one voice, guitar, flute and keyboard, it is truly beautiful. (On the other hand, "Bold Marauder" seems barren without the howling mobs helping out in the choruses.)

My other favorites include "The Dancing Bear," "Ballad of Esau's Sons" (which I consider the best Martha Keller song ever written), and "An Old Song" and "Dane-Geld" (both Kipling). There isn't a single really bad cut on the tape.

Off-Centaur has received some complaints about the overly enthusiastic overdubbing, and they will be remixing the tape soon. The remixed version will not be available until the old stock is gone (and will probably appear under the new Firebird label). For filk purists, who consider anything more than Voice and Guitar to be blasphemy, it may be worth the wait. But as it is, *Lovers, Heroes and Rogues* is a five-star tape and well worth owning.

### *Manifilk Destiny (Westercon XXXX)*

While live tapes are less technically perfect than the studio type, they often make up for it in the high quality of the music. *Manifilk Destiny*, recorded at Westercon 40 in July, 1987, is no exception. Almost every one of the 20 songs is well written, and most are well sung.

The tape's title is a pun on the

name of the first song "Humanifest Destiny," by Cecilia Eng. Eng's voice on this and on "Absent Hosts" is a bit shaky, but both songs are excellent.

Other highlights include "Velve-teen" by Kathy Mar (based on the children's story "The Velveteen Rabbit"), "The Herald's Farewell" written by Heather Rose Jones and performed in duet with Catie Helm (the response of a Herald to the death of his king), "Stonemason Keleman" by Joan Gausted (in which the stonemason is forced to make a terrible sacrifice in order to build a castle), and "Amanda's Eyes" by Paul MacDonald (the theme here is old — FTL travel takes the spacer away from his lover — but the song is beautiful and well performed). Oh, yes, and "Fire-fly," sung by Kathy Mar and written by her and Bob Kanefsky. It's a parody of Kathy's lovely "Firebird," and must be heard to be believed.

The other songs range in quality from good to excellent. Other performers include Ernest Clark, Cathy MacDonald, Harold Groot, Jordin Kare, Kristoph Klover, Cynthia McQuillen, and Steve Savitsky.

The cover by Mary Jean Holmes is attractive. The two-page tape insert is rather annoying, though. You have to unfold it to see what is on side two.

The only real fault in the tape is its lack of balance. There are four humorous songs, and they are all clustered at the end of the second side. Still, a very worthwhile tape.



# Letters of Comment

December 28, 1988

Dear Scott —

I'm always delighted to see my name in print, but I must decline Edw. A. Graham, Jr.'s recognition of me for the Nolacon Fanzine Lounge. I had trouble even finding the room. Brad Foster was the Texas artist who spent long hours behind the tables. *[We apologize for the error. — Ed.]*

A question about the FACT logo Brad did for you. Aren't logos supposed to go on the title page instead of in the letter column? *[A variety of alternative FACT logos will be appearing wherever we decide to put them in the Inquirer — not necessarily at the front. — Ed.]* Although I liked the photo collage on the latest issue, I second Brad's vote for full artwork covers on *TSFI*.

Pat Mueller told me that she intended to keep a copy of some of the letters of comment to the last issue of *TSFI* she edited. I misunderstood. The original of mine must have just gotten lost in the paper shuffle during the editorial transfer.

Almost out of space and not one comment about the substance of your latest issue. Uh, great cream-colored paper!

Beast wishes,

David Thayer

7209 DeVille Dr. N.

Richland Hills, TX 76180

January 4, 1989

Dear Scott,

I have two more things to say about Nolacon II.

First, I really can't understand why everyone keeps talking about how bad the weather was. Your publication was not the only one. *[You're right; for all the talk of rain, I didn't get wet at all except on Saturday. — Ed.]*

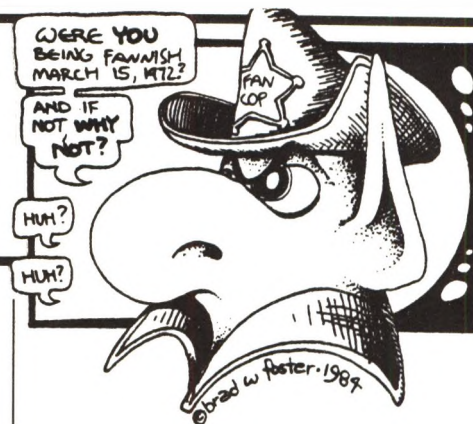
Now, we all realize that no con committee can be held responsible for

the weather. The Nolacon II committee can be criticized for a lot of things, but the weather was not that bad. I'll grant that Sunday was miserable, but the entire week up to then was fine. And Monday was gorgeous by anyone's standards. As anyone who has lived anywhere along the Gulf Coast between Brownsville and the Florida Keys knows, the normal weather pattern in the summer is partly cloudy with scattered afternoon and evening thundershowers. You get the same weather forecast every day for six months out of the year. Just because it rains for twenty to forty minutes in the afternoon, *you can't count the whole day as rainy!* Nolacon II was not nearly so hot as the last two NAS-FiCs I've been to. The clouds keep the heat down by reflecting the sunshine and the showers help cool things off, too. And being sufficiently far south, it was not uncomfortably cool, either, like at least four Worldcons I can remember in the Frozen North (including Atlanta!).

You could manage to get soaked if you were really impatient. I did it myself on Friday. But if I had waited *just 15 minutes*, I could have avoided getting wet. All you have to do when it starts to rain is duck under an awning or into a shop for half an hour. I'm really perplexed when I read articles complaining about the weather!

Besides, the picture on your cover is of a second-liner's decorated umbrella, carried at jazz funerals and Mardi Gras parades. (The second line is the people walking behind the band.) I suspect the photo was taken indoors at either the opening or closing ceremonies. You can see the bell of a brass instrument in the corner of the picture. Second line umbrellas are not carried in the rain.

The other thing I wanted to talk about is Ed Graham's article on Tex-



ans working on Nolacon II. Dennis Virzi did a very difficult job very well. He was the liaison between the Green Room and Program Ops. Because the Programming was finished so late (there's not room here to discuss why), there were *lots* of last-minute changes. Dennis intercepted Program Participants who had schedule problems and negotiated solutions with the people next door. An invaluable service, and one more difficult at this Worldcon than most, he performed it graciously and indefatigably.

Yours,

Debbie Hodgkinson

Box 15183

New Orleans, LA 70175

December 30, 1988

Dear Scott:

Just a short note: I enjoyed the post-Nolacon issue of *TSFI*. I didn't get to go, but it does sound like it was the usual — a great con. And while reading the locs, I came across the letter by Ladislav Peska. Poor guy! Can't get any decent fanzines, can he? Enclosed is my check for his one-year subscription to *TSFI*. I hope you enjoy it, Mr. Peska!

Good job so far — although I am traditional enough to want a cover that kind of looks like one. The non-cover idea is innovative, though.

Shelley Corzine

3300 Pebblebrook Dr. #111

Seabrook, TX 77586

*Thank you very much, Shelley! I kind of wanted to write a check for Ladislav, too (except that I don't have a job right now . . .). I think he will really appreciate it. — MS*

# **The Texas SF Inquirer**

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