

It's Ruggdly Virile, It's Karate Quick, It's:

BACK NUMBERS CAN BE EASILY PROCURED

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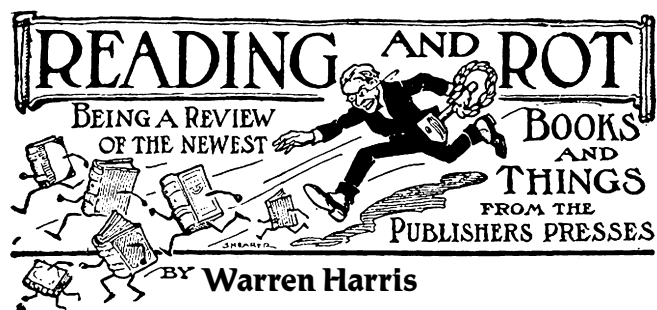
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The Ysabel Kid

The Making of a Lawman

The Gentle Giant

Hell in the Palo Duro

Go Back To Hell

Wagons to Backsight

Trail Boss

.44 Caliber Man

Gun Wizard

Sidewinder

The Wildcats

Troubled Range

To Arms! To Arms! In Dixie!

The South Will Rise Again

The Fast Gun

The Trigger Master (Master of Triggernometry)

By J.T. Edson

After running all of the books from the big book score (see feature article on page 8) through every bookstore that would look at them, I was still left with boxes and stacks and piles of books that no one wanted. Among these were a couple of boxes of Westerns and among these were a couple dozen by this J.T. Edson guy, 19 of them were unique titles.

I decided that before I donate these to the local Friends of the Library group, I should sit down and read the first chapter in the one that looked most interesting. They looked like typical junk Westerns and I'd never heard of this Edson guy, but I wanted to make sure that I wouldn't be throwing away something worth keeping.

So I read the first chapter of *The Making of a Lawman*. I finished the book in one sitting. I then read four more by Edson in the next five days. I read 16 Edsons in 18 days.

Now I'm wondering if I'm going to end up buying back Edson books that I traded in to bookstores. Sigh, I knew this was going to happen.

I'm not saying that Edson is a great writer or plotter. These aren't books that I'm going to re-read again and

again. But I will say that Edson is a terrific storyteller. At his best, he quickly sets the stage, gets the heroes involved in a battle and lets it rip from there. At his worst, he's repetitive and obviously rushed in his writing.

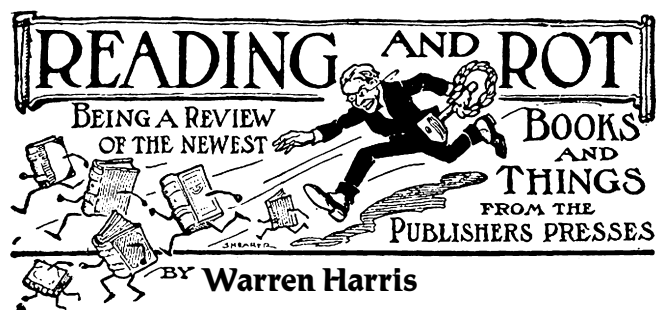
I see some parallels between his work and that of Clarence Mulford. Oh, Mulford is clearly the superior writer and Hoppalong is clearly the better character. But Edson, in his "Floating Outfit" series, has a similar group of cowboys in the quick gunslinger lead and his friends who back his every play. The difference is that Edson is essentially writing the Western equivalent to series pulp hero fiction. Each character is larger than life and has the requisite hero character features. The series is set up to allow the main characters to have a sequence of adventures.

The Floating Outfit is the name of a group of cowboys led by Dusty Fogg. While the idea behind the Floating Outfit is a group of cowboys who handle range work away from the main ranch house, the members of the outfit, in the handful of books I've read anyway, never actually do any ranch work. They are too busy saving Texas, going on secret missions for the U.S. government, tracking down outlaws, aiding the defenseless, taming towns, teaching school, leading wagon trains and meeting aliens from outer space to actually do any ranch work. Occasionally there is a trail drive, but it's usually not stock from the ranch where they are supposed to be working.

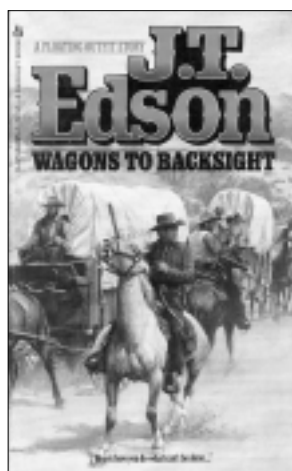
Fogg is the brilliant leader of men who knows ju-jitsu and judo, is the fastest gun in the west and an ace lawman. His companions are the "rangeland Hercules" Mark Coulter, who is second only to Fogg in gun hand speed, and The Ysabel Kid, a part Comanche expert with a Bowie knife and rifle who is able to read trail sign like no other. They eventually acquire a "Johnny Nelson" character in Waco who they take under their wing. Other regulars include Belle Boyd, the Rebel Spy, a beautiful and competent adventuress who is a master of disguise, a tough female deputy and an expert gambler. As Lester Dent would say "Wave Those Tags!" These are extremely competent characters and there is never really any point where there is a doubt that they'll succeed.

Edson is heavily influenced by Phillip Jose Farmer's





Wold-Newton theories of the relationship between major series characters. Every Edson book takes place in the same universe, and most of the main characters are related, either by blood or by a web of interconnecting adventures. Edson has taken the time to link his universe



into that of other popular fiction characters. For example, Cheyenne Bodie, of the TV series Cheyenne, makes a brief guest appearance in *The Ysabel Kid* and Mark Coulter is a “cousin” of Bret Maverick. In addition, with the permission of the Edgar Wallace estate, Fogg’s grandson has an adventure where he meets Wallace’s J.G. Reeder and other Wallace characters. Edson also was allowed by the Burroughs Estate to write a short series of adventures about Bunduki,

Tarzan’s adopted son who is also a blood descendant of characters who are part of the Floating Outfit series.

This interconnectedness results in one of the annoying parts of the books—Lots of footnotes. Sometimes the books resemble an old Marvel comic book with the number of footnoted references to other parts of the series. (Hey True Believers! Devil Dinosaur first met Eon the Living Planet waaaay back in Tales to Admonish 357—Marvelous Marv) In some of the books, you can’t go two pages without a footnote directing you to previous adventures, subsequent adventures, or related series.

Most of the books I read were pretty good. They were short, entertaining and quick to read.

The Ysabel Kid tells the story of how Fogg, the Kid and Coulter first meet up. Fogg is dispatched by his uncle (Ole Devil Hardin, who has his own series of books) to Mexico to convince a group of confederate soldiers to accept amnesty and return home. Along the way he meets up with The Ysabel Kid who is riding the trail to avenge the murder of his father. Along the way they meet up with Mark Coulter who is one of the officers of the Confederate forces. The trio has to smuggle arms into Mexico to buy safe passage back to U.S. from guerilla forces, dodge Mexican forces and convince the rebels to

come home.

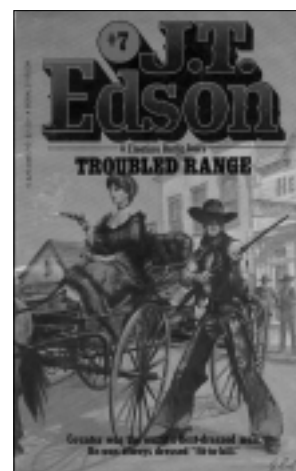
The Making of a Lawman and *Gentle Giant* were both about fighting crime. The first has the team teaching Waco how to be a good frontier lawman. This training is important we’re told, for Waco is destined to have his own series as a Western lawman. I liked *The Making of a Lawman* perhaps because it was the first I read, so the series was still fresh for me. *Gentle Giant* I didn’t much care for. It seemed like a quick adventure wedged in-between some already recorded adventures. I had a hard time believing the title character was really that dense.

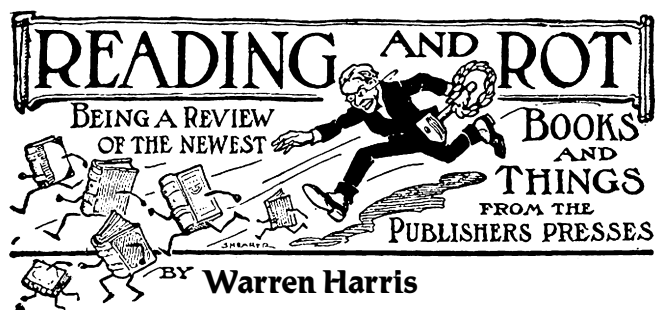
With *The Wildcats* and *Troubled Range* we get to see Mark Coulter in solo action. He’s often overshadowed by Fogg and the Kid in the books featuring the entire group. The formula for these becomes pretty obvious after a bit. Coulter comes to town and meets up with two hellcat women who end up in a catfight. Coulter meets up with, and beds down with, every famous or semi-famous female outlaw of the old west, including Calamity Jane, Belle Starr, Poker Alice and Madame Moustache. He even meets up with Cattle Annie and Little Britches, although he considers them too young to bed. It doesn’t stop them from getting into a catfight over him though.

Edson seems to have a real weakness for catfights. There are quite a few in the 16 books I’ve read so far and frankly, I, and the plots of the books, could have done without most of them.

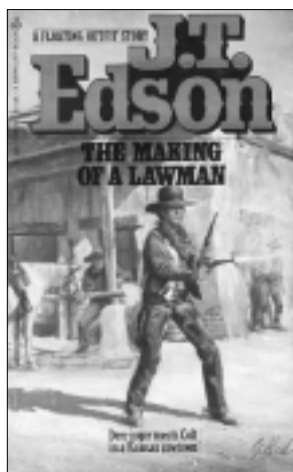
To Arms! To Arms! In Dixie! is a Belle Boyd solo adventure where the former Confederate rebel spy, now working for the U.S. Secret Service, must foil a secret organization that is trying to start a second Civil War. While investigating, she finds out some information that, while not useful to her, is the basis for the next two books in the series *Hell in the Palo Duro* and *Go Back To Hell*. In these, Fogg, The Kid and Waco must go undercover as wanted outlaws to infiltrate a secret “outlaw town” and bring the inhabitants to justice. These are followed by *The South Will Rise Again* which starts out as a Belle Boyd solo story as she continues to track the Brotherhood for Southern Freedom, infiltrating the group disguised as a petty thief. Then Mark Coulter, who is pretending to be Dusty Fogg, is recruited. Then Fogg, the Kid and Waco, still in disguise as wanted criminals from the previous two adventures, infiltrate the gang. With all of the major series characters infiltrated into the gang, the bad guys stand no chance and the brotherhood is quickly put down.

I enjoyed most of these books, but there were two





that I didn't care for. *The Fast Gun* stars Dusty Fogg without the other members of the group. And it's true he is a fast gun, but he really doesn't get much chance to use it. Fogg comes to the aid of three "religious" pilgrims



who are traveling by wagon. After dealing with a minor villain, Fogg spends the rest of the book accompanying the group and falling in love with the girl. He's hooked and proposes marriage. We all know what that means for the girl. She's gotta die or the hero's wandering days are over. (Although Fogg does get married eventually so that his grandson can have a series of adventures as the star of the Justice Company Z books.)

The unusual thing about this book is that it quickly becomes obvious that the pilgrims are really aliens doing a bit of exploring. I can't help but wonder if the aliens are "borrowed" from some other literary work, Zenna Henderson's *The People* series for example. Anyway, she dies, and the aliens wipe his memory of his meeting her. I hate these kind of endings. Why bother if the hero is never going to remember the one true love of his life? It was also pretty dull with far fewer than the usual number of shoot outs.

The Trigger Master is even worse. Only one guy gets shot in the first 120 pages. Usually a half dozen people get shot in the first couple of chapters of an Edson book. The bad guy is terrible. He is a melodramatic villain with an evil plot to cheat at gambling events and keep the local kids from learning to read. Dusty Fog, accompanied by his cousin, Betty Hardin, comes to town disguised as the new schoolteachers to put an end to the bully. Trouble is they don't show up until half way through the book. Of course there is not one, but two, female wrestling bouts. This was one dull book and if it had been the first one I'd read I'd have dumped the rest.

Edson is an Englishman and his authentic Western dialect sometimes misses the mark. He does believe in research, though. He likes to throw in as many authentic details as his research allows. For example, he'll tell

you about every gun every person in a story is carrying and when it went into production and whether or not it's prone to jamming.

To make my last point, I'm going to have to break one of my own rules—the one about not swearing in my pages. I think that I should be a good enough writer to put my points across without resorting to using cuss words. If I'm going to offend, I want it to be my ideas that are offensive, not the fact that I can type a four-letter word. However, if the situation calls for it, I don't agree with any of this nonsense about typing F--- or some such. I think if you need to say fuck, you should go ahead and do it.

This is where Mr. Edson and I disagree. In most of these books Edson writes around the problem of cussing. His cowboys manage to communicate their feelings without needing to say more than "damn" or "Hell." Even those are pretty rare. I never came to a spot where I paused and thought "hey, why didn't that cowboy say 'mother fucker'?"

But in several of the books, most notably in *The Trigger Master* he gets up on his high horse and states that he doesn't go in for any of this permissible language that other writers are using. He then substitutes "something" for "fucking" and proceeds to use it liberally. A villain sneers that no "mother something schoolteacher" is going to get in his way. This is just silly. Either say it, or write around it. Call him a damned dude, a blue-belly, an owlhoot, a snake. If you really must, pay tribute to Chester Himes and call him a mother raper. But "mother something" is silly. It's not like the reader can't figure out the word that goes there and seeing it "spelled" that way tosses the reader right out of the flow and makes him aware of the fact that he's reading a book.

The Sharpshooter

The Prizefighter

By Alan Ladd (James Reasoner)

I picked up a whole stack of these Abilene series Westerns in the book store and then traded all but three before I realized that these were written by James Reasoner under a house name. By the time I figured this out, all but three were gone. One of the three was the first in the series, which according to the information I have was written by somebody else.

Since I enjoyed *The Diablo Grant* I've been on the lookout for more of Reasoner's work and I gave these a try even though I wouldn't have ordinarily been attracted to this series.

The things that turned me off of the trying the series was the superficial stuff. First, it was a packaged series whose author was unknown to me at the time. You expect these sorts of things to vary widely in quality depending on who ghosted which book. Knowing who

the real author is turned these from “discards” to “keepers.” I also didn’t like the set up. I figured that a series about a town would be pretty limited. I would have been more inclined to purchase these if they had been marketed as being about the town marshal instead of the town. The name scheme also emphasizes the formula used. Each book (or at least so far as I’ve read) has the town visited by the title character, who causes trouble and interacts with the locals.

In *The Sharpshooter*, a traveling circus comes to town and brings both interesting characters and trouble. Someone is sabotaging the circus. The deputy and the lovely lady sharpshooter hook up and some locals gets rowdy. I thought the animal escape sequence was shorter than it should have been. Were there some editorial cuts here?



In *The Prizefighter*, a boxer from Chicago witnesses a murder. His testimony can put away a major crime lord, but only if he survives to testify. So a Chicago detective hides him out in Abilene. Of course, the crime lord’s henchmen shows up looking to silence him.

Both of these could have been longer without getting any complaints from me.

I think the series would have benefited from a regular “local” bad guy. The nasty schoolmaster, while unpleasant, isn’t really ambitious enough or dangerous enough to make a good continuing threat.

I enjoyed reading these. They were good entertaining Westerns. So now I’m using my credit to buy back this series when I find them.

Hey James! What’s the relationship between these and your Wind River series? What’s the deal with Orion’s parrot? Was it something Book Creations Inc. required that you use? I notice he gets much less wordage in *The Prizefighter* than in *The Sharpshooter*. What was it like to do a series for Engle?

It feels really weird talking about books written by other members. I suppose I’ll have to get used to it, since I have books written by four members on the old reading stack and several more that were published by members, past present and future.

The Man From the Wilderness

The Way of the Lawless

The Untamed

By Max Brand

A few of the members in recent mailings have commented that Max Brand Westerns are not like the typical

Western and that people are often either regular western readers or Max Brand readers. I picked up *The Man From the Wilderness* and *The Way of the Lawless* in the big book score and they were left over after running the books through all the bookstores that would look at them. I thought these would give me a good opportunity to find out if I am a Max Brand kind of guy or a regular Western kind of guy.

Turns out I’m a regular Western kind of guy. I read the first chapters of the these two and skimmed the endings. I just couldn’t get interested in them.

Whatever it is with Max Brand that clicks with some folks, just doesn’t work for me. In fact, it’s quite the opposite.

The other Westerns I’ve read recently, such as Reasoner’s and Edison’s, I’ve been sucked into the books by the first chapter, and ended up reading them straight through even though I had just intended to skim the first chapter to decide if I wanted to keep them. Brand’s first chapters don’t hold my interest at all.

I think the key is the suspension of disbelief. Reasoner and Mulford are doing their best to convince you that the stories they tell are real. Reading Reasoner, I get the sense of real history being used to make the fiction more believable. Even Edson, as over the top as he can be, is trying to convince you that his characters, while incredibly talented, actually existed.

Brand on the other hand, is telling a tall tale. His main characters seem to be superhuman not only in their talents, but in their being. I just cannot believe that such folk exist, and if they did, their motivations, trials and tribulations are so beyond the ken of man that reading about them is pointless.

After I’d decided to give up on Brand, at least under that pen name, John DeWalt sent me a copy of *The Untamed*, perhaps in revenge for my having sent him a copy of *The Night Horseman*.

I managed to read it even though I couldn’t identify with any of the characters. Whistling Dan Barry is clearly superhuman in an otherworldly way that makes reading about him like reading about some incomprehensible alien.

Barry and a worldly Marshall discuss women as if they are 8-year-olds penning the charter for the He-Man Woman Hater’s Club. There’s a whole bunch of meller-dramer here that I just can’t get past. It’s bunkum that reads as if it were from a 19th century dime novel. We’re supposed to believe that a bunch of hardened outlaws are cowed by a dame just because she’s a lady. We’re expected to believe that Barry is so naive that he doesn’t even know when he’s being insulted, yet he’s wise enough to judge the mood of a lynch mob.

I’ve read some George Challis that I’ve enjoyed, so I won’t give up on Mr. Faust entirely, but I’m going to leave his Westerns alone.

The Men Who Make The Argosy



PACKARD, FRANK L.

Author of "The Locked Book," "The Big Shot," "The Gold Skull Murders," etc.

Like many other successful writers, Frank L. Packard started life in a different profession. Born in Montreal in 1877, he graduated twenty years later from McGill University, Montreal, as an engineer, afterward taking his post-graduate course in Liège, Belgium. Thereafter, for a good many years, he followed engineering, and, as the result of his experience as a young engineer, in his well-known railroad books such as "Running Special," "The Wire Devils," "The Night Operator," and countless short stories can be found the atmosphere and romance of pioneer railroading in the Rockies and Canadian north-west.

Since he definitely adopted writing as his career, Mr. Packard has traveled widely throughout North and South America, Europe, Australia and the Orient in search of material for his books.

In 1912-1913 Mr. Packard and his wife made a trip around the world, visiting especially South Africa, New Zealand, and the South Sea Islands. Here, in Samoa he had the rare honor of being elevated by the natives to the rank of chief—under the impressive title of Chief Tamafaiga (Big War Chief). A series of South Seas stories was the direct result of his visit to the tropics, and under this category, to such popular titles as "Two Stolen Idols," "Shanghai Jim," "The Devil's Mantle," et cetera, must be added that of "The Gold Skull Murders," which is his latest novel.

Sitting in his study, overlooking Lake St. Louis, in Lachine, near Montreal, Mr. Packard, apart from his



Frank L. Packard

short stories, has already written twenty-six novels, ranging from thrilling railroad yarns to underworld adventures by sea and land, a large number of which made their first appearance in the Munsey publications.

Nearly all of these novels have been translated into foreign languages, and the keynote of their success is their sincerity, for Mr. Packard writes of what he knows. He has studied, at first hand, criminal psychology in the New York Bowery, in Paris and in London; he knows the water fronts of Honolulu and the haunts of beach combers in a dozen South Sea Islands; he has heard the whispered intrigues of Singapore and Hong-kong and all this he has woven in colorful and masterly fashion into his absorbing stories.

In publishing in seven installments "The Gold Skull Murders," Mr. Packard's latest full-length novel, it will, we are sure, interest our readers to know that the first check Mr. Packard ever received as an author was one sent to him twenty-five years ago, by Bob Davis, for a little storiette that took up scarcely more than two pages in Munsey' Magazine.

—The Men Who Make The Argosy, September 26, 1931

KENT, JOHN

You will be interested to know that one of our authors is occupied these days with the grim business of war. John Kent is the pen name of a British army officer who was ordered to the Front several months ago.

This week is Mr. Kent's first appearance in Argosy, although he has published a number of stories in other American magazines. We were very much afraid that Mr. Kent's military duties would mean no more fiction for us, but recently we were surprised and delighted to receive another story from him. It's a highly entertaining tale of India, and you'll be reading it very soon.

—Argonotes, January 13, 1940

WHIPPLE, CHANDLER

Generally the editors of Argosy remain anonymous for all time; but your correspondent below quite accurately recognizes an author who was a distinguished editor of this magazine.

—Argonotes, June 8, 1940

Pulp Sightings:

The answer to our Pulp Sightings question last issue came from Graham Stone who identified both cover sources. The “Vantage Point” cover comes from the Spring 1950 issue of Planet Stories. Although Graham doesn’t say so, it seems to illustrate Edwin L Graber’s “Flame Jewel of the Ancients.” He also identified the



Back Numbers

“robo flop” cover as being reprinted from the January 1950 issue of Startling Stories. The cover novel was “The Return of Captain Future.”

Mike Chomko identified the Startling Stories cover, while Brian Earl Brown didn’t know the dates, but correctly identified the magazines that both were reprinted from.

Here’s both the original covers and the new versions side by side.



The Big Book Score

I really didn't mean to come home with 2000+ genre paperbacks. Really. It just worked out that way. How could I say no when it was just \$20 out of pocket and a few trips with my car loaded down with books?

It all started when I stopped by Kayo Books on the way to see a play in San Francisco. I could barely get in the door because the shop was so full of boxes of books. Ron had made a big purchase from a book scout who had picked up more than 90 boxes of books from the estate of a reader in Santa Clara. Whoever this guy was, he liked series men's adventure, Vietnam War, Western, cold war espionage, and post-WWII novels and random assorted junk pop fiction. In order to get the books he wanted, Ron had to buy the entire batch. While there was some good stuff, including some Doc omnibus and lots of interesting and odd series fiction, at least half was, to put it indelicately, junk. Some was in poor condition, some were just titles that nobody wants. Some of the dross included a Danielle Steele novel, a complete set of the "Angelique" novels translated from French and multiple volumes of near future submarine thrillers.



Ron told me that he would probably end up just recycling quite a few boxes of books as they were not the type of stock he carried and it wouldn't be worth it to him to haul them around to area bookstores and try to sell them. Condition on many of the books was also a factor. Many had bookstore stamps on them saying "no return". Some were dirty and rat-chewed. Some had hard-to-remove price stickers. I quickly offered to help him "recycle" the ones he couldn't use.

These were books that really didn't have much value and there would be too much sweat equity required to turn these into salable books.

The deal we struck was that I'd pay \$20 for the boxes the books were in and share some of the trade credit I gained from Bay Books, a bookstore in Concord that carries used series fiction. (The cost of the boxes was because the book scout had insisted that he be paid for the nearly new magazine boxes that he had used to pack about half the books.) I only got the books that were marginal, of course. Kayo would keep the good books for store stock.

We loaded my car that day to the gun wales with the less desirable books. I had to make several trips with the car loaded down over the course of the next several weeks to get all of these back to my place. Ron was happy to get some space in his store. Unfortunately that meant that my tiny apartment looked like a bookstore had thrown up inside it. I couldn't get to "my" books because of all of the piles and boxes of "junk" books in front of the bookcases holding the good books.

So I sorted and cleaned and took stickers off of the books as fast as I could so that I could start making the rounds of bookstores in an effort to convert these piles of books into a few good books that I wanted. Of course, I took a few interesting titles for myself, but by far the majority I was determined to get rid of. I think I kept less than 5%, probably closer

The Gentle Madness, the Collyer Brothers and Me

Collecting books has been called the Gentle Madness, and if that is so, I must be among the maddest of the mad.

My recent move into a larger living space has paradoxically made me confront just how little space I have and how I've filled it. Thus I've been pondering the gentle madness of collecting, or perhaps the not so gentle madness of accumulating.

As one of the madder things I collect, or accumulate, in addition to books are true stories of the unusual, it is fitting to begin with the odd but true story of the mad Collyer brothers, who collected, or more precisely accumulated, until it killed them.

While accounts vary in the details, the story of the Collyers begins with an anonymous phone call to New York City police on March 21, 1947. There was a dead body, the caller said, in the old three-story brownstone at 2078 Fifth Avenue.

Police were familiar with the house, it was the home that Langley Collyer shared with his brother Homer. They often got crank calls about it. The brothers' attorney said Homer delighted in having people take him for a poor eccentric. Langley dressed in 19th century fashion.

Langley was known as the "Ghost Man of Harlem" for his habit of prowling the streets and back alleys during his midnight foraging trips. He had filled the house and yard with an astounding assortment of junk. Homer had not been seen in many years, housebound after going blind and becoming crippled.

They came from a prominent New York family. The home they lived in was inherited from their mother. Their father, a prominent New York physician, left the family and when he died, the brothers moved all of the contents from his home into their mother's house. Even before they became

to 3%. In fact, Ray Skirsky and Rich Berman each got more of these than I did, and John DeWalt has no idea of the avalanche of submarine novels about to engulf him.

My first step was to take down eight boxes to Bay Books in Concord. They often have good books and have large sections devoted to genre fiction. That's unusual in the Bay Area where many bookstores won't even bother to look at mystery, Western or thriller. Many won't even take in Science Fiction on trade.

I picked up some good trade credit, and quickly spent it on small stack of books that I really wanted. I thought that I was really doing well, and I looked forward to moving the rest of the books. They took about four of the eight boxes and gave me \$75 in trade credit, which I thought was a great percentage and a decent amount of credit. I spent it all on the spot.

Then I took the remaining boxes to the nearby Half Price books. These guys are real rip off artists. They were willing to take the four remaining boxes, but offered me only \$2.50 in trade. I turned them down, taking them instead to a local paperback exchange and picked up some more credit, although it wasn't as good as they only let you pay for 70 percent in credit, so you end up paying cash as well. But they gave me a lot more than \$2.50 and they are close to where I live.

So far this was working great. It was a lot of work and time, but I was getting some useful credit out of it. Enough to justify the bridge tolls and gas.

I ran into a spot of trouble on the second trip to Bay Books. This time with 20 boxes of the best of the books. I thought I had been dealing with the owner, but it turns out that it was just the manager, who had been happy, or at least not unhappy, to see the books. I had called ahead and was told that they'd be happy to look at them and that I could bring them in anytime. I'm always careful to let the buyers know that I'm in no hurry and that they can take all the time they need and that I won't mind at all if they push me to the back of the line of people to deal with.

But after I got there, the owner decided that he didn't like me bringing in lots of books as it took up too much time, so he said in the future that I had a choice of only bringing in no more than 2 boxes or to take them elsewhere. He wasn't too kind about it. So I just said that, ok, I'd take them elsewhere. He got insulted. Several of the employees took my side, privately, and told me that he was just a crotchety old man. He didn't seem to understand that if it was fine for him to offer me a choice based on his business needs, then it should be fine for me to make my choice based on my business needs.

Anyway, the manager said to just ignore him and bring in the next batch, which I figured would be at least 10 to 15 more boxes. But based on my experience with the owner, I've removed Bay Books from my list of stores to shop books to.

They gave me \$150 in credit for this second batch. That works out to \$7.50 a box, down from the almost \$10 a box I got the first time.

I suspect that the manager low-balled me to mollify the owner. They may have also been overstocked from my first trip in.

So it wouldn't be worth it to drive down with only two boxes. At

recluses, the home was filled with enough furniture and belongings to fill two houses.

Among the items was their father's collection of 15,000 medical books. In addition to those, there were law books owned by Homer, trained as an attorney and engineering books owned by Langley, trained as an engineer.

And if the other junk wasn't enough, there were the newspapers. Supposedly every issue of every New York newspaper since Homer went blind. Langley was saving them so his brother could read them when he regained his eyesight. (Actually, many of the papers found in the house predated Homer's blindness.)

Langley never stopped trying to cure his brother, combing through their father's medical books seeing answers. Among the reported treatments: a diet of black bread and peanut butter and a diet of 100 oranges a week.

Langley apparently never worked, instead tinkering with inventions such as a device to vacuum the insides of pianos. This would have been useful to the Collyers, there were at least 10 grand pianos, and perhaps as many as 14 at the end, and two organs. He also had a Model-T engine that supplied their electricity after Con-Ed turned off the power for non-payment.

Although local rumor had it that he was the richest man in New York City, in the early 1940s Langley stopped paying the mortgage on the house and the bank began eviction proceedings. Langley at first promised to pay the bank, but after no check arrived, the bank hired workers who began to haul the accumulated debris from the back yard of the home. Langley reportedly screamed at them from the window that they had no right to take his property, and with bad grace wrote a check on the spot to pay off the house.

The brothers also stopped paying both income and property taxes. A few times over the years Langley would be interviewed by the local newspapers,



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the last rate, I'd be getting \$15 in trade each trip at most. It costs me a \$2 bridge toll and about say \$4 in gas at \$2 a gallon, which was the price of gas at the time. Plus it takes me three hours round trip just in driving time and takes up my whole day. It just isn't worth it for a total of \$3 in trade per driving hour after expenses, particularly if I split the trade 50/50 with Kayo. And \$6 out of pocket does not equal \$6 in trade credit.



In addition, I didn't want to spend one day every weekend for the next 10 weeks driving to Concord and I didn't want to take two and a half months to get the books out of my apartment. Although that's pretty much how long it's taken.

I spent a little less than half of the trade credit and kept the rest to pass along to Kayo Books per our agreement. I was hoping this batch would be close to \$200 total based on my past experience, but it didn't happen.

So I decided I'd rather try shopping them around Sonoma County. I was hitting diminishing returns at Bay Books and not just

in the price per box I was getting. The first time they took nearly half the books, the second time, even though I thought they were getting a bit better stock mix, they only took about a quarter.

After driving home, I got \$55 in credit at Copperfield's in Santa Rosa on five boxes that Bay Books had already gone through. They seemed happy to see the trade. I think \$11 per box is pretty good considering they were getting Bay's rejects, although I did bring in only the five boxes that were heavy in science fiction which was what they were buying. The nice thing about Copperfield's is that they have three local stores that sell used books so I have three times the chance of finding something good. Unfortunately, they often shut down their buying desks for a month or more at a time when they get overstocked.

I then ran the four boxes left over from that through the local paperback exchange which gave me another \$40 in trade even while complaining that I had mostly junk. I think this was pretty good, even though this store is my last resort as they make you pay the tax on the trade in cash and pay 30% of each trade in cash.

I then ran some of the books Bay Books rejected through Treehorn Books. They are a bit choosier and didn't want much. They only took \$7 in trade for a handful of books. They had a \$17 book that I wanted to get, so I brought them some fresh stock that Bay Books hadn't seen hoping to get enough to get the book I wanted. The buyer turned up his nose.

At this point I became obsessed with getting that book without spending any cash. I was determined to get that book through my skills as a book scout.

This was a Collyer moment. (see sidebar) The book was the Arkham House collection of M.P. Sheil stories featuring his oddball detectives, Prince Zelseski and Cummings King Monk. This is not a book I needed. I just wanted it because it's mentioned in some reference book or other. I have at least one other Shiel book, *The Purple Cloud*, and I have never gotten around to reading it. So in all likelihood this is a book that will just sit on the shelf taking up space for no reason. But I can certainly justify it, at least to my own deluded self. It's a classic, it's the only edition, it's out of print, it's an Arkham House, I'm interested in occult detectives,

and a few details of the brother's lives would see print. Such as that Homer had visions of red buildings that Langley painted to show him when he regained his sight. Homer had read to his brother by kerosene lamp until his eyesight grew too faded. Then they spent their evenings in conversation or listening to the radio, or trying use their junk to invent odd devices.

But the extent of the Collyer brothers accumulating habits were unknown until Policeman William Barker, responding to the anonymous call finally gained access to the house through a second-story window the day following the phone call via a ladder let down from an adjoining building. After a several hour effort aided by firefighters from Emergency Squad 6, he crossed the completely filled room to where the body of Homer Collyer sat.

An autopsy revealed he had gone days without eating, and had finally died of heart failure. His poor health made him helpless without the aid of his brother. The search then began for the missing Langley.

As neighbors related stories of the mysterious house to newspaper reporters and a number of cousins joined the curious crowd that gathered, police and public workers began the search, aided by a cousin, Fire Chief George Collyer of Rutherford, New Jersey.

During the second day alone, workers removed five tons of assorted junk, a sick cat, and several tickets to the annual excursion of the Sunday school of Trinity Episcopal Church to Glen Island dated Saturday, July 8, 1905.

Other days saw the workmen removing seven foot long tree limbs, 20 inches in diameter. A phony Stradivarius was found as were pictures of girls in bathing suits and old advertising circulars. There were old bicycles, gas chandeliers, the folding top of a horse-drawn carriage, an automobile radiator and dressmakers dummies.

One room alone held 3,000 books, a Steinway piano, old telephone directories dating back to 1914, the jawbone

I might write a review, I might write an article, Sheil is an important name in pre-pulp fiction. Yeah, and all that means squat if I end up with a book that I'll never get around to reading.

But at least if I didn't pay any money for it, I'd feel better about it. That doesn't take into account that I could have earned the money to buy the book with less effort and investment of time and less carting around of heavy boxes just by working a little overtime. But I guess that's my point. I'm every bit as crazy as Langley Collyer. Deluding myself and filling my living space with objects that I think will enrich my existence, but instead are just degrading my quality of life.

After inquiring about what Treehorn was buying, I went across the street to Copperfield's and bought a hardback military non-fiction book for \$20 in trade credit and then traded it to Treehorn for enough, with the other credit I had, to buy the book. I know, I know – it wasn't a good use of the trade credit. But good sense so rarely coincides with a collector's desire. And I have almost more than I can reasonably spend in credit at Copperfield's. I'll keep thinking that until the day the credit runs out and I have to start paying cash for books again.

I have to be careful, as I tend to be less discriminating about what I'm buying when I don't have to reach into my pocket and pay cash. This defeats the whole point of getting rid of stuff, if I just replace it with more stuff I don't need and will eventually have to dispose of.

By late June, my early successes have faded. While the local Copperfield's is willing to take in science fiction, they are not buying much else. Everyone else is either not buying at all, or is full up on the sort of stock I have. The best of the 40+ boxes has been traded in, and I'm left with 23 boxes of the dregs that are in such poor condition, or are in such low demand, that no store will take them. I've run all of the books through all of the stores that will look at them.

As a last try, I took 18 boxes down to a couple of San Jose stores. One gave me \$35 in credit, but I only managed to spend \$30 of it. The other, a really great bookstore I'd never been to before gave me only \$18, or a buck a box. The buyer politely suggested that I might want to donate the books rather than waste any more time trying to interest a bookstore in them. I ended up finding \$50 in books I couldn't leave without. So that was a loss. But I did find a copy of *The Girl From Farris's* for \$1.99 so that alone was worth it.

I've learned a lot. I now know which bookstores have the best trade policies. I have become confident enough of my book scouting skills that I have been buying good condition science fiction at library book sales at \$3 per bag for use in getting trade credit.

I have also learned that some books just are not worth anything. I actually threw away a box and a half of real junk without a single qualm.

I really enjoyed this experience, but in a hobby sort of way, and not in an entrepreneurial way. If I had been doing this for used sprockets, it would have been a bust.

I had been keeping track of how much in trade credit I was getting and how many books I had gotten rid of, but it quickly became a book-keeping nightmare. Added to this is that I've purged my own to-read list and been buying bags of cheap SF for trade. It's been too difficult to keep this stuff separate, so I don't know how much of the good credit I've been getting has come from the big score, how much from my collection and how much from bag sales.

It is very nice to have my living room back. I have the books in my

of a horse, the engine block of a Model T Ford, bundles of neatly tied newspapers and numerous campaign buttons, including one that read "vote no on women suffrage". And that was just the list the New York Times printed.

On April 5, the New York Times reported "His cover-alls grimy, his face smudged with dirt, Detective Joseph Whitmore sat wearily on the steps leading to the decayed Collyer 'mansion' at 2078 Fifth Avenue yesterday and said: 'This search is becoming a nightmare. Everywhere you turn it's junk, junk, junk.'"

A small arsenal was found in the house, including 3 revolvers, a 16-gauge shotgun, 2 rifles, a 24 inch French bayonet and a 36 inch cavalry sabre.

The story became so notorious that Andrei A. Gromyko, Russia's delegate to the U.N. Security Council, was spotted reading the paper and was quoted as saying "Who knows, we might find out today where Langley Collyer is."

At first, Langley was thought to be alive, and sightings of him were reported, a body found in the river was at first identified as him. Special attention was paid to finding the secret underground passageways that rumor had it connected the house to another abandoned house across the street that had once belonged to the brothers until the IRS had seized it. But the passageways were not there to be found and Langley had met his fate in the same house that claimed his brother.

Langley, fearful of thieves, had boarded up windows and doors, and used the newspapers and junk accumulated on his midnight forays to build deadfalls throughout the house. Like a human mole, he tunneled his way through the debris that filled the house, avoiding the tripwires and trigger mechanisms, until the day he made a mistake.

On April 8, Detective Whitmore was one of those who found Langley, crushed under newspapers he himself had rigged as a deathtrap. The tunnel

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car and ready to take to the library for donation. There's just one catch. Ron just emailed me that he has another few boxes ready for me to pick up. Ah well, perhaps there are some more Edson or Reasoner books to be found.

I am NOT Langley Collyer...Yet

When I first moved into the “junior” one-bedroom apartment in January, it seemed like I had all the space in the world. Sure, the closet was quickly filled with boxes of pulps, and sure there were boxes of packed “stuff” everywhere, but I had plenty of space to move around.

There is a long hallway that seems to stretch forever. I actually have a separate bedroom and living room. After spending my entire adult life living in studio apartments or college dorm rooms, it's quite the novelty to have to leave one room and go to another room just to go to bed. I no longer have to lower the Murphy bed or unpack the sleeper sofa or rearrange the futon to get someplace to sleep.

To give me space for my books, I bought an eight-shelf tall, four-foot-wide, pine shelving unit that was designed for video tapes. It's just the right size for paperbacks. It's narrow so it doesn't take up as much space as a regular bookcase and it holds a lot of books.

Things were great, I was finally going to be able to get my stuff out of storage in Reno. I had a five by 10 storage unit in Reno, one that I've had for nine years. I had never planned on having a storage unit, certainly not for that length of time. I was forced to get the unit when I had to move all that I owned out of my folk's house in a hurry. (They moved, then once I was out of the house they moved back. I still say it was a sneaky way to get their spare bedroom back.)

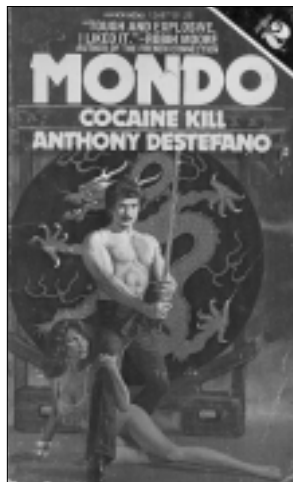
This was just supposed to be for a year or so, until I graduated college, got a job, moved into a real apartment. Then it was just until I had enough money to move into a real apartment. Then I moved to California, and it was just until I found a “real” place in the Bay Area. It was always just for a few more months until I got my act together and found a place to settle down. I found this was not an easy task with the rental prices in the Bay Area. It's very expensive to live here.

In hindsight it would have been much better to haul my furniture to the dump and buy new furniture once I found a permanent place.

But much of the storage unit was taken up by boxes of books, boxes of comics, and other “valuables.” It would be difficult to replace the books in my collection if I lost them. Sure some of them are common, but I had my collection of Howard paperbacks, my Pyramid Shadows, my copy of the hardback *Hardboiled Omnibus* that would be hard to replace.

So month after month I paid the rental fee and dreamed of the day I would finally have all of this out of storage.

Finally that day arrived. I got up at 5 a.m., walked to the bus stop, rode the Amtrak bus to Martinez, took an Amtrak train to Sacramento and rode the Amtrak bus to Reno. (Believe it or not, this is the cheapest, fastest



way to get from Santa Rosa to Reno without driving.) Once in Reno, I

consisted of a chest of drawers on one side, an old bedspring on the other and the ceiling deathtrap made up of a suitcase, three metal bread boxes and many bundles of newspapers.

The only way to clear the house was to remove the roof and have workmen clear the house layer by layer. It took three weeks to remove 136 tons of material. The salvageable material was auctioned off for \$1,800. Most of the junk, though, ended at the local dump.

But this junk was a precious treasure to Langley. (I can't help but think that Homer was at best a passive participant and at worst a hostage to his brother's hoarding, although some reports say that he shared Langley's eccentricities and helped his brother board up the house and turn it into a fortress before he went blind.) Langley had a reason for every piece. Each piano, he claimed, was tuned slightly differently, for example. The Model-T engine was used to generate power.

Langley had been a concert pianist and liked to play for his brother, thus explaining the musical instruments. Both brothers were inventors and tinkerers. They listened to radio broadcasts on home-built crystal sets powered by their self-built generator. There were rumors of the vast wealth hidden in the house, and they had been the victims of break-in attempts. This explains the traps and the small arsenal. Langley claimed that the neighborhood kids kept breaking the windows, so he boarded them up instead of replacing the glass.

The brothers had a reason for every thing they possessed.

And that brings me to my hoarding. I look around at the things I've accumulated, the things I've paid storage fees for nine years so I could keep, and I wonder just what I was thinking.

The new apartment, although being only a junior one-bedroom, seemed so spacious when I first moved in back in January. Imagine: a bedroom AND a living room. Sheer luxury. But

walked to a motel that was close by where I was to pick up the moving van the next morning. I stopped at four bookstores and the university library on the way. I'm hopeless. At one bookstore they had one of the Quiller novels that was on my want list, but it was so dust-covered, (literally an eighth of an inch of dust on top) that I passed. I later found a copy of this book in the storage unit. I'd forgotten it was there.

The next day I opened my unit and started to move stuff out. I hadn't been to Reno in three years and then only for a day or two, so opening the unit was like opening a tomb in the Valley of the Kings. There were stacks and stacks of gray, dust-covered, box-like shapes. Blowing the thick dust off the top of each box revealed the hieroglyphics: "Books June 1996," "Books September 94," "Books May 97." At least I packed these in small boxes so I didn't hurt my back loading them.

Some things I greeted like they were old friends such as my comfy reading chair and my bed. You really don't appreciate having a real bed until you've slept on futons and Murphy beds for nine years. I have the best reading chair in the world. It's really comfortable. I can read for hours with my feet propped up on a footstool. Even though I've gained weight in the past nine years, the butt impressions still fit like a glove.

But there was a lot in the unit that I can't believe I paid to store. There was a rickety old desk that I was keeping to be a computer desk. Except that now I don't own a working computer. (However I do have a computer, I keep saying that all I need to do is replace the hard drive and I'll have a computer again. A computer that was obsolete in 1996, but a computer none-the-less. Yeah, and all I need to gain my independence from Pacific Gas and Electric is an old Model-T engine to generate power.) There was a futon frame that I had planned to use as a couch. Once I hauled it back to Santa Rosa, I found that there just wasn't room in my living room for it, and I never would have used it anyway. It ended up at Goodwill. But only after taking up space for five months as I put off getting rid of it. Then there was the sword. I have no idea what rationale I used to justify owning a sword. It's not even a real sword, just a rusty, flimsy stage sword. What the heck do I need with a fake sword? I could see some use for a real sword. Not much, but some. But there isn't anything more useless than a fake sword. Perhaps I'll ask the local college theater department if they need a prop.

And finally there were the problem of the comic books. I was certain that I had nine boxes of comics in storage. This was pared down from the 18 boxes I had originally stored at my parents' place. When I opened up the unit, there were 11 boxes. The damn things had been breeding there in the dark. Comic books and cockroaches have much in common. When I got home, I unloaded 12 boxes. They breed even faster in the back of a moving van.

Getting the paperback books on shelves required that I buy two more video shelving units. These are a little smaller, only seven shelves high by three feet wide. This gives me 66 feet of storage just for paperback fiction titles. At the rate I read paperbacks, I'll run out of space before the end of the year. Some of the shelves are already getting tight.

Then OfficeMax had a great sale on tall bookcases. I bought three. I filled them all. My living room is more like a library. I suppose it's fitting as I do more reading than living. All together my living room/dining room has 12 bookcases. All filled to capacity and then some. I have two more shelving units in the bedroom. Also filled to capacity. I am now out of space to put up any more bookcases.

I was amazed at the things I didn't remember having. I had no idea

after emptying my Reno storage unit, much like the Colyers moving their father's possessions into their home, and scavenging more than 2000 paperback books in a few weeks' time, like Langley's scavenging trips, I find the apartment that once seem so large to be too small. I have to carefully wind my way between stacks of meticulously sorted trash paperbacks to keep from knocking them over. If I don't do something, I'll end up like the Collyers, although I haven't taken to rigging newspaper deadfalls. Yet.

There are still mysteries surrounding the Collyer brothers, although the house they lived in has long since been demolished and the junk hauled away. Just who made that anonymous call to the police? Langley was buried so deep in newspapers that it took weeks before his body was found. Homer was on the second floor, and there were so many Christmas trees and baby carriages and dressmakers' dummies between him and the window, that firefighters had to chop holes with axes to get to where he sat, beard reportedly grown long enough to touch the floor. He wasn't found until the day after the call was made. So how did someone know a dead body was in the house? Homer and Langley were both dead by the time the call was made, and the house itself didn't have phone service. Homer once said there was no one with whom he cared to talk. No one but Homer and Langley had been in the house for years, no one but Langley could have negotiated the burglar traps and labyrinth of garbage to find them.

While one man signed an affidavit that he was the one that made the call, police were skeptical of his story that two men had told him of the body in the house. One detective, speaking to the New York Times, said that the police had frequently received hoax phone calls about the house. Sooner or later, he said, one of the calls was bound to be true.

And do any of the mysterious red paintings Langley made of Homer's visions survive?

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that I had August Derleth's *Mask of Cthulhu* and *Trail of Cthulhu*. I bought a hardcover omnibus edition of his work because I didn't realize I had already read most of the material. That tells me just how forgettable Derleth's stories are.

I was also amazed at what I've apparently lost over the years. I keep finding (or rather not finding) books that are missing. These are books that I remember owning, and often they are books that should have been packed right next to books I still have. I know I owned a copy of the huge hardback collection of Buck Rogers comic strips. How is it that I still have the *Smithsonian Book of Comics* and *The Celebrated Cases of Dick Tracy*, but not this? Other books I'm missing are *The Mad Scientists Club* by Bertrand R. Brinley, (needed for an article I want to do for the Mystery and Adventure Series Review) *What Cops Know*, a book on police by Connie Fletcher, *Justice Inc.* by Kenneth Robeson, *Weird Tales #2* edited by Lin Carter, *An Informal History of the Pulp Magazines* by Ron Goulart, *Shadowed Millions* and *Gray Fist* by Maxwell Grant, *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* by Robert A. Heinlein, *Hail, Hail the Gang's All Here* by Ed McBain and who knows how many more that have yet to come to mind.



Unless I'm looking for a book or I'm reminded of it by another book in the same series, how would I ever know if a given book is gone?

Some of these, like the Goulart book, are things that I had at the old Santa Rosa address, so I hope they are here someplace. But I've opened every box and nothing has turned up, so unless I stuck it in some really unobvious place, they are just not here. I can't see how I don't have a copy of *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*, it's one of my favorite books, one I've read more than once, and intend to read again. All of the other Heinleins are there, or at least all the ones I remember owning, plus one, *I Will Fear No Evil*, that I swear I've never read.

But the problem I'm facing isn't the things that aren't there. It's the junk that is.

At one time, my comic books were my most precious possession. I could never think about giving up even one. Now, faced with finding a place to store these I have a different view. Such as: "what could I have been thinking when I bought these?" Sure some of this stuff I want to keep for nostalgia reasons, or because it's genuinely good. But there's a lot of it that I can't remember buying, can't understand why I spent money on it, and can't figure out why I paid so much money to store it all these years.

Now I'm starting to look at the books in my library. If I've read a book, I like to have a copy on the shelf. This applies to books I like and want to read again, and to books I didn't like and will never read again. This seems to be a very Collyerish sort of thing to do. Just like Langley Collyer I can come up with very plausible—plausible to me anyway—excuses as to why I'm cluttering up my life with books I've already read, many of which I know I'll never look at again. Maybe I'll need one for research for an article for Back Numbers, maybe somebody on the pulpmags newsgroup will have a question that only access to one of these books can answer, maybe I'll accidentally buy a book I've already read if I don't have a reminder on the shelf. Are these really any better than Homer Collyer's reasons for saving all those newspapers and books?

Here is a partial list of books from the big book score that I've kept for myself.

As you can see, if these are the best books I skimmed from the boxes, the rest was really junk.

Keep in mind that I took out any books I wanted for myself long before I shopped these around to bookstores.

Some of these were books that I wanted, but were in very damaged condition, or they were books that were in ok condition and looked like they might be interesting to read. The fact that I pulled these out of the stack should not be read as an endorsement.)

Lawless Land (The Judge Western series)

Hank Edwards

Missouri Mama/Free Press Filly

"Dirk Fletcher"

(reviewed last issue)

Johnny Nelson (plus several other books in this series.)

Clarence E. Mulford

This and several other Mulfords that I already had were the best of the lot. Good condition books by an author I like. I was able to replace several of my bulky hard covers with nice paperbacks.

The Peacemaker

The Sharpshooter

The Prizefighter

Alan Ladd (2nd two by Reasoner)
(Abilene series, reviewed this issue)

Assorted beat-up Shell Scott novels

Richard S. Prather

Jack Carter's Law

Ted Lewis

The Lions of Tsavo

James L. Haley

The Cisco Kid (very poor shape)

O. Henry

Working For the Man

Murder's Not an Odd Job

(both in the Hardman Series)

Ralph Dennis (covers stuck together by water damage)

Captain Sinbad

I have graphic novels in Japanese, a language that I thought I might learn at one time. Not only have I given up any hope of learning to read Japanese, now all of these are available in English translations.

I have books by authors I despise. Every time I see Lionel Fenn's *Seven Spears of the W'dch'ck* all I can think of is how awful it was. I don't even remember what it was about, just that it is the worst book I've ever read to the end. I don't even want to think about the Piers Anthony books I read in junior high school. (My only excuse is I lived in Winnemucca, Nevada, a town without a new bookstore. In fact the used bookstore was in a plumber's shop. I didn't have much choice in genre fiction, just what showed up at the book rack at the Raley's grocery store and what the county library would buy.)



So I've turned over a new leaf, I'm getting rid of stuff I clearly don't need. As a start, I'm going to pare down the comics to at most nine boxes, six if it isn't too painful.

I'm purging my "to-read" list. At the rate I read books, if I never buy another book, I have at least eight to nine years of reading stored away. It's time I realized that I'm never going to read *Melmoth the Wanderer* no matter how long I live. I'm taking out at least 100 books and trading or selling them. John DeWalt thinks this is nuts, that there is nothing wrong with owning books that you know you'll die long before you get a chance to read them. I disagree. If I don't think there is at least a chance I'll read a book, why did I waste my money buying it in the first place and why should I have it take up much-needed space. Even without those 100 books, I'll still have hundreds to read.

His argument is that someday I'll retire and have lots of time to read. Well, I have 35 years to buy more books to make up for the books I'm getting rid of now before I reach retirement age. If, that is, I can retire at 67, which I doubt. And I doubt I'll get any more read in retirement than I do now. I thought I'd get lots of reading done when I realized that my new apartment gets zero television reception. I don't know what's taking up the time I used to spend watching TV, but it's not reading or getting anything constructive done.

It depresses me when I look at the bookcases and realize that I will die before I get around to reading all of the books I now own. Now that I have my books entered into a database, I can say that I've read 64.2 percent of the fiction books that I own. DeWalt thinks that's an amazingly high percentage. I disagree. I haven't even read two thirds of the books I own. Six years ago my to-read list topped 300 books and I started a concerted effort to read more books that I buy. Today I have more than 800 books on the to-read list. I'd hate to think what it would be if I hadn't spent the past six years trying to reduce that number. I can see the use of having a reasonable number of unread books around – just enough that I have at least one book that fits whatever mood I might be in. But 800 is just too much.

So I am going to do something before I turn into Langley Collyer, before I have to tunnel through the junk to move around my apartment, before I am crushed under the weight of my own possessions.

Comic books are going to my nephew, he's the same age as when I

Graham Diamond
 Terror in Rio (Colonel Tobin series)
 (water damage)
 Alan Cailou
 Several "Fox" sea novels, poor condition.
 Adam Hardy
 The Red Fathom
 Robert Edmond Alter
 Mongo's (sic) Back in Town
 E. Richard Johnson
 The Caper
 Thomas B. Reagan
 City of Whispering Stone
 George Chesbro
 The Friends of Eddie Coyle
 George V. Higgins
 Kidnapped
 The Master of Ballantrae
 Robert Louis Stevenson
16 "Floating Outfit" Westerns
 J.T. Edson
 2 more "Floating Outfit Westerns
 J.T. Edson
 Journey to the Flame
 Richard Monaco
 Crown of the Sword God
 Manning Norvil
 Red Beard
 Michael Resnick
 (I don't know if these last two are really from Kayo or if they were left over from a bag sale.)

I did buy some of the books that Ron was keeping for store stock and since I got to go through the boxes right after the sale, I picked up a few cool books that way.

These included:

Blackhawk

Bought for John DeWalt. I have a copy, but I knew that he was looking for one.

Knives in the Night

Dan Sherman
 (reviewed last issue)

Dr. Syn on the High Seas

Dr. Syn Returns

Russell Thorndike

Here is a partial list of books I've bought so far with trade credit from the big book score.

(books in bold have been read recently, the rest go on my pile of more than 800 books to be read)

*Seaward

Susan Cooper
Paso Por Aqui
Eugene Manlove Rhodes
The Man From the Bar-20
Clarence Mulford

Doomsday on Ajiat (Professor Jamison Space Adventure #5)

Neil R. Jones

Twin Worlds (Professor Jamison Space Adventure #4)

Neil R. Jones

**The Savage Mountains

Robert Adams
Magazines of the 20th Century
Theodore Peterson
Dark Cities Underground
Lisa Goldstein

***The Collected Works of Buck Rogers in the 20th Century

Who's Who in Fantasy and Horror

Ed. Mike Ashley
One Hundred Years of Science Fiction Illustration
Anthony Frewin
Dick Tracy The Thirties: Tommy Guns and Hard Knocks
Chester Gould

The Visual Encyclopedia of Science Fiction

Ed. Brian Ash
The Thief of Bagdad
Achmed Abdullah
Swamp Sister
Robert Edmond Alter
The Banner of the Bull
Rafael Sabatini

****The Chronicles of Captain Blood

Rafael Sabatini

Sweet Silver Blues

Faded Steel Heat

Dread Brass Shadows

Petty Pewter Gods

October's Baby

Glen Cook

Black Gate (one issue, used)

read these, perhaps he'll find value in them that I can no longer see.

Furniture that I don't have room for and other unneeded junk is going to Goodwill or the trash.

Books I don't REALLY want are going to local bookstores for trade. I'm going to turn books I don't stand a chance of reading into books I do stand a chance of reading. Role playing game posters have been given to a coworker who RPGs. Why I had a stack of these, I'll never know.

Anime and manga will be disposed of at the next Anime swap meet held in the area, or perhaps sold through a local anime website's classifieds.

Junk I saved from high school and college is going in the trash. Memories hell, I hardly remember any of these people. Perhaps this junk meant something to me once, but I'm not the same person I was 15 years ago, and if it doesn't mean anything to me now, it certainly won't mean anything to me in another 15 years.

Of course if I do get rid of something, it's the wrong thing. I shipped a four-book series of ninja novels to either Rich Berman or Ray Skirsky, and the next week someone is asking for data on alt.pulp about ninja series. If he'd just asked a week or two earlier I could have gotten the data for him before I disposed of the books. Again the spirit of Homer Collyer rises up. Homer's solution to not knowing what would be needed in the future was to keep everything. In the great scheme of things, does it really matter that I cannot answer one question posted on a newsgroup because I disposed of a book? I think not.

My great fear stems from the fact that 15 years ago my comics were my prize possession and now they are a burden taking up too much space. Now my books are my prize possession, but I'm starting to turn a gimlet eye on whether I really need a copy of every book I've read since I was in fifth grade. At least I've read every one of those comic books more than once. Some of them I've read many, many times. I've read each book on the shelves at least once.

But I have six long boxes full of pulps. And I can't say I've read even a fraction. Part of why I do a featured issue every time is to force myself to read a pulp each quarter. Usually that is the feature I finish last. I'm a pulp collector who doesn't care for pulps. When I sit down to read, it's just so much easier to pick up a paperback than to dig into the boxes and find a crumbling pulp, try to figure out if I have enough in a row to read a complete serial, or figure out if there are any of my favorite authors lurking in the pages.

So am I setting myself up for future misery when I come to the conclusion, the next time I move, that I was an idiot for cluttering up my life with these musty, crumbling old issues of Argosy that nobody wants but me?

Unlike the Collyers, I paid a lot of money over the years to accumulate the junk that now threatens to overwhelm me. I paid cover price for



Zelaski and Cummings King Monk

M. P. Shiel

Hospital Station

James White

Space Angel

John Maddox Roberts

The Mammoth Book of Sea Battles

The Mammoth Encyclopedia of Crime Fiction

Ed. by Mike Ashley

Books at 70% trade and 30% cash:

The Pecos Kid

Dan Cushman

No Gold on Boothill

Dan Cushman

A Nghu Night Falls (Night Fighters #5)

Charlie Doesn't Live Here Anymore (Night Fighters #6)

David Sherman

The Diablo Grant

James Reasoner

Stark

James Reasoner

★ I'd never seen a copy of this, but a week later I found a copy at a library book sale, in identical condition for half a buck.

★★ This was supposed to be a replacement for one I'd lost during the move, but I didn't have my list with me, and so I bought a duplicate by accident. I also saw a copy of this at a library book sale a week later for half a buck.

★★★ This was a replacement for a book lost in the move. How I lost a book this size is beyond me. I still have the Dick Tracy collection that sat beside it on the shelf when I moved from Henderson in 1993.

★★★★ This was a nice looking 60s era Pan book but it turned out that it was a duplicate of a book I'd pulled out of the pile for myself under a different title. I liked the Pan edition enough, it has better art and is in better shape, that I threw the other one back into the pile to trade.

comic books that now are not worth a nickel. I bought imported Japanese books and videos that I can now check out in English at the library or rent from Blockbuster or Netflix on DVD. I bought books I'm now ashamed that I had the bad taste to read. I sure could use even a tenth of the cash I've paid out over the years for stuff that I can't give away now. Disposing of this stuff now is hard because I feel I have money sunk into it. But I have come to the conclusion that I got my money's worth out of it then, and if I don't have a use for it now, I should consider it's current value to be nothing.

But it's still hard to throw away things that I paid to acquire and paid to store for so many years.

There is a pretty good essay in the first issue of the www.bookologist.com newsletter entitled "The Seven Deadly Myths of Bookselling". Myth number one is that all books have value to somebody. This has been a hard lesson to learn for me, but the deluge of books (see main article) has set me straight. There is just no market for some books, and, as Craig Stark says in his bookologist piece, there are some books that not only have no value, but convert into negative value once you get them home. He says it's better off not to own some books because of the space they take up. Looking at the stacks of books that I have that have been rejected by 5 bookstores I can see what he means.

A coworker of mine, knowing the story of my book trading attempts, told me she is facing much the same thing. She moved into a new place, and even with a new bookcase still have five boxes of romance novels that she doesn't have room for, and now regrets lugging up three flights of stairs. I had to give her the bad news, she would have been better off just dumping them in the trash. At least the dumpster is on the ground floor.

Believe it Baby: These Blow

There certainly has been a lot of weird men's adventure series published over the years. Sterling examples of same have turned up in the piles of books from the big book score. Somebody somewhere must have tried every possible combination of genres. Actually William Johnstone alone seems to have tried at least one series in every possible combination.

You've got Westerns, adult Westerns and adult Westerns with kung fu.

You've got submarine thrillers, WWII submarine thrillers, futuristic techno submarine thrillers and post-apocalyptic submarine thrillers.

In addition to the above post-apocalyptic submarine thrillers, you have post-apocalyptic motorcycle gang thrillers, post apocalyptic truckers on a convoy thrillers, post-apocalyptic mutants run amok thrillers and even a post-apocalyptic aircraft carrier series.

There are lots of Travis McGee rip-offs, renegade CIA agents, fed-up vigilante ex-Vietnam vets on a rampage, mysterious government agencies and Soviet/neo-Nazi/left-wing/right-wing/mafia plots to take over the world.

After pulling out books that I wanted or that looked interesting, such as a couple of Clarence Mulford Bar-20 books, I was still left with thousands of genre fiction titles. I am quite frankly amazed that many of these every got published. I had no idea that there was an entire sub-genre of "adult" westerns or that it was that extensive, for example.

I want to stress that I haven't read any of these books. I'm sure they



This book, part of the book score, seems to have the same cover used for the recent Pecos Kid book by Dan Cushman.



Here's a sequel to H. Rider Haggard's She.

have many redeeming features, but based on the book covers and promotional blurbs, I couldn't find reason to read them. (Ok, Ok, so I read a Spur McCoy double novel. Somebody had to take a bullet for you people.)

I realize I'm going out on a limb here, making fun of series men's adventure books with at least two of our members being prominent series character authors. But I can't believe that anyone here would be responsible for some of these groaners.

Some of the weird men's adventure series I've found in the pile include:

Killinger: The adventures of Jedediah Killinger III, who hangs out on a Chinese Junk in Santa Barbara's harbor. "He's Ruggedly Virile, He's Karate Quick, He's...Killinger!"

Pepperoni Hero: This series made it to at least book three: *Tuna is Not For Eating*. The main character's name is Pepper something. The Chicago Tribune calls this "The next best thing to Travis McGee." There's a cute series logo with an overstuffed submarine sandwich. "Pepper is almost jawed to death when a Great White Shark orders a Pepperoni Hero for Lunch!"

Murder Master: "Super Hard, Super Tough, He's Black—and he's the Dying End!" "If he's out to get you, then order your box, because believe it baby—you're DEAD!" At first *Death Trap*, the first book in the series by Joseph Rosenberger looked like something I might want to keep. Lou, the murder master of the title, is a soul brother hit man wanted by the cops and the Mafia. As a fan of Donald "Kenyatta" Goins, Chester "Coffin Ed and Gravedigger" Himes, Iceberg "Trick Baby" Slim and Ernest "Shaft" Tidymen this sounded like it could be good. Even the fact that he was secretly a federal agent working deep undercover wasn't too much.

But then I read the first chapter that features the following deathless prose:



"Lou was almost to The Hideaway when he heard it—that tiny, whispering voice that is part and parcel of all men who have a working agreement with Death, particularly those killmasters who worship death one moment, then nail it to the wall the next."

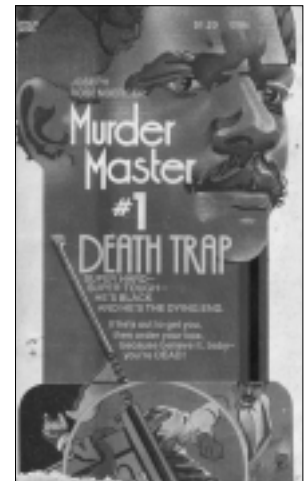
And: "The Browning cracked, and the button man's head exploded like an overly-ripe tomato that had been kicked as the 9mm slug blew bone, blood, and brains in every direction. The hood must have felt incredibly stupid when he found himself sitting instantly in the middle of hell!"

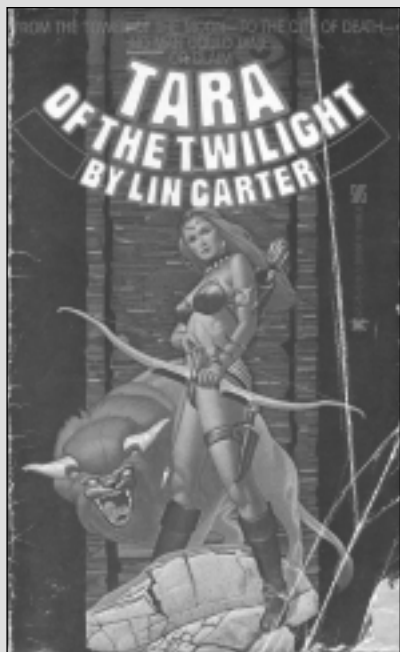
Yeah, and anyone who paid money for this turkey must have sympathized with feeling incredibly stupid finding himself in the middle of Hell.

The Murder Master's snappy retort: "Goodbye Stupid!"

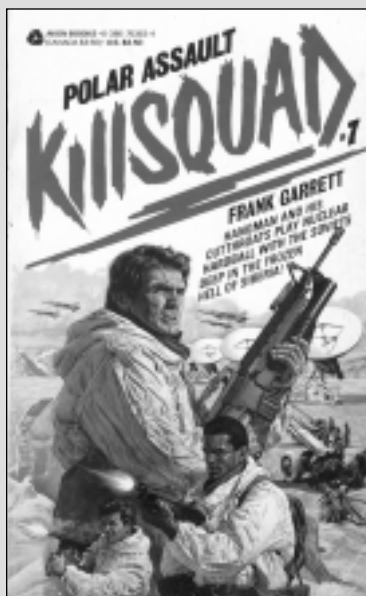
Man, I hope there wasn't a second book in this series.

Dark Angel: Here's the distaff side to the above book, a black female P.I. who, to train for her new career, was a high fashion model, police-





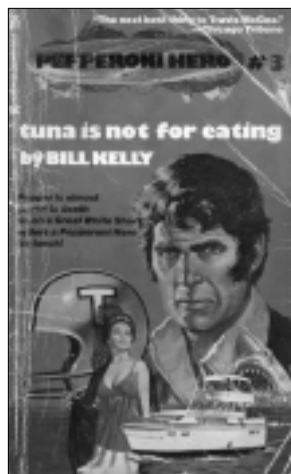
Lin Carter does for John Norman what he did for Burroughs and Howard. An “Erotic Fantasy” of, I’m sure, high quality. Strangely, I couldn’t get anyone to take this one, or another one like it. In the introduction he talks about his long interest in erotic fiction and fantasy fiction and his desire to combine the two.



Now we know what happened to the Avenger after Justice Inc. broke up. In color you can see the guy looks exactly like the Avenger, even down to the color of his face. There’s no cover credit, but I’d be surprised if it weren’t a Gross cover.

woman and call girl. Somehow Mike Hammer never felt it necessary to peddle his ass on the street as a prerequisite for a job as a detective.

The Mind Masters: Judging from book number 4, *Amazons*, this series is a little too spicy for my taste. “Britt St. Vincent becomes a sexual puppet in the hands of a tribe of psychic superwomen” “A breed of incredibly beautiful, incredibly powerful women led by a twisted hermaphrodite genius of the occult with a satanic scheme of world conquest.” Wow, sounds like a hot time at a singles bar in San Francisco. St. Vincent is a member of some sort of secret psychic evil-fighting group, but the name doesn’t spell out anything cool. He could have been an agent of say, M.I.N.D. (Manly Individuals Nullifying Destruction) or M.I.G.R.A.I.N.E. (Military Intelligence Group Removing Anarchists, Infiltrators, and National Enemies).



The Takers: Like the previous entry, one book in this series features a trip to the Amazon, where we meet hot blond Amazon women who capture our hero, tie him to a bed and prepare to rape him. I think this says way too much about the author’s fantasy life. More than I want to know anyway.

Slaves of the Empire: Even a classy outfit like Ballantine Books got into the sleazy act with at least five books in this series. The one I have, *Brotan the Breeder* even has a cover by Boris. “On a human breeding farm, he force mated captive women to produce the finest slaves in Rome.” Sorry guys but I couldn’t bring myself to even skim the first chapter on this one.

C.O.B.R.A.: featuring Jonathan Skul, agent of the Counter-subversion Operations Bureau of Resistance and Action.*

Some of the books that aren’t numbered are equally bad. There’s *Villains Galore* by Gerald Bell. His character is “John Stallion. Her Majesty’s top agent. He’s the aristocrat of espionage, fluent in many languages—including the language of love.” On the back jacket he’s referred to as “Superstud Stallion” which is all I need to know to toss this one on the discard pile.

There’s the Jana Blake in New York series featuring a “different kind of P.I.: and ardent feminist who likes men.” Yeah, she sure does. She likes ‘em all night long.

Western series, I find, have the least likely names for characters:

Wade Diamondback (Yeah, I believe that’s a real last name.)
Ruff Justice Ash Tallman Creed
Tracker Fury Bolt
Gunn Shelter Sadler

And my favorite: Klaw (he doesn’t have a hand, he has a detachable hook, so when he gets into a gunfight, he pauses to unscrew the hook and screw in a revolver, which he fires by fanning with his other hand.)

(Ok, individually John Stallion and Johnathan Skul are pretty unlikely, but as a genre as a whole, Westerns come in first.)

*I keep thinking that old Jon Skul of C.O.B.R.A. should have faced off against the villains of one of TRACK books: D.E.A.T.H. or the Directorate for Espionage, Assassination, Terrorism and Harassment. Yup, they spy, kill, terrorize and make demeaning sexual comments to their female employees.

Mailing Comments:

While I found much of interest in the past two mailings, I don't have much of consequence to say in response this time out. So, as it is July as I write this and the deadline looms, I'm just going to say that, as always, I enjoyed reading everyone's contributions and only respond to a few specific items.

April 2003 Mailing:

Brian: Thank you for printing color covers of "The Argus Pheasant" I'm guessing they came from All-Story or Argosy. I'd like to know where these originally appeared. Have you read the stories? Any good?

I have one minor correction to the roster. My email address is Argosy_Collector@yahoo.com. It needs an underscore and not a hyphen. I also see that my address hasn't been updated. The new address is 1130 Fourth Street #116, Santa Rosa, CA 95404

Thanks for the corrected treasury report.

Sulf #59 Norm Metcalf

You ask "who published what?" in response to Frank Morgan Mercer's plagiarism in Argosy. I don't know, as I don't have the original appearances, just the issue of Argosy where the apology was printed. The editor of Argosy did not print the information, although I too wish he had.

As to the need, or lack thereof, to prove women's involvement in the pulps, I think we are in agreement here. My point is that if one looks at the broad range of pulps being printed, it's quite obvious that women were involved. There are numerous women writers, editors, letter writers and certainly readers. The very existence of the large number of romance pulps aimed particularly at women, and the fact that these were some of the longest lived and highest circulation pulps shows that women were certainly a major audience. Didn't one of the romance pulps (Ranch Romances?) last until the late 1960s or early 1970s?

I think the perception comes from the large and vocal SF contingent who often don't think of pulps other than the SF pulps.

I can certainly see that it might be necessary to debunk the falsehoods, as you put it, that women were not involved in the science fiction pulps, but my point is that if one looks at the entire pulp field, it's clear that there are many women involved both as producers and as readers.

The New, Complete, Thrilling, Popular, Spicy,

mammoth, All-Comment Magazine #19 Mike Chomko

You beat me to a list of Erle Stanley Gardner collections with a more complete roster than I could muster.

I would like to add to the list the last three Perry Mason hard covers which each contained a Mason story along with other reprints, some of them from the pulps. They are as follows:

The Case of the Crimson Kiss

Title Story (Perry Mason)
Fingers of Fong (Dick Sprague)
The Valley of Little Fears (Whispering Sands)
Crooked Lightning
At Arm's Length (Jerry Marr)

The Case of the Crying Swallow

Title Story (Perry Mason)
The Candy Kid (Lester Leith)
The Vanishing Corpse (Sidney Zoom)
The Affair of the Reluctant Witness (Jerry Bain and Muggs Magoo)
Magoo was Paul Pry's sidekick in an earlier series of stories.

The Case of the Irate Witness

Title Story (Perry Mason)
The Jeweled Butterfly
Something Like a Pelican (Lester Leith)
A Man is Missing (Sheriff Bill Catlin)

In addition

"The Exact Opposite" (Lester Leith) is in Tantalizing Locked Room Mysteries edited by Isaac Asimov, Charles G. Waugh and Martin Harry Greenberg

and

"Hell's Kettle" (Ed Jenkins) is printed in The Black Mask Boys edited by William F. Nolan

Hurricane H(e)avan #8 Steve Young

Your comments about the uniqueness of Max Brand as a Western writer make a lot of sense to me now that I've started reading Westerns and been largely unsuccessful in reading a Brand Western. They certainly are a different breed of cat.

El Dorado #19 John DeWalt

The cover of the issue of Pulpdom that you ask about

was “derived” from the cover you mention. Not having seen the original cover, I don’t know how much adaptation there was.

Rough Edges Revisited #3 James Reasoner

Gans T. Field is a pseudonym for Manley Wade Wellman.

I’m glad to see your review of Donald Barr Chidsey’s Fisher and Savoy stories in Argosy. I too have them as excerpts and I enjoyed reading them.

The first six in the series, the ones you reviewed, did not quite run every other week. The dates, according the Cook Index and cross-checked with my copies, are:

Things Happen Fast	07-25-36
Battleship on a Mountain	08-08-36
Storm Signals	08-22-36
Spanish for Goat	09-19-36
Razzberries, Mex	10-17-36
One-Way Ticket	11-07-36

There is also supposed to be a Chidsey story, “The Ghost Camp” in the issue for 10-10-36. I don’t have the issue, so I can’t say if it is part of the series, but I doubt it because neither of us have it in our excerpts, and there doesn’t seem to be a story missing.

The series continued with at least five more stories, one of which was a two-part series. I wouldn’t be surprised if there weren’t a few more to be found. I have a second excerpt that contains:

The Ace of Emeralds, part 1	01-30-37
The Ace of Emeralds, part 2	02-06-37
Enter the Tiger	07-17-37
Bloodshed and Roses	08-28-37
The Sword of Vishnu	04-16-38
Chaos is a Quiet Place	11-11-39

There is also at least one Nick Fisher solo story:
Much Too Artistic 6-17-33

I suspect that there are more Fisher solo stories. By the way, I reviewed “Much Too Artistic” in my featured issue column last year.

Somewhere I have a comment by, I think Robert Samson, who said there was a Savoy series in Detective Fiction Weekly. I don’t know if that was an error and he was thinking of the series in Argosy or if there are undiscovered (undiscovered by me, that is) Savoy solo stories in DFW. In the second part of “The Ace of Emeralds” Savoy has to dodge tough Florida cop Morton who would recognize him if he saw him and realize that he’s not dead. Morton had arrested him six years previously. I don’t know if this refers to events that Chidsey wrote about in the Morton and McGarvey series in

DFW, the not-yet-known-if-it-existed series of Savoy stories in DFW or if it was just backstory invented for the one episode.

I certainly think it would be interesting if Chidsey had run a Fisher series in Argosy and a Savoy series in DFW in the early 30s, merged the two in the mid 30s with the series in Argosy and then crossed them over with the Morton and McGarvey series. So far this is speculation, but I hope to find some issues with evidence at Pulpcon this year.

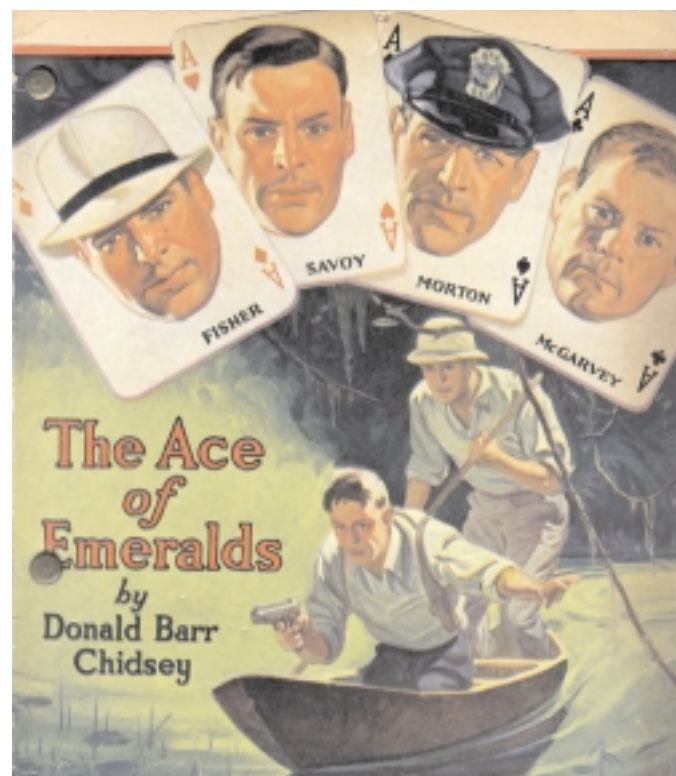
Getting back to the stories in the second excerpt, In “The Ace of Emeralds” Nick Fisher recruits the now retired Eddie Savoy to help him recover stolen diamonds. The action in part one takes place in New Orleans. It ends on a cliffhanger with Fisher taken prisoner by the gang and Savoy realizing that only he can save his friend.

In part two, the action moves to Florida where Savoy must take on the unaccustomed role of detective to try to find the crook’s hideout and rescue Fisher before the bad guys can do away with him.

It’s here that you see where Fisher is an important part of the duo. Savoy may be a much better thief and pickpocket, but he’s not the manhunter that Fisher is. However, he is clever and does manage to dodge the cops and track down the bad guys.

The rest of the stories take place in the far east, where Savoy is not known and doesn’t have to fear arrest and exposure just by walking down the street.

“Enter the Tiger” is my favorite of the stories. Fisher and Savoy travel to Cambodia on the trail of stolen jewels. The story is set in Ankor Wat and makes good use of



Back Numbers

the local color.

The next story I did not like as well as many of the others, but it was still a good read.

*Complete
Fisher-Savoy Novelet*



“Bloodshed and Roses” takes place on a South Seas Island when Fisher and Savoy spot a jewel thief while taking a slow boat back to the States following the previous adventure. I thought the coincidence of their running into a jewelry-theft based adventure was a bit much.

“The Sword of Vishnu” is excellent. Fisher, who is famed for his ability to recover stolen property is summoned by the king of Nara, a remote, tiny Asian kingdom. Somebody has stolen the sacred Sword of Vishnu, an ancient, jewel encrusted blade that is the symbol of kingship. If the king can’t recover the sword by the ceremony in a few days, the people will revolt and the plotters will take over the kingdom.

Fisher and Savoy recover the sword, but not before becoming wanted men, not only in Nara but in Singapore. The King, grateful for getting the sword back, so he demands their extradition from the neighboring country, condemns them to death, then quietly pardoning them,, sending them home with a rich reward.

“Chaos is a Quiet Place” is a pretty good story set in Cairo. Fisher is there to buy back a stolen vase on behalf of a rich client. Savoy shows the advantages of having a friend with the sneaking around skills of the Shadow that nobody knows about. While the bad guys take Fisher to a meeting at an opium den, Savoy is busy infiltrating the den and is ready to snoop around for clues and provide backup if needed. The thieves are using the exchange as a lure to get the rich client to leave his ship, crammed full of priceless treasures, undefended while they board and rob it. Fisher and Savoy figure out the game and are on hand to repel boarders in an exciting finish.

I liked these stories even better than I liked the first set. Fisher and Savoy weren’t really on the same side in the early issues, and if Fisher ever got close enough to Savoy to talk to him the series would pretty much come to an end.

I like how the series is a cross between the hardboiled detective school and the gentleman thief school of crime fiction.



Enter The Tiger

By DONALD BARR CHIDSEY
Author of “A Strange Place to Be,” “Graveyard
of the Gods,” etc.

Fisher is not toohard-boiled, but isn’t soft either. He’s pragmatic and tough when he needs to be. He isn’t concerned with justice,

he is a professional who is paid to keep his insurance company from paying off on jewelry and other valuables theft claims by recovering the stolen goods. He really doesn’t care if he catches the crook, as long as he is able to get the goods back. He is also willing to be a go-between for crooks trying to ransom back their swag.

Savoy is the light fingered roguish crook who really isn’t a bad guy at all. He risks his life and freedom because of the adventure and because of his friendship with Fisher.

January 2003

El Dorado John DeWalt

I still think the political system in *Lone Star Planet* is worth trying.

The view of the Golden Gate Bridge is from the south looking north into Marin County with San Pablo bay off to the right.

The Happiest Blue Elephant Kurt. B. Shoemaker

I really enjoyed your article on War Stories. The covers you reprinted were fantastic.

The Other Part of the Forest Mike Ashley

While it’s not related to your mailing, I had a question about an entry in *Who’s Who in Fantasy and Horror*. In the entry on Robert Lory, you suggest that his biography is a bit mysterious and he is perhaps connected with Mike Avalone. I was wondering if more recent research has turned up more information. Pretty good reference book by the way, I’m glad I found a copy.

I also recently picked up a copy of *The Mammoth Encyclopedia of Crime Fiction* and I’ve enjoyed it very much. However, and I’m sure you get this often over one author or another, I wonder why Donald Goines didn’t rate an entry.