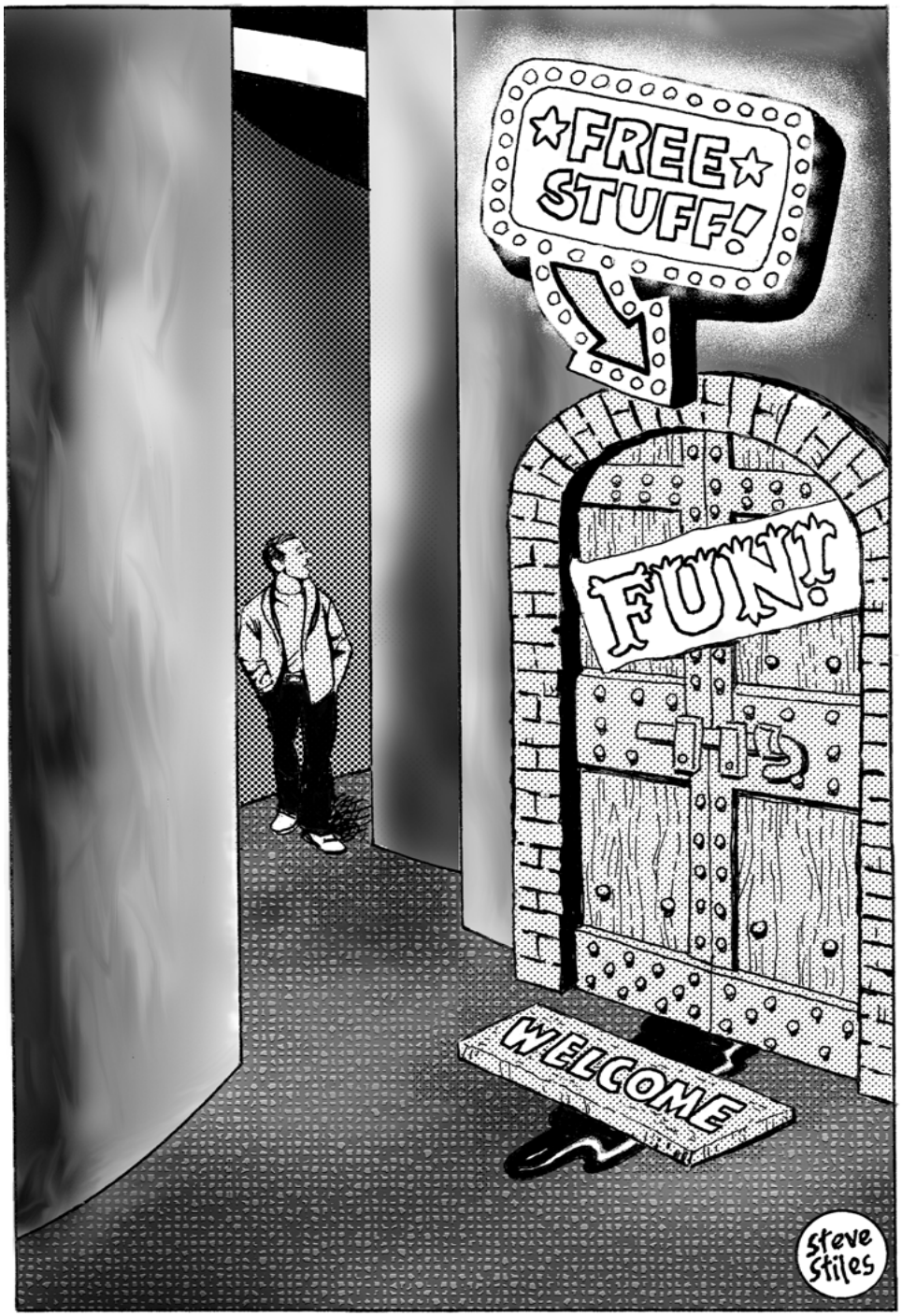
TRAP DOOR



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ART & GRAPHICS: ATom (2), William Rotsler (17, 23, 30, 55, back cover), Dan Steffan (2, 44), Steve Stiles (cover, 4, 18, 24, 31, 34) & Steve Stiles/Pat Patterson (31).

Welcome to the second 2016 issue of *Trap Door*! This is the first time since 1993 that I've produced more than a single issue in the same year, and no one could be more surprised and pleased than I am: surprised because after publishing back in March I was completely out of material except for this issue's cover and Boyd Raeburn's held-over article, and pleased because I had a good response to the feelers I sent out, and an additional article turned up out of the blue. Steve Stiles came through with outstanding headings for all of them, and Dan Steffan resurfaced with a couple of beautiful column headings. I hope you will all enjoy the result, *and* that you'll let me and my contributors know about it.

I say this because response to the last issue was the lowest it's ever been (surprising since I thought it was a very comment-worthy one), only a little over half of what I typically hear back. Of course I always hope for more letters of comment than I actually receive. However, echoing what fanzine fans have frequently said over the decades, response is the name of the game. It gives writers and artists feedback – and yes, egoboo – for their efforts, creates and maintains interactivity even in a letter column as infrequent as mine, and makes the editor feel that the effort and expense of publishing is worthwhile.

Although it would be easy to do, I don't want to succumb to an image of myself standing over the readership cracking a whip and screaming "LoC now!" Instead I'll simply hope that this low response was atypical.

And speaking of Boyd, as I was before my Big Kvetch, I mentioned last time that I would relate the full story of how his article, "The *À Bas* Story" – originally intended to be published in the seventh issue of my fanzine *Frap* in the fall of 1964 – is only now (at last!) appearing.

First, a little personal history. I became aware of Boyd extremely early in my fannish career. The penultimate issue of *À Bas* was among the first fanzines I'd ever seen. It made a distinctly positive impression on me in large part because of his long and intriguingly titled lead article, "The Moth and the Arctic Steamroller." It was an engrossing travelogue of his 1957 European visit to five European countries, with a brief report on the first London worldcon embedded in it. I was a big fan of travel writing back then, mainly from having discovered Richard Halliburton at an early age, devouring every book of his available from the library, and then moving on to other travel writers. But I found Boyd's writing livelier than that of the others, and it has stuck with me all these years. In retrospect it was also very fannish in ways I really didn't get at the time because of my utter neofannishness.

I didn't meet Boyd until the 1964 Worldcon in San Francisco. I asked him there if he would write about *À Bas* for *Frap*, and he agreed. But later that year I had a letter from him in which he confessed:

"I burnt some papers this afternoon, and I have just realized that amongst them was the draft of the article for you on *À Bas* – How It Began and What It Was and all that. I haven't the time to rewrite it as a formal article, and I've held you up long enough. So, in this letter I'll just give you the background and a few thoughts and if you wish you can write the article yourself – 'by Boyd Raeburn as told to Bob Lichtman,' just like the *SatEvePost*."

Unfortunately, what happened next was that instead of creating the article from Boyd's extensive notes, I focused on the conclusion of my final – and very demanding – semester at UCLA, followed by my move to the Bay Area, getting my first full-time job, and living with A Woman for the first time. In the process I put *Frap* on hiatus (from which it never returned) and put Boyd's letter away – out of sight and definitely out of mind.

Fast forwarding to 2015, I heard from Greg Benford that he'd run across Boyd's letter in a pile of fanzines and sent it to me. It occurred to me that what Greg had was a small portion of my original fanzine collection, and I wondered what winding trail it took to reach him. Back in 1971, when I was divesting myself of "material plane" accumulation before moving to Tennessee, perhaps the dumbest thing I did was to give away my entire fanzine collection (even including file copies of my own stuff!). I must have mindlessly tucked Boyd's letter into that large pile and then forgot about it.

I'm so glad – and grateful to the fannish ghods – that Greg found Boyd's letter and thought to send it on to me. A mere fifty-two years late, here is the article that Boyd "told" me.

Everything in this issue is new, except for Andy Hooper's piece which, like the three installments reprinted in previous issues, appeared first in a distribution of WOOF (the Worldcon Order of Faneditors, one of the enduring legacies of the late Bruce Pelz), which have a very limited circulation.

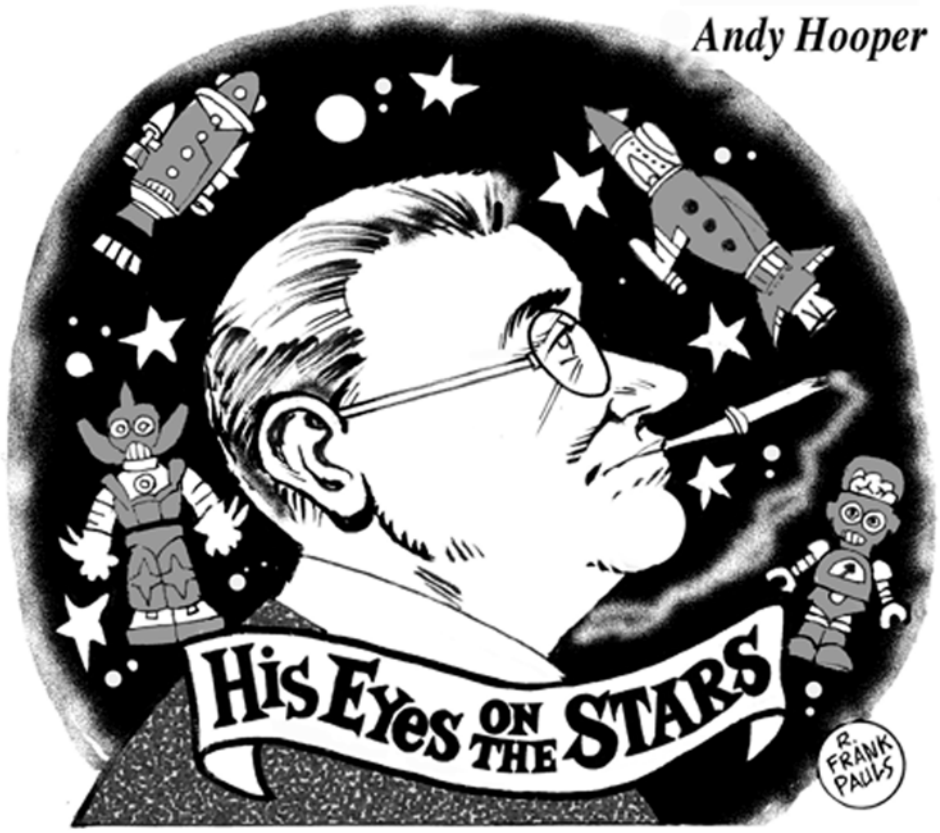
This is a somewhat abridged version. Omitted are more detailed plot descriptions of the stories in the July 1939 issue of *Astounding* which, to quote Andy, "many critics now consider…one of the finest single issues of any SF magazine ever published." In addition to taking a close look at the events at the first Worldcon from yet another perspective, Andy has painstakingly produced the most extensively detailed Campbell family history and biographical chronology ever – an important piece of scholarly research. This is further augmented by details of Campbell's professional career, and in addition a look at the careers of the men behind the magazines competing for readers with his.

This installment is definitely more sercon than its predecessors – and some may be surprised to find it here in a mostly fannish fanzine – but I found it just as engrossing a read as the others.

(continued on inside back cover)

WAITING FOR THE GOLDEN AGE:
John W. Campbell Jr. at the 1939 Worldcon

Andy Hooper



All writers are taught to look for conflict. Whether their chosen field is fiction, history or journalism, conflict is where the story lies. And one finds an abundance of conflict in considering the first "World Science Fiction Convention" of July 1939. There were many rivalries on display on the afternoon of July 2, 1939, when roughly 150 people gathered in the fourth floor auditorium of Manhattan's Caravan Hall to celebrate what was then merely the "Fifth Convention" of science fiction enthusiasts. There was the famous feud between the fans who were "supposed" to organize the convention, and those who actually did it. This split had resonance with mundane political conflicts, ideological differences that would take a lifetime to settle, if indeed they ever were. There was a more friendly rivalry between the New York and Philadelphia fan clubs, with the former eager to impress the latter. And there was an aesthetic rivalry under dispute, a struggle to determine the quality and purpose of science fiction. The earnest intensity of this fight seemed almost absurd in the context of dime pulp magazines and paperback anthologies, but it would have the most far-ranging effects, on fiction, on science, and on the "World of Tomorrow."

In the context of world events of 1939, the question of science fiction's future seems petty at best, but actual science and engineer-

ing that had been nothing but speculation a decade before would have an immense effect on the course of the World War that was to begin on the first day of September. If science fiction was only the escapist adventure stories that had dominated the field over its early history, it would likely have faded into the relative obscurity enjoyed by other specialty genres of the era, such as ranch romances and nurse novels. But among its enthusiastic readers, there was a growing belief that science fiction and the future were closely linked. It would have been difficult to determine if more of them believed in the genre's ability to accurately forecast the future, or in its power to suggest innovations and advances that inspired real researchers and inventors into experimentation. They simply knew that the future that science fiction promised them was the world in which they wished to live.

In the late 1930s, most of the people who held these ambitions for SF had very little power to make them a reality. Most of them were teenagers, a demographic that would not become commercially important until after World War II, and still desperately poor after a full decade of economic depression. Most professionals working in speculative fiction thought that the passion of the fans arose from a sort of shared hysteria; almost none of them believed that writing about spaceflight would help us actually achieve it one day. But the fans had one invaluable, irrepressible, irreproducible ally on their side. In many ways, he was the man of the hour that July weekend in New York. Ackerman and Morojo had come all the way from Los Angeles and wore scientifictional outfits for the occasion, but they were still primarily consumers of science fiction, just like the 14-year-old Harry Harrison, or the 16-year-old Erle Korshak, who had come from Chicago for the event. (And despite their youth, Korshak and his friend Mark Reinsberg were also the "official representatives" of *Amazing Stories* at the event.) Frank R. Paul, a much-liked and successful cover artist, was the convention's official guest of honor, and he would be indulged in a set of rather lengthy remarks, establishing a tradition that persists to this day.

But the single person that most of those gathered in Caravan Hall really wanted to see and hear was John W. Campbell Jr., the editor of *Astounding Science Fiction* since the fall of 1937, as well as one of the more respected professional writers in the field since the beginning of the decade. Campbell brought some unique gifts to his editorial career, and would likely have done well in any area of literature or journalism that caught his attention. But he happened to believe that science fiction was capable of great things, both as an art form and as a tool for social and cultural engineering. And he was a man of profoundly strong convictions, who would never consider the task of altering a literary community's perceptions of itself beyond his grasp. With a mind that seemed perpetually at work imagining the hitherto unimagined, and the tireless self-confidence to convince others to share his conclusions, he was the ideal example to inspire the young readers and writers who filled the Hall that Sunday afternoon.

Campbell was six foot, one inch tall, with thick, fair hair cut bristling short, and a broad-shouldered frame that grew stouter with a life spent behind a typewriter. His steady, demanding stare was mentioned by many who endured it. His natural mode of conversation was to lecture any willing listener. And any interaction with him was invariably conducted through a thick pall of cigarette smoke, as he plugged one after another into his characteristic holder. His reputation led many, like Alfred Bester, to expect that he would be "like a combination of Bertrand Russell and Ernest Rutherford," but in real life, he was more entertaining, challenging and demanding than most people could imagine. And in July of 1939, he was just 28 years old.

Campbell's boyhood had elements that would have been at home in the work of Charles Addams or William Faulkner. His father, John Sr. (1884-1959), was the second son of U. S. Representative William Wildman Campbell (1853-1927) of Napoleon, Ohio. Trained as an electrical engineer and employed by AT&T as a technician, the elder John was not affectionate toward his son, but the boy still inherited a fascination with science and engineering from him. Campbell's mother Dorothy Harrison Strahorn Campbell Middleton (1888-1954) was the daughter of Henry E. "Harry" Strahorn (1865-1931) and Laura Augusta Harrison (1864-1919), both natives of Napoleon. Family lore indicates that the couple married and divorced before Dorothy turned two. Laura then married Joseph Bancroft Kerr (1861-1935) in 1891, and had two children with him, Bancroft Jr. in 1893 and Mary Elizabeth in 1895. The Kerrs apparently divorced between 1895 and 1898, as Laura married Vermont native William Wildman Campbell in the latter year.

W. W. Campbell had several older children from his earlier marriage to the late Florence Van Campen, including John Wood Campbell Sr., named for his paternal grandfather (1823-1898). William and Laura also had one son together, William Harrison "Teddy" Campbell (1905-1969). In the 1900 U.S. Census, both John W. Sr. and Dorothy are residents in the Campbell house in Napoleon, with "stepdaughter" given as Dorothy's relationship to the head of the household. The two step-siblings were married in September 1909. She was 21; John Wood Sr. was 24 and John Wood Campbell Junior was born in Newark, New Jersey, the following June.

In a profile published in *Amazing Stories* in 1963, Campbell claimed that his mother was warmer than his father, but changeable, and that she had a twin sister who was frequently present and who did not like young John. He described how he would approach the person he thought was his mother, only to be rebuffed by his aunt. There is no evidence that this twin actually existed; vital records do not indicate that Dorothy Strahorn Campbell had any full-blood siblings of either sex. It would be tempting to assume that Campbell created the story to explain a bipolar personality. If so, his mother's mental health seems to have improved after she divorced her step-brother. She then married James Alfred Middleton in 1928, and John and his younger sister Laura Philinda Campbell Krieg were living at their house in South Orange, New Jersey, when John began attending classes at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Middleton was a native of England, the son of a London greengrocer, and a decorated and twice-wounded veteran of the First World War. His brother had married one of Dorothy's Harrison cousins, and he attended the wedding ceremony in Napoleon, where the newly-single Dorothy Campbell caught his eye. Laura Campbell Krieg and her children recalled his presence in their life with great affection, and it seems very probable that he had a positive relationship with John W. Jr. as well.

Campbell's early interests included aviation, astronomy and engineering, but he did his undergraduate work in Physics at Duke University and MIT, and he received a Bachelor of Science from the former in 1932. But by that time, he was eighteen months into a career as a professional science fiction writer, and he would only increase his commitment to that field.

One of the more positive aspects of his early home life had been a generally unfettered permission to read what he liked, and Campbell testified that he had become obsessed with the science fiction pulps the moment that he discovered them. But by passing through the "golden age" of early adolescence before organized fandom had arisen, Campbell's ambitions were channeled directly into writing science fiction and space adventures stories for the pulps. T. O'Conor Sloane, editor of *Amazing Stories*, bought Campbell's submission "Invaders of the Infinite" in the fall of 1929, but subsequently lost the manuscript. Sloane quickly made amends by buying Campbell's story "When the Atoms Failed," and published it in the January 1930 issue of *Amazing*.

Over the next three years, Campbell's stories of super science and galactic adventure made him the only serious rival to

E.E. "Doc" Smith as the master of what would come to be called "space opera." His characters Arcot, Morey and Wade were as indefatigable and resourceful as any in the genre; their saga was a series of ferocious encounters with hostile alien powers, met with an increasingly implausible succession of wonder weapons. They were collected as *The Black Sun Passes* in 1953.

Campbell met his first wife Dona Louise Stebbens (she also used her mother's maiden name, Stuart) (1913-1974) as an undergraduate at MIT, and she was still 18 when they were married in 1931. She followed him from Cambridge to Durham and back, as he continued to do post-graduate work at Duke and MIT. When he began to write stories of the far future with a more measured pace, with settings and description characterized as "moody" and "poetic," he used a variation on his wife's name, "Don A. Stuart" as a pseudonym. Beginning with the story "Twilight," in the November 1934 issue of *Astounding Stories*, he used the Stuart pseudonym to write with a more mature and literate voice. He would also use the pen name Karl Van Campen, an homage to his paternal grandmother Florence.

John and Dona Campbell's first daughter, Philinda Duane Campbell Hammond was born in August of 1940. Dona and little "PeeDee" became very close with Leslyn Heinlein, the SF writer's first wife, and little sister Leslyn Campbell Randazzo, born 1945, was named in her honor. (Philinda was named for her paternal great-grandmother, Philinda Hubbard Campbell.)

John and Dona divorced in 1949. She remarried in 1950, to the electrical engineer and frequent *Astounding* contributor George Oliver Smith (1911-1981), who was a 1980 inductee to the First Fandom Hall of Fame. In 1950, John married Margaret "Peg" Winter Campbell Kearney (1907-1989), a native of Lansing, Michigan; the two would remain together until his death.

The "Stuart" stories appeared exclusively in *Astounding*, under the editorship of Frederick Orlin Tremaine (1899-1956) since 1933, and Tremaine also commissioned a series of articles on astronomy and the solar system that were published under Campbell's own byline. Tremaine edited fifty issues of *Astounding*, and he made it into the most respected SF monthly in the field, publishing the best established writers of the period, as well as the first stories by L. Sprague de Camp and Eric Frank Russell, among others. One of his innovations was the introduction of what he called "Thought Variant" stories, which looked at a familiar premise in a different way, or imagined the second- and third-order consequences of an invention or discovery. When Tremaine had to give up *Astounding* in order to become the editorial supervisor of a brace of Street and Smith magazines, his personal choice to replace him and continue his work was John W. Campbell Jr.

In the general atmosphere of congratulation and good feeling that prevailed in the auditorium, it might have been difficult to convince anyone that there was any conflict within the genre. Most fans greeted even mediocre stories with rapt delight, eager for any foray beyond the mundane. The proliferation of pulp fiction magazines in the 1930s had included many titles devoted to fantasy and speculation. And a whole new medium of story-telling – comic strips and comic books – was coming to life. It included many fantastic and futuristic characters and settings in series like *Buck Rogers* and *Superman* – people sometimes forget that the latter is the story of an alien refugee on Earth, and certainly an archetype of SF. Aviation-themed fiction, much of it wildly speculative, was popular enough to have its own subgenre, one that attracted many readers also interested in science and the future. It would have been easy to conclude that science fiction was thriving.

Some fans, many of whom would later turn into professional critics, had their reservations. The need to fill the pages of so many magazines every month meant that a certain adherence to formula was accepted, by both editors and the majority of readers. Characters of significantly larger stature than one encounters in real life would face a series of exciting and potentially deadly challenges, which they would overcome through the set of skills most appropriate to the genre – personal grit and a quick trigger-finger in the westerns, a world-weary expectation of betrayal in the mysteries, and a propensity for inventing or discovering the device needed to solve any technical challenge in science fiction. Neither antagonists nor protagonists were generally given the space to ruminate on their motivations, or question why the universe seemed arrayed against them. It was a clever, but emotionally stunted world.

Over the next fifteen years, the combined effects of comic books, paperback fiction and television were going to slowly strangle the pulp magazine market, and the stories they told would become the purview of grindhouse and drive-in cinema. But few would have predicted this in July of 1939. Some of fandom's earliest stirrings had coalesced around *Weird Tales*, hoariest of the pulps, and it was still important to many at the Nycon. Virtually every working professional in the room owed their livelihood to the pulps. And though a number of present and future editors were present in the Hall (and several more were cooling their heels outside), there was really one man who personified the pulp establishment in the same way that Campbell represented a new, more rigorous style of science fiction. This was Leo Margulies (1900-1975), the "Little Giant of the Pulps."

The son of Romanian immigrants Jacob and Esther Margulies, Leo was born and educated in Brooklyn, and briefly attended Columbia University, before taking a job with the Munsey Publications chain, selling subsidiary rights to their stories. He also opened his own literary agency, and in the late 1920s was employed by Fox Pictures as their east coast head of research. While at Munsey, he was mentored by the legendary pulp editor Bob Davis (b. 1869), who had worked with popular writers like Max Brand, Edgar Rice Burroughs and Ray Cummings.

Notorious for his swift decisions to accept or reject stories, Margulies was also very quick to send payment, which made him a figure of reverence among writers working in the 1930s. He was small in stature but active and aggressive, and his nickname reflected a pugnacious quality, as well as his professional standing.

When Standard Magazines introduced the "Thrilling" line of 10¢ pulp fiction titles in 1931, Margulies was appointed the managing editor of the entire chain. Titles like *Thrilling Detective* and *Thrilling Ranch Stories* sold well to Depression-era readers, and the line expanded steadily. In 1936, Standard's manager Ned Pines acquired *Wonder Stories* from Hugo Gernsback, who had started it and *Air Wonder Stories* after losing control of *Amazing Stories* in 1929. Retitled *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, the magazine would be one of the last of the pulps to succumb, persisting until 1955.

Thrilling Wonder was always rightly seen as a poor relation to *ASF*, but after Margulies formed an editorial partnership with Mort Weisinger (1915-1978), who knew both fandom and the field, the quality of the fiction improved. In January 1939, the bimonthly *Thrilling Wonder* began to alternate with a new title, *Startling Stories*, which also carried on until 1955. When Weisinger left in the summer of 1941, he was replaced by pulp veteran Oscar J. Friend, who had more experience with westerns. But Sam Merwin, who became editor in 1945, brought better fiction to *Startling Stories*, and made some consider it a true rival to *Astounding*.

(Mort Weisinger left the pulps to work in comic books; he was one of a number of writers present at Nycon who would shape many of the most classic characters of that field's golden age as well. But that is a story best left for another chapter, very possibly titled "Weisinger's Worldcon.")

Few of the pros in the room would have credited the difference in editorial policies present as any kind of conflict beyond the usual competition for readers and sales. Moskowitz and the triumvirate organized the convention to celebrate the contemporary generation of science fiction writers; very

clearly, Moskowitz wanted to be part of their number, and by many definitions he succeeded. What probably was not appreciated by most of the people in the room was that another generation of writers was sitting in the audience, and they would realize and continue Campbell's plan, for *ASF* and science fiction at large.

Campbell took over *Astounding Stories* in September 1937, and his first issue is dated December of that year. In 1938, Street and Smith agreed to change the name of the magazine to *Astounding Science Fiction*, a title which it would retain until 1960, when Campbell changed it again to *Analog*. He magnified Tremaine's policy of publishing "thought experiments" into the defining purpose of the magazine, and shared a dialogue of ideas with his writers which had previously driven his own work in fiction. That came largely to an end as he became editor of *ASF*, although his single most famous story, "Who Goes There?" was not published until the January 1938 issue. The tale of an Antarctic research colony that discovers a shape-shifting alien menace trapped in the ice, it has been made into three feature films, and significant elements of it have appeared in numerous other stories and features. It was also anthologized repeatedly, and appears in several "Best Of" collections. In the wake of sharing the story of his mother and her "twin," various analysts have found a parallel between the alien's ability to change its form and the confusion Campbell experienced at his mother's behavior. It was a memorable coda to his career as a science fiction writer.

Campbell cultivated new contributors, but also published work by his established colleagues, who often struggled to meet Campbell's desire for realistic science and recognizable characters. Less than a month before the Nycon, the July 1939 issue of *Astounding* had appeared; many critics now consider it one of the finest single issues of any SF magazine ever published. Its contributors were split between new authors (new to *ASF*, at least), and those who had been working in the field for some time:

Its contents:

"Black Destroyer," A. E. Van Vogt
"City of Cosmic Rays," Nat Schachner
"Greater than Gods" C. L. Moore
"Lightship Ho!" Nelson S. Bond
"The Moth," Ross Rocklynne
"Trends," Isaac Asimov
"When the Half-Gods Go," Amelia R. Long

"Black Destroyer," was the first science fiction sale for Alfred Elton Van Vogt (1912-2000). A son of the Minnesota prairie, Van Vogt's early life was peripatetic, as his father, a lawyer, moved the family frequently. Van Vogt began writing for the pulps, particularly *True Confessions*, in the early 1930s. He was moved to try writing science fiction by reading the 1938 issue of *ASF* that contained "Don Stuart"'s last story, "Who Goes There?" Inspired, he tried to write something in a similar voice; "The Black Destroyer" was his second submission, and a memorable debut.

"Trends" was, by Isaac Asimov's (1920-1992) own reckoning, the tenth short story he completed and the third to be published, but the first to appear in *Astounding*. (His previous efforts, "Marooned off Vesta" and "The Weapon Too Dreadful To Use" had appeared earlier that year in *Amazing Stories*.) It is an ambitious piece of future history, told from the perspective of a writer in the year 2008 recalling the tumultuous struggle to reach space in the 1970s. Asimov's narrative and descriptive skills were far from fully developed at this point, so "Trends" is honestly rather clunky, and the villains all too pitiful in their opposition to progress. But it was still the kind of story that Campbell was looking for. It portrayed the sciences in a positive, almost messianic role, and suggested how foolish it would be to resist its advances. As Asimov observed many years later, Campbell had been trained in the scientific method, and was familiar with the culture and customs of real scientists; and he wanted writers to portray them so that they might recognize themselves. And "Trends" was the beginning of a writer/editor collaboration that would last for years.

Nelson S. Bond (1908-2006), Ross Rocklynne (1913-1988) and Nat Schachner (1895-1955) were all established pros by 1939. Bond was raised in Philadelphia, and began his writing career reviewing plays for the Philadelphia *Inquirer* while still a high school student. He worked in journalism and public relations concurrently with his fiction career, contributed to both the pulps and "slick" fiction magazines, and later worked in radio and television. He also became a noted antiquarian bookseller. His story in the July 1939 *Astounding*, "Lightship Ho!" included a problem with a scientific solution designed to attract Campbell's eye. His protagonists are clever Campbell Competent Men. But his villain, the improbably-named space pirate Red Armitage, would be considered mono-dimensional in a *Flash Gordon* serial. Still, "Lightship Ho!" is a step above typical pulp fare.

Ross Rocklynne was the pseudonym of Ross Louis Rocklin, a well-liked Ohio-born writer who worked hard at his craft, but never found the fame or success that many of his friends and contemporaries enjoyed. His story "The Moth" is a tale of rivalry and espionage between two aerospace firms struggling to build a space drive. Rocklynne's narrative voice seems startlingly contemporary, or at least like the model of an "*Analog*-type story." His characters include strong and intelligent women, and he favors problem-solving over gunplay and other action. Only the ending seems a bit disappointing, turning on ideas that were simply wrong. Rocklynne continued to plug away into the 1950s, then left the field for more than a decade. He had a brief comeback in the 1970s, and his novelette "Ching Witch!" appeared in Harlan Ellison's 1972 anthology *Again, Dangerous Visions*.

Nat Schachner was a lawyer by training, and he had begun writing in collaboration with another pulp author who had left a career in the law, Arthur Leo Zagat (1896-1949). Zagat was remarkably prolific across several genres, and he and Schachner published eleven stories together, beginning with "The Tower of Evil" in the Summer 1930 issue of *Wonder Stories Quarterly*. Working on his own, Schachner also wrote under the names Chan Corbett and Walter Glamis. His transition from the "Superscience" era was imperfect at best, and "City of Cosmic Rays" is a good explanation for Schachner's impending exit from the genre. (He would later write a series of successful biographies of American historical figures.)

Bond and Rocklynne were both certainly in the room that afternoon for Campbell's remarks; Schachner apparently was not.

Two other fiction writers appeared in the July *ASF*, but neither of them were present at the Nycon. Amelia Reynolds Long (1904-1978) was perhaps better known as a writer of mysteries, but she also published numerous works of science fiction. Her story "When the Half-Gods Go" is a sly tale of colonialism on an improbably habitable planet Venus. Refreshingly, the Earthmen are relatively respectful of the locals, while their partners, the overbearing Martians, attempt to impose their religious beliefs on the Venusians, with self-destructive results. It is a fun story, but more space-based fantasy than science fiction.

The last author was someone who was to be a critical participant in the impending Golden Age, Catherine L. Moore (1911-1987). Moore is seldom referred to without mentioning her husband and collaborator, Henry Kuttner (1915-1958), but she had been selling stories, particularly to *Weird Tales* editor Farnworth Wright (1888-1940), for five years prior to her marriage to Kuttner. The two met through their mutual participation in H.P. Lovecraft's correspondence "Circle," and their collaborations would include some of the signature stories of the wartime period.

But the story "Greater than Gods" is entirely Moore's work, and it is quite unlike anything else in the issue, or really almost any story of the period. Her protagonist is both blessed and cursed with the ability to see with perfect clarity the future lives and characters of his possible offspring, depending on what woman he chooses to marry. Although it does not use the specific

vocabulary we recognize today, this is a story about genetic engineering, and also about having the freedom to determine your biological destiny in a way that few had considered at the time. It also raises the possibility of multiple or alternate realities in a very direct and emotional manner.

In his editorial to this superlative issue, Campbell followed his usual practice of summarizing his research into one or more scientific disciplines which had caught his interest. He left assessments of his writers' work to the fans, which populated the "Brass Tacks" column at the center of the magazine. Titled "Addenda," his editorial was a sequel to his piece in the April issue titled "Jackpot," which summarized the era's rapidly changing understanding of atomic energy. Enough changes and corrections had come to Campbell's attention since the April issue that he felt it was important to address them. And in his conclusion he offered this remarkable prediction: "The techniques needed for balancing it at a commercial, useable level are not developed, but that is the province not of the atomic physicist, but of a new technician yet to come, with a new type of Degree. The A. E. – the Atomic Engineer." Few other editors were even capable of knowing when they had made a technical error, let alone explaining how the mistake was made in such an entertaining manner.

Campbell could have easily made his case for the future of science fiction by simply handing a copy of the July *ASF* to everyone in Caravan Hall. But that would likely have been redundant, as almost every fan at the con would already have been familiar with its contents.

And the August issue of *ASF* was going to feature a new writer who would outshine virtually anyone who had appeared in the magazine to date: Robert Anson Heinlein. Heinlein was not present at Nycon, but he did apparently send the committee a dollar to support their activities. Therefore, his name was added to the list of "Scientifictionists" printed in the official convention program, creating the misapprehension that he was present at the event.

There were several young writers at the Nycon who would enter the Campbellian sphere in the upcoming months. In addition to Asimov, and the teenaged Ray Bradbury and Harry Harrison, an extremely impressive 32-year-old L. Sprague de Camp was in the hall. His credits were already sufficient to induce Moskowitz to introduce him in the roll call of working fantasy and science fiction writers in the room. Julius Schwartz (1915-2004) had helped organize the convention and was responsible the for the program book; he was another fan who would become most famous for his work in comic books. He was also partnered with Mort Weisinger in a literary agency, the Solar Sales Service, that represented several writers at the convention.

Ironically, there was possibly more future talent excluded from entering the hall than there was inside it. Six members of the Futurian group were explicitly barred because of a pamphlet prepared by David A. Kyle questioning the committee's intentions and authority. Moskowitz attributed the work to his nemesis, Donald A. Wolheim (1914-1990), and barred Wolheim and five of his companions from the con. Jack Gillespie, Cyril Kornbluth, Robert W. Lowndes, John Michel and Frederik Pohl were also excluded. Pohl's brother Julius was allowed into the room, as was Kyle, who had anonymously started the commotion. So a remarkable convergence of talent was left outside to greet their friends as they began their ascent to the fourth-floor auditorium. After a while, the excluded repaired to a Lexington Avenue cafeteria, and it is an even-money bet that they enjoyed themselves more than they would have at the convention.

Ray Bradbury referred to sharing conversations with Henry Kuttner in his report on the convention, but if Kuttner was at Caravan Hall, he avoided signing the registration sheet.

All the writers and editors present who identified themselves as such were introduced to the audience by Moskowitz, and some of these were undeniably pioneers in the field. The best-known pro after Campbell and Frank R. Paul was probably Abraham Grace Merritt (1884-1943). A. Merritt was primarily employed as a journalist and editor, one of the most popular in the country; in 1919, he earned a remarkable $25,000. His first fantasy story, "Through the Dragon Glass," appeared in *Munsey's All Story* in 1917. Novels like *The Moon Pool* (1918) and *The Face in the Abyss* (1923) influenced virtually every writer working in the pulps. His large income allowed Merritt to explore world travel and exotic hobbies, such as cultivating orchids and plants associated with magic and witchcraft, including wolfsbane, monkshood, peyote and cannabis!

Ray Cummings (1887-1957) was probably the most prolific writer present, at least to that point in time; he would publish more than 750 stories and novels in his career. His reputation among science fiction fans had been sealed with *The Girl in the Golden Atom*, written as a short story in 1919 and subsequently expanded into a novel. By the time Moskowitz introduced him, the program seemed to stretch out to the horizon. Cummings rose and acknowledged the applause with a wave, then sat back down again without saying a word.

Several writers present were particular fan favorites, including Edmond Hamilton (1907-1977), Harl Vincent (1893-1968) and Manly Wade Wellman (1903-1986), who was already beginning to resemble a seer of antiquity in 1936. Raised in Portuguese West Africa by a missionary father, his life had contained events that seemed quite at home in pulp adventure.

Many names that are nearly forgotten today were up and coming members of the science fiction scene in 1939. One of the most interesting names on the Nycon registration sheet is that of Malcolm Roush Jameson (1891-1945). A native of Waco, Texas, Jameson was a career officer in the United States Navy; Campbell claimed that he "had much to do with the development of modern naval ordnance." He had taken up writing in his 40s, when complications from throat cancer had limited his activity. His first published story "Doubled and Redoubled" appeared in *Astounding Science Fiction* in 1938, and may be the earliest incidence of a temporal loop. His "Bullard of the Space Patrol" stories drew heavily on Jameson's service experience; they were collected posthumously in 1951, and won a Boys Club of America award. He published as many as 25 stories and essays in his peak year of 1942, but his cancer eventually claimed him only seven years after his writing career began.

His younger brother, House Baker Jameson, was an actor on radio, the stage and on television, working from the 1930s into the late 1960s. His presence in New York probably inspired the Malcolm Jameson family to relocate there from Texas in the 1930s.

Alfred Bester wrote of meeting Jameson in 1939: "Mort Weisinger introduced me to the informal luncheon gatherings of the working science fiction authors of the late 1930s… Malcolm Jameson, author of navy-oriented space stories, was there, tall, gaunt, prematurely grey, speaking in slow, heavy tones. Now and then he brought along his pretty daughter, who turned everybody's head."

This was Vida Jameson Cartmill Skinner (1916-1988), who also happened to accompany her dad to the Nycon, and signed the registration sheet on the line below him. After high school, Vida attended college while working part-time as a clerk for an industrial firm. In 1944, she joined the Women's Army Corps, but returned to civilian life after the war. In 1949, she married SF author Cleve Cartmill (1908-1964), whose collaboration with Campbell we will consider further below.

Things got underway at about 2:30 p.m. on the afternoon of Sunday, July 2nd. Moskowitz opened the convention by observing that science fiction fans were unique among followers of genre literature, because lovers of western and detective fiction had yet to organize themselves in a similar way. He gave the floor to Will Sykora, who tried to explain what the committee meant by referring to itself as "New Fandom." The

response was apparently muted, but Campbell may have found it interesting, particularly when Sykora asserted that New Fandom was "trying to bring Science Fiction to life."

The first person outside of the committee to be introduced by Moskowitz was Leo Margulies, "the editor of *Thrilling Wonder Stories*." Margulies expressed a gratifying degree of admiration for the event and the fans assembled for it. Julius Unger quoted him as remarking "I didn't think you boys were so sincere." Although it was only just getting underway, the success of the convention had made him see science fiction fans in a new and different light. Later, the correspondent from *Time* magazine, improbably sent to cover the event, sought out Margulies as one of the few recognizable faces in the crowd. Margulies repeated his assessment of the convention, but when published in *Time*, it read "I didn't think *anyone* could be so sincere," which might come closer to his real feelings.

Next, pro Kenneth Sterling read a letter from Donald Wandrei about the upcoming H.P. Lovecraft omnibus. Then Moskowitz introduced the convention's Guest of Honor, the artist Frank R. Paul. Paul was eager for the opportunity to address his fans, and had prepared a speech titled "Science Fiction and the Spirit of Youth." Most observers characterize this presentation as "long," but given that the entire program barely lasted as long as Philip Jose Farmer's speech at the 1968 Worldcon, standards may have been somewhat different in 1939. Dave Kyle later fantasized that Paul might have been talking about the Exclusion Act in his endorsement of fannish youth, but there's no real evidence that Paul even knew about it – the short plea from Kyle and Leslie Perri to allow the excluded to enter did not come until near the end of the program.

Sometime during the first ninety minutes of the meeting, Campbell's wife Dona noted that Forry Ackerman was looking pale and unhappy; he later gratefully noted that the aspirin she offered him was exactly what he needed. Ackerman had a propensity for fainting and other spells in the stressful environment of the Worldcon, as if the sheer intensity of his anticipation was more than he could endure.

When Paul finished his speech, the next item was a showing of Fritz Lang's 1927 silent film *Metropolis*. Although the film was twelve years old, a significant percentage of the convention had never seen it, and there was applause at the end of the screening. The other picture to be shown was the 1925 silent version of *The Lost World*, starring Wallace Beery. In 1939, operating a film projector capable of playing sound was a complicated task generally undertaken by professionals like Bob Tucker, and older, silent pictures were much more within the committee's budget.

After *Metropolis*, it was Campbell's turn to speak. It isn't clear how much preparation he had put into his presentation – it was extemporaneous enough that he made reference to *Metropolis* and other elements of the program just completed. But he also presented a summary of the history of science fiction up to that point, as well as some of the ways he wanted to change it. In his review of the event, Julius Unger wrote:

"John W. Campbell Jr., the editor of *Astounding Science Fiction*, traced the history of science fiction from the period of the first issue of *Amazing Stories*, until the present. Before the first issue of *Amazing Stories* came out, said Campbell, there were no science fiction magazines and no regular science fiction writers. The first few issues of *Amazing* had, for the most part, reprints of the Jules Verne, Edgar Allen Poe and H. G. Wells classics, he stated. The stories tended to be fantasy rather than science fiction, he asserted. After *Amazing* had been on the newsstands for some time, continued Campbell, new American authors and new ideas appeared. E. E. Smith, he said, was the first to introduce atomic power to science fiction. The 'rocket ship' was 'another entirely new idea.' *Astounding* came on the field in 1930, Campbell told the audience. Characters were introduced at the time. Action on other planets was developed to a 'further extent' than ever before. The next period began with the appearance of new magazines, he declared. The two main types of readers at this time were those who were interested in 'new ideas' and those interested in 'adventure on other planets' as written by Weinbaum. The present phase of science fiction, he concluded, is characterized by new ideas plus new and better characters. In the stories about Johnny, the bear, one of the new kinds of characters, the world is portrayed, said Mr. Campbell, not as human beings view it, but as Johnny, a non-human, sees it."

While Unger's summary is a bit clumsy in places, his transcription of Campbell seems perfectly congruent with the ideas and policies the latter expressed as editor of *ASF*. Some years later, in his history of early fandom *The Immortal Storm*, Moskowitz recalled Campbell's presentation this way:

"…John Campbell of *Astounding* spoke next on 'The Changing Science Fiction.' He pointed to *Metropolis* as an example to show how science fiction was advancing. He compared the crude description accompanying the early science fiction character Hawk Carse with that utilized in present-day stories. Campbell stated that science fiction must continually advance, and that there be no holes in the development of plot and story; and his magazine, he declared, was dedicated to presenting 'modern' types of science fiction and keeping abreast of the times."

If Campbell actually praised *Metropolis* as Moskowitz states, it is a little ironic that a film released in *Amazing's* second year of publication was an example of how SF was evolving, but that's just a quibble. If there was a fight brewing over the future of science fiction, Campbell was ready to win it, while Margulies and his colleagues were barely aware that the fight was even happening. After Campbell finished his presentation, Mort Weisinger got up and told some humorous stories about the way some science fiction pros had entered the field, and then Will Sykora introduced the other 18 to 20 professional writers and editors in the room. Then another two dozen or more well-known fans were also introduced. By the end, at least a third of the room had been applauded by the other two-thirds.

Dave Kyle finished the formal event by speaking briefly on the progressive potential of science fiction, then begged Moskowitz to relent and allow the six excluded fans to enter. Leslie Perri proposed the idea as a formal motion, but Moskowitz replied that motions were not allowed at this convention, and adjourned it, promising that the auction would follow shortly. And from the perspective of most of the professionals in the room, that was the end of the First World Science Fiction Convention.

After the program, John and Dona Campbell probably went somewhere to eat with one or more writers he wanted to talk to, and then almost surely caught a train back to their home in Newark. With the Independence Day holiday falling on Tuesday, and having given up a Sunday for what was unquestionably work, its likely he didn't return to the office until Wednesday the 5th.

Having made his ambitions for the field known to anyone who would read or listen to him, Campbell would realize most of them over the next six years, roughly the same years that spanned the Second World War. Wartime shortages made publishing a magazine challenging, but the war was also the most intense episode of rapid technological development in history, and "new ideas" became a matter of national security.

Campbell's success in collecting the most creative new and established writers to his magazine was like a vindication of the faith that the first generation of science fiction fans had held for the future of the field. By the summer of 1939, Campbell had purchased the first SF stories by Lester Del Rey, Robert Heinlein, Ted Sturgeon and A. E. Van Vogt, and he attracted favorite pros including de Camp, L. Ron Hubbard, Murray Leinster, Clifford Simak and Jack Williamson. Several of Henry Kuttner and C. L. Moore's best collaborative stories also appeared in *ASF* in the early 1940s.

For roughly the first eight to ten years of his work at *Astounding*, Campbell had no real competition for the more cerebral areas of the

fantasy fiction field. That certainly ended with the advent of *The Magazine of Fantasy* in 1949 and *Galaxy Science Fiction* in 1950, but the field also evolved away from the magazine to the paperback following the end of World War II.

He had muddied the waters himself by introducing his own fantasy-heavy magazine, *Unknown*, in March, 1939. Campbell's object there was to publish the kind of sophisticated fantasy tales that appeared in "slick" mainstream magazines like *Collier's Weekly*. But what he produced was a new strain of fantasy that was just as inventive as the science fiction in *ASF*.

Before wartime paper shortages forced him to fold *Unknown* in 1943, Campbell published many of the stories that made L. Sprague de Camp a favorite in the field, including "The Wheels of If" (October 1940), "Lest Darkness Fall" (December 1939), and "Nothing in the Rules" (July 1939). De Camp's collaborations with Fletcher Pratt, "The Roaring Trumpet" and "The Mathematics of Magic," were combined into *The Incompleat Enchanter* (1941), probably the single most popular fantasy novel written in the United States since the days of Baum and Burroughs. Many of Campbell's regular "stable" of writers also contributed to *Unknown*, including Heinlein, Kuttner, Sturgeon and Jack Williamson. L. Ron Hubbard contributed some of his most famous works to *Unknown*, including "Fear" and "Slaves of Sleep" in 1939, and "Typewriter in the Sky" in 1940. A. E. Van Vogt's "The Book of Ptath" first appeared in *Unknown*, as did the first stories to feature Fritz Leiber's characters Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser. Leiber's story "Conjure, Wife," has inspired at least four feature films and three TV series, and was first published in the April 1943 issue.

There was an effort to refloat the magazine after the war, and an anthology, *From Unknown Worlds*, that appeared in 1948, but nothing else emerged. Anthony Boucher was also a contributor, and it was partly the desire to fill the void left by the demise of *Unknown* that led him and J. Francis McComas to begin editing *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* in 1949. H. L. Gold was even more openly imitative in editing *Beyond Fantasy Fiction*, which published ten issues between 1953 and 1955.

Campbell's passion for futurism and technology was irrepressible. Street and Smith convinced him to edit a hobby aviation and model airplane magazine in September 1946, *Air Trails Pictorial*. In the November issue, he published a long article on rockets in space flight, by Willy Ley; by January 1947, he had changed the title to *Air Trails and Science Frontiers*. It was passed on to another, more terrestrial editor in 1948.

Campbell was also a dedicated ham radio hobbyist, call sign W2ZGU, and he wrote material on technical aspects of radio for a variety of magazines.

The most notorious example of Campbell's attempts to plant ideas about contemporary scientific advances with his writers came with Cleve Cartmill's story "Deadline," published in the March 1944 issue of *ASF*. In 1943, Cartmill approached Campbell with the idea of writing a story about the building of a futuristic super-bomb, and Campbell enthusiastically encouraged Cartmill, providing him with excerpts from articles proposing the fission of Uranium-235. The story was so heavy with technical detail that it barely worked as a narrative, but it caught the attention of the intelligence service, which wondered how Cartmill had come so close to describing what was going on in Los Alamos, New Mexico, at the same time.

The FBI interviewed Cartmill and Campbell, and investigated several of their friends, including Asimov and Heinlein. At first, they demanded the issue be pulled off the newsstands, but Campbell convinced them that this would only draw greater attention to its contents. They concluded that Campbell and Cartmill were loyal Americans, but requested that they refrain from writing any further stories about nuclear technology for the duration. Cartmill was largely embarrassed by how bad the story was; he referred to it as "that stinker." Campbell did not tell the FBI that the sudden cluster of *ASF* subscribers moving to rural New Mexico had already indicated to him that the government probably had some very technical project underway there.

The mentoring, paternal manner and the seeding of story ideas that made Campbell so effective in his first decade as the editor of *ASF* gradually became more and more autocratic as science fiction grew far beyond the linear problem-solving stories he favored most.

Despite his avowed preference for concrete fiction describing the exploits of Competent Men, Campbell was prone to belief in pseudoscience, particularly extra-sensory and "psi" powers. As an undergraduate at Duke University, he had been aware of the work done by Dr. Robert Rhine in the Parapsychology laboratory, and would refer to it in the story "Who Goes There?" He encouraged his writers to incorporate these ideas into stories, and some complied. The history of Hubbard's "Dianetics" began with an article that appeared in *Astounding* in 1949, and which Campbell assured his readers was one of the most important ever published. Although his interest did not propel him into the nascent Church of Scientology, Campbell did claim to have positive results from the techniques Hubbard described.

While these excursions did not elicit the same storm of contempt that greeted Ray Palmer's publication (in the pages of *Amazing Stories*) of Richard Shaver's delusion-induced tales of Lemurian midgets living beneath our feet, they did serve to erode Campbell's reputation, particularly among the writers who worked with him. In the 1950s, Campbell spent increasing amounts of energy and time preparing his editorials, often taking positions guaranteed to garner a wealth of angry letters from both fans and professionals. His views on race now seem particularly problematic, if not contemptible; he opined that slavery is and has been the natural state of the majority of humanity across history, and spoke favorably of George Wallace's segregationist run for the U. S. presidency in 1968. When readers condemned his views, he took credit for stimulating them into reply. He was less accepting of contradiction from the writers he worked with, and the community of authors worthy of his attention shrank as the field burgeoned with new voices in the 1960s.

Many would claim that Campbell had not actually changed at all in more than three decades of editing *ASF*. He had always been overbearing, a lecturer and monologist. He had a distrust of socialism that deepened into paranoia with the passage of time, and equally little patience with Freud and modern psychoanalysis – both swept aside by Dianetics, of course. But it could also be argued that he was the dictator that science fiction wanted at the end of the pulp era, then populated by cardboard characters and perpetually turning on technical miracles with no relationship to reality.

Isaac Asimov, who credited Campbell with the generation of the Three Laws of Robotics, among many other devices, had an apostolic reverence for his contribution. In his introduction to "The Father of Science Fiction," Asimov wrote: "By his own example and by his instruction and by his undeviating and persisting insistence, he forced first *Astounding* and then all science fiction into his mold. He abandoned the earlier orientation of the field. He demolished the stock characters who had filled it; eradicated the penny dreadful plots; extirpated the Sunday-supplement science. In a phrase, he blotted out the purple of pulp. Instead, he demanded that science fiction writers understand science and understand people, a hard requirement that many of the established writers of the 1930s could not meet. Campbell did not compromise because of that: those who could not meet his requirements could not sell to him, and the carnage was as great as it had been in Hollywood a decade before, while silent movies had given way to the talkies."

While it was widely acknowledged that his art was much diminished from its wartime heyday, and that *ASF* was a shadow of its former splendor, Campbell was still lionized by fandom as it expanded its institutions in the postwar decades. When the Hugo award was introduced, Campbell won the prize as Best Editor eight times between 1952

and 1964. The Hugo for Best Professional Magazine was bestowed between 1953 and 1972; *Astounding*/*Analog* won the award seven times.

The most ironic example of Campbell's resistance to prevailing opinion was his passionate rejection of the health risks associated with tobacco, particularly cigarettes. He denounced the connection between smoking and cancer as "esoteric," and remained skeptical right up to his death from lung cancer in 1971.

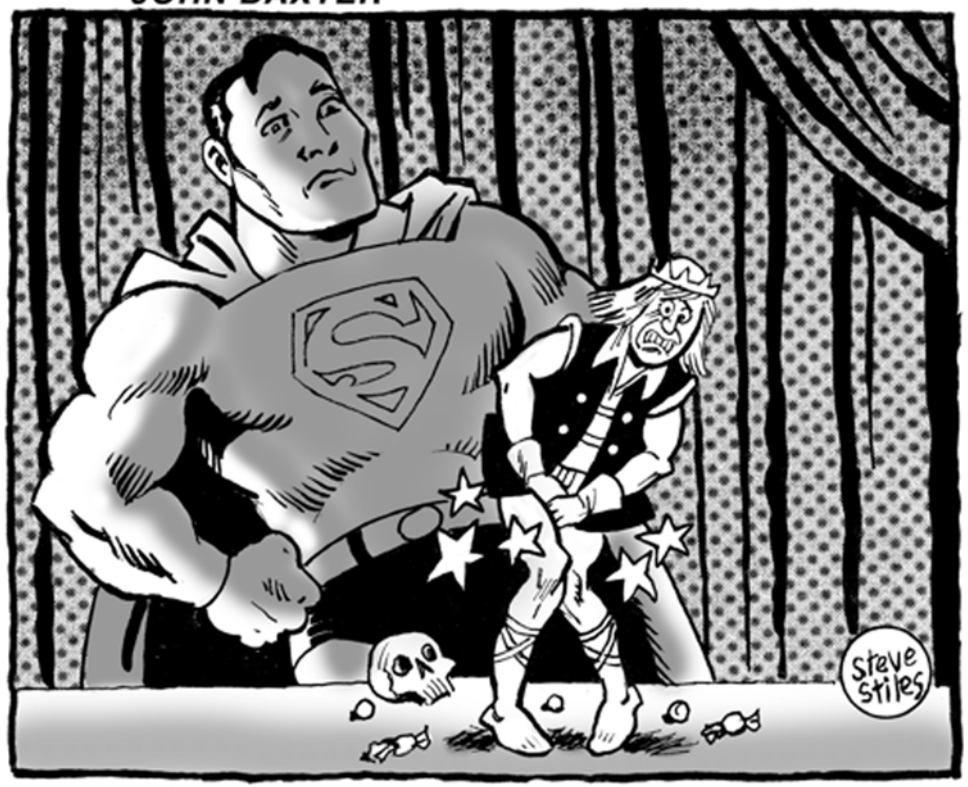
While critics characterized Campbell's style as reactionary, and justifiably claimed he came to resist the "new ideas" he had solicited so passionately in 1939, he is still regarded by many as having been the pre-eminent science fiction editor of all time, and one of the most important figures in mid-20th Century literature across all genres. Somewhat confusingly, two annual awards are named after him, the John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer, and the John W. Campbell Memorial Award, which recognizes the year's best science fiction novel published in English.

I appreciate all that Campbell did, but might admire the writers who had to work with him just a little more. Still, if there is ever to be a true Science Fiction Hall of Fame – a brick and mortar building dedicated to the celebration of the genre and no other purpose, like similar institutions in Cooperstown and Cleveland – then mark me down as voting to build it in Newark, New Jersey.

—Andy Hooper

STARE WITH YOUR EARS: A RADIO REMINISCENCE

JOHN BAXTER



In the late 1970s, when I lived in London, much of my time was spent working for the British Broadcasting Corporation, either as a critic on its arts programs or, periodically, as a producer of documentaries. One day, while I was compiling one of these in the subterranean depths of the BBC's headquarters, Broadcasting House, a man stuck his head around the door.

"Sorry to bother you," he said, trying not to sound desperate, "but I'm producing an interview next door for Radio Scotland and our studio has crashed. Could we possibly use yours?"

As he spoke, a famous face appeared in the door behind him. The slicked-down white hair and expression of genial abstraction could only belong to Alastair Cooke. I would have given up the studio anyway, but not to surrender it to the face and voice that launched uncounted editions of *Masterpiece Theatre* verged on the unthinkable.

Before I was halfway out of my chair, his producer was leaning over my shoulder and talking to Glasgow. At the other end of the line, a voice aged in single malt and raised to the sound of bagpipes was saying, "We have Alastair Cooke…" (In thick Glaswegian, his surname emerged as "Kewk") "…on the line from London…"

But Cooke wasn't listening. Instead, he was saying to me, "Now you're *quite* sure this is all right?"

"Of course," I said, "A pleasure."

I held out the earphones which he'd need to hear Glasgow, but he didn't take them. Instead he fumbled in the pockets of his baggy tweed suit.

"It really is *extremely* good of you…" he said.

By now, the presenter in Glasgow was asking her first question and the producer, having vacated the chair at the console, was shifting his weight from foot to foot like a schoolboy in need of a bathroom.

Cooke found what he was looking for, a pack of Winstons, extracted one, put it between those famous lips, and patted his pockets for a lighter.

Through the earphones, Edinburgh was asking "…gave you the idea?"

In the expectant silence that followed, Cooke slowly lit his cigarette as the producer guided him to his seat.

"…erm…" he said, loud enough for the questioner to hear. Subsiding into the chair, he took a long drag.

"…ah, well…" he continued, looking around abstractedly. Guessing what he needed, I plonked an ashtray in front of him. For a moment, I thought he might get up and start thanking me again, but his professional instinct kicked in.

All broadcasters shun "dead air," the aural equivalent of an actor "corpsing," when the illusion of communication is dispelled and the audience realizes something has gone wrong. Better to mouth gibberish than to say nothing. Of the many broadcasting arts, that of flirting with dead air but averting it is among the hardest to learn. (On stage, Harold Pinter turned pauses into an art. Asked how the anniversary of his death should be marked, fellow playwright Alan Bennett suggested two minutes' silence.) One of radio's most famous pauses appears in the Jack Benny sketch in which a thief demands of the famously stingy Benny "Your money or your life!" After milking the pause for every laugh it's worth, Benny responds testily, "I'm thinking it over."

I should have known better than to fear such a solecism from Cooke. Reaching for the headphones, he eased them over that narrow thoroughbred head.

"…erm…," he said again, as if pondering the question. Staring into the middle distance, he went on, "…one might say…" Taking another drag on the cigarette, he laid it on the ashtray with the deliberation of a golfer addressing a 30-foot putt. "…that I don't so much write a book…" His left hand adjusted the headphones while the right reached again for the cigarette. "…as the book writes…er…"

Writes <u>me</u>, everyone in the studio subvocalized. *Writes <u>me</u>*. But Cooke just let the pause build while he took another drag.

"…that, as I say," he went on, expelling the smoke, "that, well, that a book…."

Had it been anyone else, we'd have dismissed this rambling as the noise of one marble rolling around a cranium from which the others had long since escaped. Instead, every "er" and "erm" implied careful thought. If Pinter was the prince of the pause, Cooke was its king.

Long before television arrived in Australia, I was a creature of radio, drawn to the waist-high walnut-veneered console in the corner of the living room. Let my school friends race around in the sun, pursuing various species of ball. I wandered in a world of rumbling bass voices and mysterious locales, of infinitely prolonged family sagas, spasmodic comedy, and, later in adolescence, of jazz.

For a time, I flirted with taking a job in radio, and, at sixteen, even tried out as an announcer for the government-funded Australian Broadcasting Commission. The text they gave me to read, notwithstanding the scatter of foreign words and such pronunciation traps as "psittacosis," posed no difficulties. Harder to remedy was my lack of the deep, resonant voice regarded as essential for classic radio. But so few boys considered a career in broadcasting that the Commission offered me a job as a trainee producer. I refused. Even at sixteen, I knew that if you were not on the air, you were nothing.

Australian radio mostly replicated that of America in the thirties and forties. Aside from the ABC, every station subsisted on commercials. From 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday to Friday, a procession of soaps marched through the living rooms of the nation, each sponsored by some deep-pocketed manufacturer. The night was for game shows, with Sunday night reserved for an amateur hour of the kind pioneered on NBC by Major Edward Bowes. On weekends, sport took over, with blow-by-blow descriptions of cricket, football, tennis and, particularly tedious, horse-races.

The comedy shows so central to thirties American broadcasting were regarded as too specialized for Australians. It was years before I became acquainted with Fibber McGee and Molly, Amos and Andy, Burns and Allen, and Jack Benny. Instead, the ABC broadcast English programs, notably the surrealist *Goon Show*. Trying to reconcile the anarchic humor of Peter Sellers and Spike Milligan with the formula heroics of *Batman and Robin* probably accounts for the bemused state in which I stumbled through adolescence.

Almost nobody programmed jazz on Australian radio. For that, we looked to shortwave and the Voice of America. Not then outed as a CIA front, the VOA broadcast *Music USA*, a nightly two hours of jazz, half New Orleans and blues, the rest devoted to the moderns. My adolescence passed to the growl and moan of Duke Ellington, Thelonious Monk's enigmatic noodling, and an edgily precise Art Pepper, Chet Baker, Shelly Manne and Milton "Shorty" Rogers, embodiments of Californian cool.

Each track on *Music USA* was patiently annotated by presenter Willis Conover in his "Special English," a style of speech slowed to a crawl for the benefit of his core audience; not we Anglophones, but middle Europeans and Russians with limited English. In his deliberate diction, names unfolded like Chinese paper flowers dropped into water. I suspect he programmed certain tracks intentionally. How else to explain his relish in identifying Dizzy Gillespie's *Night in Tunisia* as "Night…in…Too…*nees*…ia" and lingering over the name of an obscure New Orleans bass player so that it emerged as "Al…cide… *'Sloooow* Drag*' Pav*… a…geau."?

A lifetime of Chesterfields (an addiction that finally killed him) had cured Conover's husky baritone to the suppleness of an old tobacco pouch. His nocturnal murmur, as instantly recognizable as Charlie Parker's alto sax or Billie Holiday's voice, articulated like no other the sadness of that "dark night of the soul" where, as Scott Fitzgerald wrote, "it is always 3 a.m." Augmented by Bill Evans playing *In Your Own Sweet Way* or Peggy Lee singing *Black Coffee* ("Feeling mighty lonesome, haven't slept a wink…"), melancholy had no more lulling medicine.

Almost unknown in the United States, Conover was a celebrity in eastern Europe, where to tune in to his program was an act of revolt. When he made a private visit to Poland, mobs greeted him at the airport. As he was driven through Warsaw in an open car, crowds lined the streets and cheered. I assumed he was *sui generis*. Certainly he had no rivals in Australian radio, where admiration was reserved for commentators who could gabble out at machine-gun speed an account of a horse race. After them came the actors who played private eyes and superheroes in radio drama. But if we expected to hear Orson Welles deliver his famous incantation "The weed of crime bears bitter fruit. Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? The Shadow knows!" we were in for a disappointment. Rather than use the originals, penny-pinching producers bought the scripts and had Australian performers re-record them.

Jumping at this lucrative gig, local actors never anticipated the effect on their other work. One took time off from playing a radio super-hero to appear on stage in *Hamlet.* At his first matinee, attended mainly by high school kids studying the play, he'd barely spoken a line before the whole audience, recognizing his voice, shouted "Superman!" He never regained control. Worse, rowdies in the front rows, testing his invulnerability, pelted him with candy. One of them, having smuggled in a slingshot, loaded it with a Jaffa, a sphere of ball-bearing-hard chocolate armored in a candy shell. Choosing a moment in mid-soliloquy, he let fly at the

bulge in Hamlet's tights. Halfway through the first line of "Oh, that this too too sullied flesh…" the man said "Awk!" and doubled over. Hilarity ensued as, clutching the injured area and muttering curses never imagined by Shakespeare, the Prince of Denmark hobbled into the wings.

It never occurred to me that radio might intersect with science fiction, nor that I'd learn this because of the Cuban missile crisis. When, in October 1962, Americans opened their papers to read of US Navy ships halting Soviet freighters off Havana, many packed a bag, grabbed their families, and made for the airport. Some didn't even bother with luggage or loved ones, checking in at Idlewild in robe and pyjamas. The majority bought one-way tickets to Australia, Stanley Kramer's film of *On the Beach* having convinced them that the atomic cloud arrived there last. (Ava Gardner, the film's love interest, was quoted as saying that Kramer, in selecting Australia as the setting for the end of the world, had chosen perfectly. A journalist actually invented the quote, but Ms. Gardner never repudiated it.)

One of these fugitives was Ron Smith, a Hugo winner for his fanzine *Inside Science Fiction.* Ron confounded my image of the Big Name Fan. Short, balding, with pop eyes behind bottle-bottom spectacles, he had a casual interest in sf but far greater enthusiasm for comic books and the humor of Harvey Kurtzman as exhibited in the magazines *Mad, Humbug* and *Help!* Once the crisis was defused, Ron decided to stay. We became friends, and even, as "Martin Loran" – our middle names – collaborated on a couple of stories for *Analog*. Ron also took charge of my cultural education, which he felt had been neglected. As we got to know one another, he confessed that, during his Brooklyn childhood, a neighbor regularly invited him into his basement to watch porn films. Ron insisted the man never molested him. He just wanted company, and enjoyed the role of teacher – one that Ron replicated with me.

I don't remember how Willis Conover's name came up, but it tripped a switch in a brain lavishly stocked with the lore of popular culture.

"Oh, sure. Conover," Ron said. "He was a fan. Very big before the war."

"An sf fan?"

"Yeah. Had a 'zine. *Science Fantasy Correspondent.* Pal of Lovecraft's. They wrote dozens of letters back and forth."

"*H.P.* Lovecraft?"

"Is there another one?"

Could a man who discoursed on *Black Bottom Stomp* as performed by Jelly Roll Morton and his Red Peppers also find room in his brain for the eldritch ramblings of *Dream Quest of Unknown Kadath*? I could feel my horizons widening by the minute.

"I never heard Conover," Ron went on, "but in New York we had Long John Nebel. And Ken Nordine, of course, in Chicago." When I looked blank, he prompted, "*Word Jazz*?"

Nordine, a late-night Chicago dj, fortunately committed some of his pieces to disc. As a jazz group played discreetly in the background, he spun Bradbury-esque fables and nocturnal fantasies. One of his most memorable pieces began with a raid on his refrigerator in search of a late-night snack. His intimate murmur echoed Willis Conover's celebrations of Parker and Ellington. It seemed that science fiction, jazz and radio had more in common than one might think.

Digging through the local library of the United States Information Service, presumably another spook front, I discovered Edward R. Murrow's reports from blitzed London, Orson Welles's Mercury Theatre and its alumni, including Will Geer and Martin Gabel, and William Conrad, the voice of Sheriff Dillon in *Gunsmoke*. The physiques of radio voices seldom square with the characters they play. Far from leaping tall buildings with a single bound, the roly-poly Gabel and almost spherical Conrad would not have made it up a flight of stairs. This disparity also amused Woody Allen. In his film *Radio Days.* The Masked Avenger, hero of a radio serial, is played by short, balding Wallace Shawn.

In time, Ron became deputy editor of what used to be called a "girlie" magazine. In time, he hired me to write for it also. Mostly I fabricated bios for the young women who lounged through its pages in advanced states of undress. The imagination with which I embroidered the lives of these moonlighting typists and wannabee actresses equaled anything concocted for John Campbell. Years later, living in Los Angeles, I got to know another BNF, Bill Rotsler. By then a semi-invalid, marooned in a disordered bungalow in suburban Reseda, Bill supplemented his veteran's pension doing more or less the same job, though his subjects were the women who worked the phone sex lines – yet more night voices, solitaries reaching out in the dark.

I never expected to be anything more than a listener and occasional contributor to radio, but as the budget for promoting books dwindled, along with the number of bookshops ready to host readings and signings, getting one's work before the public was increasingly left to writers. As Truman Capote's put it succinctly, "a boy's gotta hustle his book."

Radio and TV, though effective promotional tools, had their booby traps. There was the bored host/hostess who'd read neither the book nor anything about it, but just worked methodically through the list of questions on the publisher's fact sheet. One quickly learned not to anticipate Question #5 and answer it at the same time as Question #4, since we would surely find ourselves answering it all over again.

Appearing on talk-back radio, one learned to dread the phrase, "Our lines are open." If you were a biographer and your subject lived anywhere within a thousand miles, at least one neighbor or acquaintance would call with a rambling reminiscence, or a former associate with a grievance. Promoting my biography of Stanley Kubrick, I was harangued on air by a woman claiming her father had never been recompensed for his work on one of his films, and held me responsible by proxy.

Sometimes the callers claimed to have new information. As one biographer discussed his life of Wallis Simpson, a man calling from his car claimed special knowledge of the future Duchess of Windsor's shady Shanghai past. As he started to explain, his voice broke up. The last the writer heard was a faint "I'll call you when I get out of this tunnel." He never did.

Talk-back induced its own special surrealism. One novelist, ready to field queries about political chicanery in the rural south, the topic of his book, was asked by the first caller where he could buy the left-handed scissors briefly mentioned in his text. A second caller rang with the name of a local shop that sold them, and a third with an anecdote about an ancestor wounded while trimming his toenails at Second Manassas.

Doing radio interviews in England for a memoir about my passion for collecting books, I found myself asked to value rarities described by callers. "Hold it closer to the phone," I joked. But demands for valuations jammed the switchboard, and a couple of stations asked me back to repeat the performance.

Both Britain's BBC and the Australian ABC used to offer writers the superficially tempting prospect of an entire afternoon being interviewed on line by a succession of regional affiliates. Locked in a closet-sized studio with nothing but a microphone and a carafe of tepid water, one repeated the same interview a dozen times. Technical glitches came as welcome relief – though not the occasion when I overheard the host and another guest, not realizing the line was open, scornfully demolishing my book.

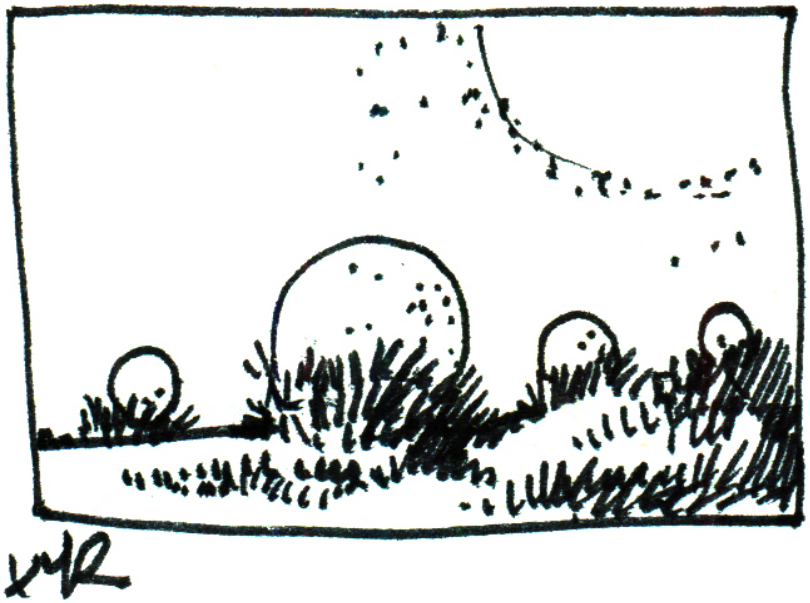
People who know of my enthusiasm for radio often say "Well, you must be a fan of Garrison Keillor." I wouldn't go that far. His novel *WLT; A Radio Romance* is a favorite, but its fanciful picture of a mid-thirties midwestern station, like his reconstructions of period broadcasts on *A Prairie Home Companion,* is more parody than homage. I've twice attended live broadcasts of the *Companion,* once in a rundown Berkeley hall for a hundred or so people, the other before two thousand in a sold-out Broadway theater. At neither event did Keillor's off-handed and affectless spinning of tall tales ever falter, nor

did he for a moment step out of character. Performance art, pastiche, taxidermy perhaps – but not radio.

I did eventually become a producer, editing and presenting a weekly book program of the sort on which I'd so often contributed. With a sense of reaffirming the traditional affinity with sf, I scheduled a segment on "slash fiction," amateur porn devoted to relationships between same-sex couples in such series as Starsky and Hutch, Cagney and Lacey, and, of course, *Star Trek.* Writers and readers of such stories – called "slash" from the line customarily used to separate the names, e.g., Randall/Hopkirk – emerged from the closet to explain the appeal of Spock and Kirk as lovers. Listener reaction to the program, unexpectedly large, consisted, more or less equally, of parents of adolescents and members of the slash community. The former requested lists of titles with which to scour the shelves of their children, while from the slashers there was a concerted chorus of "Shut up, you fool!"

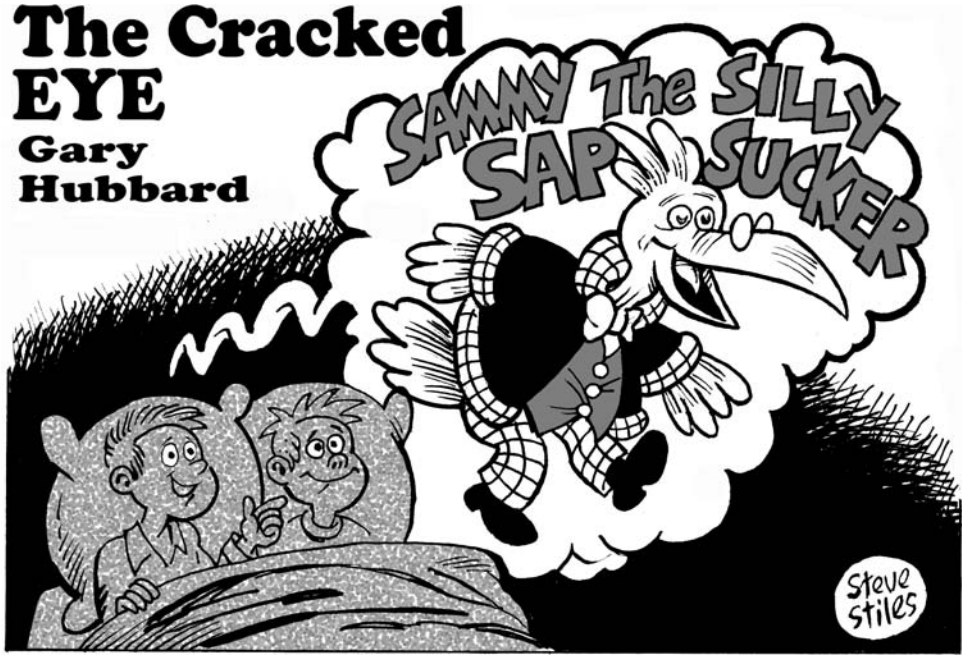
They were right, of course. Radio, of all media the one most dependent on a sense of the clandestine, should have honored their secrecy. As a poacher turned gamekeeper, I was caught between two worlds, an uncomfortable role from which I was glad in the end to retreat back into the shadows. Perhaps what I disliked about *Prairie Home Companion* was Keillor's public performances. To work at all, radio requires intimacy and a sense of inclusion. An anonymous scriptwriter on the original series of *The Shadow* articulated it well. "Never seen, only heard, as haunting to superstitious minds as a ghost, as inevitable as a guilty conscience." And Damon Knight, describing Ray Bradbury, called him "the isolated spark of consciousness, awake and alone at midnight." We of the dark know that feeling well.

—John Baxter



The Cracked EYE

Gary Hubbard



My brother Ron died a couple of years ago, and ever since his memory has been haunting me like Marley's ghost in Dickens. Like Marley, you could say he was a good man of business, but I think he was a victim of capitalism, too. He gave it more love than he gave to women and it betrayed him several times over. I've struggled with how I should present his life story or if I should at all. Much of it was not edifying, and much of what I remember is unflattering. It's perhaps unfortunate that I can't raise him from the dead to fact-check my version of his life. I'm sure his version would be different from mine. Not that it would be any more reliable. Bullshit is strong in our family and especially in Ron. He was sort of a black sheep, but I guess he had his good side, too. Others have thought so. Our sister Pam, for example, once said he made a lot of ugly girls happy.

A little mooring is necessary to get this story off to a start: I was born in 1946 and Ron a year later. I was born on Mother's Day and I like to think I take after my mother, a kind and compassionate woman. Ron was born on our father's birthday and took after the Old Man; they were both randy hustlers. Phil, brother number three, was born on Columbus Day and took off for Ohio. The two lesser brothers, Craig and Jeff, weren't born on any special days. But our sister Pam, the last to arrive, restored the record by being born on Father's Day, which made Dad pretty happy, because he'd always wanted a girl instead of the kennel of dirty boys he'd been stuck with.

In the beginning, when it was just the four of us (Mom, Dad, Ron and myself) we lived in a basement apartment in a house on West Ferry Street, Detroit, Michigan. I don't have any memories from that time. Not a one. Zip. Mom says I was always trying to escape the basement and she had to keep a constant eye on me. She also says I once tipped over Ron's highchair while he was in it. An early expression of sibling rivalry, I suppose.

In effect, our life really began in the 1950s, when the family had grown a little bigger and we moved out to the suburbs, to a town called Lincoln Park. It was a bit downriver, as they say, from Detroit and not an especially new town. I can remember seeing

a lot of old Art Deco-style buildings with cube glass windows around town – mostly bars – and the school where we endured kindergarten and the first couple of grades was a gloomy old institutional building from the twenties or thirties, kind of like the schools the Dead End Kids used to go to. However, by the time third grade came around that old school had been torn down and replaced by an A&P market. Our new grade school was closer to where we lived and thoroughly modern and had brand new asbestos ceiling tiles, under which we spent many years getting an education. The subdivision where our house was located was brand new, too – one of those Levittowns, you know? The road in front of our house wasn't even paved until a couple of years later. It was just covered in gravel and a truck used to come by once in a while and sprayed oil on it to keep the dust down. There was a nearby laundromat that had a vending machine that sold soft drinks for a nickel and had magazines in the lobby. A bunch of us (there were other kids in our life by now) used to hang out there, drinking Cokes and reading *Life* until the management got tired of our loitering and kicked us out. It was flattened by a tornado a few years later (that would have been in 1956) and replaced by an Army surplus store. That was also the year the movie *Rhodan* came out.

At first, there were a lot of small wooded areas and empty fields surrounding our subdivision, most of which were developed away before we got into high school. They made pretty good places to play while they lasted. One time Ron and I found an old tree house that someone else had built. We never knew whom, and the original owners never came around to kick us out, so we and our pals claimed it for our own. It was a great place to sneak cigarettes and store the tattered copies of *Playboy* that we frequently found discarded in the woods.

There were many bees around – a lot more than there are now – and we all got stung from time to time. I found stings horribly painful, but for Ron they were almost fatal. He had anaphylaxis and was extremely allergic to bees, wasps and yellow jackets. It was a harbinger of the soon-to-be lifelong history of physical problems he would later fall prey to: sports injuries, kidney disease, Lupus and an undescended testicle. We both also got impetigo at the same time, probably because it's contagious and we were sleeping together.

We were a large family in a small house, so we had to double up. It is always hard for two little boys to share the same bed. We'd lie awake for hours, arguing about this and that and regularly exchanging blows. Of course, we fought a lot outside of bed, too. I was the oldest and Ron the second oldest, and as such he was always trying to challenge my status as the Alpha Kid. We were sort of like the crew on a Klingon spaceship, where the second-in-command was always trying to knock off the Captain. At some point, I started making up little stories off the top of my head while we were lying in bed at night, about Sammy the Silly Sapsucker. He seemed to like them and was making me tell more, which I did until I dried up. Sadly, I don't remember even one of those stories. I didn't even know what a sapsucker was. It's just that I liked alliteration.

But childhood innocence (if there even is such a thing) passes quickly. A scandal erupted in our neighborhood when some boys lured a couple of little girls into the woods and coaxed them into pulling down their underwear and showing their privates. They did this more than once, and when they were caught by an adult it caused an uproar all over the neighborhood. I was just about the only kid on the block who wasn't involved, because I was at home watching Soupy Sales. Ron was up to his neck in the whole affair, and was tagged as one of the ringleaders. And this wasn't his first offense. A bit before this, he'd been caught playing Doctor with one of our cousins. But these incidents did sort of set the tone for his future dealings with women.

Ron decided to go into business for himself after he read an ad in the back of a comic book that promised he could Make Money and GET PRIZES by selling packets of seeds door-to-door. It was his first encounter with capitalism. The ad was festooned with pictures of the prizes you could win: wrist watches, transistor radios, BB guns, bicycles, etc., and promised there was no risk involved, because people would buy these seeds no problem. Then you could either keep a percentage of the take or turn the money in for the prizes, which was sort of like buying them via arbitrage. Furthermore, the ad promised there was no risk involved, because you could return whatever you didn't sell. There were a couple of problems with that, though. First, nobody wanted to buy seeds from a kid knocking on their door while Milton Berle was on, but to return them, you had to pay postage, which represented a loss right there. Well, someone had to pay the postage, but Dad wouldn't, so for years we had these boxes of seeds stacked up in a corner of the basement. The company, of course, sent Ron dunning notices from time to time to return them or pay up, but eventually they stopped.

As we approached our teen years, Ron and I weren't as close as we had been before and had formed separate friendships. Ron had taken up with some of the local hoods – a few of whom were bullies who'd formerly tormented me in grade school, so naturally I gave them a wide berth. He was starting to act a little thuggish, too, and still trying to unseat me as the Alpha Child. Around about this time, he got into Little League Football and put on a little muscle, but while he was in Little League he received a knee injury that would (interestingly enough) pay off big for him in later life, and he had his first bout of kidney disease. He had to be hospitalized for that. I felt sorry for him, but for the next few days I had the bed all to myself.

As I mentioned above, I had my reasons for not liking Ron's friends, although I had to be cordial, or at least indifferent when they were around. I had my own friends, a group of guys who might be classified as nerds today, but back then we were just called weirdos. Chief among them was a kid who lived across the street. His name was Tim, and his father owned a lot of jazz records which Tim and I used to listen to while sitting around in his living room. Tim was a nice guy, sort of a sensitive lad, you know? Well, I expected that all of Ron's friends (and maybe him, too) were going to end up with prison records. Ironically, none of them ever got into any serious trouble and later became pillars of the community (except for the ones who went to Vietnam and never returned, of course). On the other hand, Tim and two of my other friends got caught breaking into a gas station and were sent to reform school.

Now let's jump ahead to the year 1966, because it's significant. I had been in the Army for a couple of years by then and was back home on leave when I heard that the SF Worldcon was going to be held in Cleveland that weekend. Ron overheard me bemoaning the fact that I'd never been to a Worldcon and that this one was so close yet so far away, so he offered to drive us there. Ron wasn't a fan, but as he'd never been out of the metro Detroit area himself, he was up for an adventure. Besides, he was probably curious about what kind of freaks SF fans were, anyway.

So Worldcon: You'd think that my first SF con would have made a big impression on me, and it sort of did, but after all these years, I don't remember that much about it, except that I got to see Isaac Asimov, John Campbell and Forry Ackerman, albeit from a distance. But the most prominent memory I took away with me was of Gene Roddenberry displaying the pilot of that new TV show, *Star Trek*. I must admit I wasn't that impressed, but what do I know? Gene brought two models with him. One was of that spaceship he'd cooked up for the series named Enterprise (which, you know, was named after the WW2 aircraft carrier, but could also be understood in the sense of a commercial venture). It looked like a flying saucer stuck on top of a flashlight. The other model was a young woman who was dressed in one of the more revealing costumes from the show (not Uhura). A few years later, Ron would claim that he used to hang around the *Star Trek* set and dated her when he was living in California, and even though it was always hard to divine the depths of Ron's bullshit, it's just barely possible that both these statements

may have been true. Ron had balls of brass, after all, and could be really persuasive.

When I got out of the Army for good in "68, I came home to a couple of unpleasant shocks. The first one was that the lesser brother, Craig, had sold all my comic books, my Ace Edgar Rice Burroughs editions and a complete run of *Galaxy* magazines. If that wasn't bad enough, I heard the father of a local girl was after me for knocking up his daughter. This was completely impossible, of course, because I'd been away for four years and didn't even know any of the local girls. I'd never even dated in high school – remember, I was a weirdo. But it was a case of mistaken identity. It was Ron who had done the deed, just before he joined the Marines, and I think it's safe to say that the reason he did was in order to duck out on his responsibility to her. Fortunately for me, the matter cleared itself up quickly enough. The girl went to New York and got an abortion, because that was one of the few places you could get one in those pre-Roe v. Wade days. (Bess tells me that she used to work for a travel agency back then that offered package deals.)

Ron's own military career was very brief. He went to Vietnam where his old knee injury from playing Little League football started acting up badly enough for them to send him to San Diego for an operation. Now take a deep breath, because this is really true. The hospital operated on the wrong knee and, when they realized their mistake, they dug into the other one. The end result was now that he had two bum knees – permanently. Since he was of no further use to the Marine Corps, he got a medical discharge and a lifetime cash benefit from the Veteran's Administration. Ironic, because in later life he became a right-wing tool and frequently ranted about entitlement programs.

After his discharge, Ron stayed out there in California for a while – two or three years, I think – but he eventually returned to Michigan. That was the year I was really into Yes. I guess I should have been pissed at him for almost arranging a shotgun wedding for me, but that was years ago and water under the bridge. I didn't like him much, it's true, but I didn't dislike him, either. It's just that I didn't think we'd had much in common since high school. But, oddly, he seemed to like me, taking every opportunity he could to address me as Bro, and introducing me to his friends as his smarter older brother. Well, it put me on the spot, because he was always insisting on me performing smartness for them.

According to Ron, he spent a lot of time out there in sunny California burning bridges and crossing paths with scary people, and that was the reason he'd come back home. He showed me a scar on his arm that he said he got in a fight in a Mexican bar during a drug deal that went down badly – another foray into capitalism that didn't work out for him. But the real reason showed up on the family doorstep a few weeks earlier in the form of a girl. Her name was Diane, and she was the daughter of a TV producer (not *Star Trek*). She was a true Valley Girl (I hardly believed they existed) with blonde hair, but for a while in the '70s every woman had blonde hair. Apparently, Ron had promised to marry her, but had bugged out instead. Ron was good at talking himself into things, but not so hot at talking himself out of them. He could have saved everyone a lot of trouble by blowing her off and buying her a plane ticket back to sunny California. Instead, he caved in to her expectations and pressure from our family, and he married her. Everyone looked at me and asked when I was getting married, because I was approaching thirty with no one in sight.

The marriage of Ron and Diane was so brief that in some way it can hardly be said to have happened at all. Diane had expensive tastes. She was driving them into debt and Ron felt trapped. Perhaps as an outlet, he took up drawing during this period, and he wasn't half bad. I mean, his work was unoriginal and obviously copied from other sources, but it might have developed into something if he'd kept it up.

The sole memory of Diane that sticks in my mind (because it involves me) was when she invited me to go see *Bonnie and Clyde*, which was playing in revival at a local drive-in. Ron was in the hospital at the time with another one of his kidney infections and I guess she was feeling a little lonely. I don't know how you could say that wasn't wrong, but knowing me, it wasn't. The truth was that Diane had geeked over this movie ever since she'd seen it the first time back in the '60s, and before they got married she had fantasized about Ron and herself as a Bonnie and Clyde couple, romantic bandits. I don't think they ever stole anything together, but Diane did write a poem about her and Ron similar to the one Faye Dunaway wrote in the movie. I didn't care for it, myself. All movies made in the '60s were shit, and this one was the worst. It used attractive actors to portray a couple who, in real life, were just a couple of psychotics. Some people romanticized them, because they robbed banks during the Depression, thereby sticking it to the Man. But the truth is, they didn't rob banks, they robbed people. If Faye Dunaway and Warren Beatty stuck a gun in your ribs and demanded all your money, you probably wouldn't find them that attractive. But I guess Bonnie and Clyde did figure out how to make capitalism work – for a while.

Eventually Diane figured out that Ron was no Warren Beatty and went back to California and to who knows what. I hope she didn't join the Symbionese Liberation Army. Ron, newly single, was now free to pursue his two main interests: drugs and dicking around. He started working at a head shop called The Slave Market. I used to visit him there from time to time, because I got to read the underground comix for free. At the same time, he got involved with a Detroit-area bar band called Frijid Pink, and became a roadie of sorts. What I could never figure out was whether he was actually a fan of their music or just there for the groupies. He told me numerous stories of his encounters with them that don't bear repeating, but the first time I heard the expression "pulling a train" came from him. I guess this was his way of repaying me for all those Sapsucker stories. The band, you may recall, had a moment of glory in 1970 when they did a cover of the song "House of the Rising Sun" and got a gold record, which Ron had displayed on a wall in his apartment. Why did he have it, instead of one of the band members? I've never found out, but presumably it's now back where it rightfully belongs.

Ron was into drugs, but then, who wasn't. I remember the time he and a buddy came over to my place looped out on LSD. They sat around all evening giggling and looking into my soul. I wish I knew what they'd seen there that was so funny. Then, one night, he disappeared. He'd been partying with a bunch of people in back of The Slave Market, and apparently got hold of some very bad shit. He was out of sight for a week, long enough for Mom to start having fits over his disappearance. But, according to Phil, he was hiding out with a girl who was looking out for him while he came down. When he re-emerged, as it says in the cliché, he was a changed man. He got into an argument with the owner of The Slave Market over his wages, which he was never paid (once again, capitalism bit him in the ass) and said good-bye to the hippie life in general. I attribute this to the influence of Jan, the girl he was with. She was another blonde, but a nice level-headed person who could have done better than Ron – and after their divorce, she did.

Ron got a job through the VA driving a delivery van working for a wine distributor. He traveled all around the metro Detroit area, delivering booze to party stores, restaurants and hotels. So in a way he was still pushing drugs. He got to meet lots of people and charm the pants off them (I bet in some cases, literally). Ron was good at the job and eventually got promoted to district manager. Now he had a bunch of other guys in trucks working for him. I don't know if he missed being out on the road, but now he had a chance to charm the higher-ups in the company, which he did. He was moving up the corporate ladder and making lots of money. He married Jan, they had a couple of kids, and moved into a nice house in Grosse Pointe Hills, which is not as swank as Grosse Pointe, but almost. They spoiled their children and lived beyond their means, but doesn't everyone? They lived happily ever after for a long time.

Working for a wine distributor, however, was having its effects on Ron – we Hubbards

are genetically susceptible to drink. I was married myself by this time and had moved to Kalamazoo, so I usually got to see the family around the holidays. And every time I saw him, he was looking worse and worse. The combination of booze and his Lupis, which was increasingly beginning to express itself, had left its ravages on his face. He looked pretty bad. But since he was now interacting with a higher sociological group at work, he was mixing a bit of sophistication with his alcoholism. Suddenly he was into dry wines and liked to pontificate over their virtues. He tried to get me to develop a taste for them but I never could. I liked Boone's Farm, which he said the business classified as "pop" wines, manufactured to lure kids away from soda to alcohol.

After awhile, the company Ron was working for was taken over by Remy Martin of France, which had several consequences. Remy flew all the company executives to Paris to view their operations there. I'd seen Paris and liked it well enough, but when Ron came back, he was thoroughly disgusted. He was particularly incensed by all the blatant pornography he saw. According to him, it was everywhere. I thought that was an incredibly strange attitude for him to take, since he certainly was no stranger to porn. I remember that one Christmas Eve we spent watching *Caligula*, and the time he invited me to go with him and Jan to see *Deep Throat.* Back in the '70s, it wasn't unusual for couples to go to adult theaters together, but it was a little strange to bring your brother along. Dad played that same stunt when he wanted to go see *I Am Curious (Yellow),* explaining that it was okay, because I wanted to see it. I don't recall saying that, but both these guys liked to use me for an excuse – as if I was the patron saint of porn who could absolve them of their sins.

One of the products that Remy Martin makes is Beaujolais Nouveau, which they announce the release of every year in November around midnight worldwide, adjusted for local time zones. Ron was selected one year to make the announcement on a local Detroit station, and the result was not good. I watched a tape of it later at a more reasonable hour. First, with his Lupis and booze-ravaged face, he didn't make the most photogenic spokesperson. Also, he kind of mumbled through his lines, forgetting to mention Remy Martin's name until almost the very end. I don't know if that's why he got fired. This was the Reagan era, and downsizing was all the rage. Actually, a lot of people from his company got let go at the same time he did.

But the end of his career was also the end of his marriage. Alas, sometimes love can't always survive the socioeconomic system, although they were probably already having problems. But, nothing daunted, Ron found another job selling window dressings, by which they meant drapes. He was on the road again, going from place to place, changing displays and taking orders. The job agreed with him. Unfortunately, Ron started becoming more and more of a right-wing tool right around then. I think it was because of all those hours listening to Rush Limbaugh on his car radio. At first, he was just Rush light, but after he moved to Florida, he turned into Limbaugh extra crispy. As a lifelong Democrat and faithful labor unionist, this hurt Mom and was the cause of many arguments. Mom didn't like arguing with her offspring. As for myself, I just listened. You can't argue with Evangelists or Conservatives, so I don't try.

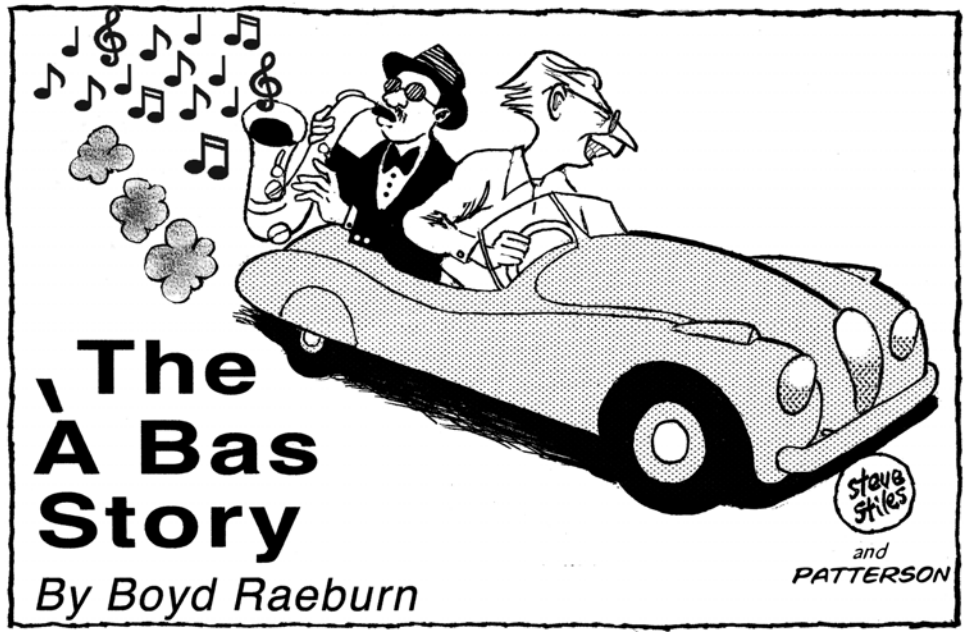
Years of marriage hadn't done much to improve his attitude about women, unfortunately; he was still as crass as can be. One time he came to Kalamazoo for a visit and invited me to dinner at the hotel where he was staying. It was just the two of us, so Bess must have been away – probably visiting her sister in Texas. Anyway, as we were passing through the lobby of the hotel, Ron called my attention to a young woman in a business suit, who was sitting on a bench and looking at a laptop. Ron said, "She's a whore," and told me a story about a class of prostitutes who service traveling salesmen. The suit and the laptop were their disguise. To this day I've never been able to make up my mind if I believed him or not. If she wasn't a prostitute, that was a vile comment, and even if she was, it was still vile the way he said it.

Ron did very well in the drapery business and rose up in the ranks quickly, and soon he was middle management again, directing the efforts of an armada of drapery salesmen all over the Midwest. This required him to relocate closer to his company's headquarters, which was located in Florida. He found himself a nice apartment looking out over a spit of land and water filled with pelicans. He got himself a cat and found a woman to live with him. He seemed contented. Then…it happened again.

The drapery company reorganized, and Ron was out on his ear. So where's a man in his sixties supposed to go for work? Why Lowe's, of course. Ron took up selling major appliances and did it so well that he was starting to rise again. Then his girlfriend had a stroke and Ron came down with lung cancer. The news sent a seismic wave through the family. Mom was especially upset. We'd already lost Craig a few years before, and now it looked like we were going to lose him as well. I hadn't really tried to keep in touch with Ron after he moved to Florida, but now I had a cell phone, so I spent a lot of time talking to him. Ron was a center of calm amid the tempest of emotions that were swirling around him. Time and time again, he insisted that it wasn't as bad as everyone thought and that he was going to beat it. If there is anything I can say about him, it was that he was a supreme optimist. But the cancer metastasized and got into his brain – and then he was gone. His sons, fine young men, went down to Florida, took care of Ron's stuff, had him cremated and brought back to Michigan.

Now, how should I end this? Sentimentally? I don't do sentiment, and I'm not sentimental about Ron. Despite his many failings, he was optimistic, capable and could have done very well for himself if the system had let him. Did I love him? Well, enough I guess to labor over this missive. At this point, I can only echo Goneril, from King Lear, and say that I loved him as a brother should, no more and no less.

—Gary Hubbard



The À Bas Story

By Boyd Raeburn

It's hard to believe that it is over five years since the last issue of *À Bas* (February 1959) and that many of the current young fans in fandom have never heard of the fanzine, much less seen a copy. God, how fandom changes!

À Bas was born in a one-shot session early in 1954 at a meeting of the Derelicts, which was a Toronto fan club. Everybody sat around writing stuff and running if off, and the whole thing was called *À Bas* and sent out as a rider with an issue of *Canadian Fandom*. I was named editor as it was thought a good idea to have some name to whom trades, if any, could be sent. The whole deal was such jolly fun that a couple of months later we did the same thing. These two issues were Vol. 0, No. 0 and Vol. 1, No. 1.

Just after the 1954 Midwestcon, at another club meeting, we wrote material for a third issue, but there wasn't time to stencil it. One of the club members, Norman ("I am a BNF and you are all neos") Browne offered to stencil the material. In all innocence we said, "Yeah, sure thing, go ahead, jolly good of you Norm ol' boy." When we saw the resulting stencils we were somewhat – shall we say – surprised, for good ol' Norm had used the opportunity to Put Us Down somewhat. However, we thought "what the hell" and ran off the stencils and mailed out the zine, fixing Browne with a cunning caricature and caption to put in a space he'd foolishly left vacant. The whole bit caused some hard feelings, and the club was split in a minor way. That is how the Derelict Insurgents – being Ron Kidder, Gerald Steward and myself – came into being. The name didn't mean much, except that we were a sort of fannish Three Musketeers, and it did give Redd Boggs the chance to make some remarks about The Fallacy of Insurgentism (or something).

That would have been the end of *À Bas*, except that Gerald Steward showed me one day a few pages of playlet which consisted of the club members making funny and cutting remarks about each other and various other fans. This gave me an idea and, using Steward's stuff as a start, I built the first "Derelicti Derogation" in the form in which it became infamous. We added some other material, and *À Bas* Vol. 3, No. 3 (whole number 4) came into being, no longer a club one-shot, but an individzine.

When that issue came out, little did I dream that *À Bas* would grow into the great zine it was. Well, that's a hackneyed phrase, and I can't come out in print and boast that my own zine was a Great Zine. But while it started out modestly, I do believe that it turned into a good zine – and that the most recent issue (1959 recent? – oh well) was a Great Issue. Do faneds of today get notes from new readers complaining that their zine "is purportedly devoted to science fiction and where is the SF?" or words to that effect? I used to, occasionally. I guess they got that idea because *À Bas* was listed in the fanzine review columns in prozines. But I never held *À Bas* out to be Devoted To Science Fiction. I just printed material I liked, and which I thought the readers would like, too. Leafing through the file of the zine tonight, I noticed with surprise that I did print a few science fiction bits, notably a great article by Dean Grennell, but then you were likely to find articles on anything in the zine – even articles on jazz and sports cars (boy, that sports car stuff was pretty funny) – and little did I know that those articles were going to start the cry, which seemed to reverberate around for years, about fanzines "devoted to jazz and sports cars."

À Bas started a few other things in fandom as well. In the editorial in #4 I referred to Pete Vorzimer as Little Pete Vorzimer, and how that stuck! But then, who now has even heard of Pete Vorzimer. A pity we don't have some Vorzimers around now. Not only was he a, shall we say, lively personality but he put out *Abstract*, a good zine. *À Bas* also started the myth about Andy Young and Fancy Expensive Restaurants, culminating in that great Grennell-suggested cover on #11 (photo of Fidel Castro at microphone captioned "Andy Young addresses science-fiction convention on the evils of "fancy expensive restaurants"). In the Derogation in #9 Ron Ellik was referred to as Squirrel Ellik, and how that stuck! That was a bit rough on Ron, but it did result in some great Bjo cartoons.

I don't feel like detailing all the articles in each issue and what they were about. There was some fine stuff…the material by Bloch, Tucker, Warner and Shaw particularly. Two of the really notable items were Terry Carr's fannish burlesque of *My Fair Lady* as *My Fair Femmefan*, under the name of Carl Brandon, who was then thought to be Real, and Willis's "As Others See Us," which I think was *the* definitive article on the opposing outlooks and attitudes of fanzine fans and convention fans.

And then there was Rich Alex Kirs. He was the only regular columnist the zine ever had. His "How The Other Half" started in #5, and always consisted of extracts of letters I received from him. In them he merely related his current doings. However, his writing style was fairly vivid, and some of the material in his first column was pretty far out and unbelievable to some of the readers. "I don't believe it," they bellowed. His later columns related much more mundane activities, but no matter what Kirs wrote about – going to a movie, buying furniture, living on City Island, Christmas at home – some of the readers were quite undone by his style. "I don't believe it," they continued to cry. I wonder whether they believed Dick Ellington's "Xmas in New York - 1954." That was as far out as any Kirs material, but eminently believable to anybody who knew that segment of New York fandom at that time.

The other regular feature in *À Bas* – and one of the most popular items – was the Derelicti Derogation. This was a playlet where the fuggheads took their lumps. some of the English fans considered them cruel, and perhaps they were, but the raw material of the Derogations was actual utterances of fans in fanzines. And while the English fans thought the Derogations cruel, some American fans would ask to be put in one. There were several attempts to imitate them, but none succeeded, perhaps because those who tried didn't really know how to go about it.

The basic cast was the club members of the time, with Ron Kidder and Gerald Steward being given a lot of the good lines, and one Albert providing an occasional innocent remark which could be used to good effect by the others. The Derogations used a fairly

regular format for the opening and introduction of the first Subject. They would open with the club members (a very elastic club…fans from all over would appear as members) making a few remarks to each others, one of which would be a hook to bring in the first subject, usually with his foot in his mouth. Kirs (who had returned to fandom after a long absence) would inquire as to the identity of the subject ("Who be you with your flashing eyes and mass of pale blue curls?" was the query of one W.B.). The members would enlighten Kirs as to the identify of the Subject, the Subject would speak some more, and on it would go until a new Subject jumped into the scene.

But this doesn't tell you how a Derogation was constructed and, after making three unsuccessful attempts at it, I have decided that I can't tell you how I wrote them. I went over some of the Derogations, analyzing them, and found that the only way would be to take an actual Derogation and dissect it. This not only would take a lot of space, but would probably be quite dull. It would be difficult even to quote from a Derogation as an illustration, for they ran from one Subject to another so smoothly that any extract would tend to be incomplete.

Instead, I am giving you here a sample Derogation, which will probably not enlighten you any further, but may give you some small amusement. While I'll use some actual quotes from fanzines, I'll use an imaginary Subject, modeled on the narrator in Nabakov's *Pale Fire*. He is a pompous, pretentious person, and is, I repeat, quite imaginary. I'll call him Irving Spratt.

DERELICTI DEROGATION

The usual meeting of the
David Clayton Thomas Fan Club.

Fitch: I think that at some time in their lives most people have what might be be called an intellectual awakening.

Raeburn: Gee, Don, I guess that either I've always been awake, or I'm still sleeping.

Spratt: Well, if Boyd Raeburn thinks that Intellectual Awakening is a pretentious term….

Raeburn: I didn't say that, Irving.

Spratt: Oh, how awful. You are making things so unpleasant in fandom.

Kirs: And who is this?

Steward: This is Irving Spratt. He's a pomegranate.

Albert: But that's a big fruit.

Kidder: Yes.

Busby: Usually they're eaten by boys, but in this case the roles are reversed.

Spratt: Well, as Laney said, Fandom is a way of life where every boy is like a wife.

Carr: But Irving, there are boys in fandom who sleep with girls.

Spratt: Yes, I've heard about boys like that. Filthy little beasts.

Albert: Oh, that was a telling sally.

Spratt: Sally? Sally = saille, salix, willow, the tree corresponding to the lunar month 16 April to 13 May, May Day falling in the middle – and the willow tree is the tree of enchantment.

Kirs: Aw, come on, this guy can't be for real.

Boogs: I fail to see how you can make such a statement. After all, What Is Reality?

Kidder: Oh, reality is just an illusion based on mescaline deficiency.

Spratt: Nevertheless, cogito, ergo sum.

Steward: Oh well, de mortuis nil nisi bonum.

Kidder: Oh no, Gerald, what you did.

Steward: Huh? What'd I do?

Kidder: You allowed Irving to put Descartes before Horace.

—Boyd Raeburn, October 1964

What this article isn't about is my views on royalty or republicanism. That said, I'd prefer an elected head of state but I don't really mind the tourist trappings around, and popular appeal of, the Queen (though somewhat less so her extensive family). If I don't want to be involved, then I can avoid it like I can for any celebrities. At least the appeal of the Queen is real and rooted in tradition and history and, for a lot of people, genuine affection, and isn't some transient social media thing.

What the article **is** about is a few personal but fleeting ways in which the Queen has impinged on my life, other than being on postage stamps that I used to collect though they were more important for a while than a lot of what follows. And a few reflections on social change during that time.

The most important effect the Queen had on my life was that her coronation meant we got a television. By 2 June 1953, after my mother's death, my Dad and I were living opposite the three blast furnaces of Bilston Steel Works with my grandparents and my Dad's three brothers and sister. The furnaces were replaced the following year with a single much larger one named Elisabeth (though named after a manager's daughter who first lit it, something apparently done traditionally by females for luck, not misspelled after the new Queen). The mineral-rich byproduct of smelting was slag, which was first used for fertilizer and later for adding to tar to make Tarmac by a firm my father would work for. I know, some people could only dream of living opposite one of the biggest producers of steelmaking waste in what was known, for reasons that were then abundantly clear to me, as the Black Country.

At the time, radio was the dominant broadcasting medium and only about two and a half million homes had TVs before the coronation, which was almost solely respon-

sible for the sale of a further 750,000 sets. Nearly eight million people watched at home with a further ten million going round other people's houses to watch and another one and a half million in cinemas, halls and pubs. It was the first time that a simultaneous TV and radio broadcast had more viewers than listeners. And certainly, as a family, we got increasing pleasure from watching the single channel in black and white followed by the first commercial channel in 1955.

The TV we got was second-hand and was almost certainly a Baird Everyman console because it had a metal badge picturing John Logie Baird embedded near the bottom. The console was taller than me but with only a 9-inch screen and – gutted of its wires, capacitors, loudspeaker and cathode ray tube – was eventually recycled into a clothes cupboard for me, which I used until I was in my early teens. I wish I'd kept that badge with the image of Baird on. I remember it well but I can't recall a thing about watching the Queen's Coronation on his TV.

A few years later, after my father remarried, I would be going to Saturday morning matinees at the vast Odeon Cinema in Bilston (then still known by its original name as the Woods Palace). Hundreds of school kids would gather in the cinema. I'd go upstairs where you could drop lollipop sticks and flick balls of paper onto the kids in the stalls. It might have cost a penny more for the privilege but I wasn't paying – my parents were happy to have me out of the way for a morning. Despite the excitement, films were pretty much watched and heard with (admittedly noisy) respect – gangster films, cowboy films, Flash Gordon and Superman serials, lots of cartoons, newsreels. At the end, the cinema would play the National Anthem but we'd have shot out beforehand, macs tied round our necks like capes, zapping each other with any remaining lolly sticks.

The National Anthem was still played after the last evening show at cinemas into the early '60s. There was a desperate rush to leave beforehand, not just to get an earlier bus, and I remember how people not quite near enough to the exit when the first strains of the anthem struck up would often stand miserably and embarrassed until it was over, caught in mid-dash as if by Captain Cold's gun in the Flash comics that I'd soon be buying. The feeling that it was just a lot of bother, except for the decreasing numbers of more patriotic or respectful older people – and the general societal changes in the '60s – put a stop to it. On the occasions I went to a late show with relatives, I was expected to stay and stand. But it didn't happen often as it was usually earlier performances that we went to or I was on my own or with my uncles, who cared just about the same as me.

I remember standing after "South Pacific" when I was about ten, but that was a big cinematic event and sticks in my mind more.

Kathleen recalls a loyal toast to the Queen at a wedding I missed a few years back (I doubt the married couple themselves wanted to toast the Queen) where there were Irish relatives who refused to stand and muttered all the time about it. There was a lot of muttering from the loyal toast proposers, too. How odd to have a thing like that at at a modern wedding. I guess there are people who feel it's the proper thing to do, but perhaps more usually in bits of society that we don't frequent.

Anyway, the thing was that avoiding the national anthem was a little act of rebellion at a time that young people were becoming more rebellious. Somehow, society managed to cope.

Around the time I was going to the matinees, we moved to Wolverhampton where eventually I passed what was known as the 11-plus exam, which since 1944 had been intended to act as a general test of intelligence for kids of nine (as I was) or more often ten or eleven to see whether they should go on, at eleven, to a secondary school – a grammar school, a secondary modern school, or a technical school. (My only other memorable achievement at primary school had been to win a kettle in a raffle. Much hilarity ensued – none of it mine.) To a significant extent this tripartite system seemed to result in kids from a middle class background going to grammar schools (with their emphasis on exams that often led to pupils going on to university) and those from a working class background to secondary modern or technical schools (with pupils rarely getting to university) and being branded as, or feeling they were, failures. Plenty got on in life but it's obviously wrong and unfair to segregate like that and particularly to make decisions that affect a child's life – indeed, that pretty much controlled their entire education – based on an ability to pass exams at that age. I had little idea of any of this at the time, nor any idea of the difference between a grammar school and a secondary modern school. That probably rightly sounds naive but we moved for my Dad's job from the area where I went to primary school to nearer the area where I went to grammar school – from four bus rides a day to two short walks, so I wasn't complaining in that respect – but it meant I lost touch with friends who went on to secondary modern school.

I didn't do well. The school had three streams – alpha, a and b – with the alpha stream being for the very brightest who would skip a year (doing three years in two in effect) and go from the first form to the third. I started off in the alpha stream but then, in one indication of how poor the idea of selection was, was quickly moved to the b stream when I failed Latin and pretty much everything else. I was even kept back a year, though that meant I was the same age as my contemporaries as I'd started younger than them. The future last Governor of the Bank of England, Mervyn King, was a friend early on but that didn't last as he zoomed up through the alpha stream and I dawdled through the b stream. Amazingly, the idea of selection at eleven, and an increased grammar school system is rearing its ugly head again under Theresa May whereas Margaret Thatcher actually closed down many grammar schools!

The school I went to had been founded in 1512 in the center of Wolverhampton but was moved to a larger site in the 19th century by the Chairman of the Governors, Sir Rupert Kettle (no relation). My Dad had been there before me, which probably explains in part why he was keen for me to go, though he hadn't gone on to university or got much in the way of whatever exams existed then. I was even taught by a couple of the same teachers who had taught him. The English teacher called me by the same nickname he had called my Dad – Captain – after Captain Kettle, the hero of a series of novels by C. J. Cutcliffe Hyne which I hadn't read at the time and still haven't, despite Lisa Tuttle buying me a copy of *The Adventures of Captain Kettle* in case I was amused.

I was at the grammar school in 1962 for its 450th anniversary when I was thirteen. The Queen visited Wolverhampton on 25 May and part of that was a trip to the school. A previous part was her visit to Molineux football stadium where I went with my Dad on alternate Saturdays to watch Wolverhampton Wanderers finish in the bottom five of the first division that season. The seasons before and after we finished in the top five.

My recollections of the day are slight. I don't think we had chairs in the hall, probably to make sure we stood and didn't accidentally sit down in a major breach of Royal protocol. The six hundred or so boys stood on each side of a central aisle, three hundred facing three hundred while the Queen walked along, accompanied by our snobby headmaster Ernest Taylor, until she reached the headmaster's chair where she probably had to push him out of the way to sit in it herself.

Once we'd turned to face the front, we sang a few songs, two in Latin: "Vivat Regina, Regina Elizabetha" – commonly sung to monarchs on appropriate occasions apparently but changed as necessary (eventually to Vivat Rex, Rex Charley), and the school song Carmen Wulfunense (I know) which, very sadly, I still recall began "Almam Matrem filii, pii salutamus."

We cheered to order and cheered some more when the headmaster said we could have the rest of the day off. But we still had to troop outside to watch the Queen lift a spadeful of earth as she planted a small tree which, I saw a few months ago, is now a large tree.

The other day I found a postcard that we were obviously all given of a portrait of the Queen – the fairly famous Pietro Annigoni mid-'50s painting which I rather like. I've also found a short bit of newsreel without

sound of the day. Umbrellas were up but I don't recall rain – we were mostly indoors. And I don't recall the day being in black and white but obviously it was.

http://bit.ly/2crora7

Kathleen and I moved to the small market town of Hitchin in the early '90s, which has a relationship to the Queen. Well, to her mother. The Bowes-Lyon family (of which she was part) lived nearby and her birth was registered in Hitchin. She used to take dancing lessons round the corner from where we now live. Those were obviously different days. I suspect there's much less mixing with the hoi polloi now.

The local theatre is named after her and there's a great photo in my local pub – The Half Moon – of her pulling a pint there, as if she was more like her hard-drinking, unpretentious Spitting Image puppet than a member of the Royal family.

When the Queen came here in 2012 by train, she was given a bunch of lavender from the rather lovely fields just on the outskirts of town. Apparently, Queen Victoria had been given a similar present at Hitchin station in 1851, though lavender was a major industry then rather than really a bit of the heritage industry as now. William Ransom's botanical business dominated an area near where we live, taking in "belladonna, cucumber, poppies, lavender, hemlock and especially dandelions" from local people in the 19th century, but when we moved here was probably producing less poisonous scents and potions for the Body Shop and others. It still exists in Hitchin, processing herbs and fruits for both pharmaceuticals and the food and drink industry (including botanicals for gin) but in a very different form to the rambling Victorian premises that, after a lot of detoxifying, is now a Sainsbury's supermarket and apartments.

I guess the next slight interaction (if it can be called as much as that) was when I was working on the Disability Discrimination Bill in 1994 when John Major was Prime Minister – it was based significantly on the earlier Americans with Disabilities Act. It was a difficult time because equal opportunities legislation was one of the last things a conservative government wanted to take forward, so not only was a significant part of the Tory party against it but also a significant part of the Cabinet. Luckily, John Major and our then-Secretary of State were two of those in favor, but the junior Minister that we had to work through was against it, as were the Treasury and newly empowered Deregulation Unit as a matter of principle.

On the other hand, the disability lobby was against it, too, as was the Labour Party. Though disability organizations wanted anti-discrimination legislation, not unexpectedly they didn't want what was on offer from the then-Government and produced their own bill, which was being taken forward in Parliament at the same time as the Government's bill was going through. Given that the Major government only had a majority of two at the time and a couple of Tories were supporters of the disability lobby proposals, this meant the Government had to keep amending its own Bill to be more like the lobby one in order to get their own through Parliament, as well as arguing against the Lobby's Bill as it went through its own parallel stages. And dealing with both bills was significantly my responsibility. Interesting times, as the Chinese say. Still, that's another story.

One of the things that happens before most legislation is that there's an announcement of a program of Bills as part of what's called the Queen's Speech at the beginning of each Parliamentary session. Eventually, two copies of each Act of Parliament, one for the parliamentary archives and one for the National Archives, are printed on vellum parchment. Recently the cheese-parers in Government thought they might save £80,000 a year by changing to archival paper. Paper apparently only lasts for up to five hundred years but the Domesday Book was written on vellum in 1086 and the Magna Carta in 1215. MPs quite fancy themselves as producing timeless words and legislation so there was a bit of an uproar, with one MP even offering to pay the £80,000 himself (while fearlessly cutting billions from the welfare budget and ensuring billions would be spent on our nuclear deterrent). Anyway, tradition and self-importance won out so vellum is still used.

The Queen also gets to read her speech out from pages of vellum, which may or may not be goatskin or calfskin or sheepskin. Whichever it is, though, it's a sad end to the life of an innocent creature and I'm surprised that PETA hasn't got naked about it. In 1994, the following carefully honed words were sent by cleft stick from my desk to one of the Queen's (via innumerable people) and eventually inscribed on vellum: "My Government will introduce a Bill to tackle discrimination against disabled people." On 16 November, she stayed awake long enough to read them out and never before in the history of history have those historic words in this order been uttered by a reigning monarch.

On Sunday, 31 August 1997, Princess Diana died. Our daughter Jen told me at breakfast, coming in to see us to complain that the children's TV had all been cancelled. I have to say I was shocked – what were we paying our license fee for other than to keep the kids occupied? And obviously, it was a shock because Diana was so young, though a car accident can happen to anyone, but perhaps not an accident engineered by her father-in-law Prince Phillip (© the *Daily Express* and conspiracy theorists everywhere). I hadn't really paid much attention to what she was up to over the years other than being impressed with her wide-ranging charitable work and practical and influential support for some causes that hadn't previously come close to other members of the Royal family. And thinking that Prince Charles was quite a lot of a git in the way he treated her.

It was the day that the annual local rounders match – just a neighborhood thing the kids and us quite enjoyed – was due but that obviously wasn't going to happen. I don't often read public tragedies particularly well, but it seemed clear that people would react strongly and emotionally to the sudden death of a such a popular figure. Past our window trooped a local family all done up more athleticly than we ever were for the event and I said we'd be seeing them again soon. Within minutes they trooped back. They'd been the only people there.

On Tuesday I went along to her home, Kensington Palace, because of what I'd seen on the news. It was an extraordinary sight. It was a vast and fast-growing field of flowers with people adding to it or standing and weeping. I was more moved by them being moved than by Diana's death, but I doubt I'll ever see anything again quite like that symbol of the public's – well, perhaps not grief but emotional overreaction. What was also bizarre was the way that the Queen – long popular and liked by many people – was seen as one of the (many) villains of the piece. She was portrayed by the press as cold and lacking compassion because she didn't immediately return to London from her holiday in Scotland (where she was with Diana's children) and because the Buckingham Palace flag was not flown at half mast. Though there were family reasons and reasons of tradition, which are both what largely control Royal protocol, they hadn't read the public mood and probably didn't feel they needed to. It was left to the new Prime Minister, Tony Blair, to out-Queen the Queen when he spoke on TV on the day of her death, though she regained her popularity while his unpopularity was yet to come.

This was all pre-social media. People reacted in a different way. It's only twenty years ago but people had actually to get together to react en masse and were guided then by TV, radio and newspapers and their relatives and friends down the pub than by their "friends." Now that there's social media, people post emojis and respond to memes and exchange messages, which is no bad thing as it can give more people more opportunities to express real or imagined grief, or at least feelings, and it's possible to get real support and recognition that you're not alone. Or it can make things worse. Who knows?

I can't say that Diana was more popular than David Bowie – maybe differently popular – but I guess people would have gathered more readily after his death had there been somewhere to do so. She had an actual home in a public place already frequented by tourists, rather than, in David Bowie's case, a mural in London or a former flat in Berlin which seem to have attracted many fewer flowers. But in his case social media seemed

particularly appropriate as it was an easy way of sharing images and music. And you can't, and wouldn't want to, say everything with flowers anyway….

In 2002 Kathleen and I went to Buckingham Palace. Various bits of the Queen's residences are open to the public. The state rooms of Buckingham Palace since 1993 and those in Windsor Castle for over 150 years. But then, they're not her personal property unlike Sandringham and Balmoral. (How many palaces and castles does anyone need? I have fewer than one.) I've never felt the urge to go to any of them despite being very touristy when we're abroad, and indeed often enough here.

On this occasion I was invited. Every year the Queen gives three garden parties at Buckingham Palace. They're not particularly exclusive. I think it's upwards of 25,000 or more people go in total each year. It's apparently "a way of recognizing and rewarding public service" and "a long established network of sponsors is used to invite guests, who include Lord-Lieutenants, Societies and Associations, Government Departments, Local Government, the Services, the Church and other Faiths."

I was invited through the Government department I worked in, though quite what it was for escaped me a bit. An invitation seems to be seen as something short of being awarded an honor – or maybe as a substitute. My father had been invited many years before and went with my mother and my youngest sister because, at the time, only unmarried daughters could accompany the main attendees. You know, in case they met a single man in possession of a good fortune. That rule eventually changed so pretty much anyone could be a guest and the monarchy entered the 20th century just before the end of it as far as that was concerned. My mum and dad and sister seemed to enjoy it enough, though it wasn't really their sort of thing.

It wasn't ours, either. We thought quite a bit about whether to accept. Neither of us is particularly keen on formal occasions and especially not of this sort. But it was an opportunity to see a 40-acre garden designed by Capability Brown and experience something a bit different.

We didn't have to dress up. I wore work clothes – suit and tie – and Kathleen a nice dress but, breaking with tradition, no hat. Some of the people there were very suited and booted but I think they were largely Royal hangers on, though clearly some people chose to wear morning dress and a top hat and some wore their military uniform.

The queue to get in was huge – eight thousand people meant a wait upwards of an hour. We had to have a passport and some other form of ID – I can't recall what it was, maybe a Departmental pass for me and a driving license for Kathleen. Probably not a gas bill. We went through the palace from front to back without seeing much of it, onto a large terrace, down some steps and out into the vast garden.

It was a sunny day but really all we were aware of was the enormous crowd, a particularly large marquee, and music being played by two military bands, one louder than the other as you wandered round, and Yeoman of the Guard standing about keeping an eye on things.

The marquee was a tea tent where we had very small sandwiches, tiny cakes, ice cream and tea and soft drinks. We could both have done with a large glass of wine. There were chairs set around but no tables. People managed.

The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh wandered amongst us, though a handful of people (unsurprisingly not including us) had been chosen to meet her and were ushered into and out of her presence for a brief chat by one of the team of Queen's Gentleman Ushers. (I was an usher at one of my sister's weddings after the proper usher, a mate of my brother-in-law-to-be, got so drunk he was still asleep in a ditch when the wedding started. It wasn't quite the same.)

Too many people were milling around so we went for a walk in the garden which was largely why we were there. It was very pleasant, especially out of earshot of the popular tunes. (Everyone likes a nice band but not *too* much.) And it was very pretty. Some was very formal, but much less so by and round the large lake with lots of native birds on it. I looked in vain for at least one of the two species of fungi new to science that a leaflet informed us had been discovered there recently.

It was so easy to forget you were in the middle of central London but that's the same with any of the big parks. And that's really what it was. A large private park.

We were there for a couple of hours but it's not an event that's burned into my memory. I can't recall what we did afterwards nor really a lot of detail of the day itself. It was a somewhat tortuous way of getting to see someone's else's big garden. When we occasionally go to Open Garden events locally it's nice to see how people have set out their gardens – some smaller than ours and some bigger. We get ideas for new plants and how to arrange them. We didn't get any ideas from Buckingham Palace gardens. Our entire garden could have fitted on the terrace behind the building before you even reach the lawn and still left room for marquees.

In 2006 I was awarded an OBE for my day job of working on disability rights legislation. Nothing for my efforts on behalf of British horror novels or fanzine writing. Perhaps that speaks for itself.

OBE stands for Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire. Though the vast official document I eventually received, signed at the top "Elizabeth R," says it is the "Grant of the Dignity of an Ordinary Officer of the Civil Division of the Order of the British Empire." I know – you don't need to tell me. The British establishment knows how to string words together.

The honors system in the UK has long been looked at with a mixture of respect and, well, disrespect. I'll leave my views for another time but I quite like this article by my namesake, Martin Kettle, in the Guardian for those who want to see something of the arguments.

https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2003/dec/23/Whitehall.uk

I took the offer of an OBE to be something to do with what my colleagues felt about me. These sort of awards are often instigated on a bottom-up basis. It's not as if the Queen sits down twice a year (New Year's and Birthday honors) and has a good long think about who might get one of the wide range of honors. I've put forward suggestions myself for people who've achieved particular distinction in the disability world, mainly at a national level. Other people make other suggestions and people do it at a local level, too. Sometimes the suggestions are for people who are volunteers and often enough they're people who are paid to do jobs, like I was.

I think this is one (of several) reasons why people are against the system – why give people an honor for simply doing their job. Well, I do wonder about that but until it's changed it's what we've got. I did do quite a lot of work outside what I was paid to do, but plenty of people do and I suspect more people do it now than ever before given our more insecure working environment. I had rather mixed feelings about the award. I'm not a big fan of this particular system but on the other hand colleagues seemed to think they wanted to "honor" me. A drink would have been fine, but I got that, too.

Some friends thought I got it because it was my turn – i.e., everyone who retires from the civil service at a particular level gets one. Not that it matters, but that's just not the case. Other people say that OBE stands for Other Buggers' Efforts and there's something in that. Whatever I achieved wasn't achieved on my own. And others wondered why I hadn't refused it. My father had been offered an honor and turned it down, but I didn't. I think I was fascinated by what would come of it all – the process – as much as it being an acknowledgment that it had been my colleagues who'd put me forward.

In fact, I was quite taken aback when I first got a letter in November 2005 telling me "in strict confidence" that the Prime Minister had it in mind to submit my name to the Queen and wanting to know first if this would be "agreeable" to me. How Sir Humphrey is that? There was a form to fill in which saved me going to Clinton Cards for a "Thanks for the offer of an OBE" card.

The actual appearance of my name on the list that's published in many newspapers achieved a few things. One was that on a visit

at New Year 2006 – the day after the list was published – to Malcolm Edwards and his family, I was given a hand-made OBE by Malcolm and Jacks' daughter Amelia Rose, my goddaughter. And I was then sent the less well known Seal of Royal Feathers by my niece Laura.

Another thing was that the local paper sent a reporter round to interview and photograph me. That was mildly embarassing and I found myself muttering things about offering something back to the community which, later, consisted of quite a lot of time working unsuccessfully towards getting a town council established. That went well, then.

On the day in May, Kathleen and I and our children Jen and Nathan, made ourselves look presentable – suits we already had for Nathan and me while Kathleen and Jen looked even lovelier in their dresses. The queues to get in were significantly less than the garden party because there weren't 8,000 or so people arriving at the same time. There are around 2,500 people awarded honors a year and each investiture only has about 120 people at it – so with guests that might be 500 or so there.

When we got into the palace, the awardees were separated off from the guests. And then the recipients were split into two – knighthoods, damehoods and CBEs (Commanders of..) in one room and OBEs and MBEs (Members of…) in another. We had yet to be given our instructions on what to expect and what to do.

We were given some water and juice from bottles with The Queen's crest, and we had little goblets which had EIIR on them and we were obviously trusted not to pocket one. I'd have quite liked a drink – a real drink – but that might have led to behavior and that would never do.

The gallery we waited in was full of old artworks – nothing we'd seen when we came to the garden party because we were marched straight through from front to back, but possibly things that were on the route for paid-for visits to the Palace. I had no idea who were the subjects of the paintings and it's quite possible that they were all Royals, so none of them were in fact subjects. I guess they were worth a few bob though. But not a Constable or Turner in sight.

We milled around a bit, doing the British thing with strangers of either not talking to each other or talking about the weather. I spotted the celebrity chef Heston Blumenthal and the fashion designer Ozwald Boateng (looking splendid in a bright blue suit) there, but that was it for well-known people. Earlier I'd seen a woman who was there for chairing the Equal Opportunities Commission and who'd I'd put forward for her first public appointment for a disability advisory panel in the early '90s but she wasn't in the gallery with us. It turned out later that she was being made a Dame. Apparently, there's nothing like it.

Fairly soon, a rather jovial and, indeed, quite amusing man came out to brief us – one of the Officers on Duty. He was fully togged up in ceremonial military wear with a sword that he had to steer away from clobbering anyone nearby with his hand on the handle and a well-rehearsed line in self-deprecatory jokes to put us at our ease as he gave us detailed guidance on what to do – when to walk forward to meet the Queen, when to walk off backwards afterwards, what to avoid walking into (mainly priceless artworks) and so on – which, if everyone else was like me, was totally forgotten within seconds so it was useful to have people to remind us as we shuffled forward in a line through the various galleries and corridors, surrounded by more artworks that were presumably part of the Royal Collection. All gilt and polished wood and plushness.

The honors are handed out either by the Queen or one of her children or grandchildren – the Prince of Wales usually but sometimes the Duke of Cambridge or the Princess Royal. In a way, I was quite pleased that it was the Queen at our investiture – I mean, if you're going to have this done, you might as well have it done right.

We each had a small clip pinned onto our lapels or equivalent and, eventually, we were parceled up into small groups and sent off about every fifteen minutes or so to the ballroom where the event was being held.

We'd been told to walk forward into the ballroom in stages as particular things happened – the person in front receiving their honor meant we shuffled forward a bit and their finishing receiving it meant we shuffled forward a bit more until finally our names were called. A lot of that was the sort of detail I couldn't recall, but another Officer on Duty was there to give us another hint as to what to do like a metaphorical shove in the back.

I had to walk towards the Queen and give a little bow just from the neck, not a deep Downton Abbey one. Then she shook my hand. I was faintly impressed that she wasn't wearing gloves for 120 handshakes, though the risk of passing on MRSA was slight, I think. Well, as far as I know neither of us got it. She was standing on a slightly raised bit of the ballroom – she's a fairly short woman – and she was standing there for over an hour which was quite a thing for an eighty-year old, I thought.

The reason for the lapel clip was to make it easy for the Queen to attach the insignia instead of struggling with a safety pin for each one and risking spilling the Royal blood.

The Queen congratulated me and asked me what on earth I'd been doing at the Department of Work and Pensions to deserve getting an OBE. I muttered something about working on disability rights and she said something about how important it was to help disabled people and we went our separate ways – me by walking backwards for a little as I'd been told (and hoped I recalled correctly as I'd look even sillier if I was the only one doing it) and she by standing still and receiving the next in line.

Afterwards, the insignia was removed and I was directed to a seat at the side of the ballroom where, for the first time, I could see Kathleen, Jennifer and Nathan. I gave them a discrete wave.

I watched the remainder of the ceremony. The Queen chatted to everyone who got an honor, some for a short while like me, and some for longer. The longest was someone being given an MBE for services to shire horses and the county of Cornwall. I know, but you don't like to ask. The Queen was obviously genuinely interested in both, I suspect, because she was keenly interested in horses and had family links through Charles to Cornwall where he had a little Duchy. The most impressive award was the Polar Medal for services in the Antarctic. I mean, if you're going to get something, then the Polar Medal would be it.

Afterwards, the recipients waited in a long corridor to get our honors back with a safety pin attached. They were given to us in a nice box with instructions on where and when to wear it with more instructions on what to do in the event of being awarded a more significant honor (you return the lesser one, presumably so it could be recycled). Your relatives get to keep it once you die, it said cheerfully. As we waited, a door in the corridor opened and we were surprised to see the entertainer Bruce Forsyth come out. He didn't say his catchphrase "Nice to see you, to see you nice" as I hoped or even tell a joke, but he gave a rather self-deprecating wave and went away. He'd been separated off from us because he was getting a CBE and couldn't mingle.

Then the four of us met up and we all mingled a bit ourselves. I met a work colleague who, unknown to me, was there because her partner had been getting a CBE for services to the National Railway Museum in York. And Kathleen and I had a chat with Heston Blumenthal about a cookbook of his we'd just bought aimed at children. Although he was really nice, he didn't slip us free tickets to one of his posher restaurants.

Outside, there was space and time for official photographs, but we were too mean to pay for them. We met up with a friend who'd taken time out at lunchtime to meet us. She took a few photos and then we went to meet another friend who worked for Gordon Brown when he was Chancellor. We got a little tour of 11 Downing Street, the Chancellor's residence, and I sat in the seat where he did his thinking about the economy – luckily it didn't rub off. Then the four of us went to the oldest restaurant in London, Rules, for a terrific meal in very old-fashioned surroundings, which somehow seemed appropriate. Kathleen is very good about keeping memorabilia and I see from the receipt that between us we had rack of lamb, lobster risotto, rabbit and something called Oyster Pudding, with lovely starters

and desserts, port and wines. I can't afford for that to happen again and it won't.

I hadn't expected to have any further contact with royalty – indeed, I'd never expected to have any at all at any time but it happened. But in 2009, I wrote to Prince Charles. I'd been sending letters to companies and public figures for a bit of fun for a while, writing as I if were Harry Adam Knight, the name John Brosnan and I used for our horror novels (and eventually I wrote an article about it for Rob Jackson's *Inca*). I was offering to include their name or brand in an upcoming story (each different one summarised in the letters) in return for a gift to charity. I got replies from Citroen cars, Virgin Management and the Office of Tony Blair, but no replies from George Bush, the Pope or Premier Inns. I did get one from the Office of TRH The Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall.

After a few jokes about some of his beliefs, I'd offered to mention his name in my latest fantasy book, *Petunia Tulip and the Wicked Unicorn Thief from a World of Wizards and Magic*. For the measly sum of £250, payable to an environmentally friendly charity of his choice, I offered to call the heroic young prince in the story, Charles. I pointed out that as the hero is everything that is good and brave and honest, Charles would see the obvious appeal of being associated with him in a bestselling children's fantasy series. Moreover, in this alternative universe he would use alternative medicine, and for an increased donation of only £400 I would also propose to make his companion a homeopathic Duke who creates original Duchy tinctures. As I pointed out, many people would be taken in by a message so subliminal as to contain barely a trace of suggestion.

One of his staff replied to say that His Royal Highness was grateful to me for taking the trouble to write and flattered that I should think of including him in my book for a fee payable to an environmentally friendly charity. However, she trusted that I understood that this was not a matter in which the Prince was able to become involved. But he'd asked her to send his best wishes.

That was nice. Maybe I'd have done better if I'd mentioned that I knew his Mum well. Anyway, I wasn't put in the Tower which, in less enlightened times – the sort of times we seem to be approaching again – would definitely have happened.

A few years later, during a trip to Kentucky for a family wedding, I had the chance to experience one American's view of the Royal Family. At that point I hadn't read the Martin Kettle article that I link to above, but though my little anecdote only relates to one person, it's perhaps apt to quote from it. "We also need to recognize that this country [the UK] is peculiarly given to the art of denigration. We do it more than others, and we need to be self-critical about that habit. If the US celebrates achievement too readily, then we undoubtedly celebrate it too grudgingly."

During our travels we'd often been asked how members of the Royal Family were getting on, simply because we were British. At the wedding reception, I moved across to a table of young Kentuckians for a chat and was inevitably asked what I thought about Pippa – the sister of Kate, the Duchess of Cambridge – and something of an international celebrity not least due to the rear view of the dress she wore at William and Kate's wedding. We had a chat about it – then I took out my phone on which I had a photo of me and the Queen. (As you do. In fact, it was there to show my sister who'd asked to see it.) The young woman looked at the photo and said excitedly, "That's the Queen." Then she paused, looked at me, looked again at the photo, thumped me really really hard on the arm, and shouted "Get out of here!" – which seems to be some common ritual expressing amused and excited disbelief. She remained over-excited for a while and eventually I returned to my table, armed by the discovery of why Americans eat with only one hand.

But there was no loyal toast at the wedding reception. This inexplicable delight in our Royalty only goes so far.

—Roy Kettle

DAN STEFFAN

It is indeed a rare thing for me to receive a new issue of *Trap Door* and have the pleasure of discovering each and every item for the first time. As you well know, this is usually not the case. Because of the regularity of my artistic contributions to your little fanzine, I have usually already read at least half of any new issue before it arrives here in its final form which, I must admit, often robs me of some of the joy of opening a freshly published issue. This time, because of my now two-year long artist's block, I contributed nothing to *TD* 32 except for the cover – which means that the joy of discovery is mine once again.

Despite that, I am still oddly familiar with a couple of the contributions in this issue – or, more properly, I am familiar with the contents of those articles. In the case of Grant's memoir of how he became high-end trailer trash, "A Retired Gentleman of Leisure," I had heard many of the details of these stories from Mr. Canfield's own lips. And while he is a fine storyteller and raconteur when he's using his mouth hole, he is an even finer writer and I thoroughly enjoyed having the opportunity to finally read his narrative in such a thoughtful and well-organized retelling.

It was especially useful to me to be able to absorb all of these tidbits in one sitting because I had heard these stories of Grant's work life, the trials and tribulations surrounding his Sausalito home, and some of the stories about the move to his little piece of retirement nirvana in real time – that is to say, as they happened or shortly thereafter. By the calendar, the article covers several years worth of his day-to-day life, and yet the way he boils it all down so nicely and presents it with such precision, thoughtfulness, and just a hint of his sarcastic world view made for a fascinating read.

Though I haven't had the opportunity to visit Grant's new residence, I've seen some photos and it looks like a really nice place, especially with all those fab floor to ceiling shelves full of goodies. Nevertheless, his journey to this new home was hard fought. Between the fucktards hampering his progress at every move and the stress of his troubled friendship with his pal, Dave, it couldn't have been easy to make the transition. Fortunately for all of us, Grant's writing ability keeps it all moving at a rapid pace, despite the many details he throws into the story. It's beautifully put together and very entertaining to read.

And, of course, it goes without saying that Grant's return at long last to pencil wrangling was a genuine delight for me. It's no secret that I have long admired his talents and skills, so it takes very little to keep me happy when he's at the drawing board. For an older gentleman, who spends more time with a pool cue in his hand than he does with a pen, he's still got some chops left. I especially liked the nautilus. I hope he does more soon.

The other bit of the new *TD* that I have some familiarity with is Andy Hooper's fine memorial for Art Widner. While I'm not claiming to have had any sort of advanced look at Andy's article, I feel like I have heard many of the same stories about Art's life before. Not that Andy is going over well-tread ground in his piece – it's more along the lines of my having had the true pleasure of Art's company on many occasions since Lynn and I moved to the west coast eleven years ago, and he often entertained us with similar stories about the past. And his memory for details was always amazing, too.

After we moved to Portland, Art quickly became something of a regular here at Steffanland during his trips to and from Seattle, and points north. He often traveled up there whenever his granddaughter and other relatives were visiting from Australia. Both of his two sons had already passed by then and Art reveled in the time he spent with their children. Whenever they were in the U.S., he went out of his way to see them and keep the family lines of communication open and flowing. His legendary car with its brilliant aboriginal decorations was a gift from his family Down Under – where, I believe, it returned after Art's death – and it too became another reason for him to visit us here in Portland.

When not traveling to Washington state for a Westercon or a Potlatch or a Corflu, Art would drive his Abo-car to Seattle every summer where it was a regular exhibit at Seattle's annual street arts festival, which included, among many other things, decorated art cars like Art's car. Until his final year or so, he never missed his annual jaunt up there to show off his heavily decorated automobile. (Besides the intricate native iconography that covered its exterior, there were also radical bumper stickers plastered on its rear end that he delighted in displaying because they so often provoked political debate, at which he was very skilled.)

For as long as we've lived here, Art came and stayed at our house during his trips back and forth, and I always felt real pride at having one of the few surviving members of the first worldcon staying in our guest room. I always looked forward to the stories he would tell us each time he came to stay. He'd take us out to dinner – often at a German restaurant at the end of our block that reminded him of his many European vacations and served a German wine that he loved – and then we'd sit up sipping whiskey and talking for hours. It was always educational and fascinating, and Art always appreciated having a small audience because he could actually hear our conversations, even when he'd forget to change the batteries in his hearing aids, which seemed like a regular habit of his.

After the first few years, he would simply call us and leave a message that he was on his way north and he'd be at our house in a day or two, and then we'd keep a watch out for his arrival. It became our routine. On one of those visits, he got particularly sentimental and told us that visiting us had redeemed Portland in his eyes. He explained that before we moved to town he had avoided the city because one of his sons died here – a victim of the family drinking problem. He was bitter that his genetics had led to the downfall of both of his boys, or so he said, but coming to stay with us had taken away most of the onus that Portland had acquired for him. We made it a happy place for him to visit once again and I have always taken that as a great compliment. And it goes without saying that his visits made Portland a better place for us, too.

Unfortunately, even though we all thought of him as possibly indestructible, time did eventually begin to take its toll of dear old Art, and from our point of view it was a bit terrifying to watch. As the years went by, Art's driving got worse and the journey north became more and more difficult, causing him to break the trip into several sections to preserve his strength and stamina. It worked for a while, but eventually he became more erratic about letting us know when he was coming to see us. He would leave messages that said he would be at our door in two days and then not show up for four days, or he would show up a day early. That's when we started to worry about his drives to Seattle.

In response, I was a wreck whenever he was coming our way. He'd forget to charge his phone and we wouldn't be able to reach him when he was overdue and then I would worry about him until he finally showed up with a sheepish look on his face. Once it was so chaotic that I spent two days on the phone trying to track his journey and his whereabouts. He had become like a dear old relative to Lynn and me, and we would worry ourselves sick whenever he was due or whenever he was late.

Eventually, it reached the point where he and I had several long talks about the continued feasibility of a man in his mid-90s driving himself up and down the west coast. Of course he didn't like it, but eventually he knew I was right, and he finally agreed that the time had indeed come to stop making the trip. About this time he also began to make plans to finally leave the isolated house he and his son had built together and move into a place in town where, as he put it, "they could get to me if I got sick." It was a hard pill to swallow for a man who had lived through all the things Andy writes about and so much more, but he couldn't deny his increasing frailty. He had always been a bull of a man who didn't have to capitulate to physical or mental weakness, and I'm sure it broke his heart to have to finally give in to the reality of his age.

But at least we got him off the road for the last few years of his life, though it didn't actually stop when it should have. Although he had finally decided to give up his trips to show off his art car, he couldn't resist a final invitation to bring his car up to Seattle one last time. It was a tough trip and he was two days late reaching our house, and he was frustrated and prickly when he finally arrived. The trip was probably not a good idea, and by the time he reached us he seemed to know it. But, being a stubborn old coot he soldiered on after a night's rest and made it to Seattle for the last time.

But the trip back turned into something of a nightmare. The weather was bad and he didn't like to drive in the rain or snow, which he'd been forced to do. And then something happened that had never happened on one of these trips: Art got lost. He had driven those same roads for years and years and suddenly he ended up somewhere off the highway, somewhere off the beaten path, and by the time he reached our house that night – several hours after dark – he was visibly shaken. Getting lost had scared him. He'd never been befuddled by his route before and it shook his confidence.

When he left the next day he seemed no less uncertain, but he sucked it up and headed home – a trip that took him an extra day, at least, to complete. As we said our goodbyes, he was very quiet and visibly saddened by the realization that this really was his last road trip, and that it needed to be. Once he was back home he seemed to embrace the process of sorting out the relics of his life, many of which had moved to his new residence after he giving his house on the hill to his grandson. He told me that he had hired a woman who worked with hoarders to help him get his life organized and he expressed a real hope that he might finally get his fanzine collection in order.

"I've got a complete set of Gregg Calkins' fanzine *Oopsla!*," he told me. "If I find them I'll send them to you," he said. I told him to be sure to read them first, as he had missed them during their original run, and he said he would. I don't know if he ever found them, but the next time I saw him in Richmond, Virginia, at the 2014 Corflu, he told me that he had fired the woman who was supposed to help him sort his stuff. "She kept wanting to throw away things," he said indignantly. I could only smile. I had no doubt that he would be irascible and obstinate to his last breath – and charmingly so.

In fact, that Richmond con was the last time I saw Art. He wasn't looking too well. His prostate cancer had been asserting itself and he was tired and seemed to be lacking any patience for the many little annoyances that were haunting him. I made sure to spend time with him when I could that weekend because I felt it unlikely that we'd have a chance to be together again. I was right.

But in retrospect, I have to say that one of my proudest friendships in fandom was my friendship with Art. He was always incredibly enthusiastic about my artwork and always seemed truly touched by the occasional items I sent his way, especially the coat of arms I drew for his 90th birthday. He always mentioned it when we were together. His encouragement and pride about my art was very touching to me. He genuinely seemed to take particular delight in it and I have to admit that, in itself, was a delight for me, too. How lucky we all were to have had a man of his intellectual curiosity and childlike awe in our lives for so many, many, many years.

And again, thanks to Andy for his beautifully crafted biography and appreciation. Somebody, by the way, ought to reprint Art's great historical article about the founding and early days of the Boston Strangers Club that appeared in a progress report for one of the Boston worldcons, many years ago. It was unique in its "you are there" eyewitness point of view of those early days of fandom. It's too bad he never got around to writing his full autobiography because his life, both in and out of fandom, would appear to have been one hell of a ride. I don't think it's hyperbole to say that Art was an irreplaceable member of our tribe.

He will be missed.

John D. Berry's Mumbai travelogue is proof of how far in life the lesson's learned in the pages of fanzine can take you, literally. Come to think of it, you can probably apply the same progression to Bob Silverberg, too, though he might rightfully argue that in his case there was also a hell of a lot more interim, non-fannish typing went into his long success as an author. Nonetheless, his persistent presence in FAPA for all these years has to be proof of some sort of gooey fanboy heart beating inside that sleek, elegant exterior of his.

The regular reprinting of his FAPA essays – especially the installments about his world travels – have been a consistent presence in one fanzine or another for most of the years I've been bumping around fandom and that has allowed him to remain a presence in fandom while continuing his "adult" career. In fact, I must admit that they have been around for so long that I had begun to take them for granted, but I now realize just how rare they are these days. There's nobody else in his position who has maintained his fan credibility for so long, and with such consistency and dedication. It reminds me that he is still one of us – although he may not agree at times – and that, as such, he is part of a continuity that is rapidly disappearing in "our" fandom these days – as are the people who lived it. Thanks to Bob for hanging in there with us and thanks to you, Robert, for publishing his FAPA material for the rest of us to read and enjoy.

Now to the art: My maudlin dick joke of a cover aside, there are a couple of pieces in this issue that I really liked. Rotsler's wonderful hand-lettered "Fandom" was superb. Sometimes we forget that he could do very complex art and design when he wanted to and this example really made me shake my head in appreciation. We're lucky that he left behind so many unpublished pieces of art for us to continue discovering in the fanzines *of the future*. (Echo effect here.)

My old buddy Steverino Stiles puts out a couple of nice pieces this issue. His heading for Fred Smith's article were slick and funny and would probably make a great jazz t-shirt design. I was also really impressed by his heading for the lettercol this time. Like the title, it really does vibrate and I kept having to stare at it to make sure it was really the artwork that was vibrating and not just me. Nope, it vibrates. Yay, Steve. His Widner Popeye was spot on, though I wish he had cropped the art so that it was larger and filled the box more. It would have added to the dynamism of the composition – a technical complaint, to be sure, but you can't expect me to be lovingly complimentary about everything, can you? Still, it was a good Popeye and Bluto and it made me almost wish I had drawn it.

But, as I'm sure you know, the art he did for Silverberg's article was so fuzzy that, well – to tell you the truth, for a moment I thought I was reading a British fanzine. Wha' hoppened? It was undoubtedly the fault of those damned Krishna copy machine cowboys who run off each issue for you. (I've seen them, you know, in the airports offering to "make copies" for the unsuspecting passengers, but I digress…)

Anyway, I mentioned it to Steve, who was then gracious enough to send me a clean jpg of the heading. I printed it out at the proper size and pasted it over the blurry version and, *Voila!*, instant fan art. I'd done this once before when one of my own pieces had ended up kinda fuzzy and I suggest it as a solution to Steve, and anybody else who wants to fix their fuzzy fanzine art. *{Alas, it was entirely my fault, not Krishna's.}*

Oh, and there was one other little piece of Steve's art I wanted to mention, his collaboration with Bill Rotsler, on page 18. I loved it. It was so, for lack of a better word, right. Both funny and sardonic without even a word. I've seen a few other of their collaborations popping up lately and wonder if he's just now releasing them from his files or if they have just coincidentally been published at about the same time. Whatever the circumstance, great stuff.

Amazing to see a long letter from Leigh Edmonds after all this time. I'll use the address you printed to try and send him a copy of *The MOTA Reader*.

I was greatly complimented by Gordon Eklund favorably comparing my wee bit of back cover fanfiction to his own excellent work. (Yikes, Bill Breiding agrees with him, too.) With Gordon as my example, I too hope to one day be retired from the post office – which is odd since I've never worked there. Still, a man can hope. And then to find out that Howard Waldrop's got my back, too – I just don't know how to react. Have these two seen a doctor lately? Certainly there is something wrong with them.

Now, of course I *know* there is something wrong with Frank Lunney. He's been one of my best pals for 45 years and I know how rare it is to get a letter of comment from him and I really enjoyed seeing it. Of course, I also know how nuts he really is, but I can confirm most of what he says about the pizza stand at the Quakertown Farmer's Market. I first visited it in 1973 when Frank and I were driving up to Toronto – with a side trip to pick up Jay Kinney, who took the train out from NYC to meet us – for the Torcon. We swung by the pizza stand so Frank could pick up his wages before we left for Canada. I think we ate a slice or two, too.

I went back again numerous times over the years, especially during the years that Catherine Jackson was living. During the 1980s and early 1990s, the four of us spent a lot of time together at their house in Zionsville, and our house in Arlington, and almost every time we went up to see them we'd end up at the Farmer's Market, which also includes a huge flea market on the weekends. The last time we went there was only a month or so before Catherine's death. We were up there for Thanksgiving and, as usual, we went by the QFM to look for bargains and maybe get some pizza. The holidays were approaching and there was a Santa on display for the kiddies to visit and have their picture taken. On a whim Frank, Catherine, and Lynn all decided to pose with Santa and have their picture taken. I refused. I poo-pooed the whole idea and stood to the side while they said "cheese." A month later I sure wished I had gotten over myself and been in that photo, but who knew it was going to be my last chance? *sigh*

Anyway, nutty Mr. Lunney brings up the minor debate about whether those were real people on my cover to the previous issue of *TD*, which is a subject that seriously amused me. How can people with Cosmic Minds be so gullible? However, I guess I can see the Stalin similarity, but none of those guys came close to resembling Don Wollheim (who was, I have it on the best of authority, a steadfast butterscotch pudding man), so I think maybe Lenny needs to have his glasses prescription checked, or something. However, he was right when he called that sports coat a "George Scithers jacket," it was definitely that. (Again, I'm told Wollheim was a corduroy enthusiast.) And yet, despite all I've just written, Frank was absolutely right about one thing: He does have hairy knees.

Next, there's no way I believe Gary Hubbard's assertion that he doesn't know the outcome of Oprah's lawsuit with *«O»* magazine. He is far too much of a perve to be in the dark about the way the mighty Oprah smashed those latex loving Deutschlanders into *ahem* submission. They surrendered like they were Frenchmen, of course. (Actually, that's not true, but I couldn't resist the joke.)

In truth, this all happened during the years I was running a newsstand, and we regularly sold the German fetish mag, which was created in the '90s by Peter Czernich, who then lost control of the magazine to a litigious money man. That guy actually brought the suit against Oprah's proposed magazine title, which he then lost when the court said that the two magazines were so dissimilar that nobody was ever likely to confuse them. By that time the German publisher was broke and *«O»* disappeared off the market well before Ms. Winfrey's self-promotional magazine hit the stands in 2002. (Where she has been on the cover of every issue since then, just in case anybody had any confusion about whose magazine it is.) Czernich went on to create another luscious fetish magazine shortly after the demise of *«O»* called *Marguis*. It recently published its 58th issue.

The last item on the back page I wanted to mention was your announcement that you'll be publishing a long-lost Boyd Raeburn article, "The *À Bas* Story," in number 33. How wonderful. As you no doubt know, I am currently mining sources of unpublished fan material for my new fanzine, *Fugghead* – I like to call it Fannish Archeology – and I look forward to seeing this fine old relic in print. When I read this announcement, however, I had a strange case of déjà vu. I recalled reading an article by that name, written by Boyd, in a fanzine from the late Sixties or early Seventies. I thought it was in an issue of *Quip*, but when I went downstairs and went through them I couldn't find it – though I am presently missing the ninth issue. *{I checked – it wasn't in it.}* After that I wasn't sure where else to look, but in my head I can see the article as it appeared on the pages – possibly blue pages. It was a double page spread with the title running horizontally across the top of the two pages, spreading out "The *À Bas* Story," far beyond what it should have been. But for the life of me I couldn't tell you now where I saw it.

Isn't that odd? It is clear as day in my mind – my visual memory remains very strong – but my memory for the details surrounding the remembered image are nonexistent. (Which is no help at

all to you.) Of course, I could have imagined it, or dreamed it. I have done things like that before. I once woke up thinking I had just bought a new King Crimson album called, "Strawberries," that included Andy "Thunderclap" Newman on piano. I was sure it was real and it was only when I told Ted about it that I realized that it had all been a dream. Silly me.

Nevertheless, this wasn't that kind of memory and I would bet you that I am right about seeing such an article. Whether it was the same one Boyd wrote in 1964 or not, I don't know. Was it a rewrite? Or am I out of my fucking mind?

Don't answer that. Still, food for thought.

And finally, I am left with your editorial. Lynn and I were both shocked by what you and Carol have been going through and we want you to know that if there is anything that we can do to be of assistance to the two of you, you need only ask. Robert, I am pulling for you and if I were a praying man I would surely be on my knees asking somebody to do something about all this fucking cancer, and do it *now*.

I could go on and on about this, but you don't need to hear any more about this from me. Please take care of yourselves and know that we love you both.

MILT STEVENS

Grant Canfield's article on retiring reminded me of all sorts of things. I've been retired for almost eighteen years. I had a quiet, conservative police retirement dinner. Seventy-five people showed up, and I got home by the middle of the next afternoon. I've heard about police retirements where the guest of honor didn't show up again for weeks. In a couple of cases, they didn't show up again at all. After a police retirement, you really feel retired.

I retired earlier than I had originally expected. The City of Los Angeles decided it wanted to get rid of older, white employees. Sound familiar? However, they allowed older employees to buy back their military time and apply it to their city pensions. So I retired after 29 years service with credit for 32. It was only after I had scheduled my retirement that they realized I was essential. I knew more about their crime analysis software than anyone else did. So they had to hire me back part-time. I went from working four days a week to working two days a week with a 10% increase in income. This went on for five years.

On the basis of my experience, I think that gradual retirement would be a good idea for everybody. For many people, working twenty hours a week would be better than complete retirement. It would give people something to do without having to do too much. Unlike ourselves, some people actually have trouble with too much spare time. The fannish imagination had trouble grasping that concept.

In Greg Benford's article "Escorting the Odd," I'm surprised colleges are wasting their time debating evolution. I had thought that if someone demanded a hearing for creationism they would be told where to go and how to get there. That's not to say that there aren't lots of creationists around. Apparently, there are millions of them in the United States.

I've found out more about these people by watching movies on Netflix. Among other selections, there are some that are specifically made for "Christians." I put "Christians" in quotes because they are made for people in a very narrow part of the Protestant spectrum and certainly not for Catholics or most Protestants. The first part of this phenomenon I noticed were the Rapture SF movies. In these movies, the Rapture has occurred, and the Beast of 666 is in charge. Naturally, the Beast is happily persecuting Christians. He only gets to persecute second-string Christians since the first-string Christians have already been raptured. I don't know why the Christians bother resisting, since they should know they can't beat the Beast until the appointed time, and then they can't lose.

Watching some of these Rapture SF movies led to my watching some of the other "Christian" movies. They have a bizarre fascination. They show people acting in a way I've never seen people act. The ignore the parts of the Bible that are good advice and concentrate on the stuff that requires blind faith. Most of Christianity doesn't exist in these movies. "Christians" and antagonists are the only people. The antagonists are not only straw but lightweight straw.

The idea that people might do good things because of religious conviction isn't unreasonable. Albert Schweitzer is an example. There are what I would consider regular movies dealing with such things. However, these "Christian" movies deal with convincing everybody that their belief is the only correct belief and all other beliefs are not only wrong but evil. Right actions don't even come into it.

STEVE JEFFERY

Having just passed sixty, I was starting to look forward to the idea of retirement but Grant Canfield has nearly put me off the idea if it involves losing my house, relationship, family and self-esteem. Well, the first three, anyway – I never had much of the last to worry about. And I very much doubt I'll be played by George Clooney in the movie. I may not have to worry about it for while anyway, since the eligibility age for UK state pensions seems to receding into the future as fast, if not faster, as I approach it. I suspect the ultimate aim is keep people chained to their desks until they die on the job, thus saving the government the worry of having to find the money to pay out their pensions.

Despite – or perhaps because of – these various pitfalls and travails, this was an excellent article from Grant. I loved the rebadged Mitt Romney quote that if corporations were people than the one Grant worked for was "a drooling demented idiot pulling the wings off bugs." Working in a large pharma corporation, I would probably qualify that as "idiot child."

I've had some weird jobs and projects in my time, but farming cat poo tops them all. (Oddly, I was listening to something on the radio this morning about an aquaponics farm which is based on recycling fish poo. I may never touch green leafed salad again.)

Nice toast to Art Widner from Andy Hooper. I've come to the belief that Art's unique writing style was actually down to him channeling mobile phone text-speak from the future, and we're all just now starting to catch up. That would leave the curious corollary that Twitter users under 25 would find Art's letters easier to understand than most fans would.

Since I only encountered Art through fanzine pages, it came as a surprise to discover from Andy's article that he had biceps like Popeye. Those Charles Atlas ads in the back of old SF magazines must have done someone some good, then. Excellent illustration from Steve Stiles for this, too.

I'm still twenty years younger than Bob Silverberg, but I'm already experiencing a few those ailments that come on suddenly and mysteriously and even more mysteriously just go away again and serve to remind you that you are gradually wearing out.

I was fascinated by Michael Dobson's description of the cable car system in the TSR/Random House warehouse, although I'm sure I'm not the only reader to suppress a shudder when reading of pallets of hardback books as furnace fuel. Didn't Ray Bradbury have something to say on that score?

HOPE LEIBOWITZ

It is so wonderful getting to read another article by Grant. He's a great writer – it's a shame he hasn't done much in fanzines in a few years. "Soulless flesh eating zombie lizard" – I couldn't have come up with that phrase, ever. Wow, a 42-year career. I thought I had a career once. Not! And his not being able to afford a large non-attached house in a better neighborhood is just ridiculous. Something wrong with that. I know a couple who bought a house (not right in Toronto, but close) and he drives a fork lift, and she has had a series of low-paying jobs. Even a small condominium apartment near me was $307,000 around five years ago, and small probably means five hundred square feet. At least there are amenities, but even my apartment building has a gym and a free barbecue once a year, and a sad starch and sugar breakfast in the lobby. Well, there is some fruit, too, and coffee – and once there was little triangular cheese things whose name escapes me.

I agree with him about corporations and it seems to be getting worse. I wrote down "Love me, love me, love me, I'm a liberal" – Phil Ochs, but I can't remember what it was about. Maybe his sister not speaking to him – so sad.

Interesting about the cats, too. I hope someone took some time to pet them and interact with them, too. Someone I know adopted a stray who was following two people who couldn't adopt him, and he is very needy. He follows her around and is upset when left alone for a few hours. Doesn't even want her to leave the house!

"Cat-shit crazy"? I thought it was bat-shit crazy but either one seems to work. And sad about the laser discs, funny about the collector.

That was a huge amount of work on the mobile home. Shouldn't all that stuff have been done before it was sold. But then I know someone here with a condo apartment and when he moved in there was mold in the cabinets and a bad smell and it had to be fixed, and other stuff too. And that is one reason I live in an apartment building.

Very interesting trip report by John D. Berry,

I hope he gets to go back again.

As to Andy Hooper's contribution about Art Widner, I had no idea I was going to end up sobbing (tearing up as I type this) but there I was at the end, bawling. I, too, felt like I should have spent more time with him at that Richmond Corflu. We were in a game of Jenga together, which I'd never played, and he won! I'd only heard about his three sons, didn't know he had four children. At a Minicon, both Art and I stayed in Dave Romm's condo, and while drinking some hard liquor Art told the sad story of how all three of his sons were dead. One drowned in a pool, probably drunk, another one I don't remember the details (was an alcoholic, possibly all three) and the third just disappeared and was never heard from again. I was crying then, too, but Dave had fallen asleep towards the end. We were all drinking the hard stuff. It's hard for me to imagine thirty years away from fandom, but I never had to raise any children.

Here is a poem Art told me from the depression: "Use it up / Wear it out / Make it do / Or do without." I wrote it down in an old datebook which I still have on my table. That's what I try to do these days, not having much income.

Interesting article by Fred Smith, who I don't know. I was astonished to see the name Jim Galloway. I've been into jazz for some time and I saw him play once, just a bit, during the jazz festival here in Toronto. He spoke, too – don't remember much about it except he was great and interesting. Many people were shocked and upset when we heard he died – last year, I think. And I've been to a few jazz brunches, too, but most people seemed to be ignoring the musicians, sadly. A new place here, the Jazz Bistro, does a jazz brunch but they charge a $15 cover plus the cost of the brunch so we haven't ever gone. And, I've heard about midges but didn't know they bit.

Frank Lunney's LoC about that "trip" was great. I've never had adventures like that, though I did take some LSD many years ago, more than once. Loved it! One time I became convinced that the entire course of the universe was determined after the Big Bang down to the tiniest detail. I believed that for quite awhile but now it seems a bit silly.

JACK CALVERT

I opened the new *Trap Door* expecting to take a quick glance through, then dive right into Grant Canfield's article, but was brought up short by your editorial. Yikes – bad news, and more bad news. Sympathy and commiseration to you and Carol.

Then I did go on to Grant's article, and enjoyed it and the rest of the issue. My late last cat would not have qualified for the catshit project. He was pretty consistent about "thinking outside the box." A good quality in tech entrepreneurs, not so much in cats. (But other than that, he was a great cat.) It seems that having a house "underwater" involves the kind of suspense that is more fun in stories than in life. I begin to understand why many people hate banks. We'uns also had some difficulties with the stagecoach crowd. Great drawings with Grant's article – he has not lost the touch.

On through the issue, more good stuff: John D. Berry in Mumbai. Before encountering that nice Mr. Berry, I would have had no idea that a typographer could lead a life of wild adventures in foreign lands. I love the phrase "Gateway of India." Very evocative of Kipling's India, with Kim lurking nearby, about to talk the rich foreigner out of a few coppers and the odd bit of strategic information.

Then Andy Hooper on Art Widner: can't get more fannish than that. I think I first encountered Art at one of the San Francisco Potlatches. I remember him whipping out a copy of *Yhos* from a hidden pocket, and encouraging me to join FAPA. I had not known about his adventures in the CCC and the Army. It's good to know more about him; he is missed. Bravo to Andy for the interview and the fine article.

And likewise to Mr. Silverberg and Mr. Benford. I think as a (more or less) innocent youf, I had something of the dream of traveling, maybe sailing a ketch around the world, but that is pretty much all gone now. Between the superhassle of flying and the dicey state of the world, it takes a lot to lure me out of my little house in the flats. A Corflu might do it.

Greg Benford's article was fun, though the comments on Timothy Leary in his latter days were a bit saddening. I particularly liked the bit about "Tom" – nicely understated. And the fascinating and touching encounter with Kurt Vonnegut.

And lots of good stuff in the lettercol. I'll only pick up one comment hook: Paul Skelton's on "Soda Run." I have a hard time with long-line poems, but I do think they are poetry. I read Ginsberg's "Kaddish" long ago, and remember not liking it, but I've been rereading it recently, and I am a little bit surprised to find that this time it's pulling me in.

FRED SMITH

I have a heavy cold at the moment and just last week suffered the loss of my oldest friend Roderic, whom I first met in high school. We were born the same month and year (he was three weeks older) but his health unfortunately wasn't as good as mine. He had two major heart attacks in the past and was fitted with a defibrillator but over the last couple of years has gradually declined. Last week he was taken into hospital and died the next day. Rod had been an art teacher all his life and even did two covers for my fanzine way back then.

So I'm well aware of the grim reaper featured on *TD*'s cover this time! Although Dan's artwork is masterly and he has drawn many good works for you, I must say that I prefer the covers that Steve Stiles did which featured the Lovecraftean/Jehovah's Witnesses confrontations. Rest of the pictures in the book are fine, of course, and Steve's illos heading each of the articles are a great touch. How do you manage to persuade your artists to slave for you like this? *{Long-time friendship and sheer audacity in equal measures.}*

Like most people of my age, I hate changes of any kind, but changes in health are the worst, naturally, so I can feel for your problems and Carol's. Mine were, first, the loss of my daughter, Karen, to cancer three years ago, followed a year and a half later by the death of my wife Betty from another stroke she suffered in her care home. During the three years she had lived there (with vascular dementia), an earlier stroke cost her the use of her right arm and leg in addition to all the other problems caused by her dementia. And now, the latest life change, Rod has gone. It's the ultimate gafia or, should be, fafia!

Happier things, of course, in *TD*, Andy Hooper's celebration of Art Widner for example. Very full account of the legendary fan and the various conventions he attended as well as his wide travels and encounters with the famous in fandom. Engrossing stuff!

Grant Canfield's "Gentleman of Leisure" memoir is not so much that as a life history covering his job, retirement and move to a mobile home (trailer park?) involving the shifting and storage of thousands (?) of books, CDs, DVDs, fanzines, comics, laser discs (!), etc. The mind boggles! Here am I worrying that my son will have to dispose of a few hundred books, LPs, CDs, DVDs, Blu-Rays,etc. when I'm gone unless I can thin the collection down. So…should I worry? Apart from all that, an engrossing article.

"Typo In Mumbai" is amusing and John's impressions of India are certainly interesting. However, it's not a country that appeals to me. As Raj says in "The Big Bang Theory": "All those people!" And then of course there's the heat! Nope, not for me.

On the other hand, I would like to visit some of the countries Bob Silverberg mentions in his piece. Noticed you've placed my article cheek by jowl with a couple of old pros! Well, Bob is 81 and Greg Benford is now 75, although I persist in thinking that he's still a young teenaged fan instead of a revered professor. We're all getting on a bit, it's true. In fact, I've just been rereading *A Wealth of Fable* and note that Warner has a paragraph describing you as "the most prominent and lasting of newcomers" (to Los Angeles fandom in the late '50s) and includes your photo as a callow youth! I'm also in the book but only get a couple of lines! Yes, we're all grizzled oldies now and Steve (and Grant) even draw your contributors as graybeards. Very appropriate!

Regarding Agberg's travelogue, okay, but he is obviously very rich to travel first class and only stay in the best hotels. Surprising, really, because I always thought that SF authors didn't make much money. But then I forget how prolific Bob has been over the years, possibly the most prolific of any SF writer. Ashamedly, I have to confess I haven't read that much of his stuff in recent times. It's nice to see that he still maintains some fannish contacts through FAPA.

Best thing for me in this *TD* is Greg's "Escorting The Odd" – his descriptions of the various characters he has chaperoned at the university. Especially Kurt Vonnegut, who seems to be exactly as you would imagine him from his written works. Marvelous! Incidentally, I've discovered via Google, that Greg is also a more prolific writer than I had realized although I do have a few of his books. and have read others via the library.

SHERYL BIRKHEAD

Joy unbounded…Grant Canfield!!!! Thank you for prying this out of his fingers! It is just *so* readable. At vet school I lived in a trailer five minutes from school – on the side of a mountain, just off a high-speed road. I was "forced" into the purchase since I refused to move into a two-bedroom apartment in town simply because I was bringing two cats with me. I never regretted it and it was *mine*. I wish I could be as forgiving of my schedule as Grant is – I just never seem to get anywhere close to getting things done. I wish him all the best in retirement!

Andy Hooper, thank you for an insight into Art Widner. I met and spoke with him at more than a handful of conventions. Since I have not been to any conventions in years, I have no real idea when the last time was that I spoke with him. It seemed that he was one of those ubiquitous forces of fandom and would always just…be there …until he wasn't.

JOHN NIELSEN-HALL

I enjoyed Andy Hooper's tribute to Art Widner. It told me much I did not know. I only met Art for the first time at the 2008 Vegas Corflu and found communication with him a little difficult in between his taking out his hearing aid and fiddling with it and putting it back in and so on. And in 2010 at the Winchester Corflu he fell down a hole. Or was that Ted White? I can't remember.

Fred Smith on his jazz playing adventures was amusing. Trad was huge for a brief period in the early sixties in the U. K. and I seem to remember that Glasgow produced a band led by George Chisholm, all bowler-hatted and given to comedy skits owing a great deal to Spike Jones. Not many people remember those bands now, but the likes of Kenny Ball or Acker Bilk could draw massive audiences. Personally, I loathed it. But every year Marlborough, our local market town, holds a jazz festival and away from the main stages the pubs are usually crammed with drinkers being serenaded by old gentlemen playing banjos and double bass behind red-faced blokes risking their already dodgy tickers playing trumpets and trombones. I'm sure none of them would know bebop if it bit them on a bus.

By the way, great cover, as always, by Dan. What is your secret, Robert? Do you have some sort of voodoo power over Dan so that you can be sure you will get a cover out of him? Or did he do a great stash of them long ago, which you now have secreted in a vault at the bank? Perhaps you go round his house with a gun? Just how do you do it? I need to know, so I can get a cover out of him. *{See my comment to Fred Smith. Does your cover desire mean you're going to publish a fanzine – perhaps a revived* Motorway Dreamer*?}*

PAUL SKELTON

I have to congratulate you on a particularly brilliant issue with *Trap Door* #32. Not a weak piece in it. It was all very enjoyable stuff. Yes, even the editorial, given the upbeat tone and the increasingly optimistic nature of your revelations as it progressed. True, you finished it "feeling your years" more than heretofore, but that may be because you are getting on a bit. I'll bet even Jesse Owens slowed down a bit as he got older. It happens to us all. All of us that that make it that far, which is, I guess, the real bottom line.

You did, though, make one major mistake, namely leading off with Grant Canfield's piece. Good as the other pieces were, there was no way they could follow that. In a way, I guess it mirrored your editorial in that he remained so upbeat despite all the bad shit that was going down. Of course he might not have done, and simply prettied it up later, but that's not the way it reads to me. This is definitely the single best fanzine piece I've read this year, so a big "Thank you" to both of you.

Given how good I found this issue to be, you will not be surprised that, after reading Greg Benford's piece, I am not actually contemplating crawling off into some shadowy corner and slashing my wrists. Even if I had been thinking such thoughts, it still wouldn't have been Greg's fault. His line, referring to Vonnegut's final remarks to him, that…anything that persuaded people that they were not leading meaningless lives in a meaningless universe, was good, "So keep writing." So he did, and in the process pretty much reminded me that I, on the other hand, am indeed leading a meaningless life in a meaningless universe. As I said, not his fault – mine entirely. He applied himself and became a "Renaissance Man," whilst I pissed my schooldays away against the wall of "couldn't be arsed." In so doing, of course, I must have been a severe disappointment to my parents who almost certainly saw me, their firstborn, as their great hope for the future. Of course they weren't thinking in terms of me ruling the Sevagram, or anything quite along those lines, but even so… Not of course that they, being the sterling parents they were, ever revealed any such disappointment.

I'm sure there's an SF novel in this concept… about a society where nobody lives a meaningless life, where everyone spends all their time making fascinating life-enhancing discoveries or inventions. Just think, the pace of change, with literally billions of people inventing new stuff every day, would be phenomenal. I mean, by the time you got to the bus stop of a morning, buses would have become obsolete. So you get the grav-sled into the city. Of course when you get to the office you find the entire staff has been replaced by half a dozen AIs. Mind you, by the time you've cleared out your desk, these too have been replaced, by an AI center in India.

So you go to catch the next grav-sled back home, in order to explain all this to your wife, only to discover that grav-sleds, too, are now as one with Nineveh and Tyre. In answer to your confused queries, someone directs you to the public matter-transmitter booths, which amazingly still accept your credit card. You arrive back home only to find that home is no longer there. It has been migrated into an alternative universe/dimension/reality (even the scientists can't agree which it is).

You activate the vid-screen only to be informed by the butler that your wife has instructed that you are not to be given the reality access code, given that she is now married to 33 other versions of you from across the megaverse – all of whom, she adamantly insists, are more interesting than you ever were. The butler sounds like he agrees with this sentiment, which is a bit snippy considering he was still the bloody dog when you left that morning. Apparently your wife had put him through the new evolve-o-mat a couple of times in your absence.

Still, you are a man of your time. You can handle this pace of change. Preparing to leave, you notice a cardboard box down by where your gatepost once stood. In it there is that day's paper-post, and your e-mail display ring. You open the first envelope and discover a copy of *Trap Door*. At first you feel reassured by this familiar item, but then your mind begins to reel. Didn't you get an issue of this just a few months ago? More than one issue of *Trap Door* in the same year? You begin to shake uncontrollably. Some changes are just too vast for the mind of man to grasp.

HOWARD WALDROP

Hooper on Widner – once again he goes to the heart of the fannish matter like no one else ever has. The two great legacies of FDR were Social Security (of which we are all now beneficiaries) and the CCC. Half the structures (and infrastructures) in Texas state parks were built by their hands and are still holding up. (Of how many 1960's apartment complexes can that he said?) You should give a nod to Widner (and other human gorillas like him), who built stuff to last, every time you visit a park.

ED BURBEE

Let me please thank you for continuing to publish my dear father's writings now and then. I know you admired him. And I believe he described you as his Number One Fan. *{Wow! And this is a good place to say that with the help of an eBay friend – a devoted Rotsler fan – I've recently acquired a long article by your father, "Heavenly Bodies in Science Fiction" from a 1972 skin mag, slated for a future issue.}*

The introductory paragraph of Fred Smith's musing clarifies for me why my father never played be-bop music in our household. He stayed with Dixieland music all his life. He even joined a Dixieland club where the musicians played that music as of old, with the same gusto. He never transitioned to the new music, much less to the blues, rhythm and blues, or rock-and-roll. As a result, I heard Dixieland music all during my childhood to boyhood, when I left for the U.S. Navy.

I should mention concerning the musical taste of my father that he also listened regularly to classical music. He had a sizable collection of this music on 78 rpm records. He got a lot of pleasure from the music of Bach and Beethoven, and his enjoyment peaked while listening to Ravel's "Bolero." This piece, if played loudly, surely could stir the dead, it has so much wild energy in it. My father liked muscular music.

As you know, my father requested his ashes to mingle with the sand near the Amboy Crater, in the community of Amboy, California. He called it the Amboy Volcano. I did some research at the nearby university, and found a plain-word description of this land formation. We spread his

ashes there. He left his music behind, but we may suppose the whistling of the wind across the desert floor will entertain his spirit.

WE ALSO HEARD FROM:

WILLIAM BREIDING (" Grant's piece was epic, and entertaining, and it was great seeing him drawing again."), **RICHARD DENGROVE**, **BRAD FOSTER**, **MARLIN FRENZEL**, **BRUCE GILLESPIE**, **ARNIE KATZ** ("As somewhat of a stoic myself, I'm awed by your resolve to fight the disease in private. I'm delighted that treatment appears to have gone well. And of course, I'm equally happy that Carol, that paragon among women, has come through her medical crisis."), **JERRY KAUFMAN** ("Wouldn't 'Scythe Matters' be a good name for a magazine about back-to-nature farming? It's certainly a very good Steffan cover, and I also loved the many and varied Steve Stiles headings you used for everything except Grant's article.") and **LLOYD PENNEY** ("The Steffan cover is great! A cutting edge piece of art, indeed. I went looking for names on the tombstones, but no luck. I'd love to know where I might get one of those stovepipe hats, though…").

(Doorway continued:)

I wrote last issue of Carol's July 2015 hospitalization with a brain abscess, and am happy to report that there have been no glitches in her speedy and full recovery – a good thing since I rely on her smarts, good judgment, and sense of humor in helping me navigate my own affliction and keeping my spirits high.

And as for me, I had talked about receiving treatment for multiple myeloma, a type of blood cancer, and how I was "glad that medical science continues to come up with new ways to keep me alive." My initial drugs were effective but one of them had to be discontinued because of its life-threatening side effects.

My current life-saver is a laboratory-made antibody that targets the myeloma cells, kills them, and – as a special favor – invites my immune system to join in the attack. Infusions are given weekly at first, moving to every other week, and finally monthly, where I am now. As with any drug, there's a long list of possible side effects. Fortunately I've had none of them, leaving only some fairly mild neuropathy in my feet and legs that's the legacy of an earlier medication. I've learned to accommodate it.

The results have been very good. My "significant numbers" have been cut in half and have maintained their stability through several cycles. There's no telling how long this good fortune will last. So far, myeloma always figures out what's going on, reinvents itself, and keeps on giving. Meanwhile, however, there are promising clinical trials and new treatments in the pipeline. And because people with myeloma are living longer and longer, the word "cure" is starting to sound irrelevant as myeloma is treated (I hope) as a chronic, not terminal, disease.

So, see you next issue.

—Robert Lichtman