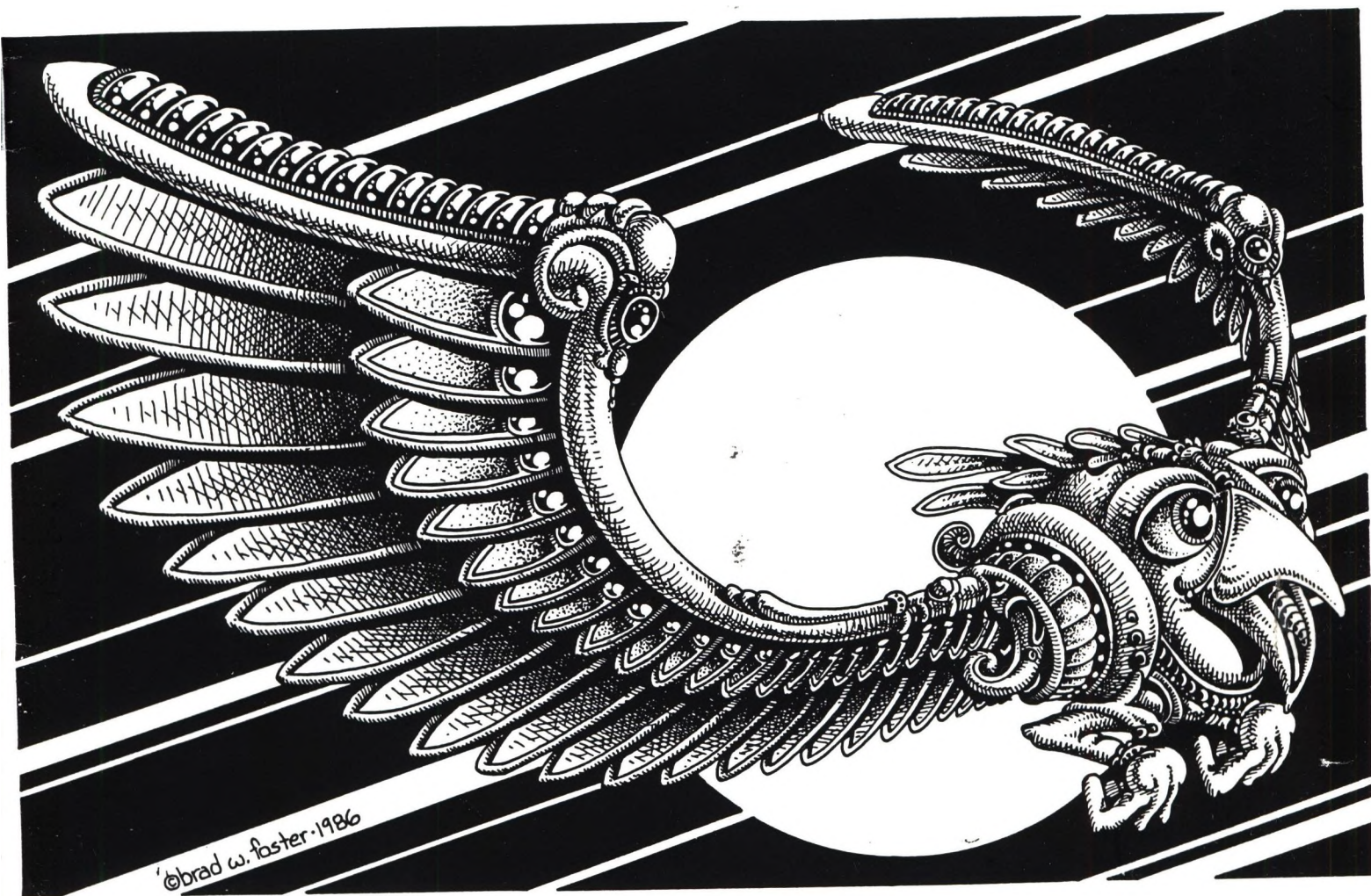


The Texas SF Inquirer #34

August 1990



Guest Editorial by Richard Brandt
Glen Cox on Journal Wired
Katharine Eliska Kimbriel on books

Fred Duarte, Jr., Karen Meschke, and Alex Slate

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Editors:
Alexander R.
Slate &
Dale Denton



Welcome to Issue #34 of *The Texas SF Inquirer*. The following is an announcement which Catherine de Camp was passing out at the July Dallas Fantasy Fair.

People interested in helping preserve the Robert Howard home and restoring the interior to the size and condition it had in Robert's lifetime may give donations to this worthy project.

Checks should be made payable to the Cross Plains Library for The Howard Museum. They should be mailed to:

The Robert E. Howard Museum
Box 534
Cross Plains, TX 76443

For persons interested in helping, here are a few facts:

The dilapidated house was recently bought by a group of civic-minded people, organized as Project Pride, who hoped to pay off the mortgage on the property and then restore it. It is to be refurbished with similar furnishings to those Howard knew and opened to Howard admirers. Donations of all sizes will be welcome. The de Camps, as well as a few other people, who have things that belonged to the Howard family at the time of Robert's death intend to donate them to the museum when the house has been restored.

We would like to give a hearty thanks to our contributors. Thank you. The articles, columns and artwork are great. Keep them coming in.

Send your contributions to either of us at the addresses to the left. If you would care to save us some re-typing, and you use a computer, send us a disk with your contribution on it. Dale can handle high or low density, 3" or 5" disks, MS-DOS format (or 5" Apple //), and Alex can handle the 5" DSDD MS-DOS. Files can be in ASCII, or most of the major word processors. Diskettes will be returned with SASE. Thanks.

We hope you enjoy the issue.

-Dale & Alex

Guest Editorial: Richard Brandt

50 Simple Ways to Destroy Your Next Convention

Just a short opening. The Texas SF Inquirer has had a new look in the past couple of issues. Part of this is deliberate, a change in computer program, some of it is not and is part of our "attempting to find ourselves." Eventually, we may settle into a standard format, but I doubt it.

Meanwhile, in this issue we offer you a variety of different authors. This is good. To this end, I am foregoing my option of writing an editorial, and in its stead Dale and I offer you a guest editorial, by El Paso fan and FACT member Richard Brandt. We hope you enjoy it. We also got some locs for this issue, keep up the good work campers. - Alex

-
1. Let the hotel double-book your function space.
 2. Let the hotel release your room block more than two months before the convention.
 3. Budget for 2 percent of the city's population to show up your first year.
 4. Assume they'll all show up just because you're throwing a convention, so you don't have to tell anyone about it locally.
 5. Figure those four-by-five-inch con flyers will really attract their attention.
 6. Announce guests who haven't actually told you they're coming.
 7. Announce guests whom you haven't actually invited yet.
 9. Put off inviting guests until six months before the convention.
 10. Invite guests whose credentials are that they're thinking of submitting a proposal.

11. Decide how many dealer' tables you can sell without ever taking measurements of the room.
12. Design a layout for the dealers' room assigning one table to a location where no one can reach it without passing through a space than two feet wide.
13. Tell dealers they'll get larger tables than they, in fact will.
14. Don't bring the layout to the dealers' room on set-up day.
15. Don't bring a list of who your dealers are.
16. Tell a dealer who registered in advance you have to refund his payment because you sold his table to someone who showed up at the door.
17. Figure because it worked well at last year's hotel, it will work just as well at the new one.
18. Do it because you did it last year--whether it worked then or not.
19. Wait until two weeks before the convention to ask your local supplier if cash registers are available.
20. Order a slide projector and screen through the hotel and assume it will be there for the Friday night slide show, whether you checked for it Friday morning or not.
21. Don't have anyone from the committee on sit at the hotel the day the convention opens.
22. Plan to break down, move and set up the entire art show in a second location, during the course of the convention.

23. Put the masquerade in a room where you haven't checked the nighttime lighting.

24. Assign someone to the committee whose sole and final contribution to the convention is promising to do the hob.

25. Let the volunteer coordinator make other plans for the opening night of the con.

26. Appoint a treasurer whose first-draft budget doesn't contain certain items because, she explains, those are "just necessary expenses."

27. Let everyone ignore the budget anyway.

28. Spend an extra \$150 on two dozen t-shirts so that all the sizes will be just the color you were looking for.

29. Let months go by without hearing from someone on the committee, because it's not your job to call them and find out what's going on.

30. Let the hotel liaison answer questions with "I don't know" instead of "I'll find out."

31. Decide you don't need help or advice from someone who's actually worked on conventions before.

32. Buy plane tickets for the guests without consulting them on their schedules first.

33. Let the Guest of Honor show up at the airport without someone from the committee there to meet them.

34. Let the Guest of Honor sit in a strange city for 24 hours without hearing from someone on the committee.

35. Misspell the Guest of Honor's name on your posters, and display it prominently at the hotel.

36. Schedule guests for program items at times before or after they are actually at the hotel.

37. Schedule guests for program items at times before they are actually awake.

38. Schedule guests for program items without asking them.

39. Schedule your Guest of Honor appearances opposite events that everyone will want to go to instead.

40. Let the hotel remove tables from the dealers' room for the Sunday buffet.

41. Plan on using a computer for registration, then bring an incompatible printer.

42. Don't bring any receipt books.

43. Schedule at least one guest for an autographing, a reading, and a panel at the same hour.

44. Schedule each guest for lots and lots of program items each day, preferably at least three in a row and running through the dinner hour.

45. Don't make any dinner arrangements for your out-of-town guests who don't have their own transportation.

46. Don't put any water breaks in the program rooms.

47. Put films and slideshows in a room where the windows can't be covered.

48. Don't invest in an answering machine.

49. Break the law.

50. Expect everything to work out for the best.

Con Report - SerCon IV

by Fred Duarte Jr. and Karen Meschke

The beginning did not bode well for Karen and I. We were to transfer planes in Phoenix on our way to San Francisco. The flight would then stop in San Diego before going on to San Francisco. Another non-stop flight from Phoenix to San Francisco that had been delayed was leaving twenty minutes before our flight. We were enticed to take the non-stop flight with the assurance that our luggage would be transferred to the other airplane.

Poor trusting souls that we are, we took the non-stop flight to San Francisco, and naturally, our luggage didn't. Further, the flight with our luggage was delayed in San Diego by bad weather, and was in danger of being canceled as San Diego has a midnight to six a.m. curfew similar to Austin. We were not amused.

We later found out that the flight had arrived at eleven p.m. Not wanting to wait until morning for fresh clothes, we hopped the hotel shuttle to the airport to rescue our luggage. No one was on duty at baggage claims when we arrived. Anyone could have taken our luggage. We were tempted to call the next day to demand our luggage, and send them on a wild goose chase. Never change your flight plans on Southwest, no matter what they say.

Things looked much better the next morning after a decent (but not good) night's sleep. We realized it would be a convention to remember. We were sharing the hotel with the Los Angeles Rams. They beat the New York Giants in the NFC playoffs, and won the right to play the 49er's in San Francisco.

This was actually fortuitous for the convention because the hotel moved one of the con-suite rooms to a bigger, better suite on the same floor. It also meant you couldn't swing a dead cat without hitting an overpaid jock and his babysitter (i.e., coach). All the food functions the players attended were heavily guarded, no doubt to protect the players from hordes of non-existent groupies. The football players made for an interesting distraction to the convention. Too bad this was SerCon. A more conventional con with

costumers would have made for interesting confrontations.

Since Karen and I were lobbying to get SerCon VI in 1992, we didn't get to attend as much programming as we wanted to. We missed all of Friday's programming and were reduced to party hopping.

We stumbled in during the middle of our first Saturday panel, which was on writers' workshops. Algis Budrys gave an eloquent defense of the *Writers of The Future* contest. Apparently, the entire contest (the finals, anyway) takes place during the space of a week. Budrys contention was, if a new writer follows the tenets of what he or she learned in the workshop, he or she shouldn't have writer's block, and shouldn't have to get into an ongoing workshop.

Karen Joy Fowler, from the audience, defended workshops, saying she'd been in one for seven years. Budrys said a real writer works alone, and there's a real difference between a loner and a workshop writer. Basically, they agreed to disagree. Their respect for each other kept it from getting out of hand.

The next panel was, *What makes "hard" science hard?* Panel members consisted of F.M. Busby, Paul Pruess, John Cramer, Toni Weisskopf and Kathryn Cramer. The general consensus seemed to be, if you need to ask a scientific question, and you don't subscribe to Scientific American, call a scientist. Pruess said they're in the phone book.

Larry Niven, recruited out of the audience, said he calls Robert Forward for his technical questions. I've heard John Varley say he's used Greg Benford to double check the science used in the Titan trilogy. The panel degenerated into naming the pleasures of non-hard science in science fiction. Pruess used *The Left Hand of Darkness* as an example since you can spot the research an anthropologist does in it.

Publishing Magic - this actually was a nuts and bolts panel disguised as a silly panel. It started out by asking what editors wore to get

noticed. The standard seems to be casual clothes, if the editor has "made it". David Hartwell then went into the history of his wearing those God-awful ties of his. It seems that back in the Neanderthal age of the early 1970s when he first started out, sf editors weren't seen or heard. However, people with ties were the ones everyone paid attention to. So, David started wearing the loudest ties he owned, so people could point and say, "Yes, that was the sf editor"!

After the finer points of fashion were discussed, the actual genesis of a book was covered, from idea and author submission to printing of the dust jackets. The marketing aspects of publishing were fascinating, especially the dreaded sales conferences. Those are the working get-togethers where you have one minute to make a presentation about the book you're pushing, and are careful to do it in as few sentences as possible, otherwise you'll bore the sales reps and they won't buy your book.

We learned all sorts of marketing ploys; any book with "War" in the title guarantees sales; covers with dragons on them sell well also, but a cat on the cover beats a dragon anytime. And any book with a green cover will not sell. This is now a superstition that dates back to the late 60s when off-set printing couldn't do the color green. The process can handle green fine now, but green books still don't sell.

"Do you kiss on the first date?" Not what it sounds like. How does an author bait his hook to get the reader. The flip side being how do you get people to read subjects they probably don't like. Pat Murphy said she doesn't think about the reader when she's writing, she just plays with herself!

Tappan King wondered if you really need to bash someone over the head with your fiction, i.e., splatterpunk. He feels a majority of the splatterpunks use the horror as an excuse to gross people out. Also, depending on the message an author wants to get out, not making the story palatable or easy to go down is partly the author's fault. This helps to explain why Stephen King goes down so easy and others don't.

Suzy McKee Charnas best summed up the author's view by saying the author needs to be true to himself before pleasing the reader.

All of these panels had one thing in common: the audience had as much knowledge of the field as the panelists, and they were not treated as the usual audience at a convention. There were as many fans as pros on each panel, and the repartee between panelists and the crowd was long and insightful. None of the panels were boring. Some were silly, but in a serious way!

The *featured* speaker was long time writer and editor Judith Merrill. She hasn't been to many conventions since the 60s, when she moved to Canada. With her shock of white hair and gravelly voice, you pay attention to what she has to say when she speaks, and feel privileged to be spoken to. For personal reasons, she quit writing in the 60s, though she recently edited a book of Canadian science fiction. It was good to see her out and about again.

The dealers' room was very small, only thirteen tables, of which twelve were book dealers including ArmadilloCon regulars Greg Ketter and Mark Zeising. They each had their usual good selection of books. Also present was Bay area dealer Bryan Barrett with a lot of Pinkwater for sale, and bookstore owner Tom Whitmore, who also doubled as head of operations for the convention, Tom had the best of both worlds. The door behind his dealer tables opened to the programming room. He got to both deal and interact with the programming discussions.

The con suite consisted of two adjoining rooms with a spill-over room across the hall from the other two (one was smoking), with some alcohol, the usual munchies and sodas. There was plenty of everything.

The art show was very small, but was highlighted by prints by well known photographer K'tein.

Programming head Debbie Notkin is to be commended for having such a great program. She was also in charge of programming for SerCon I in Berkeley in 1987, where she did an equally great job.

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All Wired Up

Review by Glen E. Cox

I've always missed out.

I was born too late to enter Beatlemania, didn't start grooving to Kate Bush until *Hounds of Love*, and once thought that Elvis Costello was a comedian turned Elvis impersonator. I read the TV listings and skipped Monty Python's Flying Circus, 'cause I knew it couldn't beat seeing Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Baileys' live show. Chevy had already taken his last pratfall before I started tuning in "Saturday Night Live." William Gibson was on the verge of winning the Hugo for *Neuromancer* before I became a Cyber-junkie. I never read *The Whole Earth Review*, thinking it was a catalog of hiking equipment until six months ago. And girls. . . well, there are some areas better left alone.

But not this time. This time I'm in on the ground floor. This time I got a copy before anyone else, I got the inside track on the coming thing, I am in the know! This time I have the lead on something that could be as big as any of the above, and I'm willing to share it with you.

That's just the kind of guy I am.

I'm talking about **Journal Wired** - an ambitious new publication for those willing to think. Co-publishers and editors Andy Watson and Mark V. Ziesing bill it as "a recurring mixed anthology with too long a shelf life not to be a book." **Wired #1** is already available - a 128 page perfectbound trade paperback containing over 30,000 words. This first issue contains such items as interviews with activist Abbie Hoffman and British writer Iain M. Banks, commentary by SF writers John Shirley on Hollywood and Lucius Sheppard on publishing, and trans-real fiction by Rudy Rucker and A.A. Attanasio.

What sets **Wired** apart from other "experimental" magazines is the fearless editorial policy: no advertisements, no subscriptions, no letters to the editor. Why is this dangerous to a magazine? By cutting advertisements and subscriptions, you throw out two of your three ways of making money.

The only revenue generating avenue left is bookstore sales, in a business where returns (unsold merchandise returned to the publisher for credit) run as high as 50% on mass market paperbacks. By freeing the journal from the vagaries of the ad agencies, **Wired** is unfettered by boycotts and is able to publish freely without the worry of offending the arbitrary company censor, but is also in danger of folding in case sales don't meet expectations. Zeising and Watson are realistically limiting the journal to only 2000 copies for the first couple of issues; hopefully this number will increase with demand.

But no letters to the editor? Does this mean that **Wired** isn't interested in the views of its readership? Au contraire, mon ami. **Wired** insists that people who wish to respond to something within its pages enter into the same arena as the original author. That is, if something pisses you off in **Wired**, instead of writing a letter saying how mad you are, you are expected to research and write your own article in rebuttal that you submit for publication. I don't suspect that the co-publishers expect this to end the cheap shots usually delivered by mail, but their policy will prevent any of these from seeing print. They also hope that this policy will insure competent but engaging discussion, presenting all facets of the issues as they relate to individual writers, not just the clear cut "left" versus "right," "black" versus "white" arguments perpetrated by the larger outlets of mass media.

But posturing and policy won't make an issue; it takes words, and some of the better ones. From the contents of issue one, **Wired** has the right words, and authors who know how to put them together.

In the first issue, John Shirley (author of **Eclipse** and **Heat Seeker**, a new short story collection) writes about Hollywood from the standpoint of a novelist turned screen-writer. While this is hardly unusual - fine books on the subject already exist such as Harlan

Ellison which can be found in **The Glass Teat** and **Harlan Ellison's Watching**, all of which have considered most of the same problems brought up by Shirley. His installment brings the subject to us with a youthful vigor that seems lacking in Goldman and Ellison. Shirley makes no excuses for the fact that he is working on scripts for money, and no one should fault him for looking for the pot of gold under Hollywood's rainbow. His essay brings to point the fact that movie-making is an ensemble approach, quite different from the novelist who works in solitude.

Once the screenwriter gets finished with a script, it will go through more than an editor's hands before it reaches the public. The fact that a movie still retains any shred of what the screenwriter intended is the miracle of Hollywood, and Shirley describes several processes by which this miracle occurs. Although Shirley's is not an original essay, his fresh perspective and honesty about his own work and the screen makes it eminently readable.

The two interviews are well edited, lacking the usual and unnecessary conventional questions of where the interviewee was born, went to school, and what they majored in in college. Instead both concentrate on what makes that person interviewable: for Abbie Hoffman (in an interview done roughly a year before his death), his activities dealing with The Pump, an overgrown developmental project on the Delaware River that has become a symbol of the struggle between land developers and conservationists; for Iain Banks, it centers on the fine line that his work treads between genre classifications. Of the two interviews, I found the Banks to be more interesting. It was obvious from the comfortable interplay between interviewer David Garnett and Banks that both men were interested in each other and the subject they were discussing.

Both pieces of fiction are unusual stories that would seem out of place in any other publication. Rudy Rucker's *Drugs and Live Sex-New York City, 1980* is an excerpt from his novel, **All the Visions**, to be published early next year. Autobiographical, and yet

not, Rucker is a master of transreality, his fiction challenging you to question reality, love, and friendship. For those unfamiliar with this aspect of Rucker, who have only read his gonzo SF cybernovels, **Software** and **Wetware**, or his mathematical non-fiction, *Drugs and Live Sex* is an excellent introduction to this aspect of his work. *Atlantis Rose* by A.A. Attanasio isn't all that unusual to readers familiar with the SF New Wave or some of the post-modernist works, but is well written and ends quite nicely.

Co-editor Andy Watson and J.B. Reynolds contribute the first installments of their columns. In this issue, they introduce the concepts that will flow through future columns, and as such these installments are more informative than vitriol. I look forward to further installments from both editors, though.

But the capstone of issue one is Lucius Shepard's rant about movements in SF and other sections of life. Shepard's writing about publishing and promoting yourself, something he learned the hard way after his first two novels were ineptly managed by Ace books (**Green Eyes**) and Bantam New Fiction (**Life During Wartime**). Shepard doesn't dilly-dally talking about what he plans for future issues, but vents the full force of his spleen against both Cyberpunks and Splatterpunks for their hype-jinks. "You want to be the Cutting Edge, stop slashing the throats of young women with big-chest problems and go after the throats that need slashing," says Shepard, commenting on the proclivity for horror authors to take the easy street by attacking women and children. But Shepard knows enough about raving to take the devil's advocate with himself, and, for all his earlier negativity about Cyberpunk and **Cheap Truth** (the newsletter of that movement), he states that he genuinely misses the hypsters-because at least when they were active, things were interesting. Shepard's remarks are what **Wired** is about: strong, forceful commentary that is designed to wake up the complacent and make things happen.

The next issue of **Wired** is scheduled to be printed on April 23, with more to follow on a
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A Darkened Screen - Book Reviews

by Katharine Ellska Kimbriel

Popcorn Reviews

(A handful, of course)

Writers do read, of course--occasionally they even get to read fiction. But they rarely have time to write reviews of the books they read. In my case, I usually read the books years after everyone else does! But not this time; I actually got my hands on some tomes before they were old news, and I wanted to say a few words about them. Here are the quick takes:

Read **Grass** by Sheri S. Tepper. No excuses--if you read SF, you *must* read this book! I suspect it's one of the best SF books of the 80's, and it should have been a Nebula nominee. It *is* a Hugo nominee, and will be battling it out neck and neck for the prize. You like strange new worlds and stranger aliens? Read **Grass**. You like strong characterization of both humans and aliens? Read **Grass**.

Tepper continues to grow as a writer with each new book, and you won't want to miss this one! I read it in one shot (not recommended--my eyes didn't work for days afterwards) and even now I find myself looking at growing things differently. If you can't wait for the paperback, spend the money--or check it out of the library. If they don't have it, fill out a book request! I'm serious! Read **Grass**!

Another recent read worth finding is **Sister Light, Sister Dark** by Jane Yolen. It was a Nebula nominee last time, and is an interesting examination of where myth, legend, and reality intersect and choose different paths. We follow the prophecy of the White Jenna, the child who killed three mothers, in a continuing myth, in a scholarly treatise about the time and region, and as a third person story about Jenna as she matures and is swept up by the tides of war. Yolen is creating some of the best fantasy written today, and I am about to dive into the second half of the

story, **White Jenna**--which is a Hugo nominee, by the way. . . .

In another fantasy vein completely, **Sorceress of Darshiva** by David Eddings is out. Warning: Don't jump into the *Malloreon* with Book Four. In fact, I'd suggest reading the five books of the *Belgariad* first. For starters, they're better written, intricate without being complex. The first book of the *Malloreon* is like walking through molasses, and the beginning of the second one isn't much of an improvement. Then Eddings hits his stride and we're into the story. In this episode, the biggies include finding out that Garion is probably not going to be the Child of Light when the next confrontation takes place, getting POV from Zandramas the Sorceress, and finding out the *other* reason that Durnik was given the power of the Will and the Word.

For those of you haven't tried Eddings' **The Diamond Throne**, it is still a monster tome, but there is a slight change in the feel of it--this is a harder world, where even the Champions are a bit worse for wear. Most of it is a new twist on an old theme (aren't all books?) but his radically different Orders for Knights and his race of people who are either rather transparent and easily led *or* sorcerers is fun. Those who like his other books should give it a shot--I found the opening rough and hard to get into, but then it settled right down into a new world.

Short-shorts: Read **Lunar Activity** by Elizabeth Moon. All the good SF short stories you've been missing if you don't read the magazines, plus a short piece that explains what happened to that child tortured in **Oath of Gold**. Read **Strange Things in Close Up** by Howard Waldrop. A combination of **Howard, Who?** and **All About Strange Monsters of the Recent Past**. Not a clinker in the bunch. Only wish it had included *Night of the Coolers*, still my favorite Waldrop in its deceptively simple intricacy. And for those of you who have discovered Barbara's Michaels' suspense thrillers, yes, the new one is out, and

yes, it's worth buying in hardback. **Into the Darkness**--get those library "book request" slips filled out!

Coming attractions by Texas authors include **Good Night, Mr. Holmes** by Carole Nelson Douglas, as we see Irene Adler from *A Scandal in Bohemia* take on all comers. Lillian Stewart Carl has a romantic suspense thriller in the Michaels tradition coming out--**Ashes to Ashes**. And **Hidden Fires** by yours truly will be a Christmas Questar release. It takes place ten years after **Fires of Nuala**, as Darame's past catches up with her.

Now, the feature presentations--

Spell Bound by Ru Emerson (Ace Books, 1990, 243 pp., \$3.95, ISBN: 0-441-77792-9)

An enduring sub-genre of fantasy is the fairy tale and all its modern interpretations. For those who have been waiting for a new slant on an old favorite, **Spell Bound** has arrived.

The time and place is a tiny Germanic kingdom of the early 1600s, and once you have visited Saxe-Baden, you will wonder how *Cinderella* can take place anywhere else. Emerson's Sofia is an abused and unloved young woman under the thumb of a malicious stepmother. Her brief months of freedom as a lady-in-waiting to Saxe-Baden's queen come to an abrupt end when her armsmaster father dies from a witch's curse. Seeking a village Green Witch who has learned Gold Magic, the power of the ruling class, King Leopold and his men burn the wrong woman--and her daughter's vengeance does not stop with the deaths of those who did the deed.

In **Spell Bound**, we are given a tale of betrayal and revenge, as the "godmother" weaves a bastard spell of forced love and promised death. Returning from school in Paris to seek a wife and take up his throne, sheltered Prince Conrad must learn both patience and judgment to survive. Sofia has the hardest role: a pawn who continues to suffer, she escapes Ilse the witch only to be recaptured and force to aid the magical attack against their pursuers. Henriette the Dowager

Queen and Conrad's companion Dominic are only two of the well-fleshed supporting characters, and the true allegiance of Gustave the wizard will keep all but the most careful reader guessing until the very end.

Finally it is Sofia's victory that fulfills the promise of the book, as we learn graphically that heroism may not require conquering Evil but instead may demand one purposeful movement in the face of certain death. Emerson's ear for language remains true, as her talent for weighing description and detail grows. I especially enjoyed the intricacies of Green Magic, including the power of roses, and Conrad's introduction to "trail food." As for flaws, they are minor; once or twice I wanted to strike a line or two in a descriptive passage, and I might have wished for a few more hints as to whether the witch pursued her course through guilt, fury, or madness, but it is nitpicking at a satisfying whole.

Emerson followers and fairy tale lovers alike will read this book in one sitting, and every fan of good fantasy should seek it out!

Surrender None: The Legacy of Gird, by Elizabeth Moon (Baen Books, 1990, 531 pp., \$4.50, ISBN: 0-671-69878-8)

In her latest novel, Elizabeth Moon returns to the land of **The Deed of Paksenarrion**, and tells us of the man who blazed the trail against oppression--he who will become St. Gird.

Surrender None shows us the stretch of a man's long life, as Gird is honed like a blade into the individual who finally takes up arms against a brutal ruling class. Gird's greatest strength is his search for justice. It is the trait that makes the nobles first fear and then respect him, and the Gnomes contract to teach him of Law, so that his people will have something to replace tyranny after the lords have been toppled. Peasant Gird moves faster than most can imagine, as he envisions a world where the law is the same for everyone, poor or rich, and where men and women are restricted only by the talent in their hands.

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Convention Review - AmigoCon 5

by Alex Slate

El Paso is a long way to drive for a convention. That about sums up my journey to go to Amigocon 5 over the weekend of 20 April 1990. Amigocon 5 was held in the Embassy Suites hotel which is a very nice hotel, but a bit unusual to hold a science fiction convention in. First off, all of the rooms are suites, and second, all of the function space is on the top floor (the eighth). Usually conventions are held on the first and second floors of the hotel, not the top.

The convention space was almost adequate.

The rooms where most of the panels were held were large enough, but the dealer's room was very cramped, and the art show had to double as the video room (and was also used for a couple of panels) when it also could have used some extra space.

The biggest problem with Amigocon was its seeming lack of organization. Casey Hamilton, Ed Graham, and myself, had driven in Thursday because we expected (and were told) that things would kick off in the early afternoon on Friday. I was bringing some of my wife's artwork to put in the art show, and we also lugged books with us for the FACT dealers' room table. The sign at the front desk said that registration would begin at 2:00. Come 2:00 and registration is not open. In fact, no one is even starting to set up registration. In fact no one is around that seems to know what is going on. Earlier, we had run into the Artist Guest of Honor, David Cherry, and he was a bit upset because no one was there to greet him at the airport on Thursday, nor did he even hear from anyone on the committee until about noon on Friday.

Finally we found someone from the committee who told us that nothing would be happening until about 5:00 P.M. In fact they didn't even think they were going to get the rooms until slightly after 5:00 because the Texas Bar Association meeting seemed to be running a little long. Fortunately for Amigo-

con, the last two speakers for the Bar Association didn't show. But even so, it wasn't until 6:00 that we could start setting up the dealers' room table, and I wasn't able to hang Laurel's artwork until after 7:00. And we had skipped out on going to Laredo that morning because we wanted to get everything set up!

After this delayed start, things went fairly well. Amigocon is a small convention, attendance ran about 350. It did have a fairly good line up of guests. The Author Guests of Honor were Poul and Karen Anderson, the Artist Guest of Honor was David Cherry. Other guests were Bruce D. Athurs, John Miller and Gail Gerstner-Miller, Thorarinn Gunnarsson, David and Ellisa Martin, Tom Moore, Real and Muff Musgrave, Ingrid Neilson, Michalene Pendelton, Somtow Sucharitkul, Robert E. Vardeman, and Mel. White. Aside from the videos, there was one complete programming track and occasionally a second. I went to at least part of some of the programming, and what I saw were well attended panels with pretty lively discussion.

The art show was small but quite good. Besides the artist guests there were pieces there by Kelly Freas and Jean Elizabeth Martin. An interesting note is that the art contest, best of show was won by an amateur artist (new to the convention scene) from Blanco, Texas. There were a number of artists new to Amigocon this year. There were also a number of pieces by local high school artists, a trademark of Amigocon. Some of the pieces showed a lot of promise. One bad point on the art show was that the print shop was not co-located. Instead it was tucked away in one corner of the dealers' room, very small, difficult to find unless you really looked for it, and it was not advertised at all.

The dealers' room, as stated before was very small and a bit cramped. There were nine dealer's. Beside's the FACT table, Carrie Richerson of Richerson's Books in Blanco and

(continued on Page 15)

SerCon IV - continued from Page 6

Despite the problems this convention has had in the past, this year's went very well. Paid attendance reached the magic 200 that had only been reached at SerCon I. Included in that number was fellow FACT member John Gibbons from Center Point. He had previously gone to SerCon II in Austin. We also came across other fans that had been to the Austin SerCon and were told how much they enjoyed it. These compliments made us feel good about the Austin SerCon, even if it was two years ago. Most fans don't give convention organizers enough feedback about the job they do, good or bad.

In the cluttered convention schedule, SerCon serves as a reminder why conventions came about in the first place. They are havens for authors and their fans to meet and discuss mutual interests and aspirations.

Wired - continued from Page 8

quarterly basis. Since I don't live in Austin anymore, I can't tell you whether or not you'll find it in the bookstores, so below is the information to get it directly from Mr. Z. (by the way, a brief bias disclaimer: Yes, I am friends with both the editors, and that's how I know a lot of this information. But don't think that I'd try to pass trash off on you just because friends of mine did it. I honestly recommend **Wired** on the basis of what I've read so far.) Don't you wish that you had been on **Cheap Truth's** mailing list, or, don't you wish you had been going to the Armadillo when Joplin played? Don't miss out this time-get **Journal Wired**.

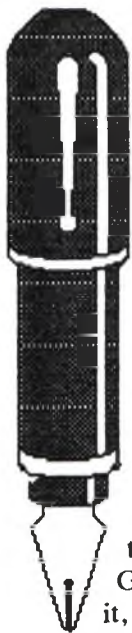
Journal Wired (ISBN 0-929480-14-7, \$7.95) is available from Mark Ziesing, P.O. Box 76, Shingletown, CA 96088, toll free 1-800-869-0348 (add \$2.05 shipping and handling, California residents add 6% blood money for the State).

Reviews - continued from Page 10

He is no saint, this hard-living man who can scythe from dawn to dusk. Gird has a problem with alcohol that he has to watch, and he's as stubborn as the day is long. But after losses and setbacks that would grind a lesser soul to dust, he sets out to teach those who will learn that they can both fight and win against their oppressors. Moon has always shown skill describing the gritty world of the working warrior; now she adds to her fame the back-breaking life of the field worker and tenant farmer. After following a season with Gird's family, you will never be able to think of "unskilled labor" in quite the same way again. Even better, Moon accomplishes brilliantly what many have attempted but not quite accomplished--how to show bumbling farmers becoming soldiers and fighting off starvation without slowing a story or boring a reader. I was especially impressed with the contrast between the cultures, as we learn why Gird's people and the lords misunderstood each other from the start.

If there is a flaw, it is because the book is too short (which is undoubtedly due to current market pressure). In what can only be called an epic, characters whip past quickly, with only Gird to anchor them. But where this trait gave **Sheepfarmer's Daughter** a coolness and distance at times, **Surrender None** locks you into the cycle of the land. I offer Gird's wife Mali as an example. She figures in the tale less than forty-five pages, yet that tenacious woman sticks in my mind like a sandbur. With Gird, we gain and lose, in joy and sorrow, and the years roll on. Lives brush against his and are gone, through wars and beyond it. At the end, Gird finally understands that the gods did not offer a false vision when they told him that true peace would require his death, as **Surrender None** triumphs with a sacrifice that may be worthy of sainthood.

Fans of *The Deeds of Paksenarrion* have been waiting for this book, but newcomers to Moon's vision should not fear jumping right in. If you've enjoyed Moon's SF in *Analog* and *F&SF*, give her fantasy a try. I don't think you'll be disappointed.



Letters of Comment

Dear Alex & Dale (the Inquirer Boys):

Thanks for issue 33 of the Texas SF Inquirer; nice issue, a little slender, could use some more material (and more about that in a while, but first. . .) The in-depth art show review is well handled; I especially like the non-obvious choice of an artist to profile. (But really, Alex: "The aliens were all unique and different from each other"?) Likewise, the bio on Fred and Karen was both exhaustive and personable.

On the other hand, you might have had the co-editor who actually attended Galaxy Fair contribute a few words about it, rather than have one writer commenting on all the conventions whether he attended them or not. A paragraph to the effect that "There was a convention but I didn't go to it, so I'm not really telling you anything" is wasted space.

Also, as long as you're mentioning conventions, how about running a listing of upcoming cons and events in Texas? A friend of mine in Austin called and asked me for information on cons in her area, and I've a devil of a time finding a source of that information for her. You folks are better situated to pick up con fliers, and the listings in other publications aren't as good at mentioning Texas happenings, particularly the Fantasy Fairs, as you might think. Besides, upcoming con listings are one of the traditional provinces of newszines, which title the Inquirer has some legitimate claim to. (And yes, I picked up some fliers when I was at Galaxy Fair, but I turned them over to the editor of our local clubzine, and he hasn't used them, the bum.)

Richard Brandt, El Paso TX.

Believe it or not, there were actually as many articles in our 16 page issue as in our previous 20 pagers. Our new fonts are that much more space efficient. But we also would like to see more articles by different people.

Yes, they were "all unique AND different from each other". William didn't copy any one else's aliens, no Vulcans, etc., and he portrayed different types of aliens, all different from the others in either that picture or in his other pictures.

You're right about the con reports. But, I don't know if we're any better situated for picking up con fliers. As to listing upcoming cons, so far it's one vote

for, zero against. We'll see what we can come up with in the next issue or two. - Alex

On the GalaxyFair non-review, I was kind of hoping that it might inspire someone to write their impressions of the convention. I'm sure I wasn't the only one who couldn't make it, but wished they could have. Also, as the next LOC infers, it was written originally for my perzine, and added to TSFI because we did not have any reviews on any of the conventions which had recently occurred. - Dale

Dear Dale,

The sentence in the FACT Profile "Karen lived in the countryside surrounding Austin" made it sound as if Karen was raised by a family of coyotes. The mere thought made me howl.

Reading the latest *TXSFI* gave me a feeling of *deja vu* and caused my mind to have *The Nature to Wander*. Ha, ha, ha!

David Thayer, Euless TX.

Dear Editor -

I won't be submitting in the requested computer format this time around. I'll try to conform to your request for typewritten or computer diskette in the future.

Due to work, my own fanzine publication has become extremely erratic so I'm trying to make it a personal policy to loc fanzines that cross my mailbox. I see your zine is promoting the recycling cause that is being carried in so many zines. Our household has taken up the cause of recycling as much as we can. We recycle glass, plastic, aluminum, paper, newspaper and soft plastic bags. The amount of garbage we take out to the dumpster went from one or two per day, to less than three per week. Locally a company carries recycled paper. Art & Cindy Strauss, Planet Pushers, 187 Acton Rd, Columbus OH 43214 (216) 267-4047. They carry the products offered by Earth Care, a recycled paper wholesaler in Madison, Wisconsin.

My own fanzine, *Life With Gallagher*, will join the cause of using recycled paper, when my current supply runs out. What effort is Texas SF Inquirer making in behalf of the recycling cause? Do members households recycle, will your zine be done on recycled paper in the future? It takes many individuals acting together to make a difference, and as the song says "Let it begin with me."

My household and my business recycle, as we replace our paper products we'll buy recycled

products from Art & Cindy. Let fans practice what we preach!

I enjoyed Larry T's article on SF/F art. The art show is always a must on our agenda at an SF con. When I have money, I spend it on the art show. The "purity" of SF art probably will depend on the motivations of the artist. Some artists use fandom as a "testing ground", for others it is a hobby a place to do the work they enjoy that won't sell in mainstream outlets, for others it is the only outlet that will accept work of poor and amateurish quality.

An artist who wishes to succeed financially will probably do whatever commercial work is necessary to survive, and pursue SF work as a second job. If s/he wishes to make a living as an SF artist the trade-off will be made between financial success and personal enjoyment of the work one produces.

I don't believe computers can replace artists. The computer will be just another tool to be used to produce work of a talented individual. It may cut into jobs as all technology does, but the human being with talent can't be replaced by a machine. The ability to combine pictures with mechanical perfection doesn't replace the ability to combine pictures and images with the eye of a trained professional. I look forward to more of Larry's columns. I'm not sure that I will always share his opinions, but at least he's making an effort to express them.

The issue of art and artists isn't even addressed outside the art community. Perhaps your columns will get pro & fan artists commenting on their own opinions about how fandom treats them and the financial and personal rewards available in the field.

Lots of luck with your efforts.

All comments are on zine #31. My locs will probably be as out of sequence as your zines.

Kathleen Gallagher, Worthington OH

The formats listed aren't requirement, but I take no responsibility for the accuracy of what I interpret from other's handwriting.

Me and my family recycle - cans, plastic and glass bottles, and paper. I haven't bought new computer paper in about two years. As for the zine, Dale normally takes care of the production end. - Alex

I also recycle, glass and cans, mainly. Presently, TSFI is not being printed on recycled paper. However, if the budget will allow, this should change shortly. - Dale

Dear Alexander-

Once again my comments are on the art column. David Cherry has been GOH at two midwestern cons I've attended. I'm a big fan of his work and him as a guest.

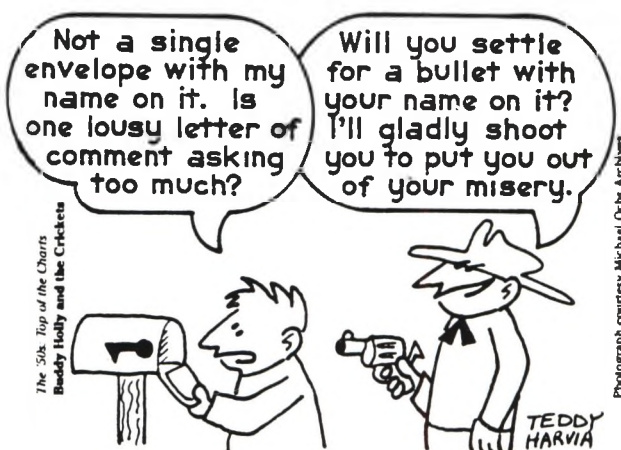
A hardworking artist, who's dedication has helped create the professional standard used in setting up art shows, treating artists fairly and helping conventions understand the needs of an artist.

I like the way David C. handles the subject of women. Women are real, doing real jobs, dressed in appropriate clothes for the setting and portrayed as competent. His women aren't objects used to pretty up the background or entice a young male reader into buying a book because "sex sells."

Marcon, a local Columbus, OH con also promotes a high school art contest and exhibits the works in its art show. I'm glad to see the promotion being done to showcase and promote talent. The average work was very derivative of popular SF images, media imagery and comic book art styles. The works were disappointingly lacking in originality. The artists were talented, but...

Keep up the work, you guys are looking good.

Kathleen Gallagher, Worthington OH



Austin Writer, June 90
 BCSFazine, #206
 DASFAx Vol. 22, #5-7
 DR, #65
 Factsheet Five, #36
 Fictions Free-for-all, #3
 File 770, #86
 FOSFAx, #150
 Neology, #70
 New Pathways, #16
 Robots and Roadrunners,
 Vol 5 #2
 The SF ConRegister,
 Summer 90
 SFSFS Shuttle, #64
 Timescoop, May 90
 Trash Barrel
 Westwind, #147, 150

Some new things in the Mail

Life on Planet Claire.
 ed. J.C. Coleman, The



Embassy of Planet Claire,
 POB 3194, Bellingham
 WA 98227

A new request for trade
 which contains some very
 strange items.

Life With Gallagher #14
 Kathleen Gallagher, POB

42, Worthington OH 43085
 A personalzine.

Scavengers Newsletter #76

Janet Fox, 519 Ellinwood,
 Osage City KS 66523
 News on the small press
 scene for writers.

The TAFF Door #1

ed. Robert Lichtman
 (American Administrator of
 TAFF), POB 30, Glen Ellen
 CA 95442

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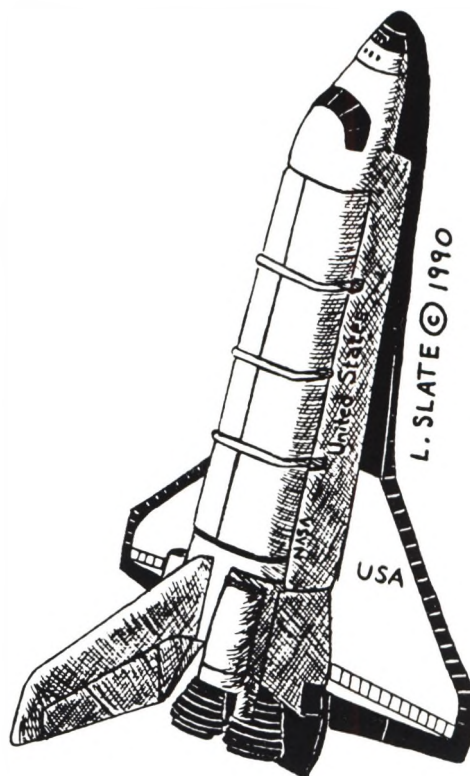
AmigoCon 5 - cont. from Page 11
 Willie Siros also handled books. Willie also
 had prints for sale, as did Ingrid Nielson and
 one other table. Scott Merritt was there with
 his buttons, bumper stickers and tapes. There
 was another table as well that also handled filk
 tapes. Two tables handled comic books, a
 table had weapons, and one jewelry.

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