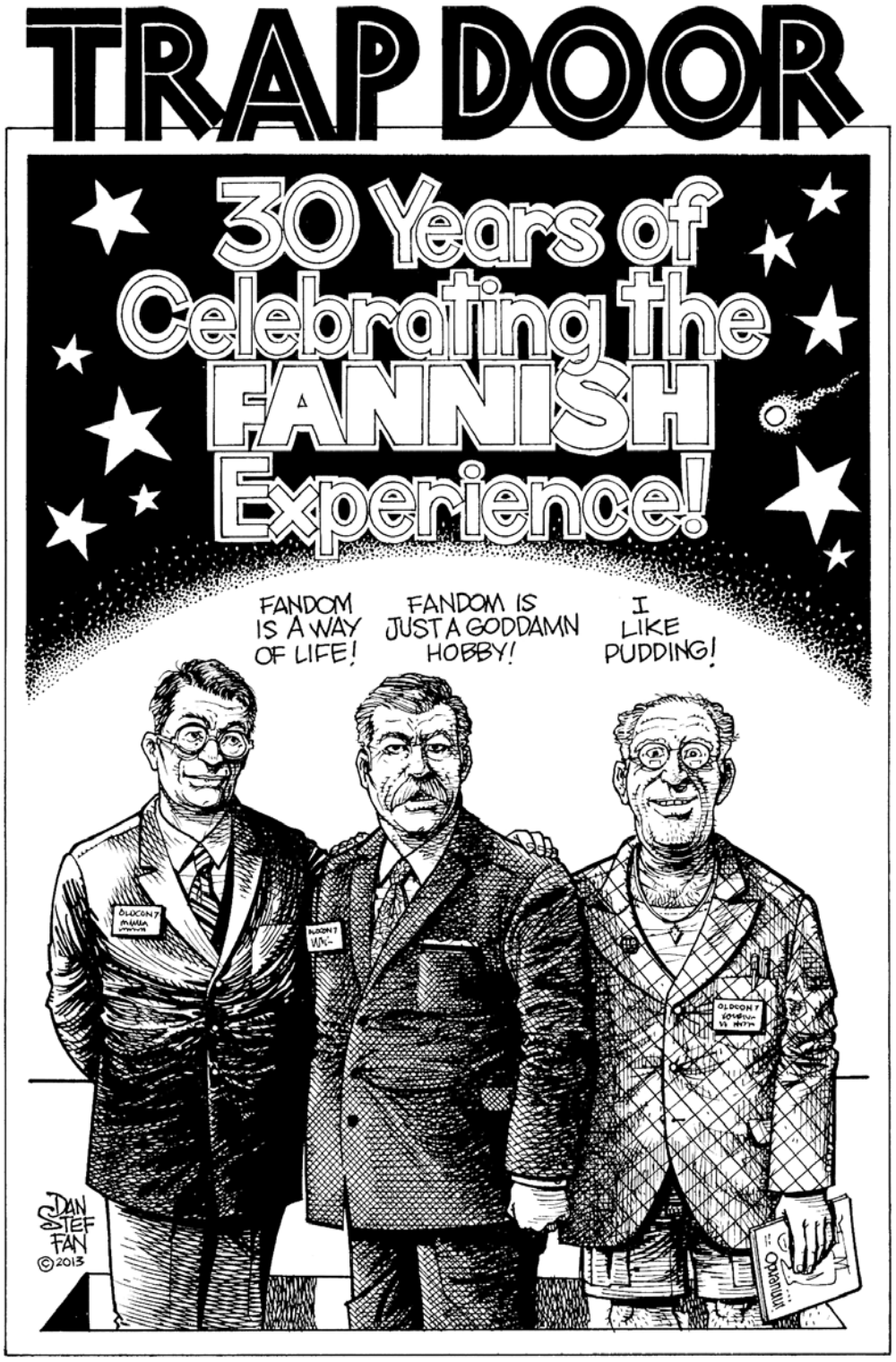

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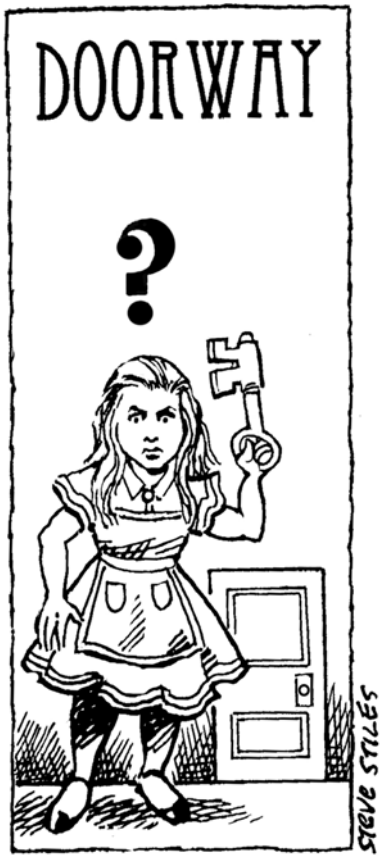
DOORWAY



Welcome to *Trap Door*'s thirtieth issue, which coincidentally is also the thirtieth annish. How did this harmonic convergence happen? When I launched this fanzine in October 1983, I envisioned it, in the fanspeak of the time, as an "ensmalled" fanzine that could be mailed for a single stamp and come out at least quarterly. My inspirations were Dan Steffan's and Ted White's *Pong* and Richard Bergeron's *Wiz*. *Pong* in particular was a fanzine I loved. It started up just as I returned to my new life in fandom from a decade on the Farm *and* it was full of both familiar names and interesting new ones.

Well, my vision was never fulfilled. I inadvertently blew it with the first issue thanks to the paper I chose, which took the weight into a second ounce and increased the postage significantly. Rather than retrench, I published larger issues to use up the rest of that additional ounce. And I never did manage anything that approached quarterly. For the first five issues I published twice yearly, but after that "highly irregular" would best describe my schedule, with just over two years being the most extreme gap. In more recent times I've adjusted my internal fan clock, and this issue will be the fifth consecutive one I've published on a yearly basis.

This month also marks the 55th anniversary of the first issue of my first fanzine, *Psi-Phi*, in December 1958. I'd caught the fanzine editor bug that

summer, almost as soon as I'd read my first handful of fanzines and thought "Hey, I could do that." But first I needed to come up with a suitable title, something that's often difficult for me. (Paul Williams, rest his soul, gave me *Trap Door*.) I considered and rejected a bunch of names until, one day, as I was reading a story in *Astounding* about psi, lightning struck, and *Psi-Phi* was born. At the time I didn't know that some in fandom harbored great disdain for the term "sci-fi," and I had to take a little flack.

With the title settled, I started mulling over what to put in the fanzine and how to produce it. Ditto? Mimeo? I couldn't afford to buy my own machine. The possibility of using a mimeo where a friend worked came and quickly went. In the depths of desperation, I even considered using a hektograph. They were cheap to buy. I didn't learn until much later what an inky mess that would have been.

One day, as I was mulling things over, there was a knock on the door. It was my fellow SF-reading high school friend, Arv Underman, who had come to show me a few books he'd just bought. He went into lyrical detail about the huge piles of SF magazines at some of the downtown bookshops. This immediately brought out the (even then) dedicated collector in me, and I asked him if he might have seen any 1951 issues of *Galaxy* that I needed to complete my run. And then I told him about the fanzine I was hoping to publish and my financial difficulties in getting it together.

"Oh, is that all? I can help," he said. He explained that his father was a paper salesman (of all things!) and had a spirit duplicator at home which he used now and then to print price sheets for his customers. It was a crude, hand-fed affair, Arv said, but it worked and we were welcome to use it. The term "mind-blown" hadn't been invented yet, but that's what I was. Arv became my coeditor.

When I visited Arv a few days later, I followed him to a room at the back of his house where the duplicator sat, invitingly, on a table. Shelving loaded with reams of paper lined the room, and there were stacks and piles of more paper that covered much of the floor. My eyes could hardly take in such abundance. Arv grinned and told me his father had given us permission to help ourselves, that he always had more than he could use. A lot of it was high-quality coated book paper that we decided to use for *Psi-Phi*. I was in fanzine heaven!

That first issue wasn't much: eleven pages, single-sided, mostly written by me but with a cover and a one-page column by Arv. We printed up about a hundred copies and sent them out to an unsuspecting fandom. The first response came quickly:

"*Psi-Phi* is a new fanzine from people we've never heard of before down in Los Angeles. Fellow named Bob Lichtman seems to be the guiding light, with another fellow name of Arv Underman helping. I somehow doubt the existence of Mr. Underman—it's too pat a name for an assistant. Anyway, this first issue contains little of interest except the fact that there are new fans on the scene, that they're trying, and that they're capable of quite decent layout and reproduction. This could develop into something good, and contact with the other active fans in L.A. could help. Go look them up, all you fans down there." (Terry Carr in *Fanac*)

Those L.A. fans did look me up, and before long I was going to LASFS meetings—but that's another story. Lured by the prospect of "quite decent layout and reproduction," the second issue attracted contributions from John Berry, Guy Terwilleger, "Ted Johnstone" (who began a series of articles that speculated on a movie being made of *The Lord of the Rings*) and Roger Ebert (with the first installment of a regular book review column), all decorated with lots of ATom artwork. It was twice as large as the first issue.

(By the way, as for Terry thinking Arv was a hoax: Apart from Arv's suspicious-sounding last name, remember that this was just a few months after the "Carl Brandon" revelations and a couple years after the "Joan W. Carr" hoax)

On the strength of that issue and two more in 1959, *Psi-Phi* placed seventeenth in the *Fanac* Poll, where it was described as "a bright newcomer." And to my surprise I placed third in the "best new fan" category. Terry again: "In the short space of a year and a half Bob Lichtman has become one of fandom's most active members. He writes well and knows how to publish neatly—definitely an asset to the fan-scene."

Arv remained my coeditor for the first six issues (we still hadn't made much of a dent in all that paper), but after we graduated from high school he went off to Stanford and disappeared into the glades of gafia. He was never completely out of my mind, though, and eventually—thanks to the internet—I learned he'd become a physician practicing in Southern California. We reconnected this fall for the first time in over fifty years, when I was given his e-mail address by a mutual acquaintance. Because it had been so long and because our lives had taken such different turns since our days doing a fanzine together, I was a little apprehensive about seeing him again. But it turned out I had no reason to be. After several hours of pleasant remembrances of times past and catching up on our present lives, we parted with plans to meet again when we could.

Don't doubt for a moment that the early egoboo and the easy acceptance I received as part of the fan scene didn't have a strong effect on me. I was an introverted teenager with little social life, and it was pure manna. Contrary to the common knowledge back then that young people who got active in fandom burned out and disappeared in a couple of years, this acceptance only served to reinforce my interest and boost my activity.

Fast-forward fifty-five years, and while of course I feel more confident about my writing and production skills these days, egoboo is never unwelcome. And so my heartfelt thanks to those who continue to offer it. My collection of variously shaped FAAn awards continues to grow—and at those special times, well, so does my head.

* * * * * *

It's been four years since Carol last appeared in *Trap Door*, and I sympathize with her faithful fans who have opened each new issue in anticipation of a fresh installment of her column, "Stuff"—which started in Terry's *Lighthouse* in 1964 and was revived here in 1990. Although this issue also lacks her column, your long wait for more Carol is over. She's got a book coming out, and here is an admittedly shameless plug for it.

By the time you read this, *Carol Carr: The Collected Writings* will probably be available for purchase. It contains the five published stories she refers to as her *oeuvrette*. In addition, she has "appreciations" of Dick Lupoff and Avram Davidson, plus her amusing (sic) obituary of Philip K. Dick—with seldom-seen photos of all three. There are also seventeen poems and a lavish helping of the best of her "Stuff" columns (including newer material in print here for the first time).

The publisher is Dick Lupoff's Surinam Turtle Press, an imprint of Ramble House. It will be available on Amazon, but can best be ordered via this link:
http://www.ramblehouse.com/carolcarr.htm

If link doesn't work, try again in a few days. Shipping is free when you order that way, there's no sales tax—and you get to avoid a perhaps unwanted interaction with Amazon.

Preview copies of the book elicited back-cover comments from Ellen Datlow, Grania Davis, Joe Haldeman, Marta Randall, Kim Stanley Robinson, Bob Silverberg, and *San Francisco Chronicle* columnist Jon Carroll.

If Carol's impending fame and fortune don't interfere (I hear her laughing), I'll do my best to get her back in these pages, too.

"...social realism in this country is a television commercial for America, a simulated republic of eagles and big-box stores, a good place to live so long as we never stray outside the hologram." – *Joe Bageant*, "Lost in the Hologram," from his posthumous collection: *Waltzing at the Doomsday Ball*

I discovered Joe Bageant about ten years ago. He was fucking brilliant, and really pissed off about pretty much the same things as me. He died in 2011. If you've never run across him, his website is still being kept up by his friends: www.joebageant.com

Back in college my beatnik poet English professor from Joe Bageant's generation (who wrote some book reviews for Harlan's fanzine, *Dimensions*) told us not to leave college and go out and get a job as a writer. Or an artist, or a musician, or a mime. And never, ever, he was very clear on this, never, ever, ever, work at an advertising agency.

Get a job in a factory, he said. Learn a trade, join a union, get some benefits, start a pension, retire early. Do your creative work on your own time, don't sell your gift for a handful of magic beans. In the end you'll have a much happier life. It was hard to picture this back then, but it rolled around in the back of my head until the time was right.

I graduated college in 1974 and spent the summer bicycling across Canada. Hiked big chunks of the Appalachian Trail. Drove a cab in Pittsburgh for five years. Stood back and let it all be, totally awed by this world. I wanted to document and observe everything. After college I at least knew a little about writing and had taught myself photography and had always been pretty good at figuring out complicated stuff. What I still didn't know, as I entered my great work, was that I also needed to learn how to be a professional.

Jumping ahead just a bit, I retired from printing twenty-five months ago, three days after my sixtieth birthday. The printing industry, like most things these days, is changing very fast. I started typesetting in 1978 on the early proprietary computer systems. I did a few other things along the way, like working in the NYC film industry. By 1984 I'd learned three typesetting systems and the first commercial computer art system, Genigraphics. The guts of Genigraphics were later bought by Microsoft and rejiggered as…*Powerpoint*.

My final sixteen years were spent in a couple of huge unionized printing plants, sitting on old broken office chairs under bad lighting in front of ever more powerful Macintosh computers in dank, windowless concrete bunkers tucked in odd corners of the factories. I was paid very well to put up with this while retouching other people's photos in Photoshop, stripping press forms, making litho plates. It was extraordinarily hard work, lots of overtime, insane pressure, impossible deadlines, incompetent management, dangerous and unhealthy working conditions… but I could go out on the pressroom floor at the end of the night and see my jobs coming off of the big offset presses. I was proud of my work.

The pressmen were always glad to see me —my jobs usually ran very nicely for them. Rocky, the lead second shift pressman, wasn't happy when I told him I was done putting up with this shit. He and his crew threw me a retirement party out on their press, and that night, my last night in printing, Rocky told me I was the only person in the plate department he trusted with his jobs. No one in management ever told me anything like that. There were a few sales people who figured out on their own that if they waited until I came in at 2 p.m. to hand in a tricky job, the company might actually make some money on it.

A fancy cake was sitting on the front light table for me the next day, my last, but no one from upstairs came down. Dr. Donnelly was right, though; I made it through and now I'm about the happiest I've been since I was four years old.

A year ago June, Marjorie, my wife of nine years, and I were driving south of Afton, Minnesota, following the west bank of the St. Croix River on County Road 21, scouting logistics for a photo shoot of a friend's outdoor bread oven building class. I was looking for a campground to stay in the night before the shoot. We drove past small sign pointing down a side road: "Lost Valley Prairie State Natural Area."

Lost Valley Prairie. Lost. Valley. Prairie. It became my mantra in the dark depths of the following winter. I looked at it on Google Earth, studied the DNR's web page, even found someone had Liked It on Yelp. (I Un-Liked Yelp when they joined ALEC.) If I wrote songs or poetry, I'd probably have written one.

We recently lost Jay Kay Klein. My work in *Locus* in the early 1980s caught his eye and at Chicon IV he came over to me at the Hugo Losers Party to chat. He said I was the only other person (besides himself) in fandom selling pictures to *Locus* who knew what they were doing. Charlie Brown also liked my work, and told me much the same thing. Jay Kay and I talked now and then over the years, he told me about long-ago fans and pros he had photographed, instructed me on odd, useful, extraordinarily finicky photographic processes, explained why Leica gear was the only thing one should be shooting with, and warned me that Olden Camera was run by a bunch of crooks.

Another of my teachers was Bob Tucker. At his last Minicon, we got to talking and I mentioned my work as a stage electrician. He told me tales going back to when electricity was still…electricity, before ground fault interruptors. Two-fisted gaffer tales. Tucker didn't care much for the la-de-da film students he'd had to work with and their risky behavior around the gear. Not professional. "You kids should listen to us old guys, that's how we got to be old."

In March I ordered twenty rolls of fresh black and white film from New York. I get eight frames per roll with 120 in my Fuji 6x9. This forces you to think a little when you're shooting. The Fuji has one fixed lens, the wide angle one, 65 mm. Ilford Pan F and

FP4. I still develop my own negatives, but for now, I'm scanning the negs and printing on an Epson inkjet.

My quest for the Lost Valley Prairie wasn't just about a photo shoot. No, I'm afraid there's always this fucking rural idiocy thing of the Lake Poets to consider. You know, where your mind runs free and the birds and wild animals and the insects and the spirits of the air, wood, and water whisper their secrets. If you're really lucky, the local nymphs appear and hustle you off to their shady swimming hole. I expect the modern thing to do standing in the midst of a prairie deep in the hollow of a long-lost valley would be to post some ironic self-referential snark.

I'm into this for the satori. The Lake Poets didn't have smartphones. There is no tweeting from the depths of true experience. There's just the now.

Minnesota had no spring this year. The year before, spring began the first week of March. That was weird. Our asparagus came up immediately and produced heavily until late June. We filled the freezer with asparagus soup, green sunshine for the dead of winter. This year the jet-stream got stuck over Des Moines and winter lasted into May. Also very weird.

A single asparagus spear popped up on the one sunny day in mid-May; after that it stayed cold and rainy until the middle of June. A day later it was like August: 96 degrees Fahrenheit under a blazing sun up here on this god-forsaken wind-blasted prairie. The lone asparagus spear fronded but never got much taller. By mid-summer the bed should be a huge jungle of six-foot fronds. I cheered the little one on, weeded around it, gave it lots of compost. I dug around a bit and found dormant rhizomes still down there. Other Minnesota gardeners had similar stories. The state extension service person thought the rhizomes might come back next year. Hope so.

Our asparagus bed was old; it came with the house. I worked on my lettuce and spinach instead. A groundhog got that in early July. The rest of the month went into beefing up the wire fencing. It kept out the rabbits, but the groundhog found a weak point it could squeeze under. Yeah, well, we did build our houses on top of their homes. We're in a row of 1950's ramblers on a south facing slope in an alluvial valley left by the glaciers that leads down to the Mississippi. That slope is honeycombed with the li'l grunts' tunnels. I bet they've been sunning themselves on these hillsides for thousands of years. Our old dog Madison killed a couple a few years back; that pretty much kept them out of the yard, but she's gone now, and they just waddle around like they own the place.

Back to the lost prairie thing. I was looking for a deep blue sky afternoon with nice fluffy clouds, temperatures in the mid-80s. Like the cover of the "It's A Beautiful Day" album.

The morning of the last Thursday in July broke clear, breezy, perfect. A beautiful day to go off looking for an elusive spot of time. Heading out of Northeast Minneapolis, onto I-94 and straight through the middle of St. Paul, you hang a right onto Bob Dylan's Highway 61 and make a run for Hastings. The Mississippi is on your right, massive rail-yards on the bank in between. What with the big towboats pushing strings of river barges from here to New Orleans and the long fast freights. A lot of commerce goes up and down this river.

Just before the steep hill leading down to the Hastings bridge, you go left onto a series of ever-smaller roads through rolling farmlands until you come to the lane. There's no sign for the SNA at the crossroad; it'd be easy to miss if you hadn't studied it all winter on Google Earth. There are houses and hobby farms left and right, and, after about a mile, a dusty dead end turn-around.

A Department of Natural Resources pick-up was backed inside the gate. A nice young fellow in a ranger hat was repainting the Official Wooden Sign. He was happy to set down his brush and chat for a spell about the prairie restoration project. Down in the hollow, the patch of prairie had been broken and farmed in the late 1800s. Too steep and convoluted for big machinery, it was abandoned and left to itself for many years, hidden under dense thickets of cedar and buckthorn.

In the 1950s the state bought the land and began a long-term plan to dig out and burn off the invasive overgrowth, reseeding the slopes with local native plants. It's not a big park. It's not really a park at all, it's just a preserved natural area. No hiking trails, no buildings, no concession stand, just sixty acres of hilly prairie. The ranger pointed out a rutted farm lane off to the right skirting the SNA and suggested I follow that and go left at the bottom of the slope. It was about 2:30 in the afternoon, though not a Tuesday, and I was once again synched into the Cheech Wizard Scheme of Things.

To the right, vast rolling cornfields with tidy farmhouses on the far horizon. Turning left at the bottom of the slope put me on a faint trail through a shady fen. There was an odor of clean wet bottomland soil and the slightly sharp smell of bright green leaves growing fast in the patches of sun.

The track came out of the little woods into a small open space and trickled off to nothing. The real deal. Full sun. Fluffy clouds. Dragonflies, bees, waving prairie grasses. The ranger had told me of some special rare plants marked with pink tape whose names I wasn't likely to remember. Big, big sky. You really can't *hike* through a tall grass prairie, you just sort of slowly swim your way through. Sometimes you get stuck in a sumac thicket and have to back your way out and go around. You're not going to hurt anything, this stuff loves it when a bison herd comes through once in a while. In fact, the survival of a prairie depends on fire and trampling herds. I stopped to admire some of the marked plants, careful not to hurt them, they're the rare ones, pretty much gone everywhere except little patches like these.

Still, many of the prairie plants around me were familiar. I've been fighting them for years in my gardens up here. Scratch a bit of garden soil after the weather has warmed it and a dozen different invaders spring up in a day. But they aren't invaders, they were here first. Again, there was that striking smell of summer, of life and growth. It's not an odor you can bottle or produce in a laboratory, it's the product of nature transpiring.

I breathed deeply. It's not a sweet odor, not unpleasant, there's a bit of a sharpness. Wild, organic, growing, nature working feverishly at the peak of its short life. Fight to be born, grow, throw seed, die. Do it again. The years go by.

The bowl of the little prairie drains into a marsh along the path I'd come in by, but the valley, the Lost Valley, is land-locked, it does not drain to either the St. Croix or the Mississippi, though it's right in the confluence of bluff lands before they meet. I worked my way around, really pleased with myself that I'd finally gotten out here. Took some photos, a couple rolls with the big camera, a bunch with my little digital. It's hard to replicate the rolling panorama, but I do what I do. I'll spend the next winter working on my summer images.

It's quite hot out on the prairie by now, I've climbed the far slope and found the limestone outcroppings the DNR fellow told me about. From up here I can see houses and barns in the distance. A big power line that I've worked hard to keep out of my pictures. I love sitting on these limestone bones of the old earth. Once they were seafloor, then the earth shifted and the seafloors tilted upwards. Now they've worn their way back down to these rolling hills. And here I sit.

Hawks circled overhead, warm winds blew the grasses. I drained my water bottle, hummed a bit of Beethoven's Sixth, quietly smiled. This was just a scouting mission. An afternoon excursion into a brief spot of time, another Brigadoon for my collection. In the years to come, maybe I'll go back and stay at the nearby county campground. I could camp for a few days and shoot the prairie at sunrise…at sunset…if you're truly serious, really prepared, these are the times when the dreamscapes reveal themselves and you may even find the hidden doorway into absolute beauty.

—Jeff Schalles

PKD in OC

by Greg Benford

I met Philip K. Dick in 1964, and it struck me how funny he was. I had just read *The Man in the High Castle*, and expected a rather dour sort. He had a way of comically falling out of a chair. At dinner he smoked a cigar and ate spaghetti simultaneously.

When I came by to go to dinner in the 1960s, I would at times hear something like a cheap motorbike banging inside the house. It was Phil, hammering at an Olympia typewriter like a woodpecker on meth; with one letter change, he was indeed a wordpecker on meth. Once when I arrived he said, not looking up, "I can finish this novel tonight if I go straight through to dawn." I pointed out that the speed he was on needed dilution at least, and took him to dinner. And he finished it the next morning, he said.

My being an identical twin fascinated him, as it did Heinlein. Phil thought he'd write a novel about twins, and I suppose in some way he did in some of the more confusing novels. He also asked me lots of questions about time and quantum mechanics, especially for background for *Counter Clock World*. He thought entropy was a great metaphor but I could never make sense of the eventual novel. In that time he was moving from wife Ann to wife Nancy, and remarked, "You'd guess that a guy who won the novel Hugo would do better with women." I thought it a doubtful syllogism.

Then he moved to Orange County in 1972, still steamed up about an earlier break-in at his home. He imagined the FBI was responsible. I found he didn't much like the aspects of the county that I found best, such as the beaches and ocean. He never visited my home perched high up with a view of the town and ocean in Laguna Beach. Only slowly did I realize that he was agoraphobic, so vistas and great weather mattered little. He liked churches, he said, and questioned me closely about my being an Episcopalian. He felt the gospels were powerful messages we should all study intently. He was writing an interminable Exegesis and consulted me on it, but I never read more than a few passages. Not my thing, unlike his novels and especially the short stories that snagged my attention in the 1950s.

As success came to him, he was generous to the poor. He told me in 1981 that he had made $180,000 that year and gave most of it to charities. Even though he lived pretty close to the street himself, he knew what it was like to be down, and tried to help people. The one person who would not have believed in the prominence of Philip Dick in our culture now was Phil Dick himself.

About that time I used some connections in the CIA to inquire with the FBI about Phil, and the break-in. Word came back that there was no Dick file at all. When I told him that he said they had probably destroyed it to "cover their trail."

He did love music and spent a lot on his FM system. With Tim Powers he often listened to major symphonic works, and mentioned that he could not quite register the nuances from the left speaker. Later, Tim told me, he went to a doctor to check and found that he was losing his hearing in the left ear. "Thank God," he said. "I was afraid it was in my speakers!"

Somehow that sums Phil up to me.

I found him hard to quite appreciate as he became more intent on the meaning of scripture, transcendental matters, and the Bishop Pike brand of Christianity. Often Phil had, shall we say, a continuity problem. He spoke of hearing a voice from the cosmic sky but what he heard from on high tended to vary often.

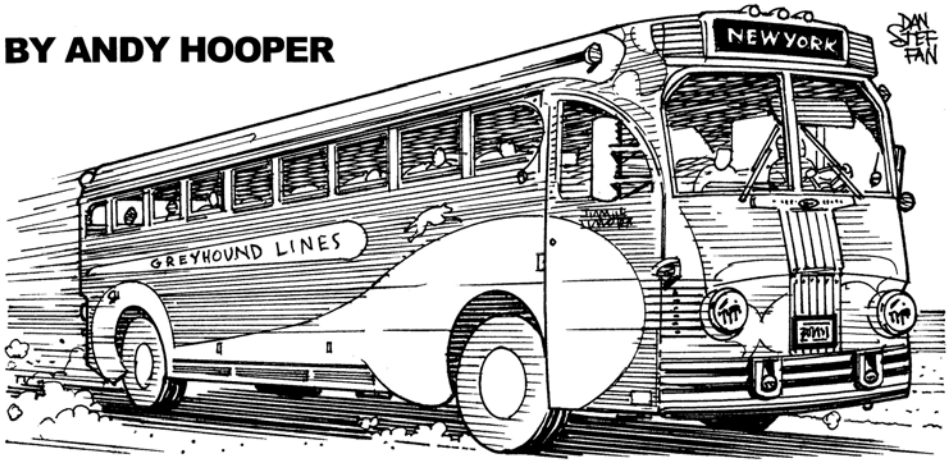
I was intent on running a plasma physics lab and so saw him infrequently, though I did continue to urge him to move and enjoy the pleasant aspects of the county, instead of his strip mall neighborhood. In spring 1982 I realized we hadn't spoken for a year, so I called and made a date for dinner. He was jazzed about the rushes of *Blade Runner* he'd seen and wanted to talk about it.

Days later, I heard he had died. When Tim Powers called to tell me about the memorial service, I flipped open my appointment calendar and found that the day and time were precisely when we had scheduled to have dinner.

It was what we have come to think of as a Phil Dick moment.

—Greg Benford

BY ANDY HOOPER



BRADBURY'S WORLDCON

RAY DOUGLAS BRADBURY and the WORLD SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION of 1939

It is interesting that for someone who enjoyed such a lengthy and prolific career, many of science fiction fandom's favorite memories of Ray Bradbury (1920 – 2012) date from very early in his life. Bradbury's childhood and adolescence – as he described them – were full of fascinating experiences, and inevitably turned his tastes toward the fabulous. For the first decade of his life, his family migrated between his hometown of Waukegan, Illinois and Tucson, Arizona, then moved permanently to Los Angeles in 1934. There the young Ray was mesmerized by the floodlit world of Hollywood, a town built on the art of storytelling. It was a place where being larger-than-life was nearly a prerequisite for citizenship, and Ray began to grow into his surroundings almost as soon as he arrived.

In the Depression, as we are told, many kids had to master the art of sneaking into things, peering at events through waist-high knotholes, or from convenient tree branches. Ray Bradbury was the kind of kid who would sneak into movie previews at the Uptown Theater on Western Avenue, or just hang around in front of Paramount or Columbia's studios, then roller-skate over to the Brown Derby restaurant to see famous players like Cary Grant and Mae West arriving for a swanky dinner. He described himself as "hell-bent on acquiring autographs from glamorous stars. It was glorious." I've always loved the image of his skates. They made sense for a roving newspaper boy like Bradbury, but to me, they make him seem like someone out of the Dead End Kids – Ray the Roller Boy, or "Wheels" Bradbury, tracking down actors like Ronald Coleman, Norma Shearer, Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy.

Arriving in town just a few years after the pictures acquired sound. Bradbury would watch Hollywood grow into the early Technicolor age, practically on his doorstep. No wonder he was tempted into acting – he belonged to the Drama and Poetry Clubs at Los Angeles High School, and after graduation, joined the Wilshire Players Guild, a company run by a young actress from Utah, Laraine Day. Bradbury wrote and acted in two plays with the Wilshire Players, but felt they were so terrible that he was scared away from attempting any further live drama for twenty years.

But nothing was going to stop Bradbury from writing. By the time he entered high school, it had already become a daily compulsion for him. At times, the family's financial straits left him composing his tales on butcher paper, but he could not be discouraged. Early on, he had practiced by listening to a favorite radio drama, "Chandu the Magician," then immediately transcribing the action and dialogue from memory. He loved the comics, and was reasonably good at imitating those as well, drawing his own Sunday panels for beloved characters like Tarzan of the Apes. He had been a regular visitor to the Carnegie Free Library in Waukegan, where he discovered the 19th Century pioneers of speculation, H.G. Wells and Jules Verne, and the pulp adventure novelists, especially Edgar Rice Burroughs. He began reading *Astounding Science Fiction* in 1936, and became a fan of writers including Murray Leinster, Raymond Z Gallun and Ross Rocklynne. "Also in 1936, he found a handbill in a used book store advertising the Los Angeles chapter of the Science Fiction League. He began to attend their weekly Thursday night meetings in the upstairs room at Clifton's Cafeteria, and made friendships that would also encourage his professional and aesthetic ambitions.

Mr. Science Fiction

At this writing, it is just under five years since Forrest J Ackerman (1916 – 2008) passed away, and it is still a little difficult for those who knew him to imagine science fiction fandom without him. "Forry" not only devoted virtually the whole of his long life to science fiction and its fandom, he actually seemed to ***embody*** fandom at times. Although he would proudly point to his achievements as an agent, publisher, producer, actor and writer, the truth is that Forry was also a professional fan, one of the very few who have ever found actual profit in that career choice. He was literally known as "Mr. Science Fiction," a title which he happily encouraged and embraced.

His effects on fandom will continue to be felt for decades, but the direct knowledge of his character and specific contributions is already slipping away. The much-told story of the role that Ackerman played in Ray Bradbury's early career is thus worth repeating to whatever posterity may be available. Ackerman was perhaps most proud of the careers in science fiction and fantasy which he had helped to start, and none gave him more pleasure than his association with the young Ray Bradbury.

Ray was sixteen years old when the two met, while Ackerman was a worldly twenty. He too was a transplant to Los Angeles, having grown up in San Francisco; the two shared a fascination for the fabulous possibilities that

Hollywood offered, a fixation that neither of them would ever fully abandon. Not long after their first meeting, Ackerman would introduce Bradbury to another 16-year-old Angeleno named Ray Harryhausen. The two Rays were fascinated by dinosaurs, spaceships and sea monsters, all prominent features of their later professional output. Harryhausen had been so inspired by the work of effects technician Willis O'Brien in the 1933 RKO film of *King Kong* that he had set out to duplicate and expand on O'Brien's work in his basement. Although he had just begun to learn the techniques he would use to create model sequences for classic Hollywood fantasy films, he was already a prolific sculptor and painter. His daunting proficiency in three-dimensional art may have been another reason why Bradbury saw his future in the descriptive power of language. Their friendship was also life-long; when Bradbury married Marguerite McClure in 1947, Harryhausen was his best man.

Bradbury's first "professional" sale had come at age fourteen, when the roller-skating Ray had tracked down comedian George Burns and recited a selection of jokes and comical lyrics to him. Burns was impressed enough to pay for the "right" to use them on the *Burns and Allen* radio show, although the amount of money involved must have been small. Vaudeville was just staggering to its protracted death at the time, and had he been born a few decades earlier, Bradbury might have made a fine variety performer. He had some talent for close-in magic and sleight of hand, a pastime he loved all his life. He attributed this fascination to an encounter with a traveling carnival magician dubbed "Mr. Electrico," who had made Ray's hair stand on end with the touch of a static-charged sword, while orotundly exhorting the 12-year-old to "Live forever!" But instead of driving him toward life as a stage magician, Bradbury credited the incident with literally galvanizing him into his daily writing habits, convinced that there was magic in the products of his imagination, a conviction shared by several generations of appreciative readers.

Which is not to say that Ray immediately showed the talents he would eventually demonstrate. Before completing high school, he began to submit stories to the pulp magazines he had loved, particularly *Weird Tales*. But everything he sent out was rejected. He didn't find his efforts to write in the pulp idiom very satisfying either. His tastes were already expanding toward more "serious" literature, fueled by additional hours spent haunting the shelves of public and school libraries. American stylists like Thomas Wolfe, Eudora Welty, John Steinbeck and Katherine Ann Porter all appealed to him. His family's finances made attending college on anything beyond a part-time basis unlikely; later he would proudly interpret this as a virtue, exhorting college workshop students not to listen to instructors who knew no more about writing than they did.

Fandom evolved, in part, precisely to fill this gap between the amateur and the academic, the professional and the impassioned. In the 1930s, the lines of demarcation between the circles in which fans and pros revolved had not yet hardened, and the pros were as hungry for contact with people who liked and thought about science fiction as any fan. Between 1936 and 1939, Bradbury met and interacted with professional sf writers including Leigh Brackett, Fredric Brown, Henry Kuttner, Emil Petaja and Jack Williamson. He was particularly impressed with Robert Heinlein; the two met when Bradbury had just graduated from high school, and Heinlein was 31, a Navy veteran and a survivor of tuberculosis, a sometime real estate salesman and silver miner who had turned to writing in an effort to pay the mortgage on the house he shared with his second wife. His imperatives were of a different order than those facing the teen-aged Bradbury, yet the latter found Heinlein's approach exemplary: "He wrote humanistic science fiction that encouraged me to be human instead of mechanical."

Meanwhile, he got a job. Sometimes he still hawked newspapers on foot outside a premiere or a ball game, but mostly he worked at a newsstand on the corner of South Norton Avenue and Olympic Boulevard. Most days that he wasn't working were at least partly spent in a library – he later claimed he spent three days a week in libraries for ten years. The novel that would eventually become *Fahrenheit 451* was composed in UCLA's Powell Library, in a study room that rented typewriters by the hour.

Imaginary Voices

Students of fan history will have noted that I have as yet failed to mention the word "fanzine" once in this account. Certainly this is partly attributable to the fact that the word "fanzine" had not been coined yet; Louis Russell Chauvenet would not invent the word until the October, 1940 issue of his, um, fanzine *Detours*. Amateur presses and amateur journalism had been around for decades, and fan-published magazines featuring fantasy and science fiction were becoming a significant phenomenon. Naturally, a forward-looking club like the Science Fiction League's Los Angeles chapter (to be re-christened the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society in 1939) would be inspired to undertake a publication of their own. Their first effort, *Imagination!*, debuted in October 1937, and would generate thirteen monthly issues before it ceased publication in the following October. Ackerman was the *de facto* publisher; as with many things in the early years of LASFS, Forry had the bank balance needed to subsidize the project, owing to a modest family inheritance. Club members T. Bruce Yerke and Myrtle Douglas (aka "Morojo") did much of the work of composing and printing the magazine, which would attract contributors including Robert Bloch, Karl Capek, Litterio Farsaci, Paul Freehafer, Russ Hodgkins, Henry Kuttner, Richard Matheson, Sam Moskowitz, Ray Palmer, Mack Reynolds, Eric Frank Russell, Julius Schwartz, Tigrina and Donald Wollheim. It also featured the first appearance by the notorious Claude Degler and his collection of imaginary friends. The magazine attracted a broad spectrum of correspondence, collected under the title "Voice of the Imagi-Nation." (After the 13-issue run of *Imagination!* was over, Ackerman and Morojo essentially "spun-off" the letter column into its own fanzine, titled *Voice of the Imagi-Nation* or *VoM* for short.)

Imagination! covers were drawn by Bradbury, Hannes Bok, Ray Harryhausen, Jim Mooney and Malcolm Smith. And the January, 1938 issue featured "Hollenbocher's Dilemma," the first Ray Bradbury story every published .Or, more precisely, part one of the first Ray Bradbury story ever published. Ray apparently took his time completing "Hollenbocher's Dilemma," because part two didn't appear until September of 1938. By then, having consumed twelve issues of *Imagination*! and a handful of rival "fan mags," Bradbury had conceived the ambition to publish one of his own. As 1938 rolled into 1939, Ray had high hopes for the first issue of *Futuria Fantasia*…if he could just put the money together to print the 100 copies he figured he would need….

Once again, Ackerman was the angel. When Bradbury wailed that his magazine was stalled for lack of money, Forry produced a grant of $90 that was enough to get *Futuria Fantasia* into print in the early summer months of 1939. Issue #1 ran eleven pages, including a cover created by Bradbury's friend Hannes Bok. In those days, there was absolutely no prejudice against publishing fiction in a fanzine; in fact, few amateur science fiction magazines published much else besides amateur fiction, poetry, and brief editorials. *Futuria Fantasia* #1 included fiction by Ackerman ("The Record"), a Technocratic polemic by Yerke ("Revolt of the Scientists"), and another story by Bradbury, "Don't Get Technatal," albeit bylined with the pseudonym "Ron Reynolds." Bradbury also contributed a poem titled "Thought and Space," and it is every bit as profound as one would expect from a 19-year-old writer's' thoughts on the infinite.

Perhaps more intriguing was the short editorial preview inserted just before the poem, which read: "FUTURIA FANTASIA! FALL ISSUE COMING UP AS SOON AS YE EDITOR RETURNS FROM JAUNT TO MANHATTEN (in case you intend writing me and telling me I spelled MANHATTAN wrong in the editorial and above, I already

know it ... it was just a typical-graphical error.) THE NEXT ISSUE WILL BE EVEN LARGER—CONTAINING YOUR COMMENTS ON FUFA AND ARTICLES BY ACKERMAN, YERKE, HENRY KUTTNER, JACK ERMAN AND RON REYNOLDS. There will also be a play by play dew-scription of the trip to New Yawk and the happenings there in the science-fiction outfield—by Bradbury of course."

The Big Bus Ride

The news of the upcoming "World's Science Fiction Convention" in New York City at the beginning of July 1939 had filled all active science fiction fans with anticipation and envy. The science fiction convention itself had existed for only a few years, and had yet to accumulate many of the rituals and traditions we associate with them today. The name "World's Convention" owed its existence to the close proximity of the 1939 New York World's Fair, which had providentially chosen "The World of Tomorrow" as its official theme. Though the convention had no connection with the fair, the opportunity to visit its exhibits was a significant added attraction.

Forry Ackerman seldom provided much detail behind his decision to loan Ray Bradbury the money he would need to travel from Los Angeles to New York and back by Greyhound bus. Years later, in a memoir written the year after Morojo died, Ackerman gave her much of the credit for organizing the resources necessary to get Bradbury to New York. Did this mean it was her idea to begin with? Or did she also collect money to help Ray make the trip from other friends and fans, to cover his expenses in New York and on the road? The story has significant elements of the exchanges that would later become standard in the various fan funds, but it remains tantalizingly unclear just how and why his friends chose Ray Bradbury from among all possible fans to send to fandom's first great convocation.

Ackerman would cheerfully admit some measure of self-interest in this matter, as it allowed him to purport to even greater perspicacity regarding Bradbury's talents. Bradbury would be one of the 200 writers that accepted Forry's services as literary agent for some part of their careers, but no one could have predicted the advent of works like *The Martian Chronicles* and *Something Wicked This Way Comes* on the strength of Ray's output to that point. He was a charming, interesting kid, who could recite Poe from memory, and do tricks with cards and bits of string. It would be fun to have him along; a familiar face to share the weekend with, and potentially report on Ackerman's accomplishments, unencumbered by the natural reticence of "Mr. Science Fiction." Morojo probably liked his poetry, or perhaps it was his hair; all his life, Ray Bradbury had great hair.

Air travel was available, but outside the means of any science fiction fan. And New York did not yet have an airport for most of 1939 – Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia dedicated the North Beach field that would later bear his name in October. Until then air travelers had to fly in and out of Newark, New Jersey.

But the fare was only part of the investment involved. The fastest railroad link between L.A. and Chicago was the Union Pacific's *City of Los Angeles*, which could cover the distance between the two cities in 38 to 40 hours. The fastest line between Chicago and New York was the New York Central's legendary *20th Century Limited*, which had dropped its transit time to sixteen hours with the introduction of lightweight cars in 1938. Even with optimal connections, the trip would take nearly three days to complete. And the most efficient connections were also the most expensive; a ticket on the *20th Century Limited* alone could exceed $75 depending on the sort of Pullman berth or suite preferred, a sum of money worth between $500 and $600 in 2013 terms. The average train traveler could anticipate taking the better part of four days between New York and Los Angeles. Hopping on board a freight train, as Olon F. Wiggins would do on his way to the 1940 World Convention in Chicago, was dramatically cheaper, but they ran on an even less predictable schedule, and exposed the rider to beatings by angry conductors and yard bosses.

Traveling by road, either in your own car or on a bus service like Greyhound was even more time-consuming. The Interstate highway system we enjoy today was a post-war project begun by President Dwight Eisenhower's administration. The national road network in 1939 was a patchwork of recent roads meant for automobiles, and routes created a hundred or more years ago, for foot and horse-drawn traffic, and only slightly straightened and improved for motor vehicles. Most highways did not arc around cities in the contemporary style, but ran through the center of each town along its route. Today, a team of drivers with a fast car can drive the 2,778 road miles from Los Angeles to New York in about 42 hours, exceeding speed limits only occasionally. In 1939, crossing a continental distance by car could easily take four to six days, depending on how many drivers were involved, and how often they stopped to sleep and eat. Even driving through the night and rotating drivers, the bus trip to New York would take four days each way. Committed to at least five or six days in New York, Ray was looking at missing over two weeks of work in order to attend the convention.

The journey from Los Angeles to Chicago would have been quite familiar to Bradbury, and probably evoked many memories in someone who exhibited such a keen sense of nostalgia. Following US Highway 66, the bus route would have passed by the state of the art in roadhouses, motor courts and roadside tourist attractions. The drive from Chicago eastward cut through a very different landscape, and must have excited notions of driving into the past while on the way to the future. Bradbury's family had deep roots in the east; one of his ancestors had been accused in the Salem Village witch trials in 1692. Even for a defiantly independent west coast writer, New York was the country's literary center of gravity, and must have inspired a full spectrum of happy day dreams and ambitions as the Greyhound wheels rolled ever on.

Interlude: I was a Spy for Jack L. Warner

Given our knowledge of the cataclysmic events that were to rock the world beginning on September 1st, 1939, it is very tempting for the modern observer to imagine that they can see some sort of foreboding or uneasiness in the months leading up to the outbreak of the Second World War. But to the contrary, most Americans were feeling a sense of guarded but increasing optimism as the 1930s came to a close.

At the newsstand on South Norton Avenue in Los Angeles where Bradbury worked, the covers of the magazines on sale in June 1939 seemed to collectively portray an America that was hopeful but nearsighted, with little sense of the enormous events about to take place. *Time* magazine featured Charles Lindbergh on its cover on June 19th; the aviation hero was now the face of the American isolationist movement, and privately held very pro-fascist views. Inside, an article covered the meeting between French General Gamelin and Britain's Lord Gort, discussing plans for a unified Anglo-French command. But was the object of the alliance to defend against the expansion of fascism, or the putative crusade against international Bolshevism? The question was only answered definitively when Hitler invaded France the following spring.

As the tenth anniversary of the 1929 stock market panic approached, many American industries were expanding and hiring new workers. In retrospect, it's easy to see that American firms were doing so in anticipation of the material demands that would be created by another European war – but equally demanding, America's appetite for progress had only grown more intense through the enforced slowdown of the Depression.

Steel might make new warships and fighting vehicles, but we also needed it for apartment buildings and bridges – like the new Bronx-Whitestone bridge, dedicated by the ubiquitous LaGuardia on April 29th. Part of urban planner Robert Moses' car-friendly Belt Parkway system around Brooklyn and Queens, the bridge accommodated just four lanes of motor traffic and a pedestrian walkway, yet

necessitated the destruction of seventeen homes in the Malba section of Queens. On the other hand, its fabrication and construction employed hundreds of workers, and when completed, it gave drivers from mainland New York direct access to the World's Fair grounds in Flushing. (The architect, Othmar Amman, used much the same design as the original Tacoma Narrows Bridge, also known as "Galloping Gertie" for the ultimately catastrophic oscillations it suffered in high winds. After that structure collapsed on November 7th, 1940, the Whitestone was retrofitted with 32 more stay cables.)

On *Time* magazine's *Cinema* page, no doubt well-thumbed by the movie-loving Bradbury, the "Current and Choice" section listed John Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln* at the top of a list that also included Robert Donat in *Goodbye Mr. Chips*, Elisabeth Bergner and Michael Redgrave in *Stolen Life*, Kenny Baker and Jean Colin in *The Mikado* and Paul Muni and Bette Davis in *Juárez*. If there was certain emphasis on "quality drama" in the list, the June 26th issue struck out for more fantastic territory with a spirited review of *Tarzan Finds a Son*, singling out Johnny Weissmuller and the 5-year-old John Sheffield for their performances as Tarzan and Boy, respectively. In the same issue, staff writers gave rather faint praise to *Land of Liberty*, a wide-screen anthology of clips from Hollywood's interpretation of history, meant for exhibition at both the San Francisco and New York World's Fairs, and assembled by, of all possible parties, the Hays Commission. America's official censors had chosen a predictably bloodless montage of heroic distortion, although early-Century newsreel footage of figures like the Kaiser and the Czar added a particle of authenticity. Movies interested Bradbury as a subject for criticism as well as a means of escape; the following year, he would begin contributing to *Script*, Rob Wagner's liberal journal of film, culture and politics. It was a prestigious venue, but just like the fan mags, it often paid its writers little or nothing for their work.

Actor Henry Fonda, star of *Young Mr. Lincoln* was clearly the man of the hour in June 1939: *Life* magazine also presented a ten-page story on John Ford's film in their June 12th issue. Although lionized by critics, the story of Lincoln's role as a defense attorney in an 1858 murder trial only received one Academy Award nomination, for Lamar Trotti's original screenplay. The very well-known struggle between Ford and producer Daryl F. Zanuck for control of the picture probably hurt its reputation inside Hollywood. But Ford, Fonda and screenwriter Nunnally Johnson would return with their now-legendary adaptation of John Steinbeck's novel *The Grapes of Wrath* in 1940, thoroughly redeeming the reputations of all involved.

The June 12th issue of *Life* also featured photos of Dr. Albert Einstein opening the Palestine pavilion at the New York World's Fair, and a profile of Zionist leader and future President of Israel Chaim Weizmann, juxtaposed with a feature on anti-Communist rallies led by British fascist Oswald Mosley. Another article speculated on the potential for war over colonial possessions in Antarctica as if it were a distant possibility – but German commerce raiders would seize the Norwegian whaling fleet in Antarctic waters just eighteen months later. The issue's cover photograph captured an ecstatic group of cadets graduating from the US Naval Academy in Annapolis. In addition to wondering how many of them were still living five years later, one is struck by the fact that each cadet is just as white as the starched midshipman's uniforms they are wearing. It's a scene that would look very different today.

Hollywood had made its allegiances in the impending conflict known before the European war actually broke out. One of the most controversial movies of 1939 was a dark Warner Brothers potboiler titled *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*. It was based on a series of articles written by an FBI agent named Leon G. Torrou, who had been dismissed by the Bureau for making its part in the case known without prior permission. Edward G. Robinson portrayed Torrou, renamed "Ed Renard" for the film, as he investigated a conspiracy of American Nazi sympathizers, organized by German secret agents and saboteurs. The cast also included George Sanders, Paul Lukas, Francis Lederer, and a number of expatriate German actors, many of whom had fled Germany when Hitler was elected Chancellor. Released on May 8th, the thriller drew unexpectedly large audiences, and these only grew when the film was banned in Germany and much of the rest of Europe.

Many Americans were repulsed by the Nazi's ideals, and wanted to oppose them short of taking part in another war in Europe. The film's message was that we had no need to go to Europe, because the Nazis had already brought the fight to us. One of the film's more florid scenes actually portrayed a real incident, when approximately thirty American Legion members, veterans of World War One, had tried to break up a march by the German-American Bund in New York. The veterans were badly beaten, and one, Cecil Schubert, suffered a fractured skull. Portrayed in the movie by Ward Bond, Cecil recovered, and would receive a citation for bravery – from New York Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, of course. The Bund, undaunted by their disorganized opposition, would continue to draw disturbingly large crowds for their rallies, peaking on February 20th, 1939. That night, 20,000 people gathered in Madison Square Garden to hear Bund leader Julius Kuhn denounce President "Frank D. Rosenfeld" and his central economic policy as the "Jew Deal." Half a dozen Bund "training camps" were active in New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, and membership remained steady until the war began on September 1st.

Confessions of a Nazi Spy made no one's top ten list, and was completely lost among great 1939 releases like *Gone With the Wind*, *The Women*, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and *The Wizard of Oz*. But it was rereleased in the spring of 1940, with a new coda featuring footage of the Nazi invasions of Poland, Denmark and Norway. Juxtaposed with newsreels portraying the conquest of France, there seemed little hope that America could remain outside the conflict forever.

A Pocket Full of Bok

It would be logical to assume that Ray Bradbury would have used the opportunity to meet most of the important editors working in science fiction in 1939 to tout his own writing, or at least pump them for advice in breaking into the field. And he may well have spent a little time in that or similarly self-serving activities, in one or more of the informal conversations that proved to be the really important part of that convention weekend. But the overwhelming impression which Bradbury made that weekend came from his efforts to place artwork by his friend Hannes Bok in the SF magazines of the day.

Bok's real name was Wayne Woodard; he was another transplant to Los Angeles, having lived between divorced parents in Kansas City, Duluth and Seattle before enjoying a Southern California interlude in 1937 and 1938. He would return to Seattle in '38, where he found employment with the WPA, and friends among the "Northwest School," including painters Mark Tobey and Morris Graves. "Hannes Bok" was a pseudonym inspired by one of his favorite composers, Johann Sebastian Bach. But by the time Bradbury knew him, Bok's taste had turned to modernist composers like Jean Sibelius and Ferde Grofé. His art was substantially influenced by Maxfield Parrish, with whom Bok had met and corresponded.

Bradbury felt that Bok's fantastic, near-mythical figures and settings would be ideal for the covers of magazines *like Weird Tales* and *ASF*. Bok was skeptical; he had hitchhiked from Seattle to New York the previous year, showing his work to every editor he could find, with no success. He felt, with some justification, that his homosexuality made editors reluctant to employ him. This was well before the era of motorcycle caps and nipple rings, but Bok was refined, somewhat delicate, even a bit fey. It was hard for him to banter about baseball or boxing in the effort to fit in. His eccentric passion for astrology was probably at least as off-putting to most people as his sexuality.

Bradbury was evidently not gay; his 46-year marriage to Marguerite, with whom he raised four daughters, may have been the only significant, intimate relationship of his life. But as a young man, he had several very close friendships with fellow aspiring artists and writers who were gay, including Hannes Bok, Emil Petaja and Henry Hasse. (And he apparently indulged in a mutually-admiring "bromance" with the writer Ross Rocklynne after the New York convention.) As a young actor, Ray would have worked with gay boys and girls on a daily basis. Young actors can develop a crush on anything: their teachers, their scene partners, Ben Hecht's dialogue, or the fender of a Hudson Terraplane. Ray was *very* close with these men, and he had an understanding of the difficulties in what we would now call a closeted life, and every fan can identify with what it feels like to be different. It irritated his sense of fairness that Bok's beautiful art should remain unknown to the world because a handful of editors thought the artist a queer duck.

Capitalizing on their shared optimism regarding the New York convention, Bradbury convinced Bok to send him new work to supplement the sheaf of art that he had left in Ray's hands for use in *Futuria Fantasia*. With this portfolio under his arm, Ray had the confidence to introduce himself to both professional editors and amateur publishers, all of whom now found Bok's art much more *interesting* than they had the year before. Farnsworth Wright, editor of *Weird Tales*, was finally convinced that Bok was a perfect match for his magazine; the first of more than fifty covers featuring his work appeared in the December 1939 issue. Not only did Ray secure Bok several immediate commissions for new work, he even placed some of the sample work in the portfolio. This sudden sprinkling of commissions convinced Bok that he would be able to support himself as a working artist, and he would move to New York before the end of the year. For the next five to six years, he was one of the most prolific and popular artists working in science fiction; in addition to magazine covers, he did jacket illustrations for virtually all of the new SF and fantasy presses entering the field, including Arkham House, Llewellyn, Shasta and Fantasy Press.

Tactically, his presentation was a brilliant introduction for Bradbury as well. With the Bok portfolio, he had stolen just a little thunder from his flamboyant mentor Ackerman, who also fancied himself an agent and promoter in the field. He was also realistic about the state of his own writing, in the wake of several rejections by the promags of the hour. But the positive impression he had made on the New York Science Fiction community would help build his audience when his stories began appearing a few years later. Would those contemplative, lyrical stories have made their splash without Ray's gregarious, coin-palming charm to back them up? We're never going to know, but much of Ray's career was shaped by the friendships he made in science fiction, in Hollywood, and in the wider literary world. A chance encounter with Christopher Isherwood in a used book store would lead the English critic to give Bradbury's work some of its first exposure in literary and academic circles. His writing generally deserved the praise which it received, but his talent for nearly effortless self-promotion would be the envy of any carnival barker.

Bradbury also attended the daytime program at the convention, and did his best to stay awake through the seemingly interminable series of speakers. In the informal evening sessions, he got to meet and talk with many fans he knew as correspondents to *Imagination!* He seems to have hit it off particularly well with Ross Rocklynne, a working pro who was one of the official guests of the convention. Rocklynne and Bradbury were part of a group who quit Manhattan on July 4th, in favor of an excursion to the venerable amusement center at Coney Island. Despite Bradbury's Technocratic sympathies, he chose not to attend the "Futurian Conference" in Brooklyn that afternoon. Neither did Mark Reinsberg or Erle Korshak, despite the fact that the two were expected to be in charge of the 1940 convention in Chicago. Bradbury, Korshak, Reinsberg and Rocklynne posed for a photograph in an antique car with Jack Agnew and another fan identified as "V. Kidwell;" Bradbury kept a framed enlargement of this photo on the wall of his basement for most of his life.

Rocklynne and Bradbury would continue to pal around for several days after the end of the convention, an experience that was almost certainly more educational than anything associated with the NYCon. From Broadway and Times Square to the Subway and Coney Island's sea air, Bradbury took it all in, and found New York was everything he'd heard and much more.

Bad Roller Boy

Another possibility regarding Bradbury's seeming lack of professional ambition in the summer of 1939 is that he just wasn't ready to stop being a full-time fan just yet. He was only mastering the snarky, insurgent attitude that has always denoted the experienced science fiction fan – the telltale signs of a Sense of Wonder accessed too frequently in aid of weak and pedestrian fare. The second issue of *Futuria Fantasia* gave him an opportunity to express how jaded he was, with both fantastic fiction, and the silly, silly people who called themselves its fans. At the same time, his trip to New York had been a peak experience worth editorial attention: "The trip to New York was a happily successful thing. *Futuria Fantasia* would like to toss an orchid to the editors who contributed so generously to the convention, and at the same time blare forth with a juicy razzberry for a certain trio of fans who made fools of themselves at the Conv. (and u know who we meen)."

Bradbury meant Sam Moskowitz, Will Sykora and James Taurasi, the "Triumvirate" who had done the work of organizing the convention, but then squandered the goodwill they had earned by excluding a half-dozen rival New York fans from the event. Although Bradbury professed impatience with fannish feuds and disagreements, he reveled in a series of increasingly caustic observations of the people he met at the New York convention. He began with a profile of two fans he had particularly liked, then indulged in one-liners at the expense of several others:

"CONVENTIONAL NOTES or the report on THE S.F.L. BALL GAME, by the editor

"Score: 27 sprained ankles to 3 cracked knees.

"Ross Rocklynne: Tall, freckled, red haired, pleasant looking, good-natured and humorous – that is Rocklynne – and, by the way, in real life he spells it Rocklin. Makes the ideal traveling companion. Continually clicking away with his candid camera. Is versed in many subjects – likes plots about gigantic ideas, such as THE MOTH, giant men, and THE MEN AND THE MIRROR with an amorphous reflector, while JUPITER TRAP gave us a giant siphon. Rocklynne, 26, looks 22 or younger. Favorite expression, when agreeing with anyone is, 'That's right.' Spending most of my time after the convention with Ross, painting the town a delicate pink, I found that he is now trying a bit of Weird writing which has been unsuccessful, and some Western concocting – ditto. Ross is quite different than his characters Deveral and Colbie. Somehow I had imagined a Rocklynne with a sharp gaunted face and bulging muscles – I found, instead, a good example of what mite be called typical college species number #569Z, a cross between science and wit, well mixed and jelled in an Empire State tall body. Lives in Cincinnati. His characters, Colbie and Deveral, are two of the most consistent and popular guys in s.f. today, according to Campbell.

"Charlie Hornig: The dark horse who says neigh to every manuscript I write for him. Dark-haired, dark-eyed, dark-skinned fiend who deals from the bottom of the manuscript pile over at *Science-Fiction*. He has just learned to speak English during the past week and now he finds it much more fun picking out the manuscripts instead of leaping into a pile of them and bobbing up with one between his teeth. Makes lousy speeches. Is a human dynamo and expert guide to anyone in Manhattan. Makes money on the side selling shoestrings on the I.R.T. between the Bronx and Coney Island. Father was a toupee manufacturer which makes

Charlie hair to a big-wig's fortune. Thanx, Charlie, for your presence in New York to guide me around. And I just LOVE *Science Fiction*! (paid adv.)

"Impressions cawt short: **John W. (werewolf) Campbell**, a scientific theory in a potato sack suit with high rubber boots to match.

"Julius Schwartz and **Groucho Marx**: look-alikes.

"Mort Weisinger, a plump smile.

"A. Merritt, the man on the billboards with a mug of Milwaukee beer in his hand. Jovial, glasses, chubby. Not a bit mysterious.

"Forrest J Ackerman, dressed in future garb at convention, looking like a fugitive from a costume shop.

"Willy Ley, a pair of thick-lensed glasses with an accent. **"Lowndes** – moustache and gold tooth – double feature. **Leslie Perry** – Madame Butterfly with bangs.

"Henry Kuttner, a voice from a pile of cigarettes. **Morojo**, short and sweet, commonly referred to as the VOICE OF MIDGE. **Sykora**, nervous breakdown with hair. **Moskowitz**, human fog-horn: following his opening speech New York gripped by earth tremors. **Wollheim**, Communist, born in a revolving door, believes in revolutions, get it? Or do you? **Sykora, Moskowitz, Taurasi** – three little pigs. **Manly Wade Wellman** – the human JELL-O! **Kornbluth**, a well-padded belch. **Swisher**, massive literary Babe Ruth, king of so-what! Robert **J. Thompson**, the leaning tower of Pisa wired for sound."

As Bradbury ran out of fans and pros to skewer before reaching the bottom of the page, he filled it out with a little story that explained why there were still only a few women interested in being part of fandom:

"LOCAL LEAGUE LIFE

"Nite of Halloween the Paramount theatre found itself besieged with members of the S.F.L. when 4Sj, Morojo, Pogo, Bradbury, Corvais, Rogers, Amory, Eldred and others met there to enjoy special preview of Bob Hope film CAT AND CANARY. Bradbury took along weird mask fashioned by Harryhausen and, in spookiest part of film, scared hell out of innocent blonde sitting alongside. Her scream was heard over in Pomona. Chandeliers rocked. Bradbury then took off mask and laffed and the girl fainted."

The rest of the issue was mostly filled out with fiction, much of it written by Bradbury under a series of aliases. Bok contributed a story as well as the cover illustration, but he used a second pseudonym, "Anthony Corvais," as his byline. At least Henry Kuttner was willing to contribute under his own name. This proliferation of identities was far from unusual in fandom, but Bradbury had crossed some kind of line by claiming that his imaginary friends – Corvais and Guy Amory – were now going to the movies with him. Had he chosen at that point to cease bathing and begin traveling the country, sponging off gullible fans and stealing from their book collections, he would have been indistinguishable from Claude Degler. And his eccentricities would increase over time. He never obtained a driver's license, and felt very keenly that automobiles were the most dangerous element in modern human life. His eyesight deteriorated until he needed thick glasses, and became a sufficient reason to prevent him from serving in the armed forces during the war. He lived at home with his family until he was 27 years old, when he married the only woman he had ever dated.

All My Charms Are Now O'erthrown

Indeed, Bradbury had every opportunity to run his talents down a dead end, immerse himself in fan politics, and exhaust himself with an increasingly elaborate and unprofitable succession of fanzines and little magazines. He could have grown old on the corner of Norton Avenue and Olympic Boulevard. But he had already passed out of his own personal golden age of science fiction, and would pursue a much wider range of interests in the future. There were four issues of *Futuria Fantasia* published through the fall of 1940; #4 featured "Hell," a short story by Robert Heinlein writing under the pseudonym "Lyle Monroe." It was Heinlein's only story to be published in a fanzine. Ross Rocklynne, Hannes Bok, and his close friends Emil Petaja and Henry Hasse were among the "real" contributors to later issues. As was traditional, Bradbury collected material for a fifth issue, but was distracted by other work and never published it.

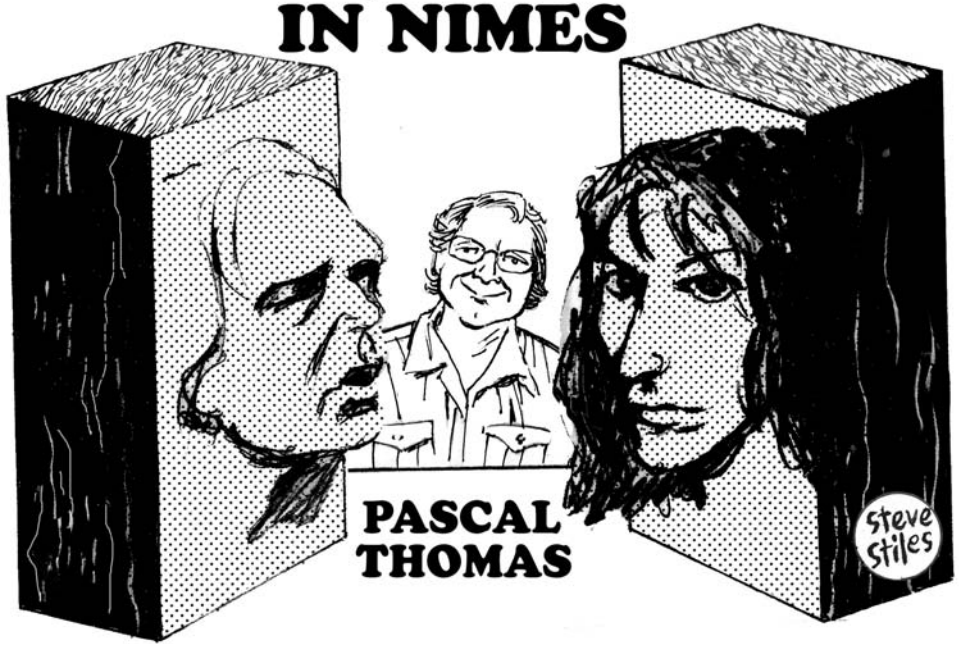
He had his flirtation with the stage in the Wilshire Players Guild, and contributed material to other publishers' fan mags. He submitted the story "The Pendulum," originally composed for *FuFa* in collaboration with Henry Hasse, to *Super Science Stories* and it was accepted for publication in November 1941. He made $15 off the sale. His first "solo" sale came early in 1942, and paid even less; he received $13.75 for the short story "The Lake." But by the end of 1942, he was working full time as a writer. Friendships with other creative characters like Ray Harryhausen and the cartoonist Charles Addams served Bradbury famously. When a young editor named Truman Capote pulled Bradbury's story "The Homecoming" out of a slush pile for the 1946 Halloween issue of *Mademoiselle* magazine, Addams contributed a cartoon to illustrate it. This tale introduced the curious Elliot Family of Illinois, characters that would appear in several of Bradbury's stories. Addams had begun using his own ghoulish characters in 1938, but the collaboration with Bradbury helped cement their association with the idea of a macabre family of eccentrics. The two planned an elaborate illustrated history of the Elliots, but this never materialized. But Addams continued illustrating what would become known as "The Addams Family," with the double "d" of "Addams" serving as a subtle reminder of the double-l Elliots. "The Homecoming" was part of Bradbury's first anthology, *Dark Carnival*, published by Arkham House in 1947, while "The Addams Family" franchise extended to television, and a big budget movie series starring Raul Julia and Anjelica Huston.

Ray's story "The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms" hit the big time with publication in *The Saturday Evening Post* in 1951. It described a pelagic dinosaur attracted to the surface world by the sound of a lighthouse's foghorn. The producers of a film with a remarkably similar premise decided to buy the rights to Bradbury's story to take advantage of his rapidly increasing reputation. Naturally, the film's model motion effects were created by the great Ray Harryhausen, who based the "Rhedosaurus" on the illustration that accompanied the story in the *Post*. Not much in the film had any relationship to Bradbury's story, but it's worth noting that its climax takes place at Coney Island. Bradbury later explained that he had been inspired by the sight of a dilapidated roller coaster near the Pacific Ocean. The broken structure made him think of a dinosaur's skeleton.

The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms was a fairly standard giant monster movie, largely distinguished by Harryhausen's excellent animation. But the deals behind the picture and the buzz around Bradbury were enough to attract the attention of director John Huston. And Huston would hire Bradbury to write a screen adaptation of *Moby Dick*, just the kind of Hollywood adventure he had dreamed of having when he arrived in 1934. Perhaps Mr. Electrico, that long departed carnival magician, had known something after all, when he exhorted the young Ray to immortality on that summer night in Waukegan so many years ago. Although Ray's life ended in 2012, his stature as a writer remains undiminished, and new adaptations of his work continue to appear. It can certainly be argued that Ray Bradbury has left such an extensive legacy that he has achieved the kind of immortality that every writer dreams about. Because of the quiet power of his fiction, generations as yet unborn may find themselves seized with an inexplicable nostalgia for celluloid collars, street car rides and comic strips featuring Flash Gordon and Tarzan of the Apes. That this process may seem externally indistinguishable from magic only increases the delight in store for those who will yet discover it.

—Andy Hooper

A LONG, LIVE NIGHT IN NIMES



When an occasional contributor to *Trap Door* takes the stage in front of thousands of people, and it's happening in my backyard, I guess I should be there—what a perfect excuse for an article. Of course, it almost didn't happen. But I should provide some background.

As many a fan, I am always late, RSN holds no mystery for me. And it's not getting any better with age. Back in June, I heard from a friend that Neil Young was touring Europe with Crazy Horse (he was taking a trip to Paris for the express purpose to see that show). And he also told me about the Nimes gig. With Patti Smith opening. Wow. Well, Paris is far away from Toulouse, but Nimes is in the South, and more to the point, it's even closer to our summer home in Béziers. You know how it is: I dallied and dithered and procrastinated, waited for additional info about our summer calendar, and by the time I got around to purchasing tickets on the web, all the good and expensive seats (or spaces) were taken. Fourteen were left, the site was telling me. The Nimes Arena—an antique Roman amphitheater—could hold more than 20,000 spectators in its 2nd century AD heyday. Fourteen left? I bought one in a hurry. Open seating, alas.

Had I been reasonable, I'd have showed up way ahead of time. But that Wednesday, July 17, was the day I was leaving Toulouse for Béziers to start my vacation. So, you know how it is: there was always one more book to pack, one more window to shutter, one more letter to file away before I could lock the door and start the car. To us Europeans, Toulouse and Nimes are far from next door; it's 120 miles from Toulouse to Béziers (which is along the way), and although we may go up to 80 mph on the freeways here (and I do), trucks are everywhere, and it took a couple of hours before I could get to Béziers where I had some amount of luggage to drop, only to take to the road again, unreasonably fast again, to reach Nimes before 8 p.m. after an hour and a half drive. And I did make it by 7:40. But right after the freeway exit, there was a glut of trafic —a line of obvious concertgoers.

Still far from the arena, I spotted the only space left in a no parking zone already full of parked cars, I managed to shoehorn my car in (thank god it's a small one), got out, cursed myself for not taking a map of Nimes with me, walked in a likely direction, came on the heels of a group of Spaniards looking as uncertain as I, checked a map on a bus stop, reassured my Southern neighbors in Catalan (I can't speak Spanish, but luckily those guys also spoke Catalan—not too surprising, as Catalonia is the part of Spain closest to Nimes). As I neared the arena, the strains of "Dancing Barefoot" reached my ears. Hey, not fair! It was only one minute past eight… but there I was, the venue was essentially full, they'd started right on time.

Those Roman guys knew how to build amphitheaters, and that one, although not as tall as Rome's Coliseum, is one of the best-preserved (after centuries of being turned into a makeshift fortress, then a city neighborhood). A maze of corridors and stairs, leading to the various tiers of reserved or open seating. Alas, by now every last step was full of spectators, not a space in sight, and knots of despairing late comers clustering near the top of every flight of stairs. I wheedled and cajoled my way up to the last row, and (miracle!) found a few inches of standing room at the very top, resting my back on the rim wall, sparrows circling overhead. That wall itself was nice and wide, made of large limestone blocks (those Romans knew how to, etc), but patrolled by stern security personnel. No guardrail up there, you see, and in the past months several people had jumped to their death on the street seventy feet below to the point that single visitors are now forbidden in the Nimes arena —you have to come in groups of at least two. So, no sitting on top of that nice wall…that meant standing for four hours, my knees and back will hate me for it.

Staying more than a hundred yards away from the stage should be a bummer. Musicians look like ants, you can't see much of their faces—and no giant screen that night, we're talking a basic show here, concentrating on the music. On the other hand, modern equipment is so good that you're not losing anything musically speaking, and seen from that distance, you can't say whether Patti Smith is in her sixties or in her twenties—in "Privilege (Set Me Free)" she asks the Lord to give her energy. Well, her prayers have been granted. That evening was shaping up to be so good that I started scribbling frantic snippets in the margins of the newspaper I'm always lugging around, to read during any moment of waiting time that could occur.

An unexpected upside to my location was the landscape. I felt like a fly stuck on the equator of an imaginary sphere, half sky, half crowd. Above me, the gradually darkening, storm-threatening sky (eventually, not a drop fell; rain had hit earlier in the afternoon). Below, a huge bowl filled with people, with stage and scaffolding at one extremity (yes, I've just lied, the amphitheater isn't circular, but oval in fact, and my sphere was an ellipsoid, and when it got dark, the lights looked like an inverted ship in the night). But the best sights were at the equator, 360 degrees of horizon lined with the city's landscape, those low slope pink tile roofs, public buildings and tree-lined avenues, the spires of a half dozen churches, and on a wooded hill overlooking the city, the Magne Tower.

I always forget how old that structure is. When the Romans submitted to their rule the part of the Mediterranean coastline between Alps and the Pyrenees—a task completed around 100 BC—they took over a string of pre-existing cities, founded by the Greeks, the Ibers, the Celt (Gauls)… A large defensive tower had been built in Nimes by the Gallic rulers in the 3rd century BC. Augustus built over it, doubling its height, and to this day, stubby and stubborn, it stands more than 100 feet high ("Magne" is Latin for "big," hardly altered). It was still watching us from its hilltop—without deterring me from the soundtrack.

From my vantage, the audience was a sea of bald spots, surrounded by long, unruly hair in various shades of grey (luckily nobody, except the security guards, could look at me from the same angle and be subjected to the

same spectacle). We're not talking about millennia or even centuries here, but Neil Young *has* been around for a long time—his audience, too. He's written so many songs that it's always difficult to guess which ones are going to be played at a given concert. Of course, we knew he was with Crazy Horse, and his latest album, *Psychedelic Pill*, strongly suggested a show in the *Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere/Rust Never Sleeps/ Ragged Glory* lineage. Saturated guitar riffs galore. The opening salvo of "Love and Only Love" and "Powderfinger" didn't disappoint, although the latter was played with less raw rage than I would have liked. In some sense, the band made up for it with the ten minute feedback coda to "Walk Like a Giant," one of the long tracks of the latest album.

Perhaps those ten minutes were going on a bit. Perhaps that was done on purpose, as they were followed by the acoustic portion of the show, including a couple of unreleased songs, including the moving "Singer Without a Song" played by Neil on the piano. There were a couple of other surprises, such as the low key encore ("Roll Another Number"/ "Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere," a choice of tempo and lyrics that didn't call for hand-clapping nor the waving of thousands of lighters), the inclusion of "Surfer Joe and Moe the Sleaze" (semi-obscure tune from *Re-ac-tor*), or the absence of "Like a Hurricane" or "Tonight's the Night."

In spite of those disappointed expectations, or thanks to them, a job very well done. But Patti Smith was something else. A storm of feeling and emotion. Towards the end of her set she had the whole crowd clapping in time. The Patti Smith group mostly played songs from their first four albums, and excerpts from the latest album, *Banga*, which were holding their own against the venerable standards. Lenny Kaye, the stated motivation for this article, delivered a number of fluid and crackling guitar solos. The band seemed to breathe new life into those songs, which sounded better than the memories I have of two PSG gigs in '77 and '79 (but memory is a fickle thing). There were a lot of introductions, sometimes sad ("This Is the Girl" about Amy Winehouse, and "Because the Night" dedicated to Fred Smith), sometimes unintentionally funny, such as that to the song about the bullfighter Manolete, who was gored to death during a corrida. "Both the bull and Manolete died," commented Patti Smith," which makes them equally saintly and equally well, equally saintly, that's enough." That evocation, at any rate, fitted the place— the Nimes arena is still used every year for the bull fights which are the centerpiece of the *feria*, several days of public revelry (and drunkenness) with the corridas for an excuse. That tradition came from Spain, but has been going on from more than a century, to the point that it's now perceived as homegrown, and many fighting bulls are raised in the nearby Camargue region.

Bulls, horses (of courses), Banga (Bulgakov's dog), the spirits of many an animal were summoned by the music, with Smith as shaman, channeling the energy of the crowd. As the intensity grew, I became totally entranced, shouting lyrics in out-of-tune harmony (biting my lips once in a while, it wasn't nice for my immediate neighbors), getting frenzied as "Horses" segued into a ferocious "Gloria," the set closer.

There, however, something stuck in my throat—but that requires some context, another article maybe, and the margins of the newspaper weren't large enough to write that down. A few words of explanation, however: Roland Wagner was a fan and prolific French SF writer (about fifty novels), who gradually gained high recognition for his work. In his SF detective series *Les Futurs Mysterès de Paris,* he created a nonhuman character called Gloria (a distributed AI that could use any network as its infrastructure). Roland was an avid rock'n'roll listener, too, with a marked preference for the garage psychedelic side of the '60s—as exemplified by the *Nuggets* compilation album (due to Lenny Kaye, need I say?) and the subsequent *Pebbles* series.

His favorite version of "Gloria" was that by the Shadows of Knight. Roland was a good friend of mine, too. We'd spent many hours discussing rock, sf, and politics, and I'd done just that at a dinner at his house in early August 2012, just days before he died in a car crash. He was 52. You may dispute whether that's young, but we (in the French SF community) all felt the pain and a feeling of unfairness of life, because in a sense Roland was at the threshold of a new stage of his career. In 2011 he'd released a book he'd worked on for more than a decade, *Rêves de Gloire*, that was head and shoulders above his previous body of work. Its an alternate world novel about Algiers in the '60s and '70s, which didn't follow the fate of newly independent Algeria, kept a mixed population of local and European descent, and saw the rise of a psychedelic rock scene before becoming an independent city with a fiercely freedom-loving civic spirit. This is all told through multiple viewpoints, in a series of intricate flash backs from the 2000s, interspersed with fragments of an encyclopedia of an imaginary musical history. And even though it may seem hard to follow presented that way, it's pure pleasure all the way through. A tour de force that'll have no successor, alas, but which I highly recommend if you can read French. So I can't listen to "Gloria" now without thinking about some of this, and here I close this digression.

Smith and Young have written their share of songs about lives tragically cut short. "Powderfinger" and "This Is the Girl" I've already mentioned. Some were not played that night, of course: *Gone Again.* "Tonight's the Night"—their respective songs about Kurt Cobain. One song that touched on that, and *was* played with amazing intensity that night, is Young's "Rocking in the Free World" (the part about the junkie girl throwing her baby into a garbage can). It came just before the encores, and was to me the high point of the concert. I liked that. That track is from Neil Young's 1989 album *Freedom*, and I do now think that it, not *Ragged Glory*, marks his return to greatness after the calamitous '80s, following in that Paul Williams' opinion. Oh my. I wanted this piece to be fannish and light-hearted, it's not turning out that way, but let's not get misty-eyed again.

Recently, the British *Daily Mail* made fun of Mick and Keith's lined faces. Like the Rolling Stones, Patti Smith and Neil Young are turning into living monuments, and it's fair to ask whether it makes sense to listen to youth rebellion music fifty years later. Smith didn't cover "My Generation" this time, but did do Eddy Cochran's "Summertime Blues," and she and her listeners have long ceased to be "too young to vote." So, are we just steeping ourselves in nostalgia here? One answer to that is that both artists are still producing new and interesting material (Young being more prolific than Smith, but then, he has always been astonishingly prolific). Another one is that even old songs, played again in a different context, take on new resonances, just as the age-old stones of the amphitheater served many purposes through history circus games, then refuge against invaders, then housing. Until the 18th century, there even were two churches inside the Nimes arena, which was restored to something like its original state in the 19th century only, and nowadays house bullfights and concerts. Anger, love, inner discovery, all can be evoked in various ways by the same poem or the same chords as we live them through different ages of life. As long as they're built on a sound foundation (if I dare say). The "I hope I die before I get old" line from "My Generation" has lost all credibility, Neil Young and Patti Smith have refused to join the 27 Club, and we can be thankful to them for that.

—Pascal J. Thomas

I AM IRON MAN

Rob Hansen

(no, not that type of iron)

The year 2013 brought me two very unexpected things. The first was the fan fund that took me to Corflu. The second was the news I might have a genetic disorder.

It started with a phone call from my brother. This was unusual. We like each other and get on well, though I've often wondered what it must be like for him to have a brother who is so much better-looking and more intelligent than he is. He of course has wondered the exact same thing about me. We rarely ring the other unless it's a serious family matter. Turns out he had been feeling fatigued lately and was diagnosed with haemochromatosis, a genetic blood condition.

A DNA test had confirmed both our parents were carriers, so he was advised to inform his siblings because this meant there was a high likelihood we had it too. Basically, those with the condition have too much iron in their blood. It's pretty much the opposite of being anaemic, though one of the primary symptoms—fatigue—is common to both.

"It's not too serious if it's treated," he explained, "and the treatment couldn't be more straightforward. They take you in a few times a year and they bleed you, though you may need to go in once a week at first."

As he explained to me and I later related to Avedon, the initial bleeding is to remove iron from your body, after which you switch to a low-iron diet to slow future build-up.

"So I wouldn't be able to eat a meal of beef and spinach, washed down with Guinness?"

"You've never had a meal of beef and spinach, washed down with Guinness in your life," she helpfully pointed out.

"I know, and now I never will," I said. "I feel an unaccountable sense of loss. Still, having too much iron in our blood would explain one thing about us Hansen boys," I said.

"What's that?"

"Our magnetic personalities."

She snorted in what I choose to think was agreement.

I was a bit puzzled by that word 'haemochromatosis'. When John Wyndham's novel 'The Kraken Wakes' was first published Brian Aldiss took him to task about its aliens, to which he had given the name 'chromosaur'.

"But, John," Brian explained, "that means 'terrible color'."

If so then haemochromatosis must mean 'blood-color-atosis'. Wouldn't, say, 'haemo-ferrotosis' be more accurate?

Since I'd need time off to get a blood test I had to tell my employers about this, which I did during a tea break.

"I may have a genetic disorder…" I began.

"Yes," said my colleague Phil, "it's called 'being Welsh'."

As a long time SF and comics reader that word "genetic" intrigued me, of course. Visions of being a mutant and gaining amazing abilities swam before me. So I went online and looked up what haemochromatosis could do for me.

Would I gain the ability to read minds, I wondered…?

"Symptoms include chronic fatigue, weakness, lethargy…"

…or fly?

"…impaired memory, mood swings, irritability…"

…or perform amazing acrobatic stunts?

"…abdominal pain, diabetes…"

…or even to fire laser beams out of my ass?

"…loss of sex drive, impotence…"

Wait, what?

"…bronzing of the skin, or a permanent tan."

That last certainly hasn't happened. I remain as pale as ever. Was this thing at least rare and exotic…?

"Haemochromatosis is primarily a disease of white people…"

Apparently not.

"…and as many as 1-in-200 of the population may have it."

News of my possible genetic distinction was greeted with interest at our regular Thursday night pub meeting that week. Cedric focused immediately on the most important question.

"Why," he asked, "would anyone want to shoot laser beams from their arse?"

"They wouldn't," I said, "but never mind that. What matters is that, when you compare them, your blood is thin and watery whereas mine is like a thick cordial you have to dilute to taste. They fortify stuff with iron, which means my blood comes pre-fortified."

"Zzzzzzz," added Avedon, who had fallen asleep in her chair.

"You'd be at a disadvantage if you ever came up against Magneto," said Owen.

"True, but on the other hand vampires would regard my blood much as we do a fine wine."

I could see the review in my mind: "It's rich and full-bodied, salty and pretentious, with an overtone of ham and a subtle hint of corflu. My staff and I just love it!" –Vlad the Throatripper (R-Florida).

"You could use them to shoot fish, I suppose," said Cedric, pulling me back to reality.

"What?!"

"The laser beams," he said, "the ones you'd be firing from your arse."

OK, so not reality.

"Why on Earth would I want to shoot fish?"

"Zzzzzzz," agreed Avedon.

I had by now completely convinced myself that I had haemochromatosis, so the results of the blood test a week later came as a shock.

"You don't have it?" said Avedon.

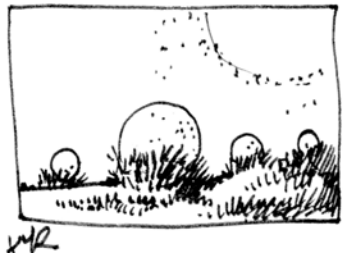
"No, I don't. Turns out my blood is just as thin and watery as yours. You know what this means, of course?"

"That you'll be having a meal of beef and spinach, washed down with Guinness?"

"No," I said, "It means I am *not* Iron Man. Which is a shame. I was really looking forward to using that line as an introduction."

So it goes.

—Rob Hansen



PAUL SKELTON

{Before launching into comments on the previous issue, Paul wrote about finding} …a couple of shelves of old fanzines which had been blocked away behind the kipple and which were now accessible. As and Bs, plus trip reports and all the miscellaneous stuff you don't want to file alphabetically.

One of the great advantages of reading old fanzines (as opposed to current fanzines) is that you don't have to LoC the buggers. So whilst I keep telling myself "Really must get around to that *Trap Door* LoC for Robert." It's been so much easier just to read an old fanzine or two instead. Trouble is, you are starting to haunt my conscience even there. I started at the back of the Bs and am working my way forward. In Alva Rogers *Bixel* 3 (June 1965) there you are looming large and disruptively in his Pacificon II report. Then, moving forward to Vic Ryan's *Bane* 2 (September 1960) again there you are with an article, "Recruiting Problem" criticizing the N3F's recruiting bureau, after first stating "Now I have no feud with whoever may be the present head of that department."

Then, in *Bane* 3 (no date given, a general fannish tendency about which you complain in your response in *Bane* 6 to MZB's article in *Bane* 5)…but quick, let's leap into the Wayback machine and return to *Bane* 3 where, in response to your piece in *Bane* 2 Honey Graham informs you that she is "…head of the Recruiting Bureau…" whilst also revealing that "…Dick Keyes is in charge of recruiting…", which apparent dichotomy caused Vic Ryan, in his youthful naivety and unused to the ways of bureaucracy, to insert a croggled editorial "?". Actually, this reminder about the ways of bureaucracy came in handy, for Honey went on to add, in responding to Nick Falasca's piece on Harlan Ellison, "Another cute trick that wasn't mentioned by Nick was that Harlan stole a bird bath with the aid of, I think, Bill Venable and Norm Browne. They lugged it over to my house on the bus and set it up in the middle of my front room. I couldn't budge the thing, so for weeks I faithfully dusted it; many visitors wondered why I had a birdbath in my front room, and it *was* hard to explain."

Ignoring, at this late remove, the moral question as to whether stealing someone's birdbath is merely a "cute trick," this information immediately struck fear into our hearts. You see just a few weeks ago, for Mothers Day, Deborah and Nick clubbed together and bought Cas…(blast of heraldic horns)…a birdbath, which is perched on the corner of our patio…not chained down, cemented in, or safely secured in any way. What should we do?

Now I know many years have flown down the River of Time since those days, but who knows but that the flame for half-inching birdbaths might still burn fiercely in Harlan's breast? Fortunately Honey also pointed us at the solution. We have formed a bureau. The National Bureau for Preventing Harlan Ellison from Stealing Cas' Birdbath (though admittedly tNBfPHEfSCB is not an acronym to trip lightly off the tongue. More likely an acronym to make you trip over your tongue in fact.) Cas is head of the bureau of course. Well, it *is* her birdbath. It is after all an administrative role, so my nose is not too put out of joint. I of course am Director of anti-Harlan (& assorted cohorts) Operations – Birdbath Division. Which means that Bestie has to settle for Birdbath Protection Operative (or BPO as he is now known). His task is to bark like crazy if ever Harlan or any of his minions set foot in the garden, and indeed to rush out and attack him in defense of the birdbath if the French windows happen to be open. Of course being only a West Highland Terrier he is not tall enough to actually knee him (or indeed any of his minions) in the groin, but he will be plenty mad, you betchum!

One of the old trip reports I was reading (re-reading, actually) was Eric Bentcliffe's *Epitaff* and there on page 63 he wrote…

"The second call was to Bob Tucker, and it seemed oddly significant that just across from the phone booth was a store displaying a multitude of birdbaths! (I wanted to buy one to take along for Bob, but I don't think we could have got it in the car)."

…which leads me to question what it is with these old-time US fans and birdbaths? Did Bob need one to replace one mysteriously stolen? Or did he just collect birdbaths? At least I can now assure Cas that her need for a Birdbath is quintessentially fannish.

Another old trip report I reread was *The Lindsay Report* in which she wrote on page 10…

"Naturally the fan talk was great to me, and we all discussed *A Trip To Hell* which had struck the New York area that week."

…but there is no explanation as to what this was. In one of the *Bane*s Vic also made a passing mention to this with no further explanation, leading me to conclude that it was some fan's *ASI*-lite. I tried Googling it, but t'interweb is awash with something current of the same title. Then it occurred to me that as one who was active during these times I could ask you once more to leap into the nearest phone-booth and change into your secret Super-Hero identity of "Fount-of-all-knowledge Man." Of course, after all this time you may no longer remember. *{Ah, but of course I remember! But I'll leave full disclosure to whoever cares to provide it (hi, and move on…}*

So thus I finally come to *Trap Door* #29, the "Liou Gehrig's Disease Theme Issue" (surely a Fannish First). True that only two of the articles mentioned this, but as they were easily the stand-out peces in the issue I think we can safely call it that.

I do however believe I have found a scientific (or at least a technical) error in Greg Benford's "A Cambridge Evening." He states that the invitation invited "my wife Joan and me…" (2) "…to evening meal with Professor Martin Rees." (3). He later continues "I walked in with Joan and saw at the table two men…" (5) "…and their wives:" (7). He adds, a couple of paragraphs further "The dining room was small, with room for six at the table." This of course means that there were seven people vying for places at a six-seater table. One of them obviously had to sit in the corner balancing his plate his knee, holding his wine glass in one hand and trying desperately not to one-handedly spill salad, Navy bean soup, or veal *a la brochard* all over his trousers. I say "his" because etiquette would dictate that any gentlemen would defer to ladies in this matter. One has no knowledge of how advanced Stephen Hawkings' illness was back in 1976, but given that he was already at the table along with Maurice Dirac, I think we can safely exclude these gentlemen. That leaves a simple choice between Greg and Martin Rees. Now normally one would expect one's host to step into the breach to prevent any embarrassment to one of his guests, but I believe Greg must have made the ultimate sacrifice and, realizing that Martin could not easily perform his hostly function whilst seated in the corner, volunteered for this awkward position. Possibly he cited every American's well-known tendency to eat anything and everything (with the possible exception of Navy bean soup) one-handedly with a fork in order to win the day on this. How typical of him to make no mention of this act of selflessness when presenting an otherwise detailed account of the evening.

Of course the seating/guests anomaly wasn't the error I spotted…not if it was indeed a detailed account. Greg wrote that "…the finishing treat…" (I note he didn't refer to it as "dessert" as quite possibly at Cambridge this course may be

archaically referred to as "pudding") was served after "…a five-course meal." Now unless at Cambridge they perversely serve the two wines he mentioned as separate courses, I only counted three previous courses.

Contending for the honor of "stand-out" article was Andy Hooper's "A Tuesday In July." Andy wove his various threads together superbly and the knowledge that all these strands were part of the fabric of a single day delights at first by the apparent unlikelihood of just such a juxtaposition, and then delights again by the intriguing supposition that such convergences take place far more frequently than we might imagine, but simply go unremarked as we are simply never in the right place to spot them. It occurs to me that the right place to spot them, or at least go looking for them, would be Google as I seem to recall once discovering via this that the release of the film "Destination Moon" occurred on the same day as the start of the Korean War (whilst in the process of LoCing an issue of *Banana Wings* I believe). You don't suppose Andy got the idea for this article the same way, do you? If so he certainly made exceptional use of the information.

Andy's article shades things for me in that I learned something new from it…well, several things actually, but especially one particular thing. You see, in my naivety I had assumed that Lou Gehrig was famous simply for having the disease named after him, of having been the first case properly identified and described in the medical canon. I thought that if they hadn't spotted it in this Gehrig bloke it would probably now be known as "Stephen Hawkings Disease." I never knew that Lou was a famous baseball player. Then again, by way of an excuse for my ignorance in this regard, you must make allowances for the fact that I am an Englishman and hence have only ever heard of two baseball players—Babe Ruth and Joe DiMaggio (and the latter only because of the Paul Simon song and the fact that he married Marilyn Monroe)…and I catch myself telling a lie, there is also Mickey Mantle, though I had to Google first to verify that he was indeed a baseball player. To these I can now add, and will always be able to remember, Lou Gehrig.

STEVE STILES

If I don't get around commenting to anything else, I must at least say how much I've admired Dan Steffan's artwork in many *Trap Door*s, not to mention *Banana Wings* #50. The big lug is definitely on a roll, and I look forward to acquiring his t-shirt at this year's Corflu in Portland.

You've written quite a bit about The Farm but have never gone into what interests me the most—Stephen Gaskin's philosophy of Right Livelihood and your take on it, whether your exposure to it was beneficial and long-lasting. At one point I had his *Monday Night Class* and *The Caravan*, but now a quick check on my Philosophy and Religion bookcase (yes, I have a Philosophy and Religion bookcase; working in a bookstore for ten years does that) disappointingly reveals that I no longer have them. Did I dump them because I was disillusioned with Gaskin, or did they get lost in one of my many moves in the seventies? My memories of the two times I heard him at the Family Dog are a mixture of zen lectures, mysticism, and just plain common sense delivered with a great deal of charisma. I was interested to read William Breiding's account of Gaskin getting irritated at a crying baby; when I was there and that happened he merely asked that everybody in the audience turn and eyeball the offending infant—who then immediately shut up. I wonder what that did to the kid's subconscious up into adulthood.

JERRY KAUFMAN

I enjoyed your material on buying stoves for the Farm. Makes me wonder if you're writing these pieces to assemble into a book-length memoir of life on the Farm. If no one else has published such a book—or even if they have—I think you'd find a publisher, as memoirs are popular these days. I think social movements in the 1960s and 1970s are also crowd pleasers, or at least Boomer pleasers.

I also found reading Andy Hooper on the events in New York on July 4, 1939, a joy. It's quite a slice of life—events that mean a great deal to Andy and to many of us—somehow connected by being in our minds, though outwardly simply simultaneous.

I connect David Redd's "A Different Culture" with Dave Langford's piece from several years ago, which I think was called, "A Welsh Alphabet," and which I think you published. *{Yes,"South Wales Alphabet," in #26 back in now far oof exotic 2009.}* Nostalgia with a bit of sentimentality to it. Makes me wish Suzle and I had been able to penetrate Wales a bit deeper than Cardiff on our last UK visit. But I suppose none of it would be as David describes it, unless there is a deliberately preserved Welsh village somewhere, waiting for tourists like us.

Interestingly, Lou Gehrig is name-checked by Greg Benford. His memoir is rather nostalgic, too. His description of Dirac's conversational style reminds me of an anecdote I read about equally taciturn President Calvin Coolidge. A woman at a White House dinner told the President she'd made a bet with a friend that she could get him to say more than two words. "You lose," he replied.

Thanks for running the Lenny Kaye letter—I will have to add him to our mailing list. I'm thinking of going to the Patti Smith Group concert here in late February. Getting to (possibly) say hi to Lenny (we met several times many years ago when I lived in New York) is only part of the reason to go. I saw Patti Smith many times from 1975 to 1978 or '79 while I was in New York, and when the group's tour brought them to Seattle soon after I moved here. Her most recent album "Banga" is the best in twenty five years or so, and I would love to see the group live and in concert once more. *{And did you?}*

DAVID REDD

Some lovely stuff in *Trap Door* 29. The revived pieces were well worth presenting, and if a few readers had encountered some before, you still gave those folk plenty more to enjoy. Greg Benford's Cambridge (amazingly well described) was another different culture to discover, one which was born and flourished approximately in the interval between the Shrine of St. David being vandalized and restored, and happily both cultures continue. (The mention of Lou Gehrig's disease in the article must be another example of editorial synchronicity. Perhaps Steve's pteranodon isn't so surprising. Do you send out vibrations for this?)

Thinking of you as editor thus, it was a wise decision to lead off with your own "Wood King" saga of meeting the backwoods Mutt and Jeff. Nice, and human. In return, may I offer the thoughts your piece inspired?

Stoves, yes. Your USA pioneering tradition—and Scandinavian immigrants—must have given you a much more widespread use of woodburning stoves than was normal in my area. Larger country houses and farms had the big Aga or Rayburn kitchen ranges for warmth, hot water and cooking; these or their smaller equivalents gradually filtered down the social scale. As late as 1952 a new council house (sort of post-WWII social housing) which my family moved to was built with an open grate and fire-dogs to hold a kettle or cooking vessels over the coals, but also had a small side oven for baking or whatever. Coal-burning, you notice; this was South Wales. Even in the furthest west, Pembrokeshire, the seams extended all the way to the sea and out under it, and were picked at or mined for centuries. I may have mentioned before that a favored fuel in cottages was anthracite dust mixed with clay into "clom balls" which would smolder and give out heat for hours.

The woodburning stoves you were seeking out, relatively low-tech and hence maintainable by a handyman, were generally rare here until the 1970s, when a local farmer called Simon Thorpe needed to find less physically demanding work following an accident. He considered opening a bookshop—my kind of person!—but knew that without a local education supply contract it wouldn't be viable in a lowly-populated rural area. (This was before the internet; nowadays second-hand e-bookshops have sprung up all over, like microbreweries and winemakers.) However, Simon made a chance discovery of something then new to him: a woodburning stove.

Simon lived in the Teifi valley, where folklore says the last dragon in Wales was shot a couple of centuries ago, in the middle of wooded hills and old estates. The landscape was littered with virtually free fuel for which the Norwegian Jøtul woodburners were ideal. He started importing them, and had five happy years distributing cast-iron stoves before he made one sales trip too many and was killed in a car crash. I admired his spirit and enterprise, and was sorry to hear of his death. Today you can find little woodburners for sale everywhere, usually for ten-inch logs, but around here Simon Thorpe was the man who started it all.

These notes are from my unreliable memory (they could be checked and corrected from print sources including at least one article by Simon himself.) For partial confirmation I offer an ebay picture of one of his old fliers.

Good stuff elsewhere, Venus fly traps and all. (Our own native carnivorous plants are the tiny sundews on our hills. Would need a mad scientist to make a *Weird Tales* yarn out of those.)

Pamela Boal thinks the sentence is a thing of the

past? Not quite. Probably it'll survive in niche ecologies, but generally the fact of swearing and acronyms replacing conscious thought means the future is not hopeful. You could see the writing on the wall when the gerund and the subjunctive were exterminated. The apostrophe, however, is invading new territories. (Being a Celt I can do twilight gloom as thoroughly as anyone.)

JOHN BAXTER

I particularly enjoyed Andy Hooper's account of July 4, 1939, since that is the year in which I was born. My birthday comes much later, on the 14th December, in fact—a date which, considering my later intimate association with the cinema, may seem fateful, since it was the day on which *Gone With the Wind* was released. I used to make some play with this fact, particularly when teaching college in the US, but stopped when one of my students, after hearing me discourse at length on a favorite film, *Shanghai Express*, asked, "Were you on the set of this film, Mr. Baxter?" As *Shanghai Express* was made in 1931, I could see that associating myself in the student's mind with Rhett, Scarlett and the burning of Atlanta was creating the wrong impression.

To we foreigners, the 1939 fair always appears in the heightened hues of three-color Technicolor, in which most documentary footage was filmed, and the equally gaudy tones of the postcards issued to commemorate the event. Prepared before the fair opened, and taken from Artist's Impressions, they have a charming comic book look, not unlike pulp covers. They made one suspect the whole event was a gigantic hoax, cooked up by Hollywood. The impression was renewed recently by seeing a clip of Salvador Dali's "Dream of Venus" exhibit. It featured two girls swimming underwater and apparently bare-breasted in a giant fish tank. The breasts, false, were part of their costumes, but the illusion worked very well. Over the years I've brushed shoulders with a number of people who harbored vivid memories of participating in the fair. Gregory Peck was a sideshow barker for, I seem to remember, a team of Swedish dancing girls, which can't have been too painful, and Forry Ackerman was proud of having stepped up to the microphone where foreign visitors were invited to say something in their own language, and speaking a few sentences of Esperanto—the language, he informed them with his customary confidence, of the future. I'm sorry I missed all the razzamatazz, but the excuse that I wasn't yet born is, I believe, a good one.

I cringed at Greg Benford's "A Cambridge Evening," which is all the more excruciating for being so well-written. I dread those dinner parties where the host indicates your neighbor, says "And of course you've heard of…," and gives a name that signifies absolutely nothing. I became friendly in his old age with the actor Ben Lyon, mainly remembered as the man to whom Jean Harlow delivers that unforgettable line about "slipping into something more comfortable." He was married for years to the actress Bebe Daniels. I knew them both, but was taken aback when I turned up at his apartment a year after her death to have him announce he was about to remarry. "Of course you'll recognize Marian Nixon," he said, introducing me to a charming lady in her sixties. I didn't—even though, as I found out later, she had a long career in silent movies. Ben and I were never quite as friendly after that.

One always wonders if people have done this on purpose, as in the party Greg describes. James Thurber, whose talent is evoked by Yvonne Rousseau in her very interesting loc, wrote about this treacherous practice in his *Guide to the Literary Pilgrimage*. Hosts have been known to invent fictitious works, and grill guests about them. "Do you agree," they demand, "that the character of Aristide in *Coucher Avant le Soleil* is poorly thought out?" No matter how you respond, you're damned.

Actually, now that I think about it, it could be fun.

ALAN DOREY

It was rather excellent to receive *Trap Door* #29 through the letter box the other day: almost like old times, as they say—although those "old times" go quite some way back. It is almost as if my fourteen years of life outside fandom was but a temporary blip and "life as usual" has now picked up again.

Life as usual, though, has changed somewhat—many have adopted an on-line existence and whether this is a good thing or not has clearly exercised your range of LoCs. I haven't seen Greg's comments from (one presumes, #28), but I was intrigued by Paul Skelton's thoughts in this area. Without the benefit of experiencing the move from paper to digital, my initial reaction is that—blimey, there are plenty of fanzines around. Some good ones, too. Some, even, from fans I have admired for years. I might almost think that it's all rather healthy at the moment. But then I thought about Skel's comments that fans don't do their talking in fanzines any more, but in various on-line groups. I've looked at a number of these—and whilst there are amusing incidents, occasional feuds and flashpoints, kite-flying and all the rest, they ain't a substitute for a fanzine. A fanzine allows time to breathe, consider, research and refine. It is an artifact—yes, even if just on efanzines—and creators can put that extra effort in to turn them into something of merit.

The downside—of course—is that modern technology makes it too easy to do fanzines—and thus too tempting to rush at it, get the ish pubbed, get the egoboo fast, move onto the next and so on. And that's assuming the editor is capable of writing and production in the first place. Skel opines that the "on-line wossname" is overwhelming: well, yes—if you see it as a paper fanzine substitute, then of course it can be. But it isn't a substitute is it really? ITB may have thousands of posts per month, but isn't it an extra, an additional facility that wasn't there years ago? And it along with the various Facebook-based groups—are international in a way that would have been slow and expensive to handle back in the '70s when I first got involved. So, I embrace it, for all its faults.

However, I don't think we can criticize technology. Fanzine fandom, our fandom, has long been threatened with marginalization. Some talk of the Star Wars effect and there's no doubt that both the huge growth of interest in all forms of SF has led to a splintered and disconnected fannish universe. Does it matter, though? There are people around who care, who produce fanzines, who organize cons aimed at our interest groups and if there are others running in parallel streams to ours, so what? Several fanzines have started up again of late, other fans have returned from their personal wilderness and there is a real opportunity now to rebuild that cross-referencing between fanzines and editors and readers. I shall do my little bit, too.

And it was fascinating to read Andy Hooper's piece "A Tuesday In July," which provides an historical link with his observations on that first Worldcon back in 1939. Sadly, when I started out, I didn't spend too much time thinking about the historical richness of fandom—despite my base at the time being in Leeds, site of the UK's first con in 1937. I take more of an interest now, mainly to see the cyclical nature of events and trends. Andy's comments on the July 4th meeting to Discuss The Future Course Of Fandom could almost be the sort of thing that happens—in a much smaller scale—on a regular basis in those on-line groups. Here, of course, 1939 shows us that feuds and disputes are nothing new—and what was later known as The Futurian Conference ended up (as Andy says) debating "several tools into existence" to enable annual conventions to be held in different parts of the States. Maybe we need to look at where things are now and make better use of modern-day "tools" to encourage our sector of fandom to be more what we want it to be. When I started convention going in the UK, we had the Eastercon aimed mainly at the wider fannish collective), Novacon (smaller and more fanzine-focused) and small relaxacons. I went to the Eastercons because everyone else did. I helped run four of them because all the fans I related to did these things. And then, Eastercon wasn't important anymore—the start of it appealing to an even broader church of interests under the loose collective that is SF. Today I would ignore Eastercon, I'd probably try Novacon once more—but I would (and will) jump at the chance of Corflus and other such gatherings. So, where is this heading? What I like and what I appreciate about fandom is still there, it's easier to access—and all the peripheral baggage can be ignored. So I'm pleased to be back—and pleased to be getting such fine fanzines as *Trap Door* with its winning mix of good writing topped off by some smart cartoons and artwork.

JIM MOWATT

It was a different culture, says David Redd, and unfolds before me a rich and ever-changing landscape of things past and things ongoing. I could almost hear the wind howling over Solfach Draw, as hardy and weatherbeaten souls struggled against the impossible gradient eking out their existence in this land of toil and togetherness. It was a fascinating experience watching the picture unfold and change in the manner the time traveler experienced in H. G. Wells' *Time Machine*. Nothing stays the same but there are snatches of memory in the language, the poetry and the memories of the people who lived and died on this

landscape. So much is passing away now and film, television and the internet will sweep away so much more. The Yorkshire dialect I grew up with is now much dissipated and may vanish entirely as we are exposed to cultures from all over the world and devolve into a homogeneous standard accent that is an aggregation of all that we are exposed to. It is inevitable and therefore, I feel, not worth fighting against but it is important that we document what life was like before globalization.

I was very envious of Greg Benford and his Cambridge evening although I suspect I would have been too overawed to have enjoyed myself in the same situation. I haven't yet read *Timescape* so have bought it, downloaded it to my Kindle, and look forward to reading it.

{Jim also had some belated comments on #28:}

…Reading it was a splendidly alien experience for me. There were so many cultural canyons in there that I was becoming quite dizzy and disoriented. The world of the Farm seemed so many miles, years and mindscapes away, and yet I found myself intrigued and delighted by the audacity of the experiment. You put it across as a real, "let's do it" moment and I often find that attitude of "let's roll up our sleeves and give it a try" incredibly invigorating.

Likewise the Hef tale gave me a glimpse into an environment I've never connected with in any way. I picture it as a glitzy club of aspiring secret agents in sharp suits with enough confidence to face down a charging rhino.

Unfortunately, there were tales with which I did identify and these were far more mundane. Roy Kettle reminds me only too clearly of my own failing body—and then Graham Charnock pops along to tell me how rubbish I am at conversation (yes, I take almost everything I read terribly personally—I'm taking a correspondence course in egomania). However, I would like to thank Graham for validating the walking away during a conversation thing. I feel guilty when I do it to other folks, unsettled when someone does it to me, and yet it is a basic survival trait. Sometimes you just need to be somewhere else and only flight will do. Going off to the toilet or to get another drink is probably a preferable way of disentangling oneself but it comes down to whatever you feel you need to do at the time. Perhaps there could be a gopher role for this. You could sign up for this at the con and then when you send out a particular message then the boring conversation gopher rushes over to inform you off some emergency you must attend right now. I suspect that this could become very popular.

MURRAY MOORE

Greg Benford's remarking of working on his family farms and your serialization of your life on the Farm is the trigger to me describing my farming background. I don't often begin a sentence at home "When I was a farmer..." because of the result: eyerolling so vigorous that I fear my loved ones's eyesight is endangered. Nevertheless, the facts remain. I am a grandson of Ralph Moore, founder of Ralph Moore & Sons Ltd. of Norwich, Ontario. An effect of World War One in Canada was the stoppage of export from Europe of vegetable seeds; my grandfather became a seeds grower. By the 1960s, during my teenage years, my grandfather and his three sons, employees plus seasonal workers, harvested industrial volumes of asparagus, rhubarb, beets, carrots, and millet (food for budgies and canaries) on hundreds of acres, owned and rented. So the farming with which I was involved had no cows to milk or chickens from which to collect eggs. My father, oldest of the Sons, was the business's office manager. Our two-story brick house was one block from the post office of the village (fewer than 2,000 people), one block from Norwich Public School, one block from Norwich United Church, two blocks from Norwich Public Library. The business section was three blocks along the main street and one block either side of the main intersection. Norwich functioned without stoplights at its main intersection until the late 1970s.

Picking asparagus, rhubarb, and millet was by hand. Asparagus was the hardest because it had to be cut at the ground. An older cousin quit, walked out of the field on a cold wet spring day, hitchhiked home. His next job was Royal Canadian Mounted Police constable in a mining town in Manitoba. I look at my knuckles now and I imagine that they still are pale, legacy of the tender, probably sunburned, skin burned by the acidic juice splashed on my knuckles when handfuls of rhubarb leaves and rhubarb stalks were twisted and separated.

I was a seasonal Ralph Moore & Sons employee summers Grades 10 through 13 and during my university years, and full-time for some years post-university. My Uncle David did not give me a reason when he stopped me as I drove the riding lawn mower the day he told me I was done at the end of that week. My poor relationship with machinery probably was the main reason. In the course of my farming career I drove a tractor into an area of a field I was told not to enter (it didn't look too wet to me), the result being I had to get another employee with a tractor to extract my tractor from the gripping clay, during which the thick chain snapped. More expensively was the motor of the new John Deere tractor that I burned out because I drove in a higher gear than I was told. And the engine of the tractor of the tractor-trailer which didn't belong to us that I moved in the wrong gear. And less clearly my memory suggests that, while under my control, the power takeoff of one of our trucks broke.

And then there were the delivery incidents. A customer in Toronto was awkwardly located at the back of a long lane. On separate deliveries the driver side of our delivery truck as I backed it up scraped the side of a house, upsetting the woman who lived inside it. And on the other occasion I was following the direction to "back up, back up" of the employee of the customer. During my following the exhortation of that employee, who was standing at the back of the driver's side of our truck, the other end of the back of our truck broke through the wooden wall of a building beside the building of the customer. Nevertheless, to this day, on my driver's license is a D, allowing me to drive a truck bigger than a cargo van. To get my car driver's license I had to pass a test; I don't remember taking a truck driving test.

Another farm's truck driver nearly crushed my right leg. I was directing him to back up. Never, is my advice, put any part of your body between a truck that is backing up and a solid object, such as the exterior of a wooden building.

A couple of months after the end of the farmer phase of my life, Dad told me that our weekly Norwich Gazette needed an editor. During my job interview I used samples of my Canadapa zine. I was hired anyway

KEN FAIG

The latest *Trap Door* has a lot of good reading. Burbee is amusing and I liked the annotations by his children. Kemp as well always holds my interest.

I can't imagine having dinner with the likes of Dirac and Hawking. That's why Benford's article describing such an occasion is so fascinating. Actually, I believe the lives of the very brightest benefit from filters so that they don't waste too much time on interacting with the hoi polloi. Of course, even the brightest are human beings, too —with personalities, emotions, family and all such complications—but I still believe in the utility of filters for many of their interactions. I am not talking about imposed isolation but just natural structures (e.g., secretary to handle mail and e-mail) which result in less wasted time.

"A Tuesday in July" has nice reminiscences of the 1939 World's Fair and not so nice reminiscences of the notorious anti-semite Julius Streicher. Andy is probably right that only Hitler's own anti-Semitism saved Streicher from the fate of other discredited Alte Kaempfers like Ernst Roehm. As a single woman, my mother attended the 1939 World's Fair and then as a family we went to the 1964 World's Fair, also in NYC. I don't remember asking her about the 1939 fair. I bet she and her girlfriends had a good time; she was twenty years old when she went to the 1939 fair. Life goes on, despite the perilous times.

Lenny Bailes on "Proud and Lonely" seems to say that the fan world is less insulated than it once was. That's probably all to the good. One doesn't encounter Diracs and Hawkings on every street corner, but there are lots of bright people in the world of book culture. More and more of that experience uses electronic readers, but I don't yet own one. For me, reading from a screen is a different experience than a book. Which is one reason I am still glad to experience *Trap Door* in paper form.

MILT STEVENS

In *Trap Door* #29, Greg Benford's article seemed like the beginning of a science fiction story. In fact, it seemed like the beginning of a whole bunch of science fiction stories. A group of people gather for dinner. Before the main course, we are introduced to the incredible discovery, the cosmic conjecture, or the goshwow gadget. After that, the story may go absolutely anywhere.

The idea of nature abhorring things summons some strange images. "Yech, it's a vacuum. We hates it forever." You might think it was a spider in the bathtub rather than nothing whatsoever. Abhorring a time machine is an even stranger idea. I suppose the commander of the Chronology Protection Corp might be referred to as Mother Nature. We already know what a bad idea it is to

fool Mother Nature.

I'd heard about Steven Hawking and his wife divorcing over religious differences. I can see why Hawking would not regard God as a nice guy. When you are mad at God, what can you do other than reason him out of existence. That should show him. On the other hand, I can see why Hawking's wife needed some sort of religious faith to deal with Hawking's problems. It's an unfortunate situation all the way around.

Even before reading Earl Kemp's article, I had read that the Shaver Mysteries were being reprinted. If I were a superstitious sort, I might think it was a harbinger for the end of the world. Shaver wasn't just a bad science fiction writer. I truly believe he was the worst science fiction writer who ever lived.

I remember when Shaver was writing letters to the fanzine *Title.* It didn't take long to notice he was out of his mind. It isn't illegal to be out of your mind, but it isn't likely to make you a whole lot of friends. In one of my letters of comment, I made a DNP comment on Shaver's sanity. The editor replied he had also noticed that about Shaver.

Like Earl Kemp, I wanted to get a job on a pulp magazine when I grew up. Unfortunately, the pulp magazines had folded by the time I grew up. I suppose it was just as well I didn't end up in the publishing business. Everybody seems to agree the pay is terrible, and the job security is non-existent. However, it was fun to think about when I was a kid.

TARAL WAYNE

I never knew any "hillbillies," but I've had their "shine." It was probably back in the 1970s, when I was traveling from con to con with Victoria Vayne. Which con brought us to the East Coast that time, I can't remember, but we took a side-trip to the home of one of our fannish friends who happened to have a traditional Mason jar of white lightning, and he offered us a snootful. Victoria doesn't care for alcohol. At that time, I had a reputation for disliking alcohol that was totally undeserved. I just didn't like *bitter* drinks—like beer, vodka, whiskey and so on. So, I was game to try it, despite knowing that mountain dew was a sort of bourbon and therefore a sort of whiskey …and likely to be less than sweet. I mean…who could resist moonshine, at least once in their life?

As I remember it, the stuff was rather good. It was bitter, but in such a smooth, mellow way that I didn't mind. I don't know if I could have put down a whole ounce of it… but a sip was fine.

In later years, my taste broadened somewhat. I developed a liking for Drambuie, Gran Marnier, and some other rather powerful (and dreadfully expensive) brands of legitimate hooch (that is to say, the government gets its cut), even though they are a far cry from the Kahlua and peach brandy liqueur I learned to love first. But I still have not met a whiskey I would wipe my monitor screen with. It isn't just too alcoholic—I've had double Kahlua, which is about 160 proof. To me, whiskey tastes exactly what you'd expect a sack of wet grain left in a dark, damp corner somewhere to taste like after a week or two. Just horrid. No beer tastes much better to me, and I've tried a fair number of them.

Well, *tomato, tomahto*…not everybody likes anchovy on their pizza, and I love it.

Now, as for stoves, I'm happy to say that I have never in my life depended on one to avoid freezing to death during the night. I've been plenty poor, but we've always had electric heat or an oil furnace, thank goodness. The exceptions are those times I've stayed in Pasadena at Marc Schirmeister's place. He lives in a flat over a sort of large shed. He owns the property and the house on the property, but prefers the frontier ambiance of wooden beams, wooden roof, wooden walls and wooden floor. Actually, the floor is tiled, and the walls are only wood to about waist level, then flaccid, torn screens from there up. But he's called it home for more than 35 years now, so I don't suppose he'll fall out of love with rusticity anytime soon.

But 360 degrees (nearly) of screen window makes for chilly Pasadena nights when the outside temperature drops much below 65. When it drops to 50 or 55, even a blanket isn't sufficient—not unless you have a large, extra-duty bladder that needn't be emptied until morning, when you get out of bed.

Now, Schirm *might* have installed an electric heater. The property has a gas stove in the kitchen, and he might have installed a gas heater. But Schirm is romantic, and loves the idea of a lively, crackling fire, so he put in a Franklin stove instead. It sits in the middle of the room like a large spider that has had its legs torn off, with a stovepipe that leads through the roof and needs constant cleaning. Never mind…Schirm loves it anyway. And there is a pleasure to be had in building a fire inside the iron gut. The smoke smells nice and the sound of wood snapping arouses primal instincts. The problem is that around 3 a.m., the fire generally goes out. Nobody in their right mind would get out of a warm bed to tend to a fire—it takes time. So you scrunch down under the covers, roll into a ball to reduce surface area through which you may lose body heat, and you endure until morning.

Other problems assert themselves at awkward moments, such as when you realize it will be chilly that night, but you're run out of firewood. Schirm has a solution to that too—he burns brush and leafy trash that grows in the gullies to either side of the property. When available. When dry. When neither, he drives to the nearest Ralph's and buys a cord of commercially grown firewood. Whether he saves much money over gas or electric heat, I don't know. Perhaps. It isn't really chilly in Pasadena all that often.

It just wouldn't do in Ontario, though.

I envy Greg Benford. In my life, I feel that I've met nobody of significance. Oh, the odd SF writer, but how significant is that? And fans. Lots of fans. But have I ever had breakfast with a Prime Minister, taken a car trip with an astronaut, slept with a movie star or taken dictation for the personal memoirs of a third-world dictator? Not that I recall. I saw President Eisenhower once, during a parade in New York. My mother said he looked at me. Looked my way, more likely.

And there's Greg Benford, hobnobbing with Steven Hawking and Maurice Dirac, just because he's a goddamn, show-off astronomer and I'm a nobody funny-animal artist.

But, I know *Greg Benford. That's* something. I have to forgive him his place in the hobnobbing hierarchy, because he was one of the very first people to ever send me a letter of comment. It was 1971 or 1972, and I had just published my first fanzine—part amateur fiction and part science nonfiction. One of the articles I wrote for it was titled "Star Born," and it laid out this really keen idea I had had all by myself…that since supernovas created the heavy elements, and there were heavy elements in our bodies, we were in a sense born from stars. I think I must have gotten Benford's address from the letter column of a used copy of *Analog* or some other magazine, and had the bloody nerve to mail him my fanzine. But instead of ignoring the naïve proto-fan, he wrote back.

Unfortunately, I never had the same luck when I wrote to James Blish, Lena Lovich (the New Wave rocker) or even Dave Simm (the comic book artist), years later.

But, you know what? I still get letters of comment from Greg Benford for *Broken Toys.*

Lenny Bailes' article gave me a great deal to think about. However, I'm not sure what conclusions I came to…if any. It seems as though he laid out a number of trends in modern fandom in a clear and logical way, but I don't know whether there was a point or not. I think it was mainly that we should do what it says in the *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*—"Don't Panic." I need conclusions to be stated in a small number of simple words. Would these be it? Neither give into the harsh dictates of Mass Fandom, nor hide our heads in Old School tradition? Be open to change, while preserving what works from the past. If that's what Lenny said, I think I can sign onto the program with a clear conscience.

However, don't count on my ceasing to kvetch and complain. It's what I do best.

As for Andrew Hooper's article I will have to limit myself to expressing admiration for his erudite weaving of different threads into one coherent fabric. But, I don't seem to have risen to the occasion of commenting on any of the individual parts, and therefore cannot comment on the whole, either. The piece deserves more, but at least it will be said that I read it with absorption from beginning to end. Okay, maybe I didn't linger on the parts about baseball…my little foible.

Although there is an odd tie-in to Greg Benford's piece. Benford met Steven Hawking, the famous cosmologist who is almost as famous for having ALS, or Lou Gehrig's Disease, as for describing black holes. In England, I understand they call ALS by a simpler name—Motor Neuron Disease. What's wrong with *that?* Why do we have to do things the *hard* way on this side of the ocean, and give the disease a triple-mouthful of a name like Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis? I suppose we'll have to be content with Lou Gehrig's Disease instead of Steven Hawking's Disease, since the baseball player had it first.

GARY HUBBARD

Read with interest Earl Kemp's profile of Richard S. Shaver. I wasn't around when the Shaver Mystery (or Hoax) was raging, so I have no idea what sorts of emotions were stirred up

when it was in full swing. It was just a kooky bit of fannish history to me. But, in 1981, when I moved to Kalamazoo, I discovered a used book shop that had a whole shit pile of *Amazing Stories* and *Fantastic Adventures* from the 1940s—basically, the entire corpus of the Shaver Mystery. So for a while, during that period, I became quite knowledgable about SM (there's a little bit of a double entendre there). But that was thirty years ago, and I don't remember that much about now, except that it was pretty goofy and some of the stories seemed to be cribbed from Edgar Rice Burroughs. Still, I appreciated the fact that Palmer decorated Shaver's stories with more nude illustrations that I can remember in any SF mag. Before or since. Also, I rather liked those dominatrix that seemed to hang out in the caves (the SM angle, get it?) along with the dero.

Palmer, at this time, had other people writing Shaverish stories for him, as well—Rog Philips, for one. And then there was Stuart J. Byrne, who contributed (as far as I'm concerned) the most delightful description of a Shaver Mystery character ever. Here's how he described the commander of a 1950s era flying saucer:

"The captain wore…black, shiny, short boots, silver colored action trunks and a handsome, jeweled belt which supported a disintegrator gun. A gold colored shirt that looked like chain mail covered his broad chest, bearing an emblazoned Sword of Agarthi, in pure, glistening white. From his muscular shoulders hung a pure white cloak down to the tops of his heels. He was a handsome, strong-faced man with blue-gray eyes, which were shadowed by the short visor of a special type of helmet that contained compact electrophonic and telepathic devices."

Snappy, huh? Over the years, Bess and I have gotten quite a few laughs using the phrase "silver action trunks" in various contexts. I doubt that Byrne was as much of a true believer in the Mystery as Shaver was. In fact, I'm sure that he was just writing these stories for a paycheck. I looked him up on the Wiki and learned that post-SM; he had a long career as a screenwriter and a hack. He was responsible for translating some of those Perry Rhodan novels that were so inexplicably popular.

JOE KENNEDY

Earl Kemp on Lemuria was a gas. I could appreciate his choosing Bea Mahaffey for his lust object. Having landed a story in *Other Worlds* when she was Ray Palmer's assistant editor, I dropped her a note in 1951 when I suddenly found myself a sailor stationed at Great Lakes near Chicago. Sure enough, she invited me to join her and Ted Dikty for a restaurant meal. She was a woman of great charm and keen intelligence. I met with her and Ted a couple of times, but then realized that, friendly to me though both were, I was sort of a third wheel on their dates. Never did meet Palmer, who apparently ran *OW* as a labor of love while making better money from *Fate*, a mag that catered to Shaverites and other kooky occultists.

LLOYD PENNEY

I've had to deal with wood-burning stoves myself…my father built a house up Vancouver Island, and he built it to withstand far colder conditions than what the island could provide. I helped him install two very efficient wood-burning stoves in the house, along with two forced-air fans to circulate the heat. They served well for two years, until we came to visit the tenants. The house had been deserted, and the stoves expertly disconnected and stolen.

To go with Andy Hooper's article, I've been reading and watching articles about brain degeneration in athletes who have sustained regular bumps and jolts in the playing of sports like hockey and football. With the physical problems Lou Gehrig endured, I wonder if there is any relationship to Lou Gehrig's Disease and that brain degeneration?

I had to smile at Greg Benford's article at guesting with top British boffins. Rob Sawyer seems to have spent most of his winter so far traveling here and there and meeting with famous names. I have to wonder how scientists deal with science fiction writers…I think both Greg and Rob bill themselves as futurists, so this may be the way in. *{Greg is a science fiction writer, but he's also a scientist…a physicist…and equally well-known for that.}* Steven Hawking spent some time at The Perimeter Institute in Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario, last year, I believe, and I heard a rumor that he might be attending Loncon 3. I have my doubts, but we plan to be there, so we will find out for sure.

RICHARD DENGROVE

I hope I get this LoC about *Trap Door* #29 to you before you compile the next issue. Otherwise, I guess my letter will fall through the trapdoor. On the other hand, it's hard to get my priorities right in letter writing. At least, this is a petty worry rather than a full-blown one. We live far from the really big conflicts. That wasn't the case in 1939. It is no wonder Andy Hooper notes there was the Lockout of 1939 in fandom just as the world prepared for World War II. Fandom then was an island of conflicts in a sea of conflicts.

Besides conflicts within conflicts over the years, Greg Benford noted another phenomena, the tendency for scientists to read science fiction, especially the old-timey harder science fiction. However, this is easier to explain. Such men of ideas would naturally be attracted to the literature of ideas. Maybe not as much to the literature of emotions and myth (i.e., fantasy) that is eclipsing science fiction in the marketplace.

While the reason for the taste of great scientists lies very much on the surface, like with the 1939 conflicts, you have to dig a little to find the importance of the Shaver Mysteries. Beyond Richard Shaver, whom Earl Kemp finds a good old boy, and Ray Palmer, whom Earl finds a thick-skinned friend.

Yes, the Shaver Mysteries have a hidden importance. They constitute myth, and, no matter how illogical they are—and they are very illogical—why they tickled a lot of the people's fancy in the '40s may help unlock some doors today. In fact, it makes it more valuable that people were willing to believe the completely illogical.

While we need to search out the hidden meaning of the Shaver Mysteries, Lenny Bailes lays the state of science fiction fandom on the line: we shouldn't put it in a box. We shouldn't lop off the pros. We shouldn't lop off the computer fans. We shouldn't lop off the mass fans. Particularly not the last because, despite rumors to the contrary, economies of size from their presence make convention going cheaper for us more literary fans. When we get to the cons, we can always show benign neglect to the Trekkies.

I have to praise a joke in Dick Lupoff's letter about the publishing industry.

Q: How do you make a small fortune in the publishing industry?

A: Start with a large fortune.

Not everyone found it as funny as I, though. My wife, while appreciating it, didn't find it half as funny. The reason is she heard a very similar joke, which concerned the horse industry rather than the book publishing industry. It is different strokes for different folks not only in jokes but in genres. For instance, for the "rugged" men's magazines that Gary Hubbard mentions. To add to the stories in them, I remember "Bestial Orgy of the Hairy Ainu." As for their readership, Gary recalls them from the military. I recall them from high school. Now as far as I can tell, the last men's magazines, from Martin Goodman's Red Circle, bit the dust in the late '70s. Apparently, we don't need that much masculinity anymore—or we have trouble considering our masculinity a joke.

So I end with a little tidbit of past pulp. The type of stuff that makes *Trap Door* so relaxing. It can never join the Lockout of 1939, or the Shaver mysteries in importance in our psyches. It can't be as personal as experience with scientists and science fiction, or the different tribes at conventions, either. Still, I suspect it is a little contribution to the cause of the past.

SHELBY VICK

Great artwork on a clever cover. No one will *ever* steal that work of Harry Bell's and try to use it on *their* fanzine!

My first impulse was to compare this issue with the *Reader's Digest*, a fannish Reader's Digest, of course. But that was an error; for one thing, you didn't condense the reprints you included, but copied them verbatim. So I decided it was a marvelous slice of history gathered into one place. In other words, I was Greatly Impressed! *{You and Murray Moore!}*

Andy Hooper revealed some interesting things about history in "A Tuesday in July." I'll hafta admit I had forgotten that "the first science fiction convention" was on July Fourth, 1939. I recall all the brouhaha that was involved, just had forgotten the date. Also, although I'm quite familiar with that classic Lou Gehrig Appreciation Day, I hadn't realized both events were on the same date. And the World's Fair was at the same time? That is *definitely* a Tuesday worthy of remembering.

David Redd is so right about the way "progress" loses worthwhile customs. It is a shame that there seems little chance on holding onto the better parts of the past. "Time marches on" is more like "Time tramples on." I have some Welsh in my genealogy. A couple of hundred years ago there existed an "Evan Dhu Shelby." I've been told that "Dhu" means "dark," so he's a

dark part of my history. (Excuse that! Just couldn't resist.) Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed "A Different Culture."

Then I came to Greg Benford's "A Cambridge Evening." I've know Greg casually for many years. We've met at cons, the last time being at DeepSouthCon 50 in 2012. I've always been in awe of him, both for his scientific knowledge and his success in fiction. But now I read he had the chance to meet and have conversations with some scientific geniuses, including Stephen Hawking! And that was back when Hawking could, haltingly, actually speak. It was fascinating that Hawking primarily read/reads SF, and I enjoyed the reactions of other scientists to SF.

Lenny Bailes' excellent piece made me feel like I was an archeologist watching one of those time-lapse films depicting man's history in writing, from cuneiform to electronic communication. Then I realized: Hey! We *are* actually living through a great development of history. We have seen the birth of the internet and witnessed the growth from telegraph to telephone to telecommunication all in the last comparatively few decades. Most importantly, Lenny tells us that SF fandom itself played a key part in the development of all that—well, in the development of the internet, in any case.

Greg Benford asks if anyone knows what nursing home Madeleine Willis is in. Sorry; I *should* know, and did try to trace it down, but no luck. *{Does anyone know if she's even still alive? If Walt was, he'd be 94.}*

Murray Moore mentions cataract surgery. I've had both eyes operated on, one in outpatient and one in my ophthalmologist's office, and both were simple. Took an hour or more in outpatient, but less than an hour later on. That was in great contrast to when my mother had cataract surgery decades ago. She had to remain hospitalized for days, flat on her back, her head braced so that she wouldn't shift from side-to-side and disrupt the surgery. Ain't medical developments wunnerful???

Fred Smith brought up *Psycho*. First, let me say that Hitchcock really turned Robert Bloch's book into a Blochbuster! I remember telling Bob that its success had changed his legal name from "Robert Bloch" to "Robert Bloch Author of Psycho," because that was the way he was referred to thereafter. But, to the movie. We hadn't seen the trailer. In fact, I don't remember *ever* seeing the trailer, though it certainly must have been used hyping the TV reruns of the movie. After seeing the movie with my wife, Suzanne, she said that for *months* she wouldn't take a shower if I (or anyone else) was in the house!

Richard Dengrove mentions how technology has changed reading. With me, it has opened new doors! Over thirty years ago, a sudden burst of glaucoma pressure robbed me of all but peripheral vision in my right eye. I had already suffered reduced vision in my left eye, so my reading suffered badly. Used to be, I'd read at least five books a week, sometimes one in a day. Now my reading a book can take from two weeks to a month. So ebooks (where I can enlarge the type) make reading *much* easier.

GREG BENFORD

Andy Hooper is spot on about historical immediacy. Amazing what resonances we can now see in the rearview mirror.

Earl Kemp seems to have done everything…and everybody. What a life!

Always fun to see Burbee writing. I recall watching him coast on innumerable beers across a summer afternoon in his back yard, still coherent nine hours later. Boyd Raeburn thought this remarkable and it was. He had a subtle wit unlike that of Willis but on the same level. I think, being a machinist, he saw the pretensions of those who mostly talk, and not work with real things using their hands, as amusing in themselves. Cosmic minds indeed.

David Redd fine as usual. Is there another nationality that's a synonym for a bad trait? Maybe the Welsh can name one.

Len Bailes is right about the web that fandom connects. I too think Jo Walton's novel appealed because it's a fan memoir thinly disguised, with fantasy elements to heighten the plotline.

YVONNE ROUSSEAU

Trap Door #29 was fascinating from cover to cover. Having read it, I was inspired by Lenny Bailes, "The 'Proud and Lonely' Thing Re-Examined" to go forth and read Jo Walton's novel *Among Others*. I found myself remembering when I'd read the various stfnal works the heroine Mori was encountering and comparing my reactions (and my circumstances at the time) to hers.

Since then, Andy Hooper has written "The Albacon Club," dramatizing Mori's first sf convention (the one that in *Among Others* she was planning to attend: Albacon, the 31st British Eastercon in Glasgow in 1980). One person who wrote a report on the real-world Albacon was Dave Langford, for whom Mori in *Among Others* declares her love on the basis that his Ansible is "funny, and it's so exactly what I would have called it that I love the author, Dave Langford, sight unseen without meeting him." At Eastercon in 2013, Dave duly thanked Jo Walton for this egoboo.

Among her voracious reading, Mori mentions the crime novels of Dorothy L. Sayers. There is an echo that seems like a tribute when on 6 January 1980 Mori returns to Arlinghurst, an all-girl school, and remarks: "I always forget how loud school is. My ears are ringing." Readers of Sayers' novel *Gaudy Night* (1935), are likely to recall that Sayers' heroine Harriet Vane remarks: "Gosh! I'd forgotten what this row was like." Harriet is reacting to an all-woman Shrewsbury College reunion at Oxford: "Two hundred female tongues, released as though by a spring, burst into high, clamorous speech. She had forgotten what it was like, but it came back to her to-night, how at the beginning of every term, she had felt that if the noise were to go on like that for one minute more, she would go quite mad. […] Harriet turned to Phoebe. 'Gosh! I'd forgotten what this row was like. If I scream I shall be as hoarse as a crow. I'm going to bellow at you in a fog-horn kind of voice. Do you mind?'"

Within *Among Others*, Mori worries about using magic to change the world: "Was the book group, and SF fandom, there all the time, or did it all come into being when I did that magic, to give me a karass?" Also: "What if everything I do, everything I say, everything I write, absolutely everything about me […] was dictated by some magic somebody else will do in the future." Jo Walton is an obvious candidate for this "somebody else"—and perhaps her inventions pay tribute not only to the many sf novels that Mori discusses but also to some young-adult British fiction that she never mentions at all.

Mori reports that her "school coat had the Arlinghurst badge on it, a rose, with the motto *Dum spiro spero*, which actually I rather like—while I breathe I shall hope."

In 1959, John Verney published *Friday's Tunnel*: a slightly stfnal young-adult novel dealing with a legendary metal called Caprium which is practically pure energy. The novel's heroine February Callendar reflects upon a "gipsy family called Spiro." Her father "always refers to our friends in the Quarry as 'the dum Spiros'—because there's a famous Latin saying, *dum spiro spero*, meaning 'while I breathe there's still hope.'" Perhaps the Arlinghurst motto was dictated by *Friday's Tunnel*—which was available to be read both by Mori herself and by Jo Walton.

Also in 1959, the Arlinghurst school library acquired Mary Renault's *The Charioteer* (published in 1953)—which Mori was shocked by: "It hadn't struck me before that the men in Renault's ancient Greek books who fall in love with each other are homosexuals, but I see now that of course they are. I read it furtively, as if someone would take it away from me if they knew what it was about. I'm amazed it's in the school library. I wonder if I'm the first person to actually read it since 1959, when they bought it?"

Readers of Antonia Forest's young-adult novels about Kingscote School will recall from *The Cricket Term*, first published in 1974, that Mary Renault's *The Mask of Apollo* (1966) was on the school's "limited" list, but that Forest's heroine Nicola Marlow smuggled in a copy to finish reading it. When Miss Cromwell asks whether she sees why access to the book is limited, Nicola replies, "Because Nico liked men better than women, you mean?" When Miss Cromwell demands to know why Nicola is so shocked at the suggestion that she might have lent the book to any of the other students: "'Well, but it's *Limited*—' explained Nicola; and then giggled, she sounded so virtuous. So, fortunately, in a somewhat more adult fashion, did Miss Cromwell, snorting rather."

Although these echoes seem to me like tributes, they may be sheer coincidence. As Mori observes: "There's no proving anything once magic gets involved."

JOSEPH NICHOLAS

Reading this latest issue, I felt a bit like William Breiding, quoting the now-departed E. B. Frohvet. It contains a number of well-written pieces, but they don't exactly provoke one to respond. Another piece about the Farm by you; David Redd on the vanished rural Wales of half a century ago; Greg Benford on meeting some physics luminaries at a Cambridge University dinner—all good stuff, but unless one has had similar experiences to those described it's very difficult to comment. But then I read Lenny

Bailes on the controversy which surrounded Jo Walton's Hugo Award.

Change the name of his subject and the year in which it happened, and he could almost have been writing about Cheryl Morgan winning a best fanzine Hugo for *Emerald City* in 2004 or Theresa Derwin standing for TAFF this year, because the reaction to all three was exactly the same—they are Not One Of Us. They may have pubbed their ish, but it was Not A Proper Fanzine. They come from a different part of fandom, so are Not Really Fans. And so on—crabby, knee-jerk rejections from people who seem to be nothing less than scared witless that they might no longer be kings of the hill. The world has changed around them, but rather than embrace those changes they'd prefer a better yesterday, thank you very much. (As many sociologists who've studied science fiction fandom have remarked, a group of people who claim to be excited about the possibilities the future will usher in are notably conservative in their own political, cultural and intellectual behavior and outlook.)

Those who can remember the early 1980s may remember what in retrospect might almost be the precursor argument to this rejection of Morgan *et al*, in which worries were voiced about what was seen as the "balkanization" of fandom but to anyone else looked strongly like an attempt to maintain the pre-eminence of fanzine fandom by pretending that all other fandoms were somehow subsets of it. Such an argument could never be sustained for long, of course; and indeed its progenitors seemed to have largely given up on it by the end of the decade. (Certainly, I have not myself heard any references to "balkanization" since then—unless those who do still hold such views are presenting them in a more nuanced form, using different terminology.)

As someone-or-other in this issue quotes Greg Pickersgill as remarking, the fanzine fandom that we knew has gone for good and is never coming back. That being so, I wonder if it might now be time to consider dropping the best fanzine Hugo? In which case, the best prozine Hugo (primarily created to prevent *Locus* winning best fanzine year after year) could go, too. I can't immediately think of how they might be replaced, or even whether they should be replaced at all, but I think the issue is worth considering. We should not hang on to the past just because it is the past—traditions are practiced only so long as they are useful, and (basic sociology) fall into desuetude once they are not.

A number of people in this latest issue respond to Roy Kettle's tale by describing their own urinary issues. One person at least attributes this to the industrial quantities of Diet Coke he consumes during the day, but I wonder if any of them are aware that an increased frequency of a need to utilize a bottetorium is a sign of adult-onset Type II diabetes? I assume their doctors will have already considered this and advised accordingly, but if not it might be as well to check. In the case of the Diet Coke drinker, he's merely reducing his sugar intake, not eliminating it completely, and that could well be a factor. (Wag finger, look pompous.) End of medical note!

ALAN BRIGNULL

Issue 29 was fascinating and I read every word, more assiduously than I would read a commercial magazine. I cannot imagine any blog or e-reader device providing the same convenience and enjoyment as this wodge of paper. It feels more like a personal communication than a publication even though, or maybe because, some of he lives and experiences described are so different from my own. I learned a lot from those tales of "The Farm," the World's Fair and old SF conventions.

Other items were more recognizable: we hade a holiday in St. David's a couple of years ago and I knew some of the places mentioned in David Redd's piece. On the other hand, I'm pleased to say that all the urological stories were entirely unfamiliar and long may they remain so!

{Alan is an amateur journalist I "met" in 2010 when he purchased a batch of Bill Danner's letterpressed fanzine Stefantasy *from me on eBay. Bill was a familiar name to him from amateur journalism's annual* It's A Small World *"combozine," for which each contributor sends a set number of copies of a single sheet showing off his/her printing skills and receives a copy in return. Bill contributed to them for 41 consecutive years until his death. Alan and I began corresponding, discovered that we knew some of the same people in the ayjay world, and began exchanging publications. This is his first LoC.}*

FRED SMITH

One thing I must thank you sincerely for is your response to my plea for more Burbee. Great stuff, as always. I particularly enjoyed his comments about banjo players which reminded me of the multiple jokes that circulate among jazz musicians about banjoists and their ilk. One that comes to mind is the reply that Captain Scott (of the Antarctic) made to Captain Oates when he said "I'm just going outside. I may be some time." Scott apparently replied "Don't forget your banjo"…

In his article Greg mentions that Hawking's motor troubles are also known as Lou Gehrig's Disease and in "A Tuesday in July" Andy Hooper goes to some length to talk about Lou Gehrig, his terminal illness and his farewell to baseball on July 4th, 1939, which, of course, coincides with the First World Science Fiction Convention. and the New York World's Fair. Not being a baseball fan it was news to me, but fascinating stuff nevertheless.

Murray Moore compels me to reveal that I too have recently had cataract surgery also to my left eye. So far it doesn't seem to be 100% effective in that I expected crystal-clear vision when it is still not as good as the right eye. Not much good having high definition TV if you don't have HD eyes!.

WE ALSO HEARD FROM:

SHERYL BIRKHEAD, **MELISSA CONWAY** (with thanks for contributing #29 to the Eaton collection, something all fanzine editors are encouraged to do), **KLAUS EYLMANN** ("I was born 1939 and learned from Andy Hooper's contribution what other significant events happened that year, lol."), **BRAD FOSTER** ("I noticed your new email address at 'rocketmail.com,. which I thought was *way* too cool, and so have set up an account there myself, though not sure what exactly I will be using it for. But, had to have that, it just seemed so geekily fannish*! "*), **MARLIN FRENZEL** ("I saw Steve Gaskin at the Family Dog in San Francisco before the move to Tennessee and a couple of years later at the band shell in Golden Gate Park. Some of my friends, like Andy Main and Dick Lupoff, were really into his trip. Having just returned to S.F. from a year as night manager of the Penn Station branch of Bookmasters in New York, I couldn't get into it. In addition to being stressed out and cynical, our house had gotten busted and we were awaiting trial."), **TERRY KEMP** and **BRUCE TOWNLEY**. Thanks to all who wrote!

This electronic edition of *Trap Door* #30 is posted with letter-writers' addresses removed to preserve their privacy.