

Argentus

Issue 4: 2004

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John F. Carr
John Hertz
Rich Horton
David Langford
Rich Lynch
Joseph Major
Larry Niven
Pat Sayre McCoy
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Nicholas Whyte

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From the Mine

Steven H Silver

Although it wasn't meant to be, this would seem to be the *Argentus* travel issue. Many (but not all) of the articles focus on travel or tourism (last year's mock section should have been in this issue. But for poor planning...).

However, the issue opens with a non-travel article by Jason K. Burnett, recently returned to the fold after an hiatus of several years. He looks back at his reading tastes as a thirteen year old from the vantage point of seventeen years on. In addition, he has sent in an article for this issue's mock section.

H. Beam Piper, best known for his Paratime sequence and Fuzzy stories, would have been 100 years old on March 23 of this year (2004). Author John F. Carr, who has written several sequels to Piper's *Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen*, takes a look back at the life and career of Beam on the occasion of his centenary.

While discussing article ideas with Nicholas Whyte, he suggested an article about science fiction in his native Belfast. It sounded like a good item until I realized that he would be attending a wedding which would seem different enough to rank an article of its own. We discussed it back and forth and decided he would write a wedding report for this issue of *Argentus* and the Belfast SF article for next year's issue. Therefore, you can turn to find Nicholas Whyte's description of the Royal Wedding of Prince Johan Friso of the Netherlands to Mabel Wisse Smit.

David Langford is renowned for not attending Worldcons. Although he occasionally makes it to one of these annual events to collect his rockets, generally, when his name is called amongst the assembled, his alter ego, Martin Hoare, gleefully leaps to the dais, grabs the Hugo, recites from Dave's prepared remarks, and announces that he once again gets the honor and privilege of awakening Mr. Langford to inform him of his good fortune.

However, Dave did deign to attend Torcon 3 in Toronto, Canada in 2003 and has provided a look at the convention through his own eyes (unless Martin Hoare submitted the piece under Dave's name).

In *Argentus* 3, I ran a piece by Torontan Lloyd Penney on things to do in Toronto from a fan's point of view. Continuing the series, I've asked for and received a similar article from Louisvillian Joseph T. Major. He focuses his attention on the lead-up to the Kentucky Derby

Major's piece only rounds out a bunch of travelogues appearing in this issue. In early May, I took my wife and daughters down to Orlando for a week at Disney World. During the week, I managed to squeeze in a day and a half at the Kennedy Space Center and the nearby Astronaut Hall of Fame. Whenever we make a trip, I tend to write up a journal of it as soon as possible afterwards, not for dissemination, but so we'll have a detailed description of what we did for the girls to see when they get older. In this case, I've decided to extract the time we spent on and near Merrill Island for inclusion in *Argentus*.

If you're in Washington, D.C., Richard Lynch points out that in addition to the various monuments and museums, there are also several lecture series which you can attend which include free lunches. Richard describes some of the lectures he has crashed in his search for the ultimate Washington Free Lunch.

If Washington, Louisville and Florida are too mundane for your tastes, Rich Horton has presented an interstellar tour of nearby stars. Beginning with Alpha Centauri and going as far afield as 47 Ursus Majoris, he briefly examines the science fiction stories set around these suns, although I'll note that he fails to mention Barnard's Star's brief appears in *The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.

Following the letter column, this issue's mock section floats the idea of interviews with fictional characters. Robert Heinlein was a popular choice with Jason Burnett interviewing Friday from the eponymous novel, Joseph Major reviewing a fictitious book about Daniel Davis from *A Door Into Summer*, and Michael A. Burstein presenting an interview with the instigators of the Lunar Rebellion from *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*. If you aren't a fan of Heinlein's work (unbelievable as that might seem), Pat Sayre McCoy has tracked down and interviewed Lois McMaster Bujold's hero Miles Vorkosigan. Svetz, the hero of numerous short stories by Larry Niven, was interviewed by John Hertz and Larry Niven, himself.

Illustrations:
Sheryl Birkhead: 28
Brad W. Foster: Cover
Trinlay Khadro: 18, 19, 38, 40
William Rotsler: 7, 20, 32, 39
Steven Stiles: 8
Taral Wayne: 3, 14, 36

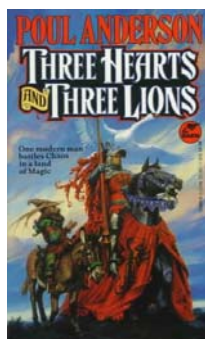
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Thirty Looks Back At Thirteen

Jason K. Burnett

James Gunn said (although the quote has been misattributed to everyone from Isaac Asimov to Robert Silverberg) that “The Golden Age of science fiction is thirteen.” That is, whatever science fiction one is reading at age 13 will be remembered as the best and will set the standards by which science fiction read over the rest of one’s life will be measured. Whether one accepts this as literally true or not, it provides an interesting conceptual framework for one to look back at one’s involvement with the genre. So, having recently turned 30 and at approximately the same time returning from a several year period of gaffiation, I’ve decided to take that look back, and to bring you along for the ride.

First, let me set the scene. When I was 13 it was 1986. I lived with my parents and my younger brother in Gautier, Mississippi, a small coastal town about 50 miles west of Mobile, Alabama, and about 100 miles east of New Orleans. I was in the eighth grade. Besides SF and fantasy, my obsessions at the time were the school band (I played trumpet), chorus, Boy Scouts (I made Eagle that year), computers (I owned a Commodore 64), skateboarding, Dungeons & Dragons, and girls. Musically, I loved heavy metal and classical with an equal lack of discrimination. What little spending money I had I got from mowing lawns (I remember one eccentric old man up the street who hired me to mow his front yard twice a month and his back yard twice a year.) As you might imagine, my varied interests in combination with my general lack of funds meant that most of my reading material came from the local library. Fortunately, whoever did the shopping for the Gautier public library



had pretty good, if somewhat eccentric at times, taste in science fiction. And so, I present my look back at what I was reading at (around) age thirteen:

Poul Anderson: *Three Hearts and Three Lions* was in the list of books in the back of the D&D rulebook, so when I found it at the local library, I read it. I honestly don’t

remember much about it, except remembering that it really didn’t impress me all that much at the time. Perhaps I’ll have to give it another shot.

Piers Anthony: I checked out *On a Pale Horse* from the library and enjoyed it very much. A couple of years later, when I got chickenpox, my mom bought me the first four books in the series to give me something to read and keep me from scratching. I’ve never read the fifth through seventh books. The series seemed to steadily decline after the first book, which was really great, until by the fourth book I thought it was mediocre at best.

Isaac Asimov: My parents gave me the *Foundation* trilogy for Christmas that year, and for my money it’s still

some of the best SF around. I have completely lost track of how many times I’ve read it, and just happen to be in the middle of rereading it again. (Off on somewhat of a tangent – if I could lose about 50 pounds, I’d love to costume Michael Whelan’s representation of the Mule from the cover of *Foundation and Empire*.)

Terry Brooks: *The Sword of Shannara* was one of the few books I managed to scrape up the money to buy. I remember enjoying it very much at the time, but the main thing I remember about it now was the way the world was racially divided *per saltire*. At the time, the simplicity of this



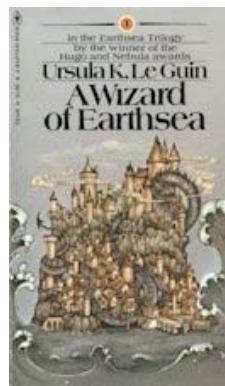
appealed to me, but looking back it looks artificial. Perhaps someday I’ll reread this and see how it stands up.

Stephen R. Donaldson: When I first tried reading *The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant the Unbeliever*, I got fed up with them, saying “They should have been called *The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant the Whiner*.” (Hey, eighth grade boys are not, as a group, known to be very sympathetic to the sufferings of others.) I later reread the trilogy and enjoyed it very much. I never finished the *Second Chronicles*, though; it just seemed like he was covering too much of the same ground over again.

William Gibson: I loved *Neuromancer*, and William Gibson is one of the few authors that I always found money to buy his books (up through *Idoru* at any rate). I’m glad I read Gibson when I did, as it inoculated me again all the bad cyberpunk of the late 1980s and early 1990s (Not in the sense that it kept me from reading it, but it did keep me from thinking it was original.)

Robert Heinlein: Here’s one place where relying on the local library seems to have skewed my tastes somewhat – the only Heinlein book they had was *Friday*, and even after reading many of his others, this remains my favorite Heinlein book.

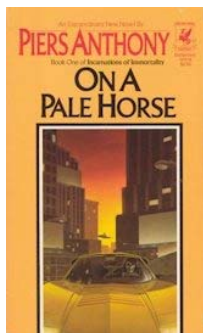
Gene Lancour: For some reason, someone at the public library had decided to order copies of *Sword for the Empire* and *The Man-Eaters of Cascalon*. I cannot tell you how many times I read these books. You can keep your Conan the Barbarian, your Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser; as far as I’m concerned, in the realm of sword and sorcery, Dirshan the God-Killer is where it’s at.



Ursula K. LeGuin: If Dirshan was my prototype for a warrior, Ged was my prototype for a wizard. The *Wizard of Earthsea* trilogy

was wonderful. It opened my eyes to the idea that a fantasy world didn't have to be the sort of land-locked pseudo-Europe that most authors provided. And even if they weren't the first "Education of a Wizard" novels, they were the first that I was aware of, so in my mind the original.

Anne McCaffrey: I read both *Dragonriders of Pern* and *Harperhall of Pern* about this time. (In a reversal of the usual order of things, I read *Harperhall* first.) And as much as I've enjoyed all the Pern books since then, I've always thought them to be somewhat inferior to these first six. In fact, there's a part of me (a very small part, mind you), that wishes Ms. McCaffrey had ended the series after the first six books plus *Moreta*. But, whatever the merits of the individual books, the Pern series has always been among my favorite, and the first fannish club I ever joined was Ista Weyr. (And from time to time I consider rejoining. Maybe I will.)



Michael Moorcock: I have to give Jason James, one of the other trumpeters in band, credit for introducing me to *The Middle Earth Role-Playing Game* (the original one, by Iron Crown Enterprises, not the new one that came out to capitalize on the movies) and to Michael Moorcock. He had ordered the *Elric of Melniboné* omnibus editions from Science Fiction Book Club, and let me borrow them as soon as he was finished with them. Also, the local library had a copy of *An Alien Heat*, which I also loved greatly except for the fact that there was a sequel and the library didn't have me. (Perhaps one day I'll reread it and then seek out the sequel and see how well it stands up again my memory.)

J.R.R. Tolkien: My mom let me borrow her copies of Tolkien's book. I loved *The Hobbit* the first time through. I got bogged down about halfway through *The Fellowship of the Ring* the first time I tried to read *Lord of the Rings*, but came back to it and finished after having read Dennis L. McKiernan's *Iron Tower* trilogy. (Incidentally, how in the hell did McKiernan ever manage to get published? Did no one at the publishing company ever stop to say "You know, Tolkien has already written this story, and did a much better job of it."?) I also read *Smith of Wooten Major* and *Farmer Giles of Ham*, but have yet to make it through *The Silmarillion*, maybe someday I will.

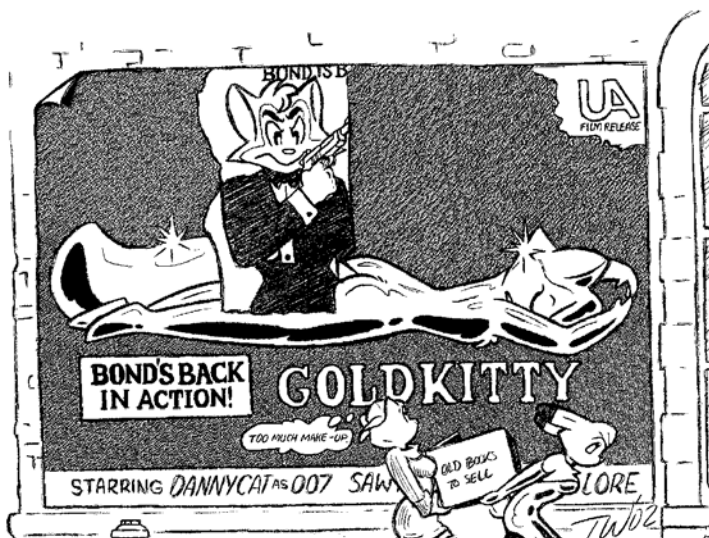
Manly Wade Wellman: Another oddity of the public library system – our local library had a complete set of the *Silver John* books. After one of the boys in my troop recommended *After Dark* to me, I went on to devour the whole series. This was to have great consequences in later years, when I first encountered the works of H.P. Lovecraft – my first impression of Lovecraft was "He's sort of a

cheap knock-off of Manly Wade Wellman."

I'm sure there were other things I read around this time. I subscribed to *Omni* (Does anyone else miss *Omni*? Where is the magazine today that blends science, pseudoscience, and SF like that?) and to Asimov's, I remember reading at least one of the *Thieves World* books to get ideas for D&D, and I always had books out from the library, but these are the ones that really stand out in my memory. I hope you've enjoyed coming with me on this walk down memory lane, and I hope something I've listed here makes you say either "I remember that. I've have to reread it," or else "I must have missed that somehow. I have to give it a try."

Jason's Books for the Thirteen Year Old

Poul Anderson, *Three Hearts and Three Lions*
 Piers Anthony, *On a Pale Horse*
 Isaac Asimov, *Foundation Series*
 Terry Brooks, *The Sword of Shannara*
 Stephen R. Donaldson, *The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant the Unbeliever*
 William Gibson, *Neuromancer*
 Robert A. Heinlein, *Friday*
 Gene Lancour, *Sword for the Empire*
 Gene Lancour, *The Man-Eaters of Cascalon*
 Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Wizard of Earthsea*
 Anne McCaffrey, *Dragonriders of Pern*
 Anne McCaffrey, *Harperhall of Pern*
 Michael Moorcock, *Elric of Melniboné*
 J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*
 J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*
 Manly Wade Wellman, *Silver John*



A Royal Wedding

Nicholas Whyte

My friend Mabel got engaged in July 2003 to her boyfriend, whose mother is Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands. Mabel works for the philanthropist George Soros, who has been a significant funder of my own work on Balkan politics since I moved to Brussels in 1999, and she and I have collaborated quite closely together off and on. She's also been a very good friend in need. So I was not especially surprised, but none the less a bit thrilled, when cream envelopes from the Dutch Royal Palace started arriving with instructions for the wedding in April 2004: details of how to dress, how to get there and where to stay.

The engagement ran into some controversy in September related to Mabel's youthful friendship with someone who turned out to have been an Amsterdam crime boss; as a result she and her fiancé, Prince Johan Friso (known generally as Friso) withdrew their request for the Dutch parliament to formally approve their marriage. The consequence is that Friso ruled himself out of the line of succession. He is the second of the Queen's three sons anyway, and both his brothers are already married with children, so the constitutional consequences are fairly minimal, but it was a difficult period for them both.

However it did mean that the wedding was a bit less royal than it might otherwise have been. A further dampening factor happened in March, when the Queen's mother, who had ruled the Netherlands as Queen Juliana from 1948 to 1980, died at the age of 94. More cream envelopes arrived from the Palace, explaining that out of respect the celebrations were to be toned down. But the wedding was going ahead on schedule on Saturday April 24th.

It's a 120 mile drive from the village where we live in Belgium to the Hague; I took the Friday off work and we set off in the late afternoon. Of course, the rush hour on Friday hits much earlier than on other days, and we were awfully delayed on one of the busiest routes in Europe; combined with essential stops for food and maintenance, we made it to our hotel in Scheveningen only by 9.30. Oddly, as we made our final approach to the Hague, the signs over the fast lane of the motorway told us not to use it, which seemed puzzling as there was no obvious physical obstruction. But all was to become clear.

Why did we stay in Scheveningen? It is the grandest beach resort in the Netherlands, and originally the evening do was supposed to be at the Kurhaus spa hotel there. Because of Queen Juliana dying it was scaled down, but we'd already made our booking—and rather

than go for one of the grand hotels with a special (but still huge) rate, I found two doubles in a perfectly presentable three-star establishment nearby. Buses were laid on from the "official" hotels to the various events.

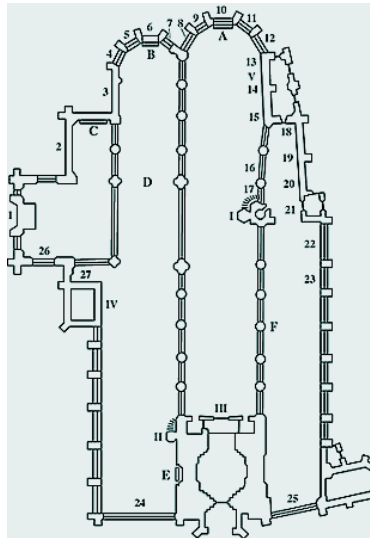
And then came phase two of the master plan: my sister-in-law, who conveniently works right beside the channel tunnel train station in Kent, arrived in the Hague around 10.30 to help with babysitting for the big day. So I was able to pick her up from the central station (it's only five miles) with minimal difficulty. Though frequent SMS messages were necessary to keep each other posted on progress. (SMS hasn't caught on in the United States yet as far as I know. I don't know how we ever managed without them.)

Anne and I rose early the next morning, left the children with her sister and walked down the hill to one of the "official" hotels to get the bus. The weather was overcast but mild. I wore my standard work suit. Anne wore her wedding dress for the first time since 1993 (she had no difficulty fitting into it, which she finds most gratifying) along with a red jacket and a Hat. The invitation had specified most explicitly that ladies were to wear Hats. Anne's was a straw hat with a ribbon which looked great.

The journey to the wedding ceremony took place in two phases. First of all we were delivered to the front door of the Dutch Council of State in the centre of the Hague, five miles inland from Scheveningen. The buses were surrounded by police escorts, holding up traffic for us, waving us through red lights and the wrong way down one-way streets. I could get used to travelling like that. At the Council of State we were ushered into the Gothic Chamber for coffee and biscuits, and to be assigned our seats in the church. This turned out for me to be the most politically hacky bit of the whole event as various people who know me (and Mabel) through Balkan politics made contact.

After the coffee we were ushered out of the back door of the Council of State and got another bus, another five miles inland, to the ancient town of Delft where the wedding ceremony was due to take place. Coincidentally it's also the area where Mabel grew up. We ended up on the bus beside George Soros, who continued a conversation we'd started earlier about Kosovo, but eventually switched to talking about the Hats, and pretending to reminisce about his memories of 17th-century Delft. The bus and our police escort zoomed along the fast lane of the motorway, which was closed to other traffic, thus explaining the mysterious traffic signs I had seen the previous night.

We were let off in Delft and ushered towards the Oude Kerk and our seats in it. Crowds of well-wishers (media estimates were about 3,500) cheered us on as we arrived. Apart from my own wedding, I don't think I've ever been cheered by a crowd in that way. OK, I know perfectly well that they were mostly cheering the happy couple, the



Oude Kerk

royal family, the Queen and their country, but there is a part of me that feels that to a very small extent they were cheering us as well.

Our block of seats was mainly work colleagues of Mabel's plus partners, i.e. the people who had never before been invited to a royal wedding and don't expect it will happen again. That was actually rather reassuring. We were in those lovely pews which are shut by half-doors at either end, only six rows back from the open space in the front where the action was to take place. Because of the Hats, of course, it was impossible to see directly. There were apparently 1,500 people in the church.

Huge TV-screens discreetly nestled amongst the pillars; they alternated between stern warnings to turn off our mobile phones and coverage of people coming from the civil ceremony which had just taken place in Delft Town Hall to the Oude Kerk, and eventually of events inside the church which would have been invisible to us otherwise. There was a huge telescopic boom with a camera mounted on it immediately to our left, and I twitched occasionally as it appeared to be about to collide with the pillars, the screens or the overhead lights. But there was no problem. With this the third royal wedding in three years (and also two royal funerals in the last year and a half—the present Queen's husband died in late 2002) the cameramen are obviously well practiced.

People arrived—including the Queen's father, 94-year-old Prince Bernhard, who looks a good fifteen years younger than his actual age, and eventually the two mothers (Mabel's mother is also a widow; she wore a fairly modest hat, whereas the Queen's was a huge blue feathery but regal affair, visible from where we were sitting), the witnesses and Mabel and Friso themselves. Mabel's dress was of course fairly spectacular, and I write as one with no eye for these things. (Because they had already had the civil ceremony there was none of the bridegroom-waits-anxiously-for-bride-to-arrive nonsense that happens elsewhere; they arrived together.)

The order of service was provided for us in two booklets, one in Dutch with just the hymns, readings and section headings, and one slightly bulkier in English with translations of the sermons, prayers and other interventions (which of course were otherwise in Dutch). The first hymn was "Praise My Soul the King of Heaven", to be sung in Dutch or English as the singer preferred. This didn't quite work but the rest of it did. Only the first reading was in English, read by an American minister.

The service was really very good. The celebrant had done both Friso's brothers' weddings, but this didn't stop him bringing a real sense of personalisation to it. The standard I Corinthians reading was presented in a fresh translation. There was a rather hauntingly beautiful hymn written specially for the occasion. The one glitch—and it was very funny—happened when Friso had considerable difficulty getting the ring onto Mabel's finger!

And then it was all over, and we filed out under orders, through the winding corridors of the Delft pottery

museum, back to the buses and back to Scheveningen and our hotel, waving regally in response to the (many) passers-by who waved at us, again with police escort and motorways blocked off. It was now after 2 pm and we hadn't eaten since the early breakfast (apart from coffee in the Council of State) so we ventured to the Scheveningen boardwalk and found a very acceptable tex-mex type place.

In the afternoon we took the children by tram to Madurodam, the exhibition of 1/25 scale model buildings from all over the Netherlands. Madurodam is fantastic for a four-year-old; the cultural dimension is lost, but it is great fun. A ship that goes on fire, and another ship that puts it out! A fun-fair! A lorry that drives around and gives you candy for ten (euro)cents! And most of all the trains!!!! Ursula surveyed it all from her buggy, and Anne and I mainly enjoyed watching Fergal enjoy himself, to the extent that looking through the official guidebook afterwards we realised we'd missed a lot of other interesting things.

Then Anne and I changed into "smart casual" clothes for the evening do (I wore smart jacket and trousers but with a "Sandman" t-shirt; she wore a blouse and skirt). This had originally been planned for the Kurhaus in Scheveningen, but the venue was now switched to the stables of the Royal Palace at Noordeinde in the Hague. Not a huge function room, with I would say fewer than 200 people there. (Of course, there had been several other meals and parties for other guests.) Parked casually in a corner of the room was the Gold State Coach that the Queen uses every year on April 30 for the state opening of the Dutch parliament. Otherwise it was chairs, comfy cushions and throw mats.

We got there in time for Friso's brothers to show an affectionately mocking video biography of the couple made by them and their friends, including embarrassing photographs from their teenage and student days, and the Queen offering supposedly essential words of wisdom to the happy pair (and keeping a straight face). The Queen herself was mingling very informally with the guests, though we did not introduce ourselves. Dancing was prohibited out of respect to the late Queen Juliana but I noticed several people moving rhythmically to the music while keeping both feet on the ground. Queen Beatrix pretended not to notice.

A Bulgarian friend of mine who was also there commented that he thought these Dutch royals were pretty good. Of course his own country's former King has been recently reinvented as a lacklustre prime minister, but it turned out that my friend has also had unsatisfactory dealings with Britain's Prince Charles, so his sample size of royal families is three times larger than mine! For what it's worth, I agree with his assessment. I got back around 2 am and must admit I found it rather slow going the next morning. But in the end we all made it back; Anne's sister caught a mid-morning train back to England, we pottered around on and off the boardwalk for a few hours, then drove back south (no closed off lanes this time) and got home by 7 pm. A fun weekend.

See the Neighborhood

Rich Horton

See the Neighborhood

Travel around the Universe begins with travel to the nearby stars. And for travel guides to the nearby stars, we have a wealth of description in many SF novels and stories. (To be sure, often a bit contradictory!)

The preferred set of likely stars to be featured in SF stories has changed over the years, mostly tracking scientific knowledge. To begin with, the main criterion was nearness, with prominence also a benefit. Hence, plenty of stories set in the systems of stars like Alpha Centauri and Sirius and Vega. As time went on, more emphasis was placed on Sol-like stars -- G stars, basically. Which crossed Sirius and Vega off the list, but not Alpha C. A writer like Poul Anderson was embarrassed enough by his use of Betelgeuse as a system containing several habitable planets in one of his early Flandry stories that he revised the 1980 edition of *Agent of the*

Terran Empire to (rather clumsily) explain that away. (You see, the planets were moved to Betelgeuse!)

By the mid 60s books like Stephen Dole and Isaac Asimov's *Planets for Man* (1964) and Carl Sagan and I. S. Shklovskii's *Intelligent Life in the Universe* (1966) appeared. These further defined the parameters for human-habitable star systems (and by analogy, systems likely to harbor humanoid aliens). In particular the notion of a "habitable zone" about a star became current, and the likelihood of finding planets with stable orbits about systems of multiple stars was disparaged. Finally, in recent years various techniques have been used to detect actual planets around some nearby stars. Though as far as I can recall the only planets so far identified have been gas giants, often in unusual orbits that seem to make the likelihood of Earthlike planets in human-habitable zones very small, SF writers have still been happy to set stories in such systems.

A few SF writers have set series of stories on various nearby stars. Perhaps the best known is Larry Niven's "Known Space," with inhabited planets at Alpha Centauri, Sirius, Procyon, Tau Ceti, and others. Also familiar is C. J. Cherryh's "Alliance/Union" series, with human colonies at Tau Ceti, Epsilon Eridani, 61 Cygni, and Van Maanen's Star. More recently, Alastair Reynolds' series of vast novels (and a few stories) beginning with *Revelation Space* uses Delta Pavonis, Epsilon Eridani, and 61 Cygni (among others) as settings.

Two web pages are of considerable interest in this regard. SolStation.com

(<http://www.solstation.com/stars.htm> lists prominent nearby stars, out to about 47 light years, with some listed even farther, and with some very nice maps. There is also a section about C. J. Cherryh's universe. Starmap Main (URL:<http://www.projectrho.com/starmap.html>) also has some nice 3-D star maps, and a page listing many of the prominent stars used in SF.

So let's visit a few of our nearest neighbors, as seen by scientists today and by SF writers over time.

Alpha Centauri

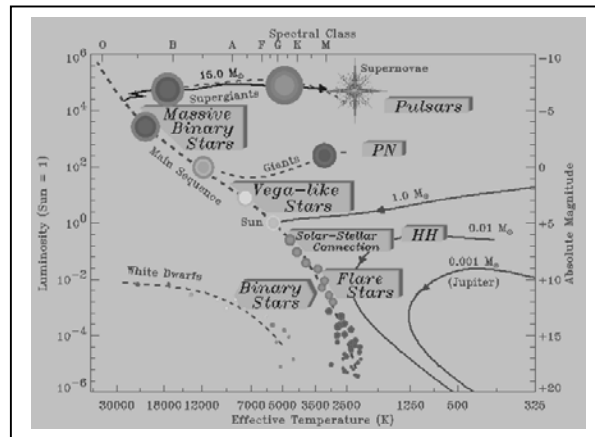
Alpha Centauri is about 4.4 light years from Sol. This is actually a three star system, with two main stars quite

close to each other (a couple astronomical units farther from each other than Saturn from Sol at closest approach), and with another very distant, very small, companion. This distant companion is often called Proxima Centauri, because it is even closer to Sol (at least now), at some 4.2 light years. Alpha Centauri is also called Rigil Kentaurus. Recent analysis suggests that a planet in the so-called "habitable zone" around Alpha Centauri A could have a stable orbit, despite the presence of Alpha Centauri B. (Though I am not sure if

theories of planetary formation allow for such planets to exist in the first place.)

Not too surprisingly, Alpha Centauri is an extremely popular location for SF stories. One of the very first SF books I read was Robert Silverberg's juvenile *Revolt on Alpha C* (1955), a Scholastic book. Alas, this tale of the Centaurian colonists revolting against Earth's domination is not really very good. Going further back in time, A. E. Van Vogt's classic short story "Far Centaurus" tells of a slower than light generation ship travelling to Alpha Centauri, only to be passed on the way by a later FTL ship. The great Leigh Brackett wrote *Alpha Centauri—or Die!* (a 1963 novel expanded from two 50s *Planet Stories* tales), in which a desperate band of humans (and one Martian) escape a Solar System over-controlled by Williamsonian robots, and make their way in a battered old spaceship to Alpha Centauri.

Of course there have been too many other stories set on Alpha Centauri to list. I'll briefly mention that the Alpha Centauri system is the location of Wonderland in Niven's "Known Space" stories, and that novels such as Charles Pellegrino's *Flying to Valhalla* (1993), Ben Bova's *Flight of Exiles* (1972), and M. K. Wren's "Phoenix Legacy" trilogy were set there. Finally, Mary Doria Russell's bestseller *The Sparrow* (1996), and its sequel *Children of God* (1998), feature a journey to a planet of Alpha Centauri where two intriguing alien species reside. *The Sparrow* in particular was a major success, with general readers as well as genre readers.



That said its choice of Alpha Centauri seems not well thought through -- Russell plays games with time dilation to drive her plot that simply don't work with a star as close as Alpha C. (This is to be sure only one of many terribly annoying science errors that mar an otherwise quite interesting story.)

Barnard's Star

Barnard's Star is the second closest star system to Sol. It is currently some 6 light years distant. It has the largest proper motion of any star in our sky, partly due to its considerable relative velocity. It is moving rapidly enough, partly toward Sol, that it will approach closer than 4 light years from us in less than 10,000 years. Its nearness makes it a tempting choice for SF writers. Even more tempting was the apparent discovery of two sub-Jupiter-sized planets around the star in the late 60s. However, later observations showed that these planets likely did not exist, and their discovery was due to observational errors. At any rate, Barnard's Star is a very dim red dwarf, and an Earthlike planet in the habitable zone would be so close to the star that it would likely be in a tidally locked orbit.

Still, some SF novels have been set there. The earliest I know of is Jack Williamson's *The Legion of Space* (1934). In Leigh Brackett's *The Big Jump* (1953) the first extrasolar expedition is to Barnard's Star, where the explorers find a planet inhabited by humanoid aliens and by alluring energy creatures. A much later example is Charles Harness's *Redworld* (1986), a novel that is most interesting when read with an eye on Harness's own life, and in particular on his later novel *Cybele, With Bluebonnets* (2002). (Despite the fact that *Redworld* is set on an alien planet with an alien protagonist, while *Cybele, With Bluebonnets* is set in early 20th Century Texas, the plots have many points of similarity. Both novels seem distinctly autobiographical.)

Sirius

Sirius is the brightest star in our night sky. This is partly due to its proximity: it is only 8.6 light years away. But it is also an intrinsically rather bright star, of the spectral class A. This spectral class, and also the presence of a white dwarf companion in an eccentric and fairly close orbit (average distance about that of Uranus from Sol), mitigate somewhat against an Earthlike planet in a stable habitable orbit. Still, one does occasionally see planets of Sirius used in SF stories, perhaps most notably

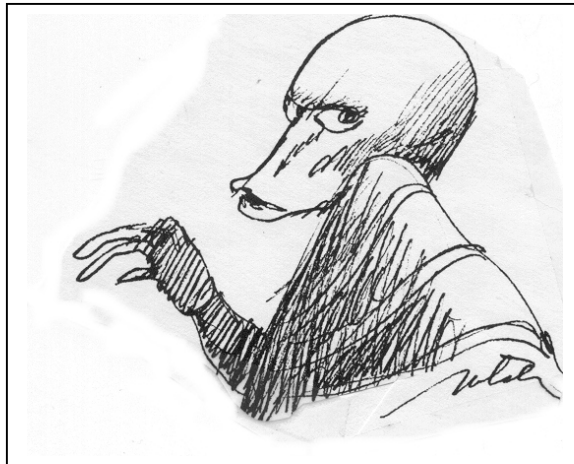
Jinx in Niven's "Known Space" series, the home of the huge intelligent aliens called Bandersnatchii.

Tau Ceti

Tau Ceti is about 11.9 light years from Sol. Its spectral class is G8, reasonably similar to Sol's class (G2), and it is a single star. (There is a distant and dim companion that is not gravitationally bound.) These factors have long made Tau Ceti a tempting location for Earthlike planets. (The human-habitable zone around Tau Ceti, which is slightly smaller and cooler than our sun, is at about the same distance as Venus from Sol.)

In Samuel R. Delany's *Empire Star* (1966) the main character comes from Tau Ceti, though he is soon journeying around the Galaxy. Poul Anderson's *After Doomsday* (1962), in which Earth is destroyed, features the few survivors traveling to a number of stars including Tau Ceti. Larry Niven's *A Gift from Earth* (1968) is set on Tau Ceti, on a planet called Plateau (due to the only human-habitable zone being on top of a large plateau). C. J. Cherryh's *Downbelow Station* (1981) is set at Pell, a planet of Tau Ceti. Aurora, the planet on which Isaac Asimov's *The Robots of Dawn* (1983) takes place, orbits Tau Ceti. Also, the aliens in Harry Turtledove's popular "Worldwar" series come from Tau Ceti.

61 Cygni



61 Cygni is a binary star system located about 11.4 light years from Sol. Both components are K stars, considerably smaller and less luminous than our sun. The two stars are far enough apart from each other that stable orbits in the habitable zones of each star are probably possible. Due to their dimness, however, such habitable zones would be very close to either star -- closer than the orbit of Mercury. Another complicating factor as to potential habitability is that 61 Cygni A is a variable star.

The most notable science-fictional planet of the 61 Cygni system is Mesklin, in Hal Clement's *Mission of Gravity* (1953) and its sequels. Mesklin, to be sure, is particularly notable for the unique features Clement gave it, particularly the its very high gravity, and the extreme way gravity varied with latitude. Much more recently, another writer noted for hard SF, astronomer Alastair Reynolds, used Sky's Edge, a hypothetical planet of 61 Cygni, as the home system for the protagonist of his novel *Chasm City* (2001). One of the most interesting aspects of Reynolds's use of local stars is that travel in his universe is strictly relativistic, so that travel time and time dilation figure prominently in the plot.

Epsilon Eridani

At only 10.5 light years from us, Epsilon Eridani is the third closest star visible to the naked eye. It is a K star, quite a bit smaller than Sol, and about a quarter as luminous. As such it is considerably more luminous than the stars of 61 Cygni. A potential habitable zone for Earthlike planets lies slightly closer to Epsilon Eridani than the Earth is to the Sun. Moreover, there is considerable exciting evidence of potential planets and even a cometary system around Epsilon Eridani. It is thought that there are at least two large planets there, one a few times the size of Jupiter, and the other perhaps one-tenth the size of Jupiter. In addition, some spectral evidence suggests the possibility of a planet with liquid water around Epsilon Eridani. (It should be emphasized that that evidence is very tenuous.) However, Epsilon Eridani is a relatively young star, so it is thought that even if a life-bearing planet exists, the likelihood of higher life forms is very slim.

Given the proximity of this system to Earth, and its apparent promise as a locale for habitable planets, it has been popular in SF novels. For example, Comporellon in Isaac Asimov's "Robot/Empire" novels is at Epsilon Eridani. Poul Anderson's *Orbit Unlimited* (1961) (and its sequel stories collected in *New America* (1982)) is set on Rustum, a planet of Epsilon Eridani, on a planet inhabitable by normal humans only at high altitudes. By contrast, in his novels *Chasm City* (2001) and *Redemption Ark* (2002) Alastair Reynolds depicts Chasm City on the planet Yellowstone of Epsilon Eridani as a city built in a deep chasm -- the only habitable area. Viking Station in C. J. Cherryh's "Alliance/Union" novels is at Epsilon Eridani. Indeed, some sources put Babylon 5 at Epsilon Eridani.

Delta Pavonis

Delta Pavonis is just under 20 light years from Earth. It is a G5-8 star, just slight larger and brighter than Sol, with a potential habitable zone just a bit farther away than Earth from the Sun. No planets have been detected around it, but they would be difficult to find. It is also a suspected variable star.

Delta Pavonis is featured in Alastair Reynolds's novels *Revelation Space* (2000) and *Redemption Ark* (2002), in which it is given a very unusual companion indeed. It also features in a little known novel by an author I like quite a bit: *The Tree Lord of Imeten* (1966), by Tom Purdom. But perhaps the most prominent novel to feature Delta Pavonis, if only briefly, is Frank Herbert's *Dune* (1965): Paul Atreides's home planet, Caladan, is at Delta Pavonis. (*Dune* itself orbits Canopus.)

47 Ursae Majoris

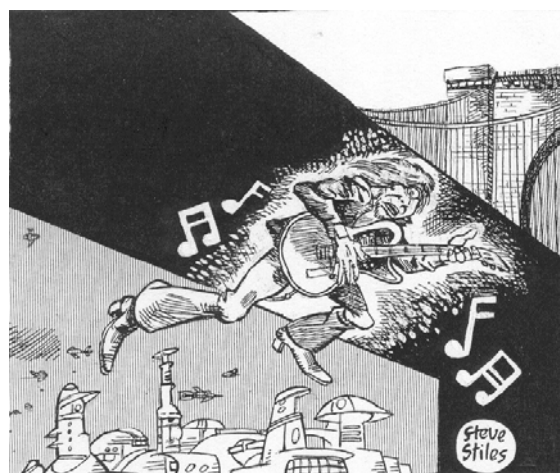
A recently fashionable star in SF is 47 Ursae Majoris. This is about 46 light years from Earth, much farther than the other stars I have discussed. But it is a G0-1 star, of

roughly Sol's mass though about one and a half times the luminosity. A Jupiter like planet was recently discovered about 47 Ursae Majoris, which may explain its late popularity.

This star came to my attention when I read two popular novels in close succession featuring it. These novels are Allen M. Steele's *Coyote* (2002) and Robert Charles Wilson's *Blind Lake* (2003). Both works have been well received, with parts of *Coyote* nominated for the Hugo in their original publication in magazines, and with *Blind Lake* on the current Hugo final ballot. *Coyote* is the name Steele gives to an Earthlike planet this is actually a satellite of Bear, the Jupiter-like planet orbiting 47 Ursae Majoris. In the novel a group of freedom-loving Americans steal a starship and escape a future right-wing dictatorship, setting up a colony on *Coyote*. The direct action in *Blind Lake*, on the other hand, is all on Earth, but scientists are observing a planet of 47 Ursae Majoris, and in particular intelligent aliens living on that planet. The star system is still popping up in recent stories -- Alex Irvine's "Volunteers", posted at *Sci Fiction* July 28, 2004, is set on a planet of the same star.

Conclusions

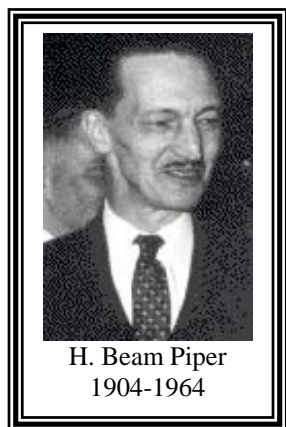
My treatment above is of course extremely sketchy. There are several other stars that have been popular locales in SF, and there are many other example novels and stories for each of the stars I've mentioned. I find it fun to see how the same rough location inspires different authors in different ways, and how fashions in star locations and world building change over time.



In 1995, Terry Kepner published a work entitled *Proximity Zero: A Writer's Guide to the Nearest 200 Stars (A 40-lightyear radius)*. In this work, Kepner discusses the life cycle of stellar formation, orbital mechanics, and finally provides maps and details for the stars. Copies, at least when I got my copy, can be purchased from him at POB 428, Peterborough, NH 03458.

H. Beam Piper

John F. Carr



Science fiction has known its share of tragedies, but few resonate as deeply as the suicide of H. Beam Piper. Any time an important artist or writer's work is brought to a premature end by death, those who love his work suffer the most tragic loss of all. Piper, who was writing at the top of his form at the time of his death, had quickly, and without the usual hype and fanfare, established himself as one of the science fiction

fields' finest authors. In the five years before his death, Piper had made the turn from promising short story writer to major novelist, with novels such as *Four Day Planet*, *Cosmic Computer*, *Space Viking*, *Little Fuzzy*, *The Other Human Race* and his final work, *Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen*. Both *Space Viking* and *Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen* deserve to be ranked right up with Robert Louis Stevenson's novels, *Kidnapped* and *Treasure Island*, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The White Company*, and Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*.

These are all books of heroic vision that appeal to young adults as well as the young at heart of all ages and can be read and re-read, passed from one generation to the next. Even Ace Books', the present copyright holder of Piper's oeuvre, policy of benign neglect—having allowed most of the Piper canon to languish out-of-print for the past fifteen years—has not stopped readers from searching out Piper's books at used bookstores and on the Internet. Piper's legion of fans gather at obscure websites and Internet lists to talk about and re-interpret his works and his millennium spanning Terro-Human Future History.

Jerry Pournelle believes that had Piper continued writing he soon would have eventually been ranked along with top SF writers, Heinlein, Clarke, Asimov and Bradbury, and shared their economic success along with their growing literary reputations. As Lester del Rey noted in his June 1976 *Analog* book review column "Piper was rapidly becoming the best adventure writer in science fiction before his tragic death..."

That a man with Beam's talent could die alone, living in hunger and abysmal poverty, is a terrible waste. Of course, like all classic Greek tragedies, this tale has its share of personal hubris, too. H. Beam Piper was a man of great pride, who enjoyed the fact that his Williamsport neighbors viewed him as a successful author of international renown. Piper was unwilling (despite having friends living nearby) to tell anyone of his worsening financial situation, desperate enough that he was shooting

pigeons from his windowsill for dinner. The idea of going on Relief wasn't open for discussion.

However, when the money arrived for a story sale, Piper did not budget his money well. After a celebratory dinner, he would go out and buy a tailored suit or two for keeping up appearances. Not really too much to ask for, except that Piper's income, even in his best year as a writer, was just above the poverty level. After his death, his ex-wife Betty wrote: "He was always broke—and when he got a check—he blew it—and was broke again."

Piper had his standards; he liked to dress well, even wearing a tie and white shirt while writing alone in the gunroom. Unfortunately, his only controllable expense was his food budget, so when story sales dropped he starved himself, eating condiments at the Busy Bee or stale crackers and the food remnants in his pantry. Authors in general are not good financial planners; some arrogantly eschew good business practices as being incompatible with art. Others are self-centered and are more interested in their work than in taking care of business. Some just don't deal well with the mundane realities of food, shelter and transportation. As Mike Knerr sums it up best, in one of his letters: "Piper made very little money, but he spent it as though it was Confederate currency."

In another letter, Mike Knerr gives us a close-up look at his Piper: "Beam continually lurked in lonely silence behind his dark suit and the black overcoat he usually wore slung over his shoulders. Black hair combed straight back, a somewhat pale and aquiline-featured face; he could have been a sort of Bella Lagosi (*sic*) walking the streets of Williamsport, muttering to himself as he plotted another story. He was also inclined to stubbornness, atheism and given the idea of creating an aura of the Victorian about himself most of the time. He often appeared to be a man from the last century, given to wearing white shirts and ties even when he wrote. True to his Victorian code, Beam seldom watched television (except the fights) and never owned one."

Piper's first story, "Time and Time Again," was published in *Astounding Science Fiction* by the legendary SF editor, John W. Campbell. Piper began writing in his teens, but did not become a published author until the mid-Nineteen Forties. In the Twenties and Thirties, Beam wrote gangster shoot-'em-ups and historical pieces and short stories. Until his death, Beam's first love was history, although he was a lifelong SF reader and occasional mystery writer. As Mike Knerr told me, "Piper truly wanted to write historical novels, but couldn't. As this became more of an obsession, he solved the problem by taking his knowledge of history to the stars—*Space Viking* and *Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen* being prime examples.

In a March 22, 1963 letter to Jerry Pournelle, Beam gives a plot summary of his historical novel, *Age of the Arquebus*: "Having just finished a story in the VII Century A.E. ("Fuzzy Sapiens" jfc), I have now dug out the historical novel on which I have been working

intermittently, when I have not been pressed by necessity to get something quickly saleable done, for the last couple of years. This is early Sixteenth Century C.E. [Christian Era jfc]—1502-1503, to be exact—and Ferdinand of Spain and Louis XII of France are fighting over the kingdom of Naples.

Although, Piper never finished his opus in the historical novel field he continued to plot it and to read history books. As Mike Knerr put it, “Writing and writers were his friends and equals on one hand, while guns and gun collectors were his companions on the other.”

Ventura II, a fanzine published shortly after Piper’s death, contains several appreciations of Piper, including SF author Jack Chalker’s “Lights Go Out”: “H. Beam Piper (He never would tell anyone what the ‘H’ stood for) was a talented and imaginative writer who endeared himself to the science fiction world not just by his superb writings, but also by his sparkling wit and personality at various conventions and conferences. He was one of the special group you looked forward to meeting again and again, and who, you know, would be the same cordial gentleman. No one was too big or too small, too famed or too unknown, that he could not talk with Beam as a friend. His pixie-like mannerisms and his twinkling eyes were always at the center of attention. Beam loved people, all kinds of people, and he was never happy unless there was a group nearby discussing history and antique weaponry, and he was often the life of any party.

“He looked somewhat like the classic movie villain, with a thin moustache and a deep, piercing voice—but the twinkle in his eye betrayed his image, and this suited his impish sense of humor.

“It was only in the past few years that he truly matured as a writer, and found his forte in the form of the novel, giving the SF world such masterpieces as *Space Viking* and the novel that truly won him universal acclaim and recognition by all, *Little Fuzzy*. His juvenile novels for Putnams, *Four Day Planet* and *Junkyard Planet*, showed him a master of all levels, perhaps the only man who could equal the gifts of Heinlein and Norton in writing juveniles that did not play down, and were often far superior to the bulk of adult fiction. Beam never wrote for adults or for juveniles—he wrote for everyone.

“By 1964 it was very apparent that H. Beam Piper was one of the truly great SF authors, and from the time when he couldn’t sell a novel to the magazine or hardback publishers (*Little Fuzzy* was universally rejected) he had, in a few short years, come up to where he would be ranked on the SF five foot shelf with every great writer in the business. In one sense he truly surpassed his contemporaries—his public knew and loved him personally as well.

“In 1964 PhillyCon attendees were rather puzzled when Beam failed to appear for the festivities. He was so much a part of the East Coast’s affairs that his very absence was almost physically noticeable. It was then that Sam Moscovitz told us that he had received word that on

November 11, 1964, just a few days before, Beam Piper had said his farewell to this world and gone on.

“Beam’s thoughts ran deep. He was a very complex man, a very unique and unfathomable man. Behind the villain’s façade, beyond even the twinkling eyes and the pixie manner, there were things that showed in no external symptom, and like the ancient ones he studied and loved, he chose his own time and place of farewell, for reasons concealed from us all.

“The news passed like a great snake through the Philadelphia audience. Few would or could believe he was gone. There are those of us who really can’t believe it even now...H. Beam Piper (1904-1964) is gone—but his name will not be forgotten until men cease to imagine far places, new worlds out among the stars...”



Henry Beam Piper was born March 23, 1904, an only child, the son of Harriet L. (Mauer) Piper (born March 26, 1864) and Herbert Orr Piper, in Altoona, Pennsylvania. Beam was a late arrival and was probably a surprise to his parents. As Piper scholar, David Hines, points out, “The Piper-Maurer union was, for the time, an unusually late marriage for both; Harriet was three days shy of forty when she gave birth to their first and only child.” It was no surprise that Beam was the young king of the Piper household.

As Don Coleman, the son of Beam’s best friend, describes Beam’s parents, “They had always been a part of his existence and remained clearly ‘near the window’ within his deluged intellect. ...always addressing them as ‘mother’ and ‘father’ rather than *mom* and *pop* had produced within his being such a personal reverence. ‘Mother’ was always there, so the saying goes, being able to relate so much knowledge of the war between the states—she having been born shortly before its ending.” Her tales led to Beam’s fascination and expertise of the history of the Civil War.

As Mike Knerr relates, “Herbert Piper was a (electric company) meter man...and prior to that occupation had been a teamster driving freight for a local wholesale grocer. Beam seldom talked about his father, except in relation to the older Piper’s firearms, but he once showed

me a picture of him. It was taken in 1922, at an area hunting camp, showing him holding his new .32 Winchester Special at a kind of port arms. The photo displays a small-boned, thin-faced man with the stern look of the 'frontier' in his eyes and a walrus mustache dripping from his upper lip."

Donald A. Wollheim, who was Piper's editor at Ace books and who bought the rights to several of Beam's novels had this to say: "H. Beam Piper is rather enigmatic about his personal life." Mike Knerr adds, "Perhaps, to a great many people, that simple statement sums up the whole of the science fiction writer's life. He was also inclined to stubbornness, atheism and given to the idea of creating an aura of the Victorian about himself most of the time."

Little is known about Piper's childhood and school years. He came from a relatively poor family and was raised in a small town whose population probably never had a writer in their midst. He worked at a menial job, struggling for everything he owned and everything he knew. College was totally out of the question, as his help was needed at home.

Mike Knerr has this to say in "PIPER," his unpublished biography, "Part of Beam's reticence regarding personal matters, I suspect, was that Beam spent most of his life working as a night watchman at the Altoona, Pennsylvania car yards, writing short stories and novels during his off time. Not a very writer-like career. While an autodidact as well versed in history—maybe more so—than most history professors, Beam may have had some insecurity in regards to his lack of formal education, although, he has been quoted as saying he didn't go to college because he had wanted to spare himself 'the ridiculous misery of four years in the uncomfortable confines of a raccoon coat.'

"Another part of the reason for the mystery of Piper lies in his origins. His life was common, his formal education almost non-existent and his knowledge of writing gleaned primarily through a voracious appetite for reading that could never be sated. When he died he was reading, ironically, *Captain Blood Returns*. I took it back to the library for him. Early in his life he knew his way around a library and grew up reading the various pulp magazines of the time."

Piper enjoyed the role-playing and mystery involved in 'hiding' his real self. Mike Knerr further notes: "Beam wanted to be what he believed a man should be, a living example of what he put on paper and, when he failed in his quest he could not allow it to be seen. The argument with his wife (Betty) over nothing resulted in a separation that tortured him, yet he felt he could not compromise his decision and, in order to reinforce his attitude, he told lies about it. His bullheaded determination to write un-salable mysteries resulted in wasted time and a lack of funds that eventually had him shooting pigeons to survive. Even in his writing, as skillful as it was, he believed that he couldn't live up to what he felt a writer should be.

"His stories were excellent, almost always earning the *Analog* bonus of extra money. They were popular with the

world of fandom at the time when science fiction was a 'closed club,' as far as the writing fraternity was concerned. Today, nearly twenty years after his death, his work still ranks among the top ten *Analog* writers.

"Piper was generous with his knowledge of science fiction and writing, but extremely chary about his personal life, and he continually lurked in a lonely silence behind a dark suit and the black overcoat he often wore slung over his shoulders. He was recognized by many people, known by very few and understood by even fewer. He was, 'that writer...what's his name...?' He was not initially friendly, nor much given to casual relationships with neighbors, but was extremely loyal to those he liked. One was never given friendship by H. Beam Piper; one earned it.

"He was opinionated, stubborn and in some ways a bit selfish, and his refusal to bend or compromise what he called his principles often bordered on the absurd. He was an atheist by his own admission, hated Democrats and believed that Social Security was the invention of the devil. He liked animals and often made friends with stray dogs and cats. He was an original. A brilliant, often tormented writer, but an original to the core.

"Little of the character that H. Beam Piper displayed to the world resembled the inner man. Beam preferred to be an enigma wrapped in a riddle and he often went to great lengths to perpetuate this belief...He maintained that attitude toward everyone, a solitary individual who spent his life chuckling at society, politics and the masses and the clumsy handling of their affairs.

"His life, and the various myths that swirled around him, is a difficult to bring into focus as the character of the man himself. Swathed in secrecy and a verbal smoke screen of self-produced fiction, he lived out his final years in a lonely, frustrated existence that few people, if any, understood. Except when it suited his purposes, he refused to discuss his past and his origins and, when he did, he frequently lied. He generally summed up everything with a favorite expression: 'Man is born, he suffers, he dies; so far, I've done two thirds of this.'"

The death of his agent, Kenneth White, in July of 1964 left Beam's writing affairs in a complete mess. John W. Campbell had rejected the third Kalvan novelette ("Hos-Hostigos") and in the confusion of letters and manuscripts left behind by Ken White (who kept it all in his 'head'), Beam was cast adrift. The third Fuzzy novel (*Fuzzies and Other People*) had been rejected by every publisher in town and his bank account was running on empty.

On the weekend of November 6th, 1964, H. Beam Piper put a premature end to the final third of his life: he shut off the utilities in his apartment at 330 East Third Street in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, placed painter's drop cloths over the walls and floor and shot himself with a .38-caliber pistol. In a terse—but characteristic—suicide note, Beam wrote: "I don't like to leave messes when I go away, but if I could have cleaned up any of this mess, I wouldn't be going away. H. Beam Piper."

Another Convention Diary: Torcon 3

Dave Langford

Well, guess what: I went to the Toronto Worldcon in 2003. And, despite promising myself to treat it all as a relaxing holiday, I took some notes....

Wednesday 27 August. A deeply uneventful outward trip, which is how I like it. By way of subtle foreshadowing, one of the in-flight films was a Hugo winner: despite spurning the offered earphones as usual, I eventually realized that this endless succession of gravity-defying martial arts setpieces must be the famous *Crouching Subtitles, Hidden Soundtrack*.

Toronto's international airport turns out to be 28 kilometres out of town. A long, long wait for the AirportExpress shuttle was enlivened by many predatory taxi drivers offering to cover the distance at the speed of light for practically no cost, but by then I already had my (return) coach ticket. At last the conveyance arrived, miles of motorway unreeled and the Toronto skyline began to loom. Since Torcon had neglected to provide maps, there was some comfort in the bus brochure's teensy, not-to-scale plan showing the various con hotels strung out along the same street and separated by, I carefully estimated, a distance. Having laboriously plodded that distance along Front Street and tracked down the Renaissance Hotel at the far end, I found it was embedded in the city's number-two landmark—the SkyDome stadium—which in turn nestled at the foot of the biggest sight of all, the 553-metre CN Tower. Oh well.

Among the strangely familiar sights were occasional bilingual direction signs, with WEST and EAST carefully glossed as OUEST and EST...rather like home in South Wales, with TAXI subtitled TACSI for the benefit of (to paraphrase Kingsley Amis) benighted Welsh who've never seen an X in their lives. Was it a delusion that Toronto's street crowds were already dotted with sensitive fannish faces? At one point I thought I heard someone unknown say "That's Dave Langford," but probably it was the jet lag talking: I never was any good as an eavesdropper.

Good news! My US dollar account card proved capable of sucking Canadian notes from Toronto ATMs, \$CAN400 at a time. Pausing only to stoke up at a convenient ethnic restaurant (East Side Mario's: New York Italian), I made my way to the Royal York Hotel where all the parties were to be. There Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden seemed to be running up an enormous Tor Books tab in the overpriced bar, surrounded by such thirly luminaries as Charlie Stross and Liz Williams. What could I do but join in? This buffered me against the later Los Angeles in 2006 bidding party, where such treats as Hugo-shaped cookies and the vast presence of fan guest of honour Mike Glyer could not entirely conceal a certain lack of alcohol. Again, foreshadowing—of five

days in a dry convention centre linked to yet a third hotel where loudly ongoing reconstruction work had closed the bar and restaurant for the duration.

Thursday 28 August. Up morbidly early. After drafting my holiday-assignment review on the palmtop (Robin Hobb, *Fool's Fate*, fat enough to last me through an entire transatlantic flight with a chapter or so to spare), I explored the local streets and famous subterranean walkways, leading to breakfast in an underground food court obsessed with healthy eating. You could order wicked substances like hash browns, but they came with a couple of raw carrots on top to take away the curse. Next, the Metro Convention Centre and my first intimation of Torcon's organizational disasters....

That was the received version, but disaster depends a great deal on your viewpoint. Arriving bright and early and jetlagged at the Centre, I discovered that as predicted the souvenir book wasn't ready (there had been some fuss about a public resignation and unresignation by the Torcon committee member in charge), but there were dinky little tickets entitling you to claim a copy later. The pocket programme, a substantial paperback, had also been delayed, but this was not a problem because so many scores of changes had happened since it went to press that fans were told to rely on the new programme grids being printed every day. Surprises abounded. All this made it a mite difficult to plan ahead.

When I later showed Hazel my Torcon badge, she protested: 'That's not a badge, it's a sporran!' That is, a flexible blue plastic pouch 6.5" high by 4.5" wide, assuring fans in large friendly white print that they were, honestly, no kidding, attending TORCON 3, held in TORONTO, CANADA, 2003, and sponsored by Tor Books. (Of course the Worldcon was named for the city, like its predecessors, but the sheer beauty of this sponsorship proved irresistible both to the cash-starved committee and to Tom Doherty at Tor.) Beneath this information was a transparent holder containing a 3" x 4" printed badge more than half occupied by a sketched Hugo rocket, with one line devoted to the member's name in type rather smaller than the recommended minimum of 24 points. I've seen worse, but would not actually have objected to a layout that let the name sprawl over more than, at most, 3.4% of the total badge area. A lot of us did a lot of furtive squinting.

Dutifully I hung this millstone round my neck (I forgot to mention the useful pockets provided on the flipside for storing souvenir book claim tickets, visiting cards, sandwiches, etc) and attached my two tiny gold Hugo-nominee rockets at the top-corner holes where the string went. Claire Brialey immediately remarked that the overall effect put her in mind of pierced nipples. I spent days trying to efface that thought from memory.

In general, although the conrunning purists were bitterly critical, tradition and goodwill kept Torcon reasonably on course, especially for lazy attendees like myself who could ignore the backstage chaos and go for relaxation rather than a round-the-clock stint of self-

promotion. Indeed, when I assured the programme disorganizer that one speech and no panel appearances would be plenty for me, there had come a hiss of indrawn breath and muttered asides about wishing more US pros had that attitude.

The first famous professional I ran into was Robert Silverberg, bemusedly looking for some action, any action. 'Where's the dealers' room?' he demanded. Upstairs, I explained, and off-limits to mere members during setup, with an implacable security guard at the escalator. 'We'll see about *that*,' said Bob sternly, and seconds later waved from on high. Subsequently he explained: 'I just said: I'm Dave Langford, I've got more Hugos than anybody, and I need to be up there.' Readers are warned that Mr Silverberg writes fiction and may sometimes make things up.

When I penetrated the dealers' room at last, I was accosted by a bearded, sinisterly hatted figure. 'Mr Langford!' said Terry Pratchett in tones of deep suspicion: 'Have you *permed your hair*?' I still hope this was subtle humour.

Meanwhile, Diane Duane and Peter Morwood appeared and voiced my inmost thoughts about passing the time until something happened: 'Where's the bar?' Across the road in a Texan restaurant, as it turned out, where we consumed frighteningly ethnic lunch served in ten-gallon hats—well, not *quite*—and the Owl Springs collective gloated about delivering their screenplay for a TV miniseries of *The Ring*, not Tolkien's but Wagner's.

The usual social scene continued. Darrell Schweitzer treated me to a lengthy spiel on self-publishing and on getting thrown out of a Hubbardite party with extreme prejudice for defending his positive review of Russell Miller's *Bare-Faced Messiah*. David Hartwell and Kathryn Cramer showed off their new offspring. I enjoyed watching Paul Barnett buy a round at the Royal York hotel bar; his face became a mask of horror as he realized that the 'we try to be exactly like an English pub' motto did not extend to allowing unseemly pint glasses. 'Two glasses each,' he cried, bravely but unwisely. We inferred that the policy was for fear that tourists would have heart attacks if exposed to the price of a Royal York pint in one instalment.

The Royal York also proved to house (at various remote positions in a maze of twisty corridors, all alike) the hospitality suite, where I enjoyed the occasional cup of tea, and a fan lounge organized by Colin Hinz and Catherine Crockett, whose delights included the great Steve Stiles and a bathtub full of bottles of extremely fannish home-brewed beer. This was the life. Or it would have been if my hearing hadn't kept letting me down.

As already noted, my hotel—the Renaissance—was built into the Skydome sports arena, a science-fictional edifice with the largest retractable roof in the universe, or thereabouts. I furtively investigated its gift shop to learn what the Toronto Blue Jays team actually plays. Football? Lacrosse? Chess? The awful truth was betrayed by a plethora of tiny souvenir baseball bats. Another local team (hockey this time) generated perpetual aesthetic

anguish by being called the Maple Leafs [sic]. But the next, or outgoing, Skydome attraction seemed to be the circus: from the hotel bar I peered down at a vast grey concrete floor, littered with mobile homes, high piles of sawdust, and in the middle—in a token enclosure of metal hurdles, not actually forming a complete barrier—three dispirited-looking elephants.

Later came the usual evening restaurant expedition with fan friends. Good stuff (Thai), but even better was the walk through evening Toronto, being boggled by eccentric public art on the way out and by the glowing night cityscape as we retraced our steps. The municipal art-forms are highly varied: here a clutch of unnaturally steep-angled stone pyramids on a grassy lot, there at a bus stop a sitting commuter who turned out to be a statue. (Seattle, I remember, goes one better with a whole group of sculpted commuters; back home in Reading, England, it may have been budget considerations that reduced this concept to a few inconspicuous bronze shopping bags.) The end wall of one vast old building had become a *trompe l'oeil* painting that cunningly incorporated the few scattered windows.

Other art, alas, was of the more familiar steel-girder genre that looks like some terrible industrial accident, foundry junkheap, or skeleton of something yet to be built. Half the convention regularly passed through one of these, a sort of high, twisted wigwam frame straddling a much-used stretch of pavement. I remarked on an extraordinary number of street beggars holding out little paper cups; the one who hopefully touched his forelock to every passer-by was not, I fear, committing Performance Art.

Los Angeles and Kansas bidding parties for the 2006 Worldcon awaited our return, both strangely garish and hellishly crowded after an initial lull of mere minutes. The Kansas theme of random glowing things was perhaps more restful than LA's ambitious conversion of hotel room doors to airlocks outlined with brilliant lights, not to mention the epileptic flicker of giant LEDs on their Space Cadet' staff uniforms. (These high-tech ornaments, brought in bulk to Torcon by some mad scientist from [I think I heard] eastern Europe, were selling like hot cakes at \$CAN2.50—I came home with a couple to show Hazel, one a gift from a kindly Kansas supporter.) After minute and flattering investigation of the date on my passport, LA decided I was old enough to be permitted a thimbleful of their pink 'rocket fuel' spirit, formula undisclosed. I still insist it wasn't so much this as lingering jetlag that soon had me yawning openly in the faces of such fans as Geri Sullivan, Bob Devney and Alyson Abramowitz. To bed, to bed.

Friday 29 August. Up far too early again, to confront the stark new experience of hazelnut and vanilla coffee (not bad, actually). My plans to continue a day of new sensations by going up the CN Tower were thwarted because it hadn't yet opened. Around 9am in the convention centre, I found John Clute waving an early copy of his latest mighty critical collection *Scores*, while

George R.R. Martin confided almost with tears in his eyes that Thog must, must, must examine that 'wonderful source', *The Fifth Sorceress* by Robert Newcomb. Later Janice Gelb told me the same, and later still Mike Cule submitted a Thoggism—see *Ansible 196*—with the comment 'I got about six chapters into the piece of excrement before I remembered that no-one was paying me to review it and stopped.' The group mind of fandom!

By and by the CN Tower opened, and after being carefully sniffed by an explosives detector I made the ear-popping ascent. The thing is 553 metres high, over 1,800 feet, but the first lift stops at a modest 346m, where there's a reasonably spacious tourist trap, coffee shop and general bogglement area. The great psychological challenge is to walk across the famous glass floor and glance nonchalantly down at toy-sized bits of Toronto 1,100 feet below, without actually leaping back in terror. That floor is supposedly rated to carry 28 hippopotami, but one finds oneself brooding over the significant weight of one's breakfast and the possibility that this very test (carried out *just how recently?*) might itself have weakened the glass. Oo-er. The rather more cramped SkyPod, 'World's Highest Observation Platform' is still further up, at 447m, and there certainly is a hell of a view. On a clear day you're supposed to be able to see the spray of Niagara Falls; for me, though, it was misty. Still, there was the teensy convention centre, the minute SkyDome stadium (now suddenly green with AstroTurf), the bijou hotels....

Back at the convention, the day passed in much the usual sort of way, with a Live Thog's Masterclass presentation looming in the early evening. It's always nice to discharge one's responsibility before the 'major' convention events, rather than fret until the far end of it all. The latest version of the Thog script was duly covered with traditional scribbles: for example, the omnipresent Torcon logo prompted me to add, from memory, Lionel Fanthorpe's classic evocation of terror in *Rodent Mutation*: 'Police! Help! We're being attacked! We're being attacked by a gigantic beaver!' With an hour to go and time to kill, I phoned Hazel to assure her that all was well, and she broke it to me that her mother had died on Thursday night.

The show had to go on, but it wasn't easy. I may not have been properly appreciative of the splendid dinner to which Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden treated me afterwards. The subsequent Tor party was a bit of a blur, and I was sufficiently on edge to be quite disturbed by David Brin's sudden, menacing remark, '*Check your stories.*' Me, struggling to think of anything horrid I'd put in *Ansible* lately: 'What, all of them?' He: 'Only the ones that *make me weep.*' And he stalked off, but I intercepted

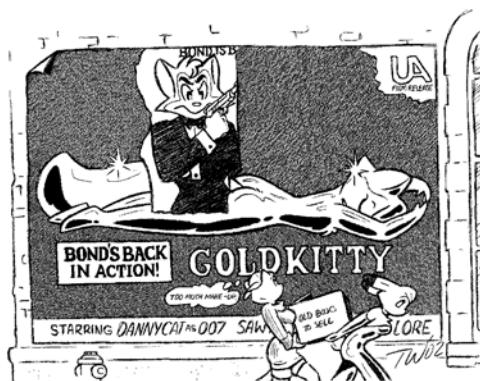
him a little later and begged for clarification. It was, as I should have realized, to do with the incident of Jo Walton throwing Coke over him. As you know, Bob, she apologized, but some others posted anti-Brin responses in her LiveJournal. Hence his statement of position: 'My wife was reduced to *tears* by the *lies* put about by Jo Walton and her lynch mob. And your line in *Ansible didn't help either.*' Pause. 'But you're a great guy.' Exit. I didn't feel at all ready for this kind of thing, and staggered back to my hotel with the wounded air of a messenger riddled by machine-gun fire.

Saturday 30 August. Hugo day. Mostly this was just an ordinary convention day, but I felt so shell-shocked by Friday's grim news that I don't think I actually ate anything. Not a good move. NESFA Press kindly let me sign books at their table for an hour in the afternoon, and I did business running well into single figures. Then the space/time continuum began to rumble with advance tremors of the award ceremony. Although I should be intensely blasé about these things, being actually present generated an irrational, indefinable dread....

The pre-Hugo party evoked memories of queuing at Foyle's book shop in the bad old days. There was a cash bar but you were not permitted to give the barman cash. Instead you queued up at a cashier's desk to buy tiny square tickets which could be exchanged for a soft or non-soft drink, with bona-fide invitees receiving one special voucher exchangeable for either a soft-drink ticket or \$4 off the expensive alcoholic substance of your choice. Oh well. To deter gatecrashers, the reception was to have been represented by a blank space in the day's final revised programme sheet, a space into which some opportunistic hand had slipped a programme item just before going to press—so in theory the reception would be enlivened by a background talk on 'Eros and Near Earth Asteroids'. Hasty retractions were posted. The party food was highly praised, but seemed to be all fishy/seafoody stuff which I queasily couldn't face.

Some remarkable evening dress was on view, none more remarkable than that of Charlie Stross's good lady, in a sort of tutu-and-fishnets effect like an extremely raffish Christmas tree fairy. "Feorag is certainly dressed up to the nines," I mentioned to Paul Barnett, who judiciously replied: "Up to the threes, I'd say."

So to the Hugo ceremony. Agonizing tension mounted as toastmaster Spider Robinson, played his guitar, sang a little ditty called '50 Ways to Lose a Hugo', mocked the USA, banged on about the space race, anything but actually start the presentations. The full results appeared in *Ansible 194* and every other SF forum known to anthropology, so I merely mention a statistic. Despite acquiring ridiculously many of these trophies from 1985 onward, I hadn't actually been to a North American Worldcon since 1980 and so had never personally



collected the award on that continent. But when I modestly remarked that this was a completely new experience, no one seemed to believe me. I forget what else I said, but there was a suggestion in there that voters might consider giving the Fan Writer award to someone else.

Other recipients came better prepared: Gardner Dozois accepted the Best Editor rocket with 'The golden age of science fiction is *right now!*', Neil Gaiman's Novella win for *Coraline* did *not* lead to a repeat of his stunned 2002 speech 'Fuck me, I've won a Hugo!', and Robert Sawyer's litany of thanks when he bagged Best Novel ('Everything good in my life I owe to fandom') included particularly heartfelt gratitude to 'J.K. Rowling for being late delivering her MS...and the judges for deciding *Coraline* is a novella—I've never been so thrilled by a word count statistic in my life.' Even those carpers who chafed at endless Sawyerian self-promotion before Torcon had to admit that—the convention's own publicity having been woefully inept—he'd raised the local profile of this Worldcon no end.

Towards the end of all this, my ego was crushed by the introduction of the George R.R. Martin Hugo Award Metric. As a Torcon guest of honour, George led up to his presentation of the best-novel Hugo by defining this in leering, lip-smacking tones, as The Big One. At times he seemed to be talking about something else altogether. 'All Hugos are created equal and free—but Joe Haldeman has *the big one*. Connie Willis also has a big one. Ursula Le Guin has *two* big ones. Fortunately, Gardner Dozois has twelve little ones. Howard Waldrop has...none at all.' The inexorable logic of this Hugo hierarchy has collapsed my own record into one little one. Plus a long string of *utterly infinitesimal* ones.

At last it was over, even the interminable Hugo photo opportunities, and we made a triumphal procession down Front Street to the Royal York and the Hugo Losers' Party—there to be greeted by unseemly behaviour from Mr Brin, who pelted Geoffrey Landis and myself with potato crisps (or possibly chips) for daring to enter as winners. I coldly reminded him that I was still in tears after losing Best Semiprozine. Actually one couldn't help feeling sympathetic, since DB was a strong contender for Best Novel and by all accounts his *Kiln People* was heaps better than Robert Sawyer's winner *Hominids*. Some day I must read them both. It's a lottery. A bad night for dear old David Brin, then, but a good one for me.

(The cruellest item in the con's traditional spoof newsletter was a Lost and Found column: 'David Brin lost the Best Novel Hugo. Could whoever has it, please return it to him?')

It has to be said, with ill-suppressed drooling, that Torcon's Hugos were among the best-looking ever. The trophy design frames the traditional rocket—gold-plated for the 50th anniversary of the first presentation—between two halves of a stylized maple leaf in beautifully polished golden wood, 'designed to represent a blast of flames'. Many of us were instead reminded of moose

antlers, with the rocket rising between them like a horn. A moosicorn.

Everybody wanted me to phone Martin Hoare with the news at 4am British time, and indeed Terry Pratchett kept offering his mobile for the purpose, but pity stayed my hand. Besides, it is a closely guarded secret that Martin doesn't *really* get me out of bed in the small hours after accepting a Hugo: he just pretends he will. Except the year when against all expectations I won Best Short Story and he got carried away. (Hazel: 'Martin, you pig.')

Sunday 31 August. You don't want to know all the little details of convention and touristy routine. I bumped into Kim Stanley Robinson and mumbled the usual Hugo commiserations. 'After *Years of Rice and Salt*,' he confided, 'I'm going to write short books, perhaps comedies.' Next, Peter F. Hamilton moves in a big way into villanelles. Stan R. also confided total inability to understand M. John Harrison's *Light*.... When the day's programme sheet appeared, it was revealed that the two items I really had to attend, the *SF Encyclopedia* panel (in my capacity as possible co-editor of the third edition) and the Sidewise Awards presentation (in my cunning Chris Priest disguise) were in successive slots covering the entire period of the fan funds auction. Oh, guilt.

The *SFE* panel was actually called 'John Clute's Encyclopedia of SF is 10 years old'—a title which John had struggled in vain to have changed, knowing all too well the geysers of wrath that can erupt from Melbourne when Peter Nicholls suspects he's being marginalized. Indeed John remained so fretful about this, and spent so much time inserting equal credit for Peter Nicholls on every possible occasion, that he nervily forgot to make several intended points. Or so he said, but it seemed fine to me, and I thought it unnecessary for *Ansible* to run his suggested public apology for not mentioning me enough. As for the Sidewise Award, Chris Priest was robbed, but what can you expect from an alternate-history jury on this side of the Atlantic when you write a tricky, subversive novel whose 'other' World War II ends before it gets interesting to Americans? The usual round of parties filled the evening: the Kansas City 2006 bidders seemed cheery enough despite having lost to LA, and in police fashion had marked the outline of the bid's corpse in tape on the floor. By now I had learned to stay up much, much later....

Monday 1 September. And at last I was sleeping better, snoozing happily until 10:48 and the realization that I was supposed to be doing an interview for radio, conducted by one Rick Kleffel, in the Royal York Hotel some distance away...at 11am. A frantically sprinting figure might have been seen dashing down Front Street, plying a cordless shaver with simulated nonchalance. I was late, but apparently it didn't matter. Emerging after what seemed an adequate interview, I met Rich Lynch of *Mimosa* coeditorial fame, who as his hair recedes looks more and more like James White, especially from the side. What, asked the acute *Ansible* newshound, would he

and Nicki do after folding *Mimosa*? 'We're waiting for the economy to recover.' More random wandering, a little unscheduled autographing, and Torcon began to shut down. The book room closed outright; the exhibits area dwindled steadily.

Much bizarreness broke out at the closing ceremony, with Torcon chair Peter Jarvis gassed at his very lectern and superseded by Noreascon 4's Deb Geisler in a little *Prisoner* spoof: 'You are number 61...I am the new number 62.' He: 'I am not a number...I am a free fan!' Then, of course, peals of mocking laughter. Sixty-two, once the magic gavel had been passed to Noreascon, also seemed to be the approximate number of their committee members who proceeded to fill the stage.

To climax this final event, George R.R.Martin's ill-concealed, Viagrasque longings were gratified at last. In the form of a glittering, inflatable Hugo rocket—liberated from the Noreascon party and fully seven feet long—George received The Even Bigger One.

All that remained was the Dead Dog Party, or Dead Beaver Party, over which we draw a merciful and sanitized veil. Looking back over the whole event, I reflected that, as is more and more usual, I'd enjoyed meeting people in small groups but didn't hear much at the very few programme items (especially the panels) that I attended. No blame attaches to others. Although I blame myself for being slow on the uptake when invited to what I belatedly realized—partly through slow reprocessing of words not entirely heard, and partly from preparatory rituals in the relevant hotel room—was a pot party. Being nervous of unusual chemical combinations so far from home, I extricated myself with some highly unconvincing excuse. (Appointment with dentist? Urgent need to wash my hair? Memory fails.) Apologies and thanks to the kindly party-giver....

Unsolved Mysteries of Toronto. Why, one day in the excessively posh mezzanine men's room of the Royal York, was there a small, neatly knotted plastic bag of (what certainly looked like) urine hanging inside the door?

Tuesday 2 September. Finally, curiosity overcame me and I looked behind the wall notice oddly placed at floor level by the Renaissance Hotel lifts: 'Please excuse our appearance as we conduct our maintenance repairs'—the defensive apology of some unprepossessing crew of Morlock repairmen? As I'd rather suspected, it was covering a hole in the wall.

This was the 'extra' day I'd set aside to do touristy things with brother Jon, who'd planned to fly up from Chicago. But life had become complicated for him, as usual, with desperate house-hunting in order to move away from unspecified 'bad vibes' in his Chicago neighbourhood, the search interrupted by a sudden need to make an appearance in Nova Scotia, all this conveyed in terms of such chaos and confusion that it seemed he was moving to Nova Scotia. Anyway, he didn't make it to Toronto. Instead, prior to lunch with some of the NESFA people (more of my esteemed publishers), I walked down to Lake Ontario and peered into the enviably clear water

just for the sake of having been there. Next came a peep behind the scenes of final closedown at the convention centre, where I marvelled as usual at the transformation of the bright dealer and exhibits areas to a single vast expanse of semi-gloom: exactly one ninth of the total lighting was active in these End Times.

My general instinct for second-hand bookshops took me on a long, long walk up Yonge Street, Toronto's main shopping road, which—in contrast to the posh parts of town that I'd come to know—grew steadily sleazier to the north. I resisted buying a t-shirt that modestly asserted:

I SURVIVED TORONTO

- SARS
- MAD COW DISEASE
- WEST NILE FEVER
- SARS AGAIN
- BLACKOUT 2003

Grubby little bookshops, often with porn sections at the back, started to appear as the street numbers passed 500. In number 584, Eliot's, I came across an old fan acquaintance, Taral Wayne, who contributed nifty artwork to my early fanzine *Twll-Ddu* and the first series of *Ansible*. He led me to Toronto's sf speciality shop Bakka, not a very taxing native-guide task since it was just a little further on at no. 598. There I committed typical acts of auctorial vandalism like signing their copy of *The Space Eater*, and tottered back south, sore-footed but happy, in search of dinner. One small item remained on the wants list, I remembered: a roll of packing tape. Around the next corner, just as though I were back in Reading, I found the local branch of Staples.

Wednesday 3 September. Time at last to face the challenge that had supposedly got a whole lot worse since 11 September 2001. How to take a massive, solid metal, very obviously rocket-shaped object through airport security? The kindly Torcon committee had offered free Hugo shipping containers—that is, the boxes they arrived in—but I didn't see this newsletter item until several hours after the relevant convention office had closed forever, with all surplus cardboard presumably junked. Instead I opted for the ecologically friendly 'wrapped in a couple of spare shirts in a paper carrier bag' option, and headed for the shuttle bus. Conveniently, my waiting time outside the Crown Plaza Hotel was occupied in chat with a passing fan who mentioned liking Thog but whose name, in this post-badge era, I failed to discover. 'At least I'm not the only fan left standing,' she said, as I tactfully left her standing and climbed into the airport coach. Toronto receded.

In due course, 28 kilometres later, the young woman at the X-ray scanner displayed a range of fascinating symptoms. Her jaw dropped, her eyebrows vanished into her hairline, she made strange inarticulate noises. I detected my cue and began: 'I think I know what you're looking at....'

And so, after a certain amount of very careful explanation, my 23rd Hugo came safely home to Britain. I really must try to give them up. Thank you, Torcon. Thank you, Canada. And thank you, fandom.

Thus We Refute Heinlein

Rich Lynch

There really *is* such a thing as a free lunch, no matter what Robert A. Heinlein believed.

Some of your readers may recognize me as the co-editor of a now defunct fanzine, but when I'm not doing fan stuff like that I work for an Agency of the U.S. Government in Washington, D.C. In a small office. In an ugly building. And without ever getting out very much to take advantage of or, sometimes, even know what goes on in the city around me. (I wasn't aware that Washington was under attack on nine-eleven until a news alert preempted the music on the classical music station I listen to.)

Anyway, at the beginning of 2003 I made an unofficial resolution all that was going to change, and that I was going to get out of my office more, if nothing else to at least take part in seminars and the like that various think tanks around the city often sponsor. One of these organizations is the Libertarian-leaning Cato Institute, whose mid-day book forums include a free buffet lunch.

To Globalize or not to Globalize, that is the question...

I'm not sure how I found out about these – my politics are anything but Libertarian, so it was probably from my contractor, who knows from experience how to locate free food events. The first one I attended was actually a debate between two university professors (who also had other affiliations and interests, to be sure – both had written books that were for sale and made sure we knew it) about the pros and cons of Globalization. Now, I happen to believe that Globalization is mostly a good thing, or at least is something that has far more pluses than minuses. I managed to get called on for the very first question and directed it at the mostly-anti-Globalization speaker:

"If companies like Coca-Cola and McDonald's can be accused at bringing cultural homogenization [as he had contended] to the non-western world, how come the anti-Globalists are not railing against an even greater such cultural homogenization force – the Internet? The only entities that seem to do that are countries like China, which have their own agendas to protect. Could it not be said, therefore, that many if not most people and organizations who claim to be anti-Globalization are so because they also have their own separate agendas to advance?"

But what I got back wasn't an answer, just a diatribe against the Internet itself, and how it's increased the likelihood of school kids being exposed to pornography, etc. etc. In short, I got sloughed off.

Afterwards, at the deli buffet luncheon, I was hoping to do a little schmoozing and make a few more contacts, but people seemed to be more interested in chowing down. I'm guessing that if lunch wasn't part of the program, the turnout might have been much smaller, perhaps embarrassingly so. I have to admit, the chocolate chip cookies *were* world-class!

Lunch with Buzz

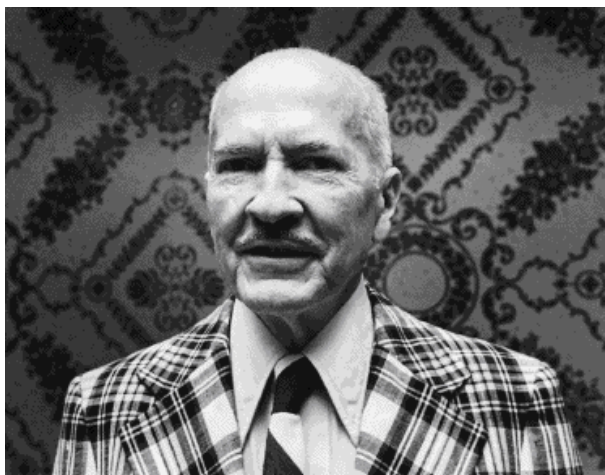
I counted that outing as a qualified success because the event was of interest, the food was good, and I even got a chance to vent some job-induced hostility by asking a politely snarky question to one of the speakers. The next time I went to a Cato luncheon book forum, I got another chance, and even 15 ~~minutes~~ seconds of fame as I was on

national TV, coast-to-coast, for about that long. The topic of the forum was *Space: The Free-Market Frontier*, and featured Buzz Aldrin as one of the panelists along with three policy-types, one of them from NASA. C-Span was there, no doubt because of the presence of Aldrin, and they were televising the event on one of their channels.

Everybody but the NASA guy spoke of how much better things would be, in terms of access to space, if only NASA and the rest of the U.S. Government hadn't strangled private enterprise's budding interest. Aldrin used his time to promote some of his ideas for easier and cheaper access to orbit (his part of the program almost seemed like he was presenting a proposal, and in a way, I guess he was, to the public). At the end, they had time for a few questions, and mine was the last one they took before the program ended.

I'd gotten there early and had a seat in the front row, so when I stood up to ask my question, there the TV camera was, pointing at me from about five feet away and bringing me to thousands of viewers across the country. (Oh, the power of the moment!) I actually asked an intelligent question, concerning the need for better justification for manned spaceflight than what's been tossed out at us for the past 40 years. One of the other speakers had thrown out a few ideas that he claimed would bring commercial benefits, and one of the tired old chestnuts he'd brought out again was that: "Space could help guarantee cheap and unlimited sources of clean energy."

However, the sad truth of the situation is: In a pig's eye it can! At least, in any foreseeable future. I tried to point this out with my question:



“The most recent study I’ve read, from several years ago, concluded that a solar power satellite for beaming power down to earth would cost about \$1 million per installed kilowatt, in terms of capital costs. This is a full three orders of magnitude greater than conventional earth-based power plants. You’ve already mentioned that, for solar energy collectors to be commercial viable, launch costs would have to drop by as much as two orders of magnitude, from about \$10,000 per pound to \$100 per pound. In my mind, that’s not nearly enough; to get the SPS costs economically competitive, the cost-to-orbit would also somehow have to come down that third order of magnitude, to \$10 per pound. But you can’t even get Federal Express to deliver for \$10 per pound, so how can you expect the SPS concept to ever become commercially interesting?”

I didn’t get a straight answer, but I guess I didn’t really expect one. The speaker remarked there could be some newer ideas for power generation that weren’t so capital intensive, and the program ended before I could try to wedge in a follow-up. At the luncheon afterwards, I got to talk to Aldrin for a couple of minutes (he was kept mostly busy signing books and being photographed), and asked him what the cost-to-orbit for his space booster concept was. Turns out the numbers have never been run – he replied that what his company was proposing was to progressively improve the launch hardware that’s being used now; the implication was that the economics would take care of itself.

All in all, the event was interesting but more than a bit unfulfilling. I really didn’t learn very much, but just being in such a media-sponsored forum where I could actually talk to Buzz Aldrin was a neat thing. Back in the summer of 1969, I never would have believed I’d have such an opportunity. For me, I guess the day’s event came out mostly like what Marshall McLuhan had claimed; it really wasn’t the information that was important, it was the medium that was the message.

How best to exit Iraq, and other obfuscations

Most of the Cato events are held at their own rather nice building on Massachusetts Avenue (I work in what must be the ugliest building in Washington, but don’t get me started on that!). Being a think tank, though, they often try to influence Congress, and what better place to do that but up on Capitol Hill. At the beginning of May, while the Iraq War was still in progress, they held one titled “After Victory: A Strategy for Exiting the Persian Gulf,” in the House Rayburn Office Building, more than a little for the benefit of Congresspeople and their staffers. The two speakers (both from Cato) made the point that it was not in anybody’s best interests for the U.S. military to have any significant presence in the Middle East now that the Iraq adventure (at that time) seemed to be about to wind down.

They actually made a few good points – it costs somewhere around \$50 billion a year for what is essentially a mission to safeguard Saudi and Kuwaiti oil.

This, despite the fact that only about 15% of U.S. oil supplies come from the Middle East. A large military presence over there might in fact even be detrimental; the former U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia has gone on the record as saying the probability of further terrorism is “an inescapable consequence of the role we have assigned to ourselves as the principle guarantor of security and stability in the region.”

Much of the event sounded like a broken record; neither of the speakers had anything bad to say about the war itself – indeed, it was actually praised as a means of ridding the world of a tyrannical regime, though they conceded that what eventually will follow in its place might not be something that we would be happy with. When they were done, I got to ask the first question (and with it, got another 15 seconds on national TV, though I think this time it was a delayed broadcast) – neither of the speakers, in their presentations, had ever mentioned the original and supposedly primary reason for bringing in the combined might of the American and British military to kick Saddam’s ass. And so I asked:



“I noticed that neither of the speakers mentioned, even once, the four words that were supposedly the justification for this war: weapons of mass destruction. None were used against U.S. or British forces during the war, and none have been found yet. It’s not altogether beyond the realm of possibility that none will ever be found. On the other

hand, I do concede that one less maniacal tyrant in the world is a good thing, so do you think it’s possible that the war with Iraq could have been, in the long run, the right thing to do, but for all the wrong reasons?”

I was hoping at least one of the speakers would be willing to take this point on, but it was not to be – if anything, they climbed even higher on the soapbox with both of them agreeing that, OK, we should get out of the region as soon as possible, but not until we’ve uncovered the stash of WMD that we *know* exists somewhere. (I think they were expecting a question like that.)

Weird Science

The Cato Institute isn’t the only think tank in Washington that’s giving out free lunches. There’s another one, the George C. Marshall Institute, whose stated mission (according to their web site) is to “encourage the use of sound science in making public policy about important issues for which science and technology are major considerations.” That sounded a

wee bit pretentious to me, so I started attending some of their luncheon seminars, in hopes that they also would provide me some chances to do a little rabble-rousing. My first opportunity came at an event titled “Lessons and Limits of Climate History: Was the 20th Century Climate Unusual?” which was held up on Capitol Hill, in the Dirksen Senate Office Building so as to, again, attract the attention of lawmakers and their staffers (which it did). The presenter, a physicist from the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, had co-written a paper that took dead aim at the often-heard claim that the 20th century was the warmest of the past millennium; his presentation (which largely consisted of eye-glazingly numerous time-series graphs of temperatures at various places on earth) tried to support the claim that there was, in fact, nothing very unusual about the temperature record of the fossil-fuel era of mankind relative to previous centuries. The implication of this, of course, is that global warming is actually just a bunch of hooley, and that it might well be that we could dump as much carbon dioxide as we wanted into the atmosphere without any significant deleterious effects.

Personally, I doubt this is true. One only has to look sunward about 30 million miles to see what an albeit ultra-extreme greenhouse effect has accomplished. So, when he was finished, I got to ask the first question:

“It seems to me that it’s mostly irrelevant what earth’s past temperature trends were, or whether or not they can be correlated with fossil fuel use. There can be no doubt that global warming would happen at some point – the planet Venus is an ultra-extreme example of that. The question ought to be, then, how much of an increase of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases can the earth’s atmosphere tolerate before significant macroscopic climate effects begin to occur?”

I guess I didn’t word it innocently enough, because both the event’s moderator and the speaker treated it as a hostile question – and I didn’t even get very much of a response because they felt I’d asked a question outside the scope of the presentation. So my question was, in effect, declared out of order.

Most of the people attending the event had their own agendas, of course – many were congressional staffers (the lady I sat next to was a lawyer on the staff of the conservative Republican senator Ted Stevens of Alaska) and most of the rest were lobbyists of various flavors. (There was an energy bill working its way through Congress at the time, and every so often a few Global Warming-related amendments were coming up for vote.) There were also some liberal organizations present, including Greenpeace, who distributed an “informational” flyer that took dead aim of its own, at both the speaker and the Marshall Institute. Here’s a sampling:

“[Speaker’s name] has spent most of the last decade trying to disprove the occurrence of global warming. He has written countless articles on how an increase in carbon dioxide has no harmful effects on global climate.

“...A closer look at the George C. Marshall Institute’s funding sources reveals a clear obstacle in the way of [its] pursuit of partial and ‘independent’ science. The Institute has taken \$140,000 in the past 2 years for the climate science work from ExxonMobil alone. ExxonMobil actively donates to organizations like the George Marshall Institute to actively sabotage actions on...the very real problem of global warming. When reports from [the Speaker] are presented under the auspices of groups like the Marshall Institute, it is not science with integrity. Rather, it is Exxon’s junk science presented as unbiased science.”

In the end, I doubt anybody who was there had their minds changed about anything. As for me, I’d like to think that I have an open mind – there *actually* is quite a bit that isn’t known, or at least, isn’t known well enough, to make all the climate models track accurately. It might well be that the global climate is much more forgiving than we have any right to expect. (Or, it might be that The End is just around the corner.)

There is no direction in space

There’s been only one other Marshall Institute luncheon event I’ve so far been to, and that one was much less controversial and much more entertaining than that Global Warming dog and pony show. This one featured a speech by noted space historian James Oberg titled “Toward a Theory of Space Power” which had been billed as an overview on possible ways of evaluating competing options for national space policy.

Oberg didn’t really keep very close to the topic, which made it a rambling but much more entertaining event – we learned, for instance, that U.S. military intelligence people once monitored reports of UFO sightings in Soviet newspapers as indication of Soviet rocket launches and satellite recovery operations, and that the Russian cosmonauts on the International Space Station have a malevolent-looking hand gun up there in the Soyuz return capsule as part of their survival kit. (Read into that what you will.)

Several years ago, Oberg had been commissioned by the U.S. Space Command to compile concepts of ‘space power’ (the military analogy of ‘air power’), but what he found was that it was a nebulous concept at best – in space, analogies tend to break down rather than be reinforced. For example, space is actually anything but ‘high ground’ in a military sense – anything up there is totally defenseless to attack and moves in a highly predictable path. His conclusion was that there was at



present no way to really determine what the proper direction for space policy should be, and: "Without...a quantitative measure of 'goodness' of policy, contesting options are championed and chosen based on ego, instinct, aesthetics, sex appeal, short-term political gain, misperceived historical analogies, protection of past investments, external requirements, whim and whimsy – and even by default or randomly. From time to time the choices turn out to be correct, but we need to improve the odds."

All that pretty much supported what I'd thought all along about the rampant benign cluelessness on what could and should be accomplished with all the money that's being spent for space-related activities. When we finally got to the Q&A session following his talk, I asked an only marginally snarky question to confirm that I was reading him correctly.

Me: *"You are well-known as a futurist, so could you get out your crystal ball and perhaps make a prediction of what we can expect in the next ten years?"*

His answer: "No."

After the Q&A ended, he came over to me to apologize for his curt answer, but I smiled and told him that actually, his answer spoke volumes. Back in the 1960s there would have been no doubt what the answer to that question would have been. The original Space Race, he replied, was a product of fear. He said that if the Chinese put men in space soon, as seemed likely then and which eventually did happen, it would not produce the same result (he thought it would mostly be ignored, which it largely has been).

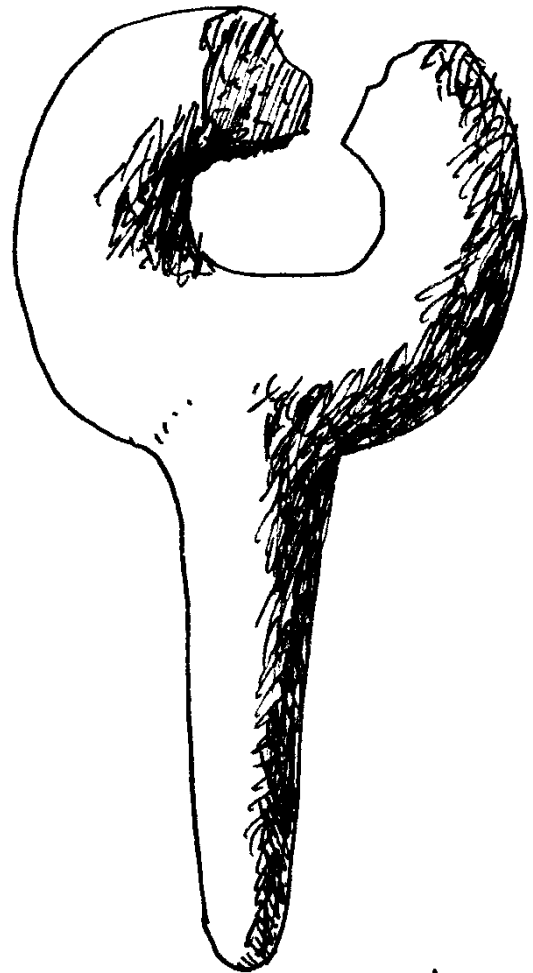
Oberg is a thought-provoking speaker, and I didn't make it through the event without some of my own conceptions about space being at least partly turned into misconceptions. I'd always thought, for instance, that one of the major goals of rocketry research was to find ways of reducing the cost of getting things into earth orbit. But, he said, in today's world that might not be altogether that great an idea – there might actually be some incentive to keep launch costs, er, sky-high to prevent things from getting put in earth orbit that you'd really not want to be there. Just launching a load of sand into the proper trajectory, for instance, could take out orbiting satellites or even an orbiting space station. He also mentioned that the Law of Unintended Consequences came into play many times in the history of the Space Age – one of these was when the U.S. Space Shuttle was developed. The Soviets had to have one too, to maintain international prestige, so they spent about \$10 billion that they couldn't afford in developing one, which bankrupted their space program. The Buran shuttle turned out to be useless to them, it flew only once, and it was eventually destroyed when the roof of the hangar where it was stored fell in on it.

As for the luncheon itself...superb! It was a sit-down affair, and I had a salmon fillet open faced sandwich with several side salads and a nice fruit tart for dessert. And it was all free! Heinlein, I think, would have been appalled.

My new aspiration

At any rate, after a while I found that I was becoming a recognizable face at these events. I attended a Cato luncheon forum on "The Company: A Short History of a Revolutionary Idea" (which was pretty interesting – the so-called 'limited liability company' was, and still is, one of the most important tools for creating modern Western society). At the buffet luncheon following the forum, a woman walked over to me and complimented me on my question at the previous week's "Space: The Free Market Frontier" forum. I told her that I hadn't asked a question at the current forum because I couldn't think of one that was pointed enough. And at that she laughed and told me that in some of the past Cato forums there had been questions so finely honed that the persons asking them had been requested to leave!

Gosh, a new goal that I can aspire to?



ARTIFACT - ROBERT'S

Kennedy Space Center, Astronaut Hall of Fame

Steven H Silver

The girls had cereal and some fruit at Pat's house while I got dressed and we set out to drive to Kennedy Space Center. Because we had already noted the high cost of the tollroads, on the way out, we stopped at a Walgreen's at the corner of Lockwood and Chuluota Roads. Actually, the reason for choosing the Walgreen's was that Elaine felt the need for an emery board. While in the store, she asked for her change in quarters, but the clerk didn't want to do that, so she sold Elaine a roll of quarters instead. Over the course of the week, we went through the entire roll on tolls alone, abetted by several singles.

The drive out to Kennedy Space Center is an easy drive, and not too long. We took the 217 to the Bee Line and then out to the 407, which has been named the Challenger Memorial Parkway. That basically took us out to 405 which leads to Merritt Island.

In 1949, Harry Truman established the Joint Long Range Proving Grounds at Cape Canaveral to take advantage of the proximity to the ocean for a target and the southern latitude, which provided a boost from the Earth's rotation. In 1951, the U.S. Air Force added the Air Force Missile Test Center to the Banana River Naval Air Station. Because of its history as a missile test site, in 1957 after Sputnik was launched, Cape Canaveral was selected to launch the United States' first satellites. When NASA was founded the following year, the Air Force Missile Test Center was transformed into a major launch site.

When John F. Kennedy announced the lunar program in 1962, NASA expanded north from Cape Canaveral to Merritt Island, taking title to 33,952 hectares by purchase and negotiating with Florida for an addition 22,600 hectares. Following Kennedy's assassination, the Launch Operations Center was renamed the Kennedy Space

Center and Cape Canaveral was renamed Cape Kennedy. The latter name change was unpopular with the local population, and in 1973, the name was reversed.

Beginning with Alan Shepard's 15-minute suborbital flight on May 5, 1961, all United States manned missions have been launched from the Kennedy Space Center. In response to Kennedy's call for a moon launch, the Vehicle Assembly Building was begun in 1962 as part of Launch Complex 39. The VAB was completed in June 1965 and the launch pads four months later. From 1967 through 1973, there were thirteen Saturn V launches from the complex. In the 1980s, the complex began to be used for space shuttle launches.

It has always struck me a little odd that Merritt Island, on which Cape Canaveral and the Kennedy Space Center are located, is, in addition to the high tech space port, the home to a 140,000 acre wildlife refuge. The refuge was



established by NASA in 1963. The preserve came about because of a local bird watcher, Allan Cruickshank, who realized that if NASA did not work in conjunction with nature, his favorite watching area would be destroyed. Within a year, NASA and the National Fish and Wildlife Service had developed Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. Although originally confined to 2500 acres, over the years, the agreement has expanded to include all lands not in operational use by the spaceport.

Merritt Island is a 25-mile long barrier island. According to archaeological research, the island has seen at least seven different periods of Indian culture, beginning around 7,000 BCE. Burial mounds still exist on the island.

One of the reasons Merritt Island was relatively undeveloped when Truman established the Missile Test base was because of the large number of mosquitoes who lived on the marshy island. However the Spanish explorers used the island for cattle ranching, and citrus growing. This continued well into the period that Florida had become a state, although most of the towns established on the island were abandoned. Following the Civil War, a railroad was established to the island, which

resulted in permanent citrus growing towns. By the turn of the century, logging and cattle ranching had returned to the area.

Currently Doctors Kenneth Lipartito and Orville Butler are working on a new history of the Kennedy Space Center under a grant from the center. This will be the first official history of the space center since 1976 when *Moonport: A History of Apollo Launch Facilities and Operations* was published by George Alexander. The earlier work covered the space center from its inception through the Apollo mission. Originally granted a two-year contract to run from May 2002 through May 2004, the contract has been extended in the wake of the Columbia disaster. No current date of publication for the resulting work has been set.

On the road that connected the Challenger Memorial Parkway to Kennedy Space Center, we passed the Astronaut Hall of Fame, the Police Hall of Fame (they share a parking lot), and the War Bird Museum. You get to Merritt Island over a long bridge which provides a great view of the Vehicle Assembly Building to the North. At least, it does if you are sitting in the front seat or on the driver's side of the back seat and can see out the window. Unfortunately, Melanie was sitting too low to see out the window and Robin was on the passenger side of the car.

As we drove in, we got to see some wildlife, mostly birds, but also some jumping fish. Again, Elaine and I saw them. Melanie was too low and getting frustrated by our instructions to look out the window, and Robin usually wasn't looking until it was too late.

The first thing you see as you approach the Kennedy Space Center is a Space Shuttle booster mounted at an angle. As you get a little closer, a large black memorial wall comes into view as does the rocket garden. We parked the car and walked over to the admissions area. Elaine had tried to get AAA discount admissions at the office in Skokie before we left Chicago, but they told her they didn't have any and implied that we could get them on site. When I asked about them, the woman behind the counter said I had been misinformed. Nevertheless, she radioed to check to make sure that the procedure hadn't been changed and then wound up giving us what discount she could.

Kennedy Space Center has a graduated admission rate. The basic rate is \$29 for adults and \$19 for kids (3-11). For \$35/\$25 you can get a "Maximum Access Pass" which includes admission to the Astronaut Hall of Fame. In addition, for \$22 additional you can sign up for either the "NASA Up Close" tour or the "Cape Canaveral Then and Now" tour. Although I would have liked to have taken one of those, I didn't think it would be suitable for the girls so we just got the Maximum Access Passes.

Our ticket vendor suggested that we see the IMAX shows first if we were going to because they tended to fill up later in the day. We decided to take her advice, which turned out to work against us. In any event, upon entering the facility, which architecturally is reminiscent of the Johnson Space Center, we went to the IMAX theater

where we learned we had just missed the start of "Space Station 3-D" (2002) by ten minutes. We decided to look around and return for the next showing of "The Dream Is Alive" instead.

Behind the IMAX theater is the black-walled memorial to fallen astronauts. It was erected in 1991 using funds raised from the sale of Challenger license plates. Signs around the memorial note that a new Challenger/Columbia plate is scheduled to be unveiled in the near future. In addition to the Apollo 1, Challenger, and Columbia Astronauts, the names on the memorial include Elliott See, Charles Bassett, Theodore Freeman, Clifton Williams, Robert Lawrence, Jr., Manley Carter, and Michael Adams. Before approaching the memorial, I took off my hat to show my respect. Despite being right next to the road that leads to Kennedy Space Center, the memorial is quite peaceful and moving and I was crying the entire time I was there. I was also disturbed by the lack of respect shown by others. There was one woman walking around the memorial area wearing shorts and a bikini top with a shirt wrapped around her waist. I later saw her in the mock-up shuttle Explorer and she had put the shirt on. It seems to me that it would have been appropriate to put her shirt on at the memorial.

We walked over to where the life-size shuttle mock-up was on display and next to the stairs to it there are some cement steps. Melanie took one look at them and decided it would be fun to run up and down them. She looked so happy doing it that Robin joined her and Elaine pulled out the video camera. Unfortunately, the video camera was acting strangely, only taping for a few seconds or when Elaine actually held down on the tape button. She wondered if it might be related to the new battery I bought a week ago in preparation for the trip and we put the camera back into the back, planning to look at it later.

NASA has a full scale replica of a generic space shuttle, which they call the "Explorer." There is a tower of steps (and an elevator) next to it and you can enter it at two levels, the lower, crew quarters, level, or the upper, flight deck, level. As we explored it, I pointed out how the cargo bay was used to Robin as well as asking her how people would get between the two levels. That led to an explanation of the development of Velcro and zero-G and I also demonstrated how people slept in zero-G, with their arms floating above them. We returned to the ground and took a look at the shuttle booster, which, as noted, is one of the first things you see as you approach the center. Noting the time, we headed over to the IMAX theater again.

The show we saw was "The Dream Is Alive," (1985) which I've seen before, but was probably better for Melanie than "Space Station 3-D." In any event, it gave Robin a chance to see what I was talking about regarding shuttle sleeping arrangements and eating in Zero-G. It also had the benefit of showing Charlie Walker, who was the astronaut on site today and who we would have a chance to meet later.

Outside the IMAX theatre is a two story art gallery with various paintings of shuttle launches (I don't recall

seeing any Apollo-era paintings). They range from the abstract to photorealistic and some of them are downright beautiful. I didn't recognize any of the artists' names, which was a little surprising since I would have expected some of them to be by artists who also do sf paintings. There also were no works by Alan Bean.

Elaine and I wanted to see the rocket garden, but Robin and Melanie were more interested in the play dome. This included a McDonaldland style habitrail and a space shuttle the kids could play on. Rather than argue with them, Elaine stayed with the girls and let me make a circuit of the rocket garden and we then changed places. We did get the girls to climb into the Gemini capsule for a picture.

The Rocket Garden has a number of spacecraft, including a Mercury-Atlas, a Mercury-Redstone, a Saturn 1-B (which lifted an Apollo capsule to orbit), a Gemini, an Agena, and others. In addition to the rockets, there is a model of the gantry which astronauts would walk out to the Apollo and lifesize models of the Apollo, Gemini, and Mercury capsules that people could climb into. I was way too large for the Mercury capsule and had to hole my head at an awkward angle to fit into it.

We spent the time at the rocket garden and the play area while waiting for the next "Mad Mission to Mars" to Mars show, which is a Mad Science kind of show. Although I wasn't impressed with it, it was aimed at children and Robin loved it. Both Robin and I wound up participating in the show. Upon entering the theater, we were provided with 3-D glasses and told that we would be informed when we should put them on. It was a live show with two actors, Kelvin, a rather annoying actress (I'm sure it was part of the character), and Professor Pruvitt. In addition, they interacted with an animated robot, WD-4D. Whenever the robot appeared on the screen behind them, we were told to put on the 3-D glasses.

The show opened with a poll taken of the audience. We would be asked questions about space policy and there were pads in front of us to press. These polls were repeated throughout the space center, and in theory would be used to try to influence space policy, but, of course, anyone who was visiting Kennedy Space Center was self-selected as someone with an interest in space exploration. In the middle of the poll, an alarm sounded and the actors announced there was an alien in the audience. Kelvin wandered through the audience with a wand which pointed to me. As the audience was informed I was an alien, I was escorted out the nearest door and told to wait outside for a few moments. Apparently, I was out for the duration of a single question and brought back in. I only learned this later when I took the same survey on a stand-alone kiosk at the end of the "Exploration New Millennium" display.

The show began with demonstrations of different scientific principles and a variety of audience participation. When explaining that there would be a mission to Mars, they called up several audience members to hold models of the planets in the solar system. Robin was selected to hold a planet and she was handed Mars.

Since Mars was the focus of the show, she figured that was pretty special.

After the show, we wandered over to the Orbit cafeteria for lunch. Elaine and I decided to split a turkey sandwich and the girls each got hotdogs. AS we had walked around in the morning, we saw someone carrying a drink bottle shaped like a space shuttle. Robin saw some bottles shaped like astronauts and asked if we could get one. Elaine and I discussed it and decided we would. It was a little expensive for a plastic bottle, but it came with free refills, so I figured I would just make sure to get a couple of them. Of course, it turns out that Kennedy Space Center carries Pepsi products. When I commented about that to a concessions clerk while getting a refill later, she informed me that on June 1, they were switching over to Coke.

After lunch, we headed over to get in line for the bus tour of the launch facilities and the Vehicle Assembly Building. We got to the depot at 2:30 and discovered that the last tour had left at 2:15. I wish that had been more prominently posted or we hadn't followed the advice of the ticket seller who told us to see the IMAX film first. I was upset, but decided not to let it affect my enjoyment of the day. In fact, I think Elaine was more upset about missing the tour than I was, although I've been on the tour before and remember it.

Walking away from the bus depot, there was a man in a moonwalker suit, so we stopped to get a picture with him. Melanie showed definite signs that she isn't comfortable with people in costumes, even though she knows that is all they are. With luck, she'll overcome her fear quickly once we get to the Disney parks.

We walked through the Space Shop, which advertises itself as the largest space memorabilia shop in the world. It is quite large, taking up two floors. It has a wide variety of toys, shirts, jackets, hats, and so forth on the first floor. The second floor is mostly books and videos, with some more expensive things, ranging from autographed photos to pieces of meteorite. Elaine and I decided to buy a magnet and bought a book about Ilon Ramon for Robin and Melanie. As we were checking out, I noticed that they sold Kennedy Space Center emery boards, so we didn't really need to have stopped at the Walgreen's on the way out from Pat's.

Elaine and I got separate, she had the girls, and I finally managed to find her sitting out listening to Charlie Walker, a shuttle astronaut. Walker flew on three shuttle missions, 41-D, 51-D, and 61-B. Prior to that, he trained shuttle crews on the CFES (continuous flow electrophoresis) payload for STS-4, STS-6, STS-7, and STS-8, a device for which he co-holds the patent. We had joined the talk near the end, and got into line with the girls to have our picture taken with Walker. I commented to Robin that he was the second astronaut she had met, noting that she had previously met Gene Cernan. Walker commented that Cernan liked to call himself the most recent man to set foot on the moon and also said that Cernan was a "real" astronaut, who had gone faster and further than he had. I pointed out that while Cernan may

have gone faster, with twenty days in orbit, Walker surely had accrued more mileage.

With the tour unavailable, Elaine and I decided we would head over to the Astronaut Hall of Fame. Before we went, however, we wanted to make sure we had done everything we could at Kennedy Space Center. I wanted to go through the "Exploration New Millennium" exhibit, which billed the chance to touch a rock from Mars. We went over what there was to do with the girls and Robin asked to go through the "Robot Scouts" exhibit.

"Robot Scouts" is an exhibit aimed at younger visitors which teaches about the evolution of robotic probes. It may well be an interesting exhibit, but not the way we went through it. We weren't really feeling rushed, but we were looking for something which we could do in a high-level pass through method. "Robot Scouts" is more structured than that, although the way it is designed doesn't make you feel that way. It is the sort of exhibit that Disney would should while you went through in a small car so they could control the speed. As it was, the exhibit completely failed to grab any of our attention and we hurried through it, only realizing how it was designed about half way through, by which time we had no desire to backtrack to do it properly.

Once we left "Robot Scouts," we walked over to "Exploration New Millennium," which Robin had no desire to see. Fortunately, as we entered, we saw a podium that allowed kids to stamp a passport. Robin and Melanie each grabbed a NASA passport and set to work running through the museum trying to find all six of the podiums to stamp their passports. I took a little longer, but still less time than I would have liked. It is an exhibit on Mars and on the future of NASA. Near the end of the exhibit is a small piece of meteorite which is believed to have been ejected from one of the Martian volcanoes and landed on Earth. The exhibit is designed to let people touch the thin piece of rock. Nearby is a model of Olympus Mons, which helped me explain to Robin where the meteorite came from.

We left Kennedy Space Center and headed down the road to the Astronaut Hall of Fame. Melanie fell asleep practically as soon as we put her into the car, and she was sound asleep by the time we arrived at the Hall of Fame. When we got there, we carefully transferred her to the stroller.

The Astronaut Hall of Fame (6225 Vectorspace Blvd., Titusville) is located about seven miles west of the Kennedy Space Center. It opened in March 1990 and is operated by the Mercury Seven Foundation and the US Space Camp Foundation. The facility is located in a 37,500 square foot building with a life-size shuttle model, "Shuttle to Tomorrow" between it and the main road. In the cargo bay of the orbiter, which was added in 1992, is a multi-media theater. The Hall of Fame only moved into the facility in early 2003. Prior to that, the building had been part of Space Camp-Florida, in September 2002. A large building to the east of the museum is a remnant from that period, currently not in use. Directly across Vectorspace Blvd. is the American Police Hall of Fame.

That museum gives helicopter rides in small choppers from its parking lot.

The Astronaut Hall of Fame was in the news only a week ago with the induction of its five newest members, Frederick Gregory; Richard Covey; Dick Scobee; Kathryn Sullivan; and Norman Thagard.

You enter the museum through a rotunda with a statue of Alan B. Shepard in a flight suit in the middle. The sculpture was created by Robert L. Rasmussen, a friend of Shepard's and the of the National Museum of Naval Aviation. On the wall is a mural by Alan Bean, or at least a mural in his style. We entered into the first room, which contained a few relics, such as an old Buck Rogers comic book, a few first edition science fiction classics from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and so forth. An audio played with sounds from the space age...Kennedy's speech at Rice University on September 12, 1962, mission communications, etc. We waited in the room as it filled with other visitors and then doors on the side opened and we went in to watch a short film. Once that film was over, we were allowed into the museum proper.

The first room you enter after the theater is the Exhibit Hall, which is filled with memorabilia from official NASA and the commercial sector. Things like records, books, mission control panels, baseballs signed by astronauts, and so forth. These are set against a timeline of more general American culture. While wandering around this room, mostly alone with the sleeping Melanie, because Elaine very kindly ran herd on Robin, I realized that the layout of the museum was poor, not always making it clear where you were supposed to go next.

The Hall of Fame proper is behind the first room. It is comprised of several panels which are angled to make wavy aisles. On each panel is a plaque with the face of an astronaut. Below the plaque is a listing of the missions the astronaut flew on. It was a very effective display, although it would have been nice to have a sheet that listed all the current members and the reasons for their admission. A second room of the Hall of Fame contains astronauts' personal effects. These can range from the relatively impersonal, like an astronaut's pilot's helmet, to the more personal, photos or report cards. It was strange looking at the things and realizing that the owners were still alive and, in some cases, people I've met, such as Eugene Cernan.

The last room contains interactive exhibits, called the Simulator Station. It includes a mockup of a Mercury capsule you can climb into, a demonstration of tightening screws while in zero-G (you sit in a chair on coasters so there is little friction to hold you when you turn a wrench), a Mars mission simulator, a moon walk simulator which Elaine and I were too big to try and Robin was too little for, a game set in a Virtual Zero-G environment and a Space shuttle cockpit.

As soon as I entered, I got into line to try the 4-G Simulator. This is a small centrifuge with a box on each end. A person gets into each box and it begins to spin, providing forces up to 4 Gs. The wait was long, but, I

hoped would be worth it. I'll admit that I felt a little trepidation over sitting in a small box and spinning at 4 Gs. I'm not claustrophobic and I enjoy spinning rides, but this seemed like it might be a little much. Nevertheless, I didn't let on to Elaine or the girls about my concern.

When they closed me in the room, the attendant pointed out that there were motion sickness bags. I buckled in and he showed me two handles that I was supposed to hold on to throughout the ride. On the screen in front of me would be a video showing a view from a fighter jet cockpit, so it would almost be like an individual version of Star Tours. The thing was amazing. At one point, I took my hands off the handles and my arms were pushed outward by centripetal force. I managed to force them back to the handles, but it wasn't particularly easy. At the point of highest acceleration, I found that it was difficult to swallow. When it was over, I would happily have gone again, although I was a little unsteady on my feet for a little while after exiting the ride.

From one ride to another, Robin wanted to go on the Mars Mission Simulator, which was more akin to the fighter plane simulator at the Museum of Science and Industry. Melanie, of course, also wanted to go, so I agreed to take both of them. I held Melanie tightly, since she did not like the ride, which lasted about five minutes. It was a simulated research mission in front of a Martian sand storm. When the ride was over, Melanie was very ready to get out. Robin, of course, wanted to go again.

Just outside the exit to the Mars Mission Simulator was a strange Virtual 0G Game. Two people could play at once. A camera put their images on either side of a large virtual sphere and tracked their movements, sometimes floating them up and sometimes down. Balls moved around on the screen and the idea was to knock them through a hole on your opponent's side. Robin and Elaine played, ending in a tie. Then I played Robin and I couldn't figure out how to make the images respond in any but the most random way. The result was an easy victory for Robin.

Once that was over, Robin and I went on the Mars Mission Simulator again, this time sitting in the back, where the ride is bumpier. It was much more enjoyable without having to worry about Melanie. My worries for Melanie are not just about this ride, but how she'll handle the rides at Disney, especially coupled with her reaction to the guy in the astronaut suit at Kennedy Space Center.

Of course, to exit the Astronaut Hall of Fame, you need to pass through the Gift Shop, and we spent some time looking around at what they had, most of which was similar to what was at Kennedy. One of the interesting things was a toy rocket in the Buzz Aldrin line. When you pushed a button, it made the sound of a launch and actually shook as well. Melanie spent her time in the Gift shop taking small round magnets and lining them up on the floor, then placing other magnets on top of them,

clearly making little magnetic hamburgers. We got out without spending any more money.

Our hopes that Melanie would fall asleep on the way back to Orlando were in vain, naturally enough. With Elaine navigating and me driving, though, we found our way to International Drive. Because International Drive is rather long, Elaine decided to call the hotel for directions, which did help. On the way to the hotel, an Embassy Suites (8978 International Drive), we passed by the Orange County Convention Center, where Magicon was held in 1992. The building is really interesting from an architectural standpoint and every time we saw it, it caught both Elaine and my eye.



Things To Do In Louisville When You're Dead (er, here for the Derby)

Joseph T. Major

Everybody has his fifteen minutes of fame, they say. Well, we spread it out in two-minute slices over 130 years and counting. More or less. But there is a staggering run-up to the Kentucky Derby . . .

Derby -14 Days (Except when Easter intervenes, when it's Derby -21 Days. This happened recently): Thunder Over Louisville

They usually begin it with one kind of thunder, an air show of airplanes flying over the Ohio river. In 2001 it involved a Pearl Harbor commemoration, with AT-6 Texans painted in Japanese colors zooming over burning barges. This was very controversial until it happened and less so at the end of summer. More normally we have today's warplanes. Yes, you too can see the stealth bomber (B-2) and fighter (F-117), along with other craft.

Once night falls, they begin the fireworks. For about half an hour, colored lights fill the air and dance from the bridges over the river. All this is spectacular and we can hear it from our house.

Hundreds of thousands of people pack into Louisville and Clarksville, Indiana along the riverbank. If you do come, bring plenty of water and be prepared for a long wait to get away.

During the next week things taper off. An open-air food court called the Chow Wagon is opened up downtown about the middle of the week. Then there comes . . .

Derby -8 Days: Balloon Glow

Out at the old airport (which by the way has one of the best French restaurants in Louisville, Le Relais), they light up the hot air balloons that will (in theory) fly tomorrow. See below for this.

Derby -7 Days: Marathon and Mini-Marathon

As might be expected, people running themselves, instead of on horseback as Poseidon, Bendis, and Epona intended them to. This used to run past the apartment where I lived and I learned to get out early in the morning.

Balloon Race

Provided the weather agrees. Often it doesn't. They do weird things with balloons these days. You see cubical balloons, balloons shaped like whiskey bottles, and so on. The usual stuff about trying to follow the chase balloon to a given spot.

Derby -5 Days: Great Bed Races

This is the sort of thing a Fan would appreciate. The contestants push decorated beds (wheeled of course) around a track. The decorations are usually appropriate and often bizarre, and the best of show can win a price for decoration. I have seen the

Metro Police Department's bed at the Metro garage.

Derby -4 Days: Run For The Rosé

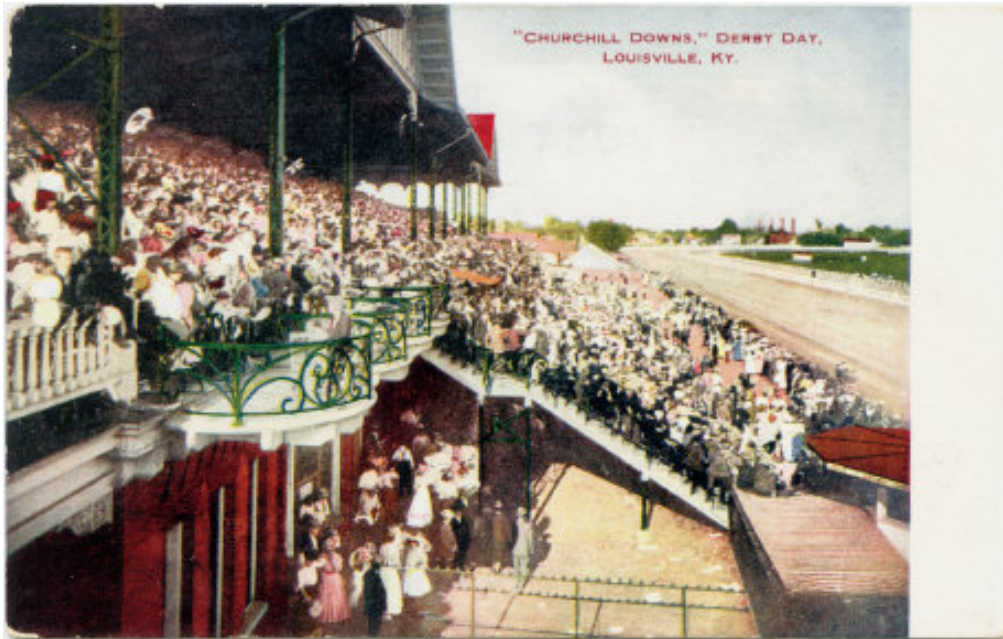
Editor, be sure and leave in the accent. That's right, "rosé" as in wine. The competitors run an obstacle course carrying a tray with glasses of wine. Spillage as well as total time count.

Hole-In-One Contest

Anyone who can hit a hole-in-one at the eighth hole at Seneca Golf Course here in Louisville can win a million dollars. So far, and it's been fifteen years, the money has been safe. But it's easier and safer than answering that email from that ever so earnest Nigerian bank executive . . .

Derby -3 Days: Great Steamboat Race





The metro excursion boat, the *Belle of Louisville*, races the Green Line's riverboat touring boat the *Delta Queen* and whoever else wants to come. In the historical tradition, there is a lot of cheating and conniving. One year the county government hired two tugs to turn the *Belle* around—the course is up and back a stretch of the river, and the turn-around takes time.

Post Position Draw

This is where the horses finally get their place. By now the Old Colonel and the Little Colonel and their one wonderful horse have dropped out for lack of funds, both won and to pay. (But see *Funny Cide* in 2003.) They select horses by total stakes winnings, if there are more than twenty competitors. There always are. And of course entry fees are substantial.

The selection is even more a matter of strategy, since the random draw is only for the order of choosing which gate the horse will be in. Thus a lucky owner can put his horse where he thinks best.

Derby -2 Days: Pegasus Parade

The people running the Macy's Thanksgiving Parade don't have to worry about squeezing the balloons under a highway overpass. The usual bands, floats, etc. One year William Shatner was grand marshal of the parade. (This may be an asset or a debit depending.)

Derby -1 Day: Kentucky Oaks

Which they call "Louisville's Race". At Churchill Downs, for 3 year old fillies. (Unlike the Derby, which is mainly for colts, though three fillies have won.)

Parties

Scads of parties, from Billy-Bob and Jim-Boy and Effie-Lou and Millie having a few beers in the back yard to the Barnstable Brown Party, given by one of the sexpot twins from *Quark* (so look it up in the IMDB already!) and her husband.

Then the next day they have a horse race . . .

If you do come, let us know well beforehand. Hopkinsville is very nice that time of year.

There is more to Louisville than just the Kentucky Derby and some other things to do while you kill time in the city include the following:

Falls of the Ohio: Not actually in Louisville, but across the river in Clarksville (which is also where the con Conglomeration is). The falls overlooks a Devonian fossil bed.

Kentucky Kingdom: An amusement park near the airport, run by Six Flags.

Kaelin's: This small family restaurant, located on Newburg Road, claims to have invented the cheeseburger in 1932.

Louisville Science Museum: Located in downtown, it has many interactive exhibits and is a good place to go with kids.

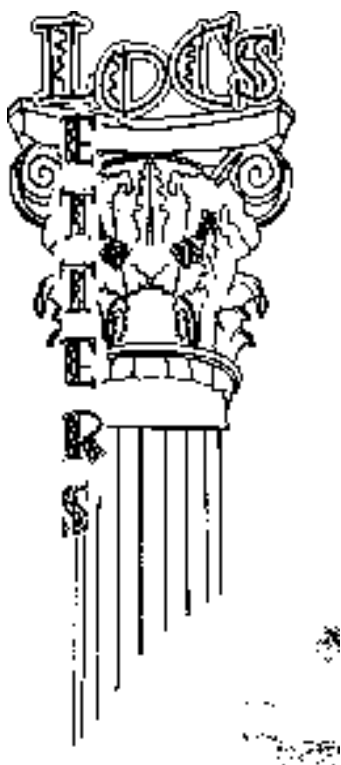
Louisville Slugger Museum: History of the famous baseball bat at this interactive museum in downtown Louisville.

Louisville Zoo: Houses about 1300 animals.

Speed Art Museum: Houses more than 13,000 pieces dating back to ancient Egypt.

Thomas Edison Home: When Edison worked for Western Union in the 1850s, he lived in Louisville. The home has been turned into an Edison museum.

Letters of Comment



August 29, 2003

Greetings Steven—

Great to see *Argentus* #3 show up in the mailbox last week. I thought that flaming comet was an interesting, if “thin” idea for a piece of cover art, then read inside the story behind it, and realized that wasn’t flames I was looking at! Wow, no wonder they had to name it for Bob if it looked like that!!

(Hey, in pulling my files to send this loc, I found copies of our quick email exchange from way back in May of 2002 about your plans for doing a one-shot zine of fannish memoirs of game show appearances, and my doing a cover for it. I wrote back saying I’d be up for it, just waiting for you to send me a title to put on it...but that was last I heard. You still playing with the idea?)

[Still plan to do so, but those plans are currently backburnered in favor of other projects, the most ambitious of which is starting up a small press for ISFiC. Our first book, a collection of stories and essays by

Robert J. Sawyer, will be released in November of this year.]

I was pleased you picked the fillo you did of mine to run this issue. It’s one of my favorites, more idea than execution...still remember sitting trying to come up with a variety of interpretations of what was just a couple of lines and a dot. My records show you’ve still got three other pieces on hand to choose from, so enclosed is a new one to replace one used, keeping you with a full range to select from for next issue.

I enjoyed reading the article from Brother Guy, but hated the opening. As a born-again agnostic, I’ve kind of gotten tired over the years of being told that *not* having a religion is a religion. No, it ain’t, and get over it. (Wait....a ‘born-again agnostic’? No, maybe that would be more of a “reform atheist”? An “orthodox skeptic”? Gosh, aren’t labels fun ...and useless.... ?) There, just needed to get that off my chest, now I feel much better, and we can just all go on being friends again.

Hey, loved the all-in-one reviews of ‘The Lost World’ from Mark. I hadn’t realized there had been quite so many. Haven’t they also pumped out another two or three remakes of “Journey to the Center of The Earth” in the past decade? Maybe Mark can take a look at that run next time!

[imdb lists eight version of “Journey to the Center of the Earth” ranging from 1959 (starring Pat Boone) through a version currently in production. I’ll see if Mark is interested.]

Still more talk on the acquiring and reading of books this issue, a topic I’m not yet tired of myself. The scary thing at the present time is that my stack of “to read” books on the bedside has now dwindled down to only three, which will barely get me ‘—through the middle of next week.... And not time/money in sight for a while to make a run on the used book store. So, looks like I’ll be scanning the shelves to see which titles might be ripe for re-reading again. Cindy mentioned something about Thurber the other night that reminded me I haven’t read any of his stuff in decades, so that’s a few volumes that I know I’ll be getting down and enjoying again...yeah, time to find some old friends again!

By the by, are you looking for any large pieces to be used for cover art? I’ve got some detailed metallic-style animal

illos I’ve done over the years that might fit in with your title. (First one I did I called “Argent Park”, since I felt these were animals made of silver. So one of my “argent” animals might fit in well on an *Argentus* cover. Even have a couple of small, vertical ones that would leave room to run lists of contributors if you want to continue that. If you are interested, drop me an email and I’ll send you one for your consideration. But thought it bet to ask first, rather than just assume you wanted anything cover-ish!

Brad W. Foster

Steven,

Thanks for the latest *Argentus*.

Hollywood’s ability to use a story without significantly altering it is something I never expect to see. Honoring the spirit of the original can occur, but it is rare. Having never read *The Lost World* I cannot judge the integrity of the various remakes, but I don’t have any problems realizing that the TV series is rather dreadful when taken at face value. It is relegated to late Sunday nights on one of the networks and I find it to be “must miss” TV.

Until next issue...

Henry L. Welch
Editor, *The Knarley Knews*

Dear Steven:

Thirties have their problems. “Thirty” is of course the journalistic signing-off, and true to that, two well-known fanzines, *Mimosa* and *Twink* have wound up their runs with . . . issue #30. I presume *Windycon* 30 will not be its thirty.

[I lost my attempt to do that. We will have Windycon 31 this year (GoHs: Robert Sawyer, Jael, Dermot Dobson, Barry & Sally Childs-Helton and Christian Ready). After twenty years at one hotel, however, we are moving to a new

location, near the airport and more convenient.]

No, *The Lord of the Rings* was first published (in a sense) in the U.S. in the fifties, not long after its British publication. Houghton Mifflin imported unbound pages from Britain, bound them, and sold them. This was what led to the whole Ace Books controversy, since HM had imported enough copies to go over the limit and put the book in the public domain.

Anne McCaffrey has said that by the time of the settlement of Pern, humanity had grown beyond having to have religion.

We too are mourning the loss of a bookstore. Louisville's independent super-bookstore, Hawley-Cooke Books, closed September 7, due to competition—they said, mostly Internet competition (BigSouthAmericanRiver.com and so on), but also competition from super-bookstore chains like Borders, which they sold out to. Now Borders Books is nice, but one misses the local touch.

The Loeb Classical Library edition of Suetonius's *Lives of the Twelve Caesars* leaves the parts about Tiberius's sexual habits untranslated.

Heinlein edited *Stranger In a Strange Land* himself. While as you say most of the cuts are justified, there is one scene which is comprehensible in the original but not in the edited. In the edited version, it appears—Alexei Panshin thought so, at least—that Ben Caxton suffered a homosexual panic when Mike made his own clothes disappear. As written, it is clearer that Mike was clearing the decks (so to speak) so he could make out, and there was no girl available for Ben. How rude!

Westfahl and Krugman are merely following the zeitgeist. We live in a culture of security. If anything might cause harm, it must be banned. This is the same reason that playgrounds are so uninteresting.

Mark Leeper would do well to read *The Annotated Lost World*, notes by Roy Pilot and Alvin Rodin. Among the useful information there is an appendix discussing the 1925 movie version. On the other hand, if

you read *The Mountains at the Bottom of the World* by "Ian Cameron" ("Donald Gordon", D. G. Payne) you will find some very familiar beginning and ending scenes. The middle is different, but the opening and closing chapters are lifted almost verbatim from *The Lost World*, the biggest difference being that the Challenger character has red hair. Somewhat more relaxing is Greg Bear's *Dinosaur Summer*, a sequel to *The Lost World*—and featuring Ray Harryhausen as a character!

[*Dinosaur Summer was also a Sidewise nominee.*]

Is it possible that Kathy Secor, fan name "Aiglet", is a member of some "fringe" group—ElfQuest, furry, LARP—where someone has a character and uses that name? And does anyone remember the NeoFan's Manifesto? If she wants to have a sample of another fanzine, I presume my address will be somewhere in this one.

I wouldn't handle anything Pamela Isley had touched.

Namarie,
Joseph T Major

Steve:

Much liked *Argentus*.

The Brother's piece on "Religion, SF & The Real World" brings into contrast how hard it is to go from the inner experience of the ineffable to the raw, rude experience of the "everyday" much less trying to capture this difference in fiction of any sort. I feel the same about physics, an equally abstract pursuit (though reinforced regularly by experiment, the ultimate authority). Right now I'm teaching a lecture with 450 students & running a lab (both in classical mechanics) of 1300. Not exactly a Socratic dialog, no, but with logistics in place and energy to deliver the lectures (much like giving a con GOH speech really) 'tis little trouble.

But life does produce its moments, at either end of the science/religion dialog. I got caught in the hurricane in Washington DC...was there for a science meeting...and found it a puny example of its species. But at 4 AM I awoke and walked out onto the balcony of my hotel room (old Victorian) and saw a man come

down Mass Ave moving fast—a unicycle—very Felliniesque.

Two weeks later I was at Hahvahd for the annual Templeton Foundation board meeting, plus a two-day conference on the fine-tuning of our universe (evidence for which gets stronger), and its possible philosophical implications. Plenty of cosmologists are fancying the multiverse theory, which envisions many universes popping out of the ever-expanding (inflating) Ylem—an extravagance I do not credit. Interesting, though, how Templeton "the most monied foundation I'm on right now" needs science as a way of addressing ancient theological concerns.

Fred Lerner is always erudite and on the spot. Dead on about *Stranger*, alas, though few fantasy novelists these days fathom the fertility of brevity—Mark Leeper on Doyle gave me much new information. But his & Evelyn's trip report sprawled entertainingly across much fresh territory for me "it's best to see the world through a fan's eyes, I think, for they are brighter, more innocent, less jaded" the best way to travel.

I'm much looking forward to Windycon; though you're chairman, we might even get a chance to talk, perhaps?

[*I was very glad to have you as a guest at Windycon and only wish we had more time to talk together. One of the high points of the con was being able to introduce you to Brother Guy at closing ceremonies after you had both asked me to introduce you to each other. Hope you had a good time.*]

Gregory Benford

Dear Steven,

Argentus #3 begins with a quite interesting article by Guy Consolmagno. I'm sure there are enough topics in there for at least a half dozen bull sessions. Brother Consolmagno begins by maintaining everybody has a religion. "Your religion is the core belief that defines your self identity, the axiom on which you base everything else,

the thing that gets you up in the morning excited to meet the day." I'm sure I've never had anything like that. I do continue to get up in the morning. Or at least, evidence suggests that I do. Actually, I usually remember getting up in the morning the way many people would remember being abducted by aliens. Snarls and grunts are about the best I can do for verbal communications until about the second cup of coffee. Whatever I might say about getting up in the morning, I wouldn't describe it as exciting.

The topic of faith reminded me of a cartoon Bill Rotsler did some years ago.

First Rotsler Character: "We have absolutely no evidence of the existence of this particle, but we must have faith."

Second Rotsler Character: "Hold it, whatever happened to the good old fashioned atheist scientist who didn't believe anything he couldn't prove?"

First Rotsler Character: "He didn't get a grant."

Faith must have been the thing George Armstrong Custer had the day before the Battle of the Little Bighorn. It isn't really a quality I've ever tried to encourage in myself. In some ways, faith is like Super Glue. You have to be very careful with it, because it can stick to almost anything.

I think it is almost inevitable that many SF stories appear to have a libertarian outlook. Much science fiction deals with a frontier either actual or intellectual. When you're mining an asteroid a million miles from the nearest human you can't collectivize your problem. You have to take individual action. The realization that there are times when you absolutely have to do something yourself is a good one. It is an antidote for the common perception that someone else will always take care of your problems.

I can sort of identify with your mourning the loss of a bookstore, although the sentiment hasn't overtaken me in recent years. I do feel nostalgia for the used book stores in Hollywood that I prowled when I was a teenager. The dim lighting, the

dust, and the smell of moldering pulp paper were all a part of my youth. Of course, I wouldn't have admitted to anyone at the time that I got a thrill out of prowling used book stores. People thought I was weird enough as was. I did most of my collecting in the era before specialty book stores. By the time there were specialty book stores, I generally avoided them for the same reason an alcoholic avoids bars. If I were to win fifty million dollars in the California Lotto, I'm sure I could easily revive my mad dog collectorism. Lacking that, I better control myself, if I don't want to end-up sleeping in the back yard.

In discussions of the Columbia disaster, I'm a little surprised nobody made any comparisons to the early days of aviation. You had to be pretty much crazy to go up in those early airplanes, and many of the aviators who did it bought the farm. The very real danger of the situation didn't seem to discourage much of anybody. You might almost suspect they actively liked the danger.

Yours truly,
Milt Stevens

Dear Steven:

Well, this sure has taken me long enough, but here is a letter of comment on *Argentus* 3. Yes, this was the summer 2003 issue, but when advertised as an annual zine, I guess there's room to fudge, and put off a large fanzine when there's so many smaller zines to tackle. Enough of excuses...

If there were one sense I'd miss the most, it would have to be my sight. What other sense conveys so much information? There is so much to read and watch, so much to visually consume. My vision is bad enough that I now need progressive bifocals, and I am hopeful I won't suffer anything like cataracts as I age.

I hope you'll be writing an article on how Windycon went. There used to be regular contingents from Toronto to Windycon, but as always these days, it was cheaper to travel way back when, and we didn't have as many bills to pay. Any news on Windycon for next year yet?

[Windycon information is at the website: <http://www.windycon.org>. As noted above, we're moving to a hotel closer to the airport (with free transportation to and from O'Hare and free parking). Although I've written a con

report for the Midwest Construction I chaired, I'm not one to write con reports, and writing one for a general SF con I chaired seems rather arrogant.]

What's the response been to my article? I would hope that someone read it and went to see some of the places I described before going to Worldcon. Torcon itself didn't seem to have had any local tours lined up for its members. There was a popular microbrewery right behind the Skydome with regular tours, for example...

Hello, Brother Guy...the Jesuits get picked on because they are level-headed, tolerant, resolute and unexcitable. Which is much more than you could say for many other religions. Picking on them could get you harassed, sued or even killed. You could have to withstand anything from a harsh retort to a court case.

There are a number of groups that produce publications for the blind in Canada, and they provide other services as well. First of all, there is the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, the CNIB, which provides a range of services, the least of which is books on tape. I do volunteer work with another group, NBRBS, the National Broadcast Reading Service. One of their divisions is VoicePrint, which is a reading service available on cable television across the country. I tape a half-hour programme once a week. Another division of NBRBS is AudioVision, which provides copies of movies and television episodes with added descriptive tracks to tell viewers about the action on screen they can't see. This can be a paid gig...they pay people to write the added scripts, and to perform the added tracks. I've performed on two movies, and made a total of \$350 in doing them.

So many SF book stores have closed, and it feels like a death in the family. The SF bookstore in Montreal, Nebula Books, closed a couple of years ago. Toronto still has its SF bookstore, Bakka Books, and it is now owned by a Ben Freiman, who bears a passing

resemblance to Elijah Wood. So, we think it's cool that Frodo Baggins runs Bakka.

Greetings to E.B. Frohvet...both agreeing with me and getting angry is fine, as long as there is some reaction to what I write. My attempts to research the FAAn Awards on RASFF certainly made some of the inhabitants angry. Mere questions about who won them in the past set them off flaming me. More and more, I understand why many people pass on Usenet and listservers, and go to blogs, which seem much more passive.

Hello, Jukka...someone else who knows Tom Beck of the Prydonians of Princeton! Tom's come up to Toronto a few times for Whovian events here, and I saw him at Torcon as well.

Re Sheryl Birkhead...I recently made a remark online about the exchange rate between the egoboo point and the Canadian dollar. I swear, some of these people gotta get a sense of humour transplant. Theirs isn't working, or is seriously depleted.

I am now sitting in the dark, and it is time to hit the sack, so I shall. I'm looking forward to the next issue. Have an enjoyable Hanukkah, and we'll be talking to you next year.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

Dear Steven,

An interesting layout to the cover—to utilize the Bob Eggleton piece.

I'm *always* impressed when I see Steve Stiles as a contributor—he's *ghood*, but doesn't show up in all the zines I'd wish!

"I've dined out regularly on a Jesuit/scientist/fan, and I've published bits and pieces..." (on page 2) this sentence has me stumped.

Interesting article by Ed Meskys on resources available to the blind.

Mourning the loss—the local used bookstore is throwing in the towel. There isn't any local bookstore. To go look at books it's a 12 mile trip (each way) and the closest one is a Border's—but then there's the

internet (excluding postage, the best prices around). Sigh.

Thank you for running the cover pics of filking material!

Yeouch! Just found ARG...April 29th.

Congrats to all the Hugo nominees. I listen to books on "tape" while I drive and I've noticed that, at least at the Public Library, there is a dearth of SF (just an observation).

(Sigh—May 19th. Agh. Over 6 months in the making—need to put bells on the zines so I can locate them!)

Whew—all my illos, us,...didn't exactly repro very well. If you use any again, I hope they look better. Do you happen to know if there is a public movie (VHS format) archive? The local library has movies but there are a lot of the old ones I'd love to watch, but there's no way to locate them.

[Interesting thought. Of course I know of places like Netflix that rent DVDs through the mail, but haven't come across anyone who rents Video tapes the same way. Frequently, you can find used VHS of older films available on ebay for less than it would cost to rent (but of course, there is the postage issue.)]

Hmmm—mundane—a comparison—do muggles find the term offensive (uh—yes mud-blood does—but that's not the comparison I was looking for.

All is found in fanzines—I was not familiar with the acronym—but I *am* familiar with the line.

Egoboo IS the currency of fandom—be a Big Spender!

Always,
(belatedly) thanks for thish,
Sheryl Birkhead

WAHF: Hal Hall, Trinlay Kahdro

Fanzines Received

Alexiad

Joseph Major
1409 Christy Avenue
Louisville, KY 40204-2040 USA

Ansible

David Langford
94 London Road
Reading, Berks RG1 5AU UK

Burstzine

Michael A. Burstein
POB 1713
Brookline, MA 02446

Challenger

Guy Lillian III
POB 53092
New Orleans, LA 70153-3092 USA

Covert Communications from Zeta Colony

Andrew C. Murdoch
9211 Glendower
Richmond, BC V7A 2YA Canada

Devniad

Bob Devney
25 Johnson Street
N. Attleboro, MA 02760

File 770

Mike Glyer
705 Valley View
Monrovia, CA 91016

For the Clerisy

Brant Kresovich
POB 404
Getzville, NY 14068 USA

Fosfax

Timothy Lane
POB 37281
Louisville, KY 40233

It Goes on the Shelf

Ned Brooks
4817 Dean Lane
Lilburn, GA 30047-4720 USA

Littlebrook

Jerry Kaufman
3522 N.E. 123rd Street
Seattle, WA 98125 USA

Lofgeornost

Fred Lerner
81 Worcester Avenue
White River Junction, VT 05001-8011 USA

Memphen

POB 820534
Memphis, TN 38182

Midfanzine
Anne K.G. Murphy
509 Dartmoor
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

Mimosa
Rich Lynch
POB 3120
Gaithersburg, MD 20885

MOZ One
Murray Moore
1065 Henley Road
Mississauga, Ontario L4Y 1C8
Canada

MT Void
Evelyn & Mark Leeper
80 Lakeridge Dr
Matawan, NJ 07747-3839 USA

Nice Distinctions
Arthur Hlavaty
206 Valentine Street
Yonkers, NY 10704-1814 USA

Non Stop
Dwain Kaiser
POB 1074
Claremont, CA 91711

Number One
Mike McInerney
83 Shakespeare Street
Daly City, CA 94014

Pablo Lennis
John Thiel
30 N. 19th Street
Lafayette, IN 47904 USA

Peregrine Nations
Jan Stinson
Box 431304
Big Pine Key, FL 33043-0314 USA

Sleight of Hand
John Teehan
499 Doulgas
Providence, RI 02908

Southern Fandom Confederation
R.B. Cleary
470 Ridge Road
Birmingham, AL 35206-2816 USA

The Knarley Knaws
Henry Welch
1525 16th Avenue
Grafton, WI 53024-2017 USA

They Made Us Do It
Max
20 Bakers Lane
Woodston
Peterborough, Cambs. PE2 9QW
United Kingdom

Twink
E.B. Frohvet
4716 Dorsey Hall Drive #506
Ellicott City, MD 21042-5988 USA

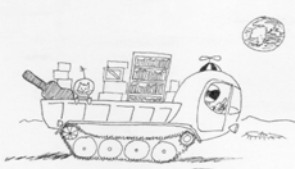
Vanamonde
John Hertz
236 S. Coronado St. #409
Los Angeles, CA 90057 USA

Velleity
Damien Warman
400 W. 35th #106

Visions of Paradise
Robert Sabella
24 Cedar Manor Court
Budd Lake, NJ 07828-1023 USA

Wabe
Tracy Benton
108 Grand Canyon Dr.
Madison, WI 53705

Wassamatta U.
Randy Byers
1013 N. 36th
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Mock Section

Note that Mr. Heinlein and Ms. Bujold have not given their approval to these mock interviews and nothing in them should be taken to reflect on those authors or their characters. On the other hand, Mr. Niven did participate in the interview John Hertz conducted with Svetz.

Although I enjoy the mock sections and seeing what people will come up with, it is also the section I find hardest to get contributions for. Therefore, I'm not sure that I'll include a mock section in the 2005 issue of *Argentus*. If I do, however, the topic will be Discussions of books never written (for instance, Gene Wolfe's novelization of a space opera film). If you would like to participate, please let me know.

His Girl Friday

Jason K. Burnett

With the recent collapse of the monarchy of The Realm, a number of previously classified documents were "released" to the media by looters of various royal offices. Among these was a medical report confirming that the Dauphin and Dauphiness had been genetically incompatible and thus completely incapable of producing an heir. This, however, was little more than confirmation of what had long been suspected. More interesting was the second document attached to this report – an Intelligence Ministry dossier detailing a plan to employ one Marjorie Friday Baldwin, an Artificial Person, as an unsuspecting surrogate for the Dauphiness. The dossier contained everything from the technical reports on the genetic engineering, performed in stages at three different labs on Terra, which was necessary in order to produce a genetically viable heir who would still test as being the offspring of the Dauphin and Dauphiness to the plans for the disposal of Ms. Baldwin's corpse after the delivery. Plans which ultimately became unnecessary once Miss Baldwin, aided by two of the agents who had been hired to guard her, sneaked off of the starship which was transporting her to The Realm by stowing away in the cargo hold of the shuttle down to Botany Bay.

Since it's not every day that a lone woman manages to single-handedly bring down one of the most powerful and oppressive monarchies in the galaxy, we here at *Argentus* knew that our readers would want to know more about Ms. Baldwin. Our research department was of precious little help: Career employee of Systems Enterprises (all details classified, naturally), Artificial Person with false papers showing her to be the natural daughter of Kelly and Emma Baldwin, pretty much drops off the radar after Dr. Baldwin's death and the dismantling of Systems Enterprises. A little more digging revealed that she is most likely "MB," who wrote the widely circulated white paper detailing a plan for preventing the spread of plaque that was so successfully utilized in containing last year's outbreak on Terra. Fortunately, one of the senior editors of *Argentus* was able to contact some of her contacts who

had previously worked for Systems Enterprises and was able to arrange for our correspondent to have this exclusive interview.

Argentus: First of all, I'd like to thank you, Ms. Baldwin, for taking the time to speak with us.

Friday: Please, call me Friday. We're not that formal here on Botany Bay. [laughs] And the one you really need to thank is Goldie – I was about to refuse your request just like I had all the others until I saw that she vouched for you.

A: Well, thank you for agreeing to speak with us. Obviously you've heard about the recent events in The Realm. Do you remember what you first thought upon hearing about it?

F: Well, obviously you can't expect me to be too broken up for it, considering what they had had in store for me. [laughs] Of course, in a roundabout sort of way, I have to be grateful to them, for without their interference I wouldn't have my home and my family here. But seriously, out of all the news that came out of whole thing, I think the part that upset me most was when I heard about the burning of the Royal Menagerie.

A: I notice your family has a lot of animals here on your farm.

F: Yes, and they're all loved and well cared for, even the ones destined to end up as dinner. Speaking of which [gets up to stir a large pot of soup] you will stay to dinner, won't you?

A: I'd love to.

F: I'm afraid you'll have to eat my cooking. You won't starve to death on it, but it's not as good as what Georges could make.

A: I'm sure it will be delicious [It was. See the recipe in this month's Celebrity Chef column.]

F: Anyway, I'm afraid there's really not much to tell. I'm afraid you've really come all this way for not more than a bowl of soup. I didn't set out to cause the downfall of The Realm. All I did was get myself out of a tight spot. The rest came from accidents of bad genetics.

A: Well, I'm sure our readers will welcome the chance to get to know you better, to put a face with the name, so to speak. So much of your past is shrouded in mystery – your time at Systems Enterprises, for instance.

F: And I'm afraid that will have to stay a mystery.

A: Surely you can tell us something about what you did with Systems Enterprises, now that the firm is no longer in existence.

F: I was a courier, but beyond that I can't say anything else – I may not need those secrets again, but my friends or my family might, and I couldn't possibly risk their lives by exposing those secrets for the entertainment for your readers.

A: Perhaps you could answer one question for us then: Are you "MB"?

F: Yes and no. The paper is based on my research, but Boss – I mean, Dr. Baldwin – was the one who directed me to that topic, and he later had someone else rewrite my findings into a coherent paper. But, yes, I suppose I could

say I'm *part* of MB. Now, enough about me. I'd like to ask you a question, and I expect a truthful answer: Who were your parents?

A: [Pauses, then blurts out] My mother was a test tube—

F: And your father was a knife. I thought so. [Pulls out a thick folder from under the table.] I took the liberty of researching you too. [Grins] And the family would like to make you a proposition over dinner.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: The interview with Ms. Baldwin ends here. Our correspondent did not return from Botany Bay, sending the video recording of this fragment along with the photos of Ms. Baldwin's house (see this month's Celebrity Home section) section, her recipe for beef and barley soup (see this month's Celebrity Chef section), and a request that his final paycheck and the contents of his retirement fund be forwarded to the Asa Hunter Bread-Upon-the-Waters Revolving Fund, New Brisbane, Botany Bay. Ms. Baldwin has refused all requests for a second interview. Apparently, like all good mysteries, this one is destined to remain a mystery.]

Hungarian Barley Stew (8)

1½ cups of stew meat cut into ½ inch cubes
2 tablespoons of vegetable oil
1½ cups of chopped yellow onion
1 clove of minced garlic
28 ounces of whole drained tomatoes
3 cups of water
2/3 cup of pearled barley
1 tablespoon of sugar
1 tablespoon of paprika
2 teaspoons of caraway seed

In a large saucepan, brown meat in oil. Add the onion and garlic, cooking until the onion is tender. Drain.

Stir in remaining ingredients. Cover and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and let simmer for at least 1 hour or until meat and barley are tender.

Miles Vorkosigan Interview

Pat Sayre McCoy

Good morning. This is Sarah Jettan, morning reporter for the Betan Eyewitness Network here with my guest, Miles Vorkosigan of Barrayar. We'll be discussing some highlights of this Barrera nobleman, who is also a citizen of Beta Prime. We're here at Vorkosigan House in the capital city of Barrayar to talk with him.

S: Lord Vorkosigan, welcome to our program. What an impressive house. I particularly noticed the gardens. You have some very unusual plants there, don't you?

M: The gardens are my wife's design; Ekaterine is a landscape designer. You'd have to ask her about any of the plants.

S: Yes, you were married short time ago. Was there a lot of pressure to marry a Barrayaran heiress?

M: As if anyone's father would let me marry his daughter! I think my mother is happy I'm married, and my mother and father love their grandchildren.

S: I had heard there were problems. You were damaged before birth and regarded by Barrayar as undesirable.

M: That's one way of putting it. I was called a mutant and most of the people on Barrayar wanted me killed. There's still a lot of ignorance and misunderstanding here as a result of the Time of Isolation. My mother had a lot to do with protecting me.

We are unexpectedly interrupted at this point by a high pitched wail. Miles jumps up from his chair and looks around frantically.

M: Aral! No! Don't pull the cat's tail!

Aral enters carrying a large orange cat upside down, with its head dragging on the floor. The cat is wailing, but Aral is smiling and giggling. I notice he has a couple of teeth. Miles carefully removes the cat from the toddler's arms, getting clawed and nearly bitten in the process. I notice the toddler is unharmed. The cat bounds out of the room, some choice cat language echoing down the hall. Miles returns to his chair, toddler in one arm and sucking at his other hand, which is bleeding.

M: He holds the animal upside down and it purrs, I rescue it and it attacks me! I was helping it! I knew I didn't like cats.

S: It's not yours?

M: NO! My wife's client, Lady Vorhagen, is visiting for a consultation. It's her da—ur, uh...monster, cat. It hates everyone but the children and they love it.

S: Are you babysitting today then?

M: Ekaterin won't let me say babysitting—it implies childcare isn't my regular duty. My mother agrees.

S: Your mother's Betan, isn't she? How did that affect you?

M: Yes, my mother is Betan and growing up with her has been...interesting. I still don't think Barrayar knows what to do with her. My grandfather certainly never knew! Especially after I was born and she refused to have any more children.

S: That is unusual, isn't it.

M: She didn't want me replaced with a healthy heir.

S: Did you want brothers or sisters when you were young?

M: Of course. Anyone else for my grandfather to glare at! I guess I did want brothers and sisters sometimes, but my cousin Ivan and I grew up together. And I don't think I would have liked a big brother to push me around. Ivan was bad enough.

S: What about your children? Are they normal?

Miles grins. Yes, as normal as can be my wife and mother say. A boy and a girl, Aral and Helena, what a perfect family.

S: Where is your daughter?

Miles grin fades. I don't know. I don't know! *He leaps from the chair again, almost dropping Aral in his haste. I follow him down the hall where the cat went.*

M (*over his shoulder*): My mother used to say she hoped I'd have children just like me. I don't think that was a compliment. I thought she loved me, but now I wonder!

Miles skids to a halt by an open door leading to a large room, apparently an office. A dark puddle spreads across the floor, with paw prints leading in several directions. Small handprints and footprints follow the cat prints. Miles, a panicked look on his face, finally locates the cat at the top of a large cabinet. From the inky prints on the draperies, it's clear how it got there. What isn't clear is how the little girl holding it got there.

M: Helena! What are you doing up there! Get down this instant!

The little girl giggles and prepares to jump down. Miles recoils.

M: No, don't! Just stay there!

A slender woman enters the office. His wife, I assume.

E: Miles! What is going on? Why are you shouting?

M: Er, nothing, just the interview I told you about. Are you done with Lady Vorhagen? Can you join us now?

E: Not yet. I just came in for some designs I made earlier. What is all over the floor?

Oh, there they are.

Without seeming to notice the ink, cat or child, she makes her way to the desk and removes a roll of paper from it and leaves. When I later asked her about the incident she laughed.

[E: Oh, when Miles is in charge of the children, he's in charge. You have to let fathers get to know their children. I learned that from my first husband—never let them think you can do better or you'll do all the work. Er, what cat?]

By this time, Miles has the little girl off the cabinet and is inspecting her hands, covered with black ink.

M: Well, we have fingerprints if we ever need such primitive technology. All over the wall. And the books. And the cat?! *The cat is still on top of the cabinet, a black handprint obscuring its face.*

S: Fingerprints?

M: Old habits die hard, I guess.

S: Ah yes, Admiral Naismith. Tell me, do you miss him?

M: Sometimes. Though I don't miss being shot at or killed. You'd think after the first time someone would get it right, but I'm still here. I do miss the excitement of the last minute rescues though. The rush of making last minute plans and then making up even more last minute plans. It's really exciting to make do like that. Of course, Ilyan said I was responsible for most of his grey hairs. If there were any left after he finished pulling it.

And Admiral Naismith didn't have the expectations I did. He was nobody from nowhere, so he just created his life without any baggage. No mutants, dwarfs or Barrayaran lords in his family!

S: Exciting. Interesting choice of words there. What else do you miss?

M: There are people I wish I'd been able to keep in touch with. Elli Quinn for one. And Taura. I did meet Bel Thorne again though at the Quaddi station. That was great. He's settled down too.

S: So how is being an Imperial Auditor compared to a mercenary admiral? That's an odd title, by the way. Most of us think of accountants when we hear "auditor."

M: Well, as I said, I sometimes miss the freedom of Admiral Naismith. I really didn't have anyone to answer to, well, except Simon Ilyan. Come to think if it, reporting to Ilyan could be difficult. Especially after my last death—there are some things I still can't figure out. And killing my crew is bad. It's hard enough to get the right ones, but accidentally killing one after a successful mission—things like that get around.

S: But he was revived, wasn't he?

M: Yeah, but it's the thought of it, dying, don't you know? It bothers some people.

To get back to the Imperial Auditor, it really means I am the Emperor's Ears. I also speak with the Emperor's Voice. *Glances aside suddenly. Aral is sitting at the edge of the ink puddle, dipping his shirt in it. With a grin at his father, he lays it on his head. Ink dribbles down his face and onto the rest of his clothes.*

M: Uh, excuse me a minute. *Miles walks over to Aral, realizes he's still holding his daughter and sets her down. Half a second later, the inky shirt is plastered over her head. Miles mutters something in Barrayaran, I can't speak it, but it sounds like a curse.*

He stands there, looking at the two inky toddlers, both grinning at him and giggling. I wonder what Admiral Naismith, the Dendarii leader is thinking. Surely he can't be stymied by two children. He looks around again, carefully moving some papers on the desk and comes back to the interview.

M: I guess they can't hurt anything. And they can't get any dirtier, can they?

The mother in me recognizes the faint note of pleading and decides not to say anything. I know what normal children can get into; I don't want to think what his children could come up with.

M: You were asking about my position as an Imperial Auditor. Well, I represent the Emperor so I have to be more aware of how I approach things. I have to think how things would look like before I do anything, at least I'm supposed to. I Speak for him too, so again I have to be careful. I really have to think of how I appear and how it could reflect on or be used against the Emperor. It does limit creativity.

S: We've heard that's not quite what happens when you go on assignment. You started some interesting relations with the Hauts on Cetaganda, for instance.

M: That's an isolated case. With the shipment so close to dying and a rogue clone. It's not always like that. And Ivan and I had visited Cetaganda awhile ago. We went to the old emperor's funeral. That was strange—lots of poetry competitions and flower arranging. Ivan kept complaining that the poetry didn't even rhyme.

S: Isolated case? Really? What about the quaddi incident?

M: Well...Uh, don't you want to talk to Ekaterin now? I thought you said you'd like to interview both of us.

S: Of course, whenever she is available. But now I'm interviewing you. I'm sure our audience would like to hear about your other cases. It's very romantic that you met your wife on your first one.

M: Well, she was married at the time, and her husband was involved in the case I was investigating. I don't think I should say more about it.

S: I understand. What other cases can you tell us about? *(Long pause)* Lord Vorkosigan?

I look at Miles. He's staring at the cat, poised at the edge of the cabinet ready to spring. It's tail is lashing, it's hind legs are quivering and it's gnashing its teeth. Miles follows the cat's stare and groans.

M: Oh no! I thought we caught them all. Ekaterin!

Now the cat has landed in the ink puddle beside the desk. Ink splashes on its stomach and it is now a half white, half black cat. I briefly wonder what Lady Vorhagen will think when she sees it. Suddenly it lashes out with a paw and something brown and silver scurries across the floor. The cat bounds after it in full chase.

M: Oh lord, please excuse me. That damned bug! How could he make them fertile!

Miles grabs some of the papers left on the desk and stalks over to the corner. The cat turns and hisses at him, but he shoves it aside with his foot. I watch as the twins follow behind him. He swings at something, missed, curses and almost trips over them.

A: Kogan bu!

H: Yay!

A and H: KOGAN BU!

Miles winces as Ekaterin and lady Vorhagen enter. Lady Vorhagen swoops up the cat, which hisses at her. She recoils as she sees the ink and drops it, but there is ink all over the front of her dress. Something brown and silver scuttles out the door. I can now see that it is some kind of insect, maybe the Barrayaran equivalent of a cockroach. How odd that it matches the Vorkosigan family colors. As the cat rushes across the room, Miles rushes after it and the bug, and Ekaterin stops dead in the doorway.

E: Miles! Must you shout? Lady Vorhagen and I are not finished yet. Aral, Helena, be quiet.

M: That damned bug! There could be hundreds of them in the house. In the walls, the floors, the ceilings...

Miles's voice fades as he runs down the hall. Ekaterin eyes the children and Lady Vorhagen's dress. She notices for the first time that the children are inky too and

glances at what's left of the puddle of ink. She also notices that Lady Vorhagen is hyperventilating.

E: Oh dear. Lady Vorhagen, I think we'll have to finish our planning later. Please sit down and breathe slowly. Yes, I'm afraid that was your cat. I'm sure we can get it clean somehow. I'll get you some tea. Children, find your grandmother. She can look after you for awhile. Don't go after your father!

S: Here, Lady Vorhagen, have my tea. I haven't touched it. Are you sure you're going to be alright?

V: *(faintly)* Goodness! What ever happened to my poor cat? And what was that awful bug it was chasing? Of course, I'm sure every grand old house has them, but, my goodness it was big. Oh, Ekaterin, your children!

Ekaterin looks at the twins, slowly creeping down the hall. Suspiciously.. She follows them out the door, across the hall and out a door to the garden to see the cat halfway down a hole next to the step, Miles trying to drag it out and cursing as it's hind feet rip his hands and arms bloody, and Helena holding a large many legged brown and silver cockroach. Ekaterin turns around in time to catch Lady Vorhagen in her arms and propel her back inside before she sees the cat. She can't do anything about Miles's language though. Judging from the many heads looking out windows and other doors, the whole house can hear him. And the next door neighbors.

E: Ms. Jettan, I'm sorry! I didn't mean to forget about you. Lady Vorhagen, I'm sure we'll find your cat and return it to you. Yes, we'll clean it too. Why don't you take the garden plans and sketches with you now and talk to your husband about them. You can come back in a day or two and we can finish our talk.

V: Yes, I think that's best. There's my driver, I can go now. Please take care of my poor Yuri. He's never been outside alone, you know.

E: Yuri?

V: My cat! Named for the former emperor, of course.

M: *(howling from the garden, still struggling with the cat)* Mad Yuri! She named the cat Mad Yuri! What a perfect name!

S: Lady Vorkosigan, please thank your husband for his time. I greatly enjoyed talking to him and I'd like to come back later and finish my interview with you,

E: Of course. Miles! Language! The children!



The Octopus

Joseph T Major

Review of *From Garage to Court: The Story of U.S. vs Davis*, by J. J. Garsch [with Magdalene Andrews] (Scribner's; 2004; \$5.95)

Over the past thirty years we have become accustomed to a great many changes in politics and society. *The Rise of the Pacific Rim* described in such books as Robert D. Kaplan's book of that title (1998) has been one consequence of the changes in society. Another has been the shift in social pressures.

Households are becoming decentralized now, thanks to advanced transport and home-care facilities. The decline in social values described in such works as *Fishing Alone* by Robert Putnam (2001), how group activities have eroded as isolated living has become both commonplace, due to advances in transport, and feasible, due to advances in household technology, is a regrettable consequence, though it is well to report that Putnam's arguments have been questioned.

One issue that has not changed, though, is the government's desire to promote competition. In the century before last, legal measures were passed that promoted the break-up of corporate entities, the companies of the so-called "Robber Barons." These were not truly employed until the turn of the century, when President Theodore Roosevelt's Justice Department began aggressively using them against monopolizing corporations.

After an initial burst of enforcement, these laws sank into disuse, having succeeded to some extent. Thirty years later, as the country struggled in the depths of the Depression, an additional field of endeavor was opened up. In response to the problems of the stock market crash, new regulations were passed that enabled the government to more adequately enforce competition in this new and indisciplined field of endeavor. Again, having succeeded in levelling the playing field, the new laws and organizations became less active.

The next thirty years of conflict meant that such regulations became, if not moot, at least unenforced. Mobilization for war required a certain acceptance of concentration of business enterprises. Reconstruction took up much of the next thirty years; in some ways we are still not recovered to the levels of the halcyon days of the fifties, and many still look back to the confident settled calm of that era as a golden age.

Now that economic recovery is a fait accompli, the U.S. Justice Department has begun again using the legal resources at its disposal to promote competition and break up unhealthy market concentrations. This is the story of one of the more notorious cases of this effort.

In 2002, a Securities and Exchange Commission report on stockholdings noted that Daniel B. Davis, a general partner in the home automation firm Aladdin Autoengineering, had married the former Frederica Virginia Heinicke, the heiress of Hired Girl, Inc. Since

these were two of the leading firms in the business, this triggered a red flag.

The SEC was soon joined in its efforts by officials of the Justice Department's Antitrust Division, which was investigating monopolistic concentration in the home automation industry. The result was a lawsuit filed against the Davises to force them to reduce their interests in the firms.

This book is the story of that trial, written by the principal defense lawyer.

U.S. vs Davis was admitted by some to be a circus. The most controversial decision was the defense's not permitting the defendant, engineering entrepreneur Daniel Davis, to testify in his own behalf. At the time, it was hinted that he was suffering from CSAS (Cold Sleep Acculturation Syndrome); this book reveals the magnitude of his problem, which was far worse than that. Putting such a deluded man on the stand would have been fatal to the defense's case. (See particularly Chapter 4, "Discovery.")

As it was, some of the witnesses were quite extraordinary. At least one witness had to have medical emergency personnel on standby, lest she collapse from the result of several years of alcoholism and drug use [Pages 97-99]. Others told contradictory stories. Lead prosecutor Janet Carson's shrewd cross-examination tripped up several of the witnesses, revealing the complex maneuvers in which Davis sought to secretly control both the leading firms. As she proved under examination, they consistently lied, creating a "legend" in which Davis appeared somehow to be in Denver and Los Angeles at the same time, working for one company while founding another. His withdrawal into cold sleep was apparently necessary due to the undue physical and mental strain placed on him by this scheme. Unfortunately the shredding of records in the thirty-year gap destroyed the evidence of the extensive pattern of interstate flights required to pull off this scheme, but the testimony regarding his pattern of work makes the depth and complexity of his planning clear; Davis would control the home automation market far more than any robber baron of the nineteenth century by controlling two companies that pretended to compete while they attained a joint control of the market. Business analyst Robert Hedrock of Stanford Business School, the prosecution's principal expert witness, described it in the simple phrase: "It is competition that is no competition." [Page 141]

Mrs. Davis was a minor at the time of the plot, though her entry into cold-sleep may have been as a pretext to foil investigation of her stepfather's role in it. The still unexplained death of Hired Girl co-founder Miles Gentry was considered suspicious at the time, but the investigation of this case did not at the time reveal any hint of this plot in the events that left his stepdaughter majority stockholder in the corporation. She was not called to the stand by either side, and from the comments she had made during pretrial testimony, probably would not have made a good witness.

Neither did Aladdin Autoengineering partners John and Jenny Sutton. Garsch describes the prolonged legal struggle to limit the range of potential questioning on the stand. Davis met the Suttons at a nudist colony, and rumors of sexual irregularities were brought up by the prosecution during the pretrial discovery. Mr. Sutton told a lame and scarcely-credible story about found money [Pages 103-110] and Mrs. Sutton claimed to be uninterested in the business [Pages 111-113]. Neither was able to explain why they were so uninterested in discovering Davis's other connection to the industry.

Pretrial discovery did uncover one proof of the depth of Davis's planning. LA County District Attorney files contained a letter from Davis containing the details of Mrs. Gentry's criminal record. Garsch was able to suppress questioning regarding Davis's engagement to Mrs. Gentry, which he believed to be part of the deception plan by which Davis was to steal *Hired Girl* out from under his partner. Presumably Miles Gentry would have been implicated in the crimes of his new wife, thus enabling Davis's representatives to gain control of the company, while Davis himself was safely out of reach in cold-sleep.

Garsch is remarkably unsentimental about his client, who comes across poorly in any case. He describes with some distaste his client's disinterest in personal hygiene: "He smelled like a cat. His cat seems to have used his clothing as its litter box." [Page 27]. He may also have been drinking; Garsch mentions several potential witnesses who noted his incoherent behavior around the time of his marriage and believed him to be drunk at the time, if not doped up. One matter that was fortunately not brought out at the trial was the sexual relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Davis, which may have begun when she was only a child.

By publishing as an appendix the long narrative Daniel Davis wrote as an explanation of his actions, Garsch & Andrews (a former WAC sergeant who, after the death of her husband, an army officer, became a professional writer) may have divulged a confidence. The story reads like an extended dream and did indeed, after the verdict, make the presiding judge, the respected jurist Brian Kaelin (who, according to reports, may be under consideration for the next vacancy on the U.S. Supreme Court) wonder about Mr. Davis's sanity.



Interview with Svetz

Larry Niven and John Hertz

Svetz is the protagonist in a series of Larry Niven time-travel stories. Five were collected in *The Flight of the Horse* (1973), later reprinted at the end of the novel *Rainbow Mars* (1999). Niven thinks time travel is fantasy. But Svetz doesn't realize that, - he thinks he is a character in science fiction. The results are strange. Svetz works for the Institute for Temporal Research eleven hundred years in the future. He has traveled into the past, or something, many times.

Ag: How long have you worked at the Institute?

Svetz: By the Institute's calendar, eight years, 1100-1108 A.E. That's "atomic era"; we date things from the first controlled atomic explosion, in the middle of your 20th Century. Once, looking for a horse—they're extinct in my own day—I went back to -750 A.E.. I've been trying to get seniority from my earliest date in service, which would give me 1,900 years. Or there's sequential time. If I spend months on a mission, and return to the moment after I left, that's a lot of man-hours which don't show on the calendar. So far I've been paid by sequential time, which seems only fair.

Ag: What's it like to travel in a time machine?

Svetz: The time machine doesn't travel, really. It's underground at the Institute. It sends an extension cage back in time, then pulls the cage home. Inside the cage, gravity is funny. Otherwise it isn't bad.

Ag: While you were on Mars, the beginning of a song came to you. Have you any other muse—do you play, sculpt, dance, weave?

Svetz: I'm pretty good at filking—making up verses to fit stolen music. When the Secretary-General's Gila monster died of indigestion, I went back to medieval England trying to replace it, and served as a troubadour. It helps to carry a decent machine translator. Zeera Southworth, who also works for the Institute, says if I can sing, I can dance. She's better at dancing, I'm better at singing.

Ag: You used to say you didn't like exotic creatures. But you've brought more home for the Vivarium than anyone else. On Mars, where you met so many intelligent races it was a wonder they all lived on one planet, you seemed to get on with Lord Pfee and with the green giant Thaxir. Do you think you've changed?

Svetz: I believe I'm developing an affinity for exotic creatures. Partly it's been self-defense. Partly it may be living with Wrona, who becomes a kind of evolved wolf when the tides distort Earth's magnetic fields.

Ag: What exactly is your relationship with Wrona?

Svetz: That is part of my private life. One day we hope to return to her own timeline.

Ag: Maybe we can talk about all these creatures. When you went to get a horse, the animal you brought back had a horn—

Svetz: Please don't start saying horses have no horns. Mine does.

Ag: —and was fiercely antagonistic, except to certain women. The whale you found was white, trailing a corpse of a bearded man with one leg. The Gila monster had wings and breathed fire. Wrona, when you met her, was a woman. When you and she got back to your time—it was forward, not back, for her—

Svetz: Don't worry about it. Just ask your question. These things hang everybody up, unless you talk in equations like the temporal physicists.

Ag: —she was a female wolf, or something like a wolf. Have you ever wondered why, traveling back in time, you keep meeting such odd creatures and events? Could there be something odd, something fantastic, about time travel itself, that might bear on this effect?

Svetz: My boss, Ra Chen, asked me that once. But he and the researchers hadn't done their homework. It shows in my mission orders too. When I go back to some earlier time, it doesn't look the way I was told, and I have to improvise. I admit it isn't easy for them. Wars and natural disasters wipe out records they need, or people throw things away when there's a change of fashion. On the Mars mission it started getting to me. I was falling in love with Miya Thorsven of the Space Bureau, and I was afraid it was all some kind of fantasy. But things kept happening, and we all had so much to do, I let it go. Afterward the research director put in a long memo, but I haven't read it.

Ag: Ra Chen calls you his best agent. You seem able to think of things others don't. Your improvisations have been pretty good, if it doesn't embarrass you to hear that. How do you do it?

Svetz: Thanks. I can't tell you much. It always feels like I should have known right away, but it can take forever. I have to go down all these blind alleys first. I eventually get it.

Ag: Zeera Southworth was your mission leader in 16th Century Brazil. You brought her a Portuguese silver coin for repairing an electrical circuit. She found the silver was alloyed with base metal, beat the coin into shape with the butt of a blaster, then had you transmute the metal into gold with your trade kit to put into the circuit. When did it occur to her that, gold being more malleable and ductile than silver, especially pure gold, she could have saved a lot of work by transmuting first? How long was it until she would talk to you again after that?

Svetz: I'm not sure she ever tumbled to it. While she was pounding at the coin, and swearing, I was asleep in a chair. If I hadn't been so tired I might have thought it through.

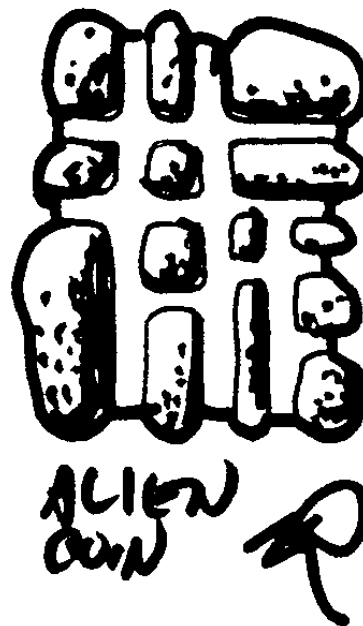
I had tapping noises and a woman's voice in my dreams. And she might have been angry with me about something else unspecified. That happened a lot.

Ag: There are time-travel paradoxes in every one of your published adventures. You've been in them; you've caused them, or uncaused them; you've nearly been killed by them. Can you explain?

Svetz: No. We're still trying to figure them out.

Ag: Well, thanks for your time, if that's not a bad way to put it. What's next?

Svetz: After the Mars mission I sometimes think I'd better retire quick. But the Chinese guy who owned the Gila monster spoke to me oddly. He said I would live in interesting times. It may take me forever to visit all of them.



Lunar Interview

Michael A. Burstein

Interview with the instigators of the Lunar Revolution, timeline Neil Armstrong (variant #2), as recounted by Robert A. Heinlein in *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*.

The interview with the three was conducted via subspace radio, with the interviewer on the Earth and the principals in the Raffles Hotel in Luna City.

MAB: Bernardo de la Paz, Manuel Garcia, Wyoming Knott, thank you for being our guests today.

BDLP: It is our pleasure, my dear boy.

MG: What Prof said. *Spaseba*.

WK: Although I honestly don't know what we could possibly tell you that would be interesting.

MAB: Well, you'll find out. Also, may I ask you to talk Earth-talk for this interview? It will be easier for our readers to understand.

(The three glance at each other.)

BDLP: Fine.

MAB: Thank you. The first question I'd like to ask is how you feel about the current political situation. In particular, what are your opinions on the Iraq War?

MG: I've never really considered myself very political. I'll pass.

WK: I think that we all have the right to defend ourselves, whenever and wherever we find it necessary. But tell me, was there any threat to the United States posed by Iraq? All I've heard is that they were stockpiling weapons. I've never heard that they actually used any against your country.

MG: Wyoh has a point. The war seemed wasteful to me.

MAB: Hm. Professor?

BDLP (long sigh): In essence, I am afraid that I have to agree with my comrades. In any war, one country is invariably the aggressor and the other the victim. The key in fighting a war properly is to ensure your country's status as the one with the moral right.

This doesn't mean that you have to let the other country run roughshod over you before you fight back. But it does mean that you have to maneuver them into taking the first step, such as when the Japanese were antagonized into bombing Pearl Harbor. Immediately that sneak attack was viewed in the worst possible light, a sort of violation of a gentleman's agreement, and cast the United States in the role of the "good guy."

MAB: I remember that you did something similar in your war against the Federated Nations.

BDLP (nodding): The right time for the United States to have deposed the dictator would have been about a decade ago, when she could have clearly staked out the moral high ground.

MAB: But you must agree that the world—excuse me, I mean the Earth as opposed to the Moon—is now a better place?

BDLP: Oh, yes. Any time a dictator is deposed I see it

as cause for rejoicing. But revolution must come from within, not imposed upon a people from the outside. If the population isn't ready for it, a power vacuum will ensue, with no one group able to stake out a clear claim to run the new government.

MAB: Manny? Wyoh? Do you agree with Professor de la Paz?

MG (pauses for a moment): Earth may be a better place now, but is it a safer place? Do you feel safer?

WK: And what about the Iraqi people? Are they really safer than they were before? And look the atrocities your own soldiers have committed. We would never treat our prisoners of war as horribly as your country did.

MG (looking pensive): True. In fact, we didn't.

BDLP: Our apologies, sir. We don't mean to be so critical of your planet or your country.

WK: But you did ask.

MAB: I did. And if I could go one step further, can I take it from your comments that you would consider the United States attack on Afghanistan in October 2001 justified?

(The three glance at each other, then nod.)

BDLP: Absolutely. A clear case of responding to a sneak attack and a continued clear and present threat. I would have done the same, although perhaps differently.

MAB: Thank you. One final question as I see we are almost out of time. What do you think of our president's proposal to send a manned mission to Mars?

MG: I'm surprised you haven't done it already.

WK (nodding): You've had a century of stories to point the way. Isn't it time?

BDLP (first turning to his comrades): Don't judge

them too harshly, friends. They did live through a somewhat different timeline than we did. (turns to interviewer) However, I think we can all agree that it is a disgrace that the Moon in your reality has remained uncolonized. Much more of a disgrace than having it serve as a penal colony. And I feel that way despite having being transported. There is a whole universe out here ripe for exploration, and that should be the main focus of the human race, not these intramural fights within one country or one planet. The human race could be the most noble creation of the universe, if only we would properly assume our role.

MAB: Prof, Manny, Wyoh, thank you again for being with us here today.

