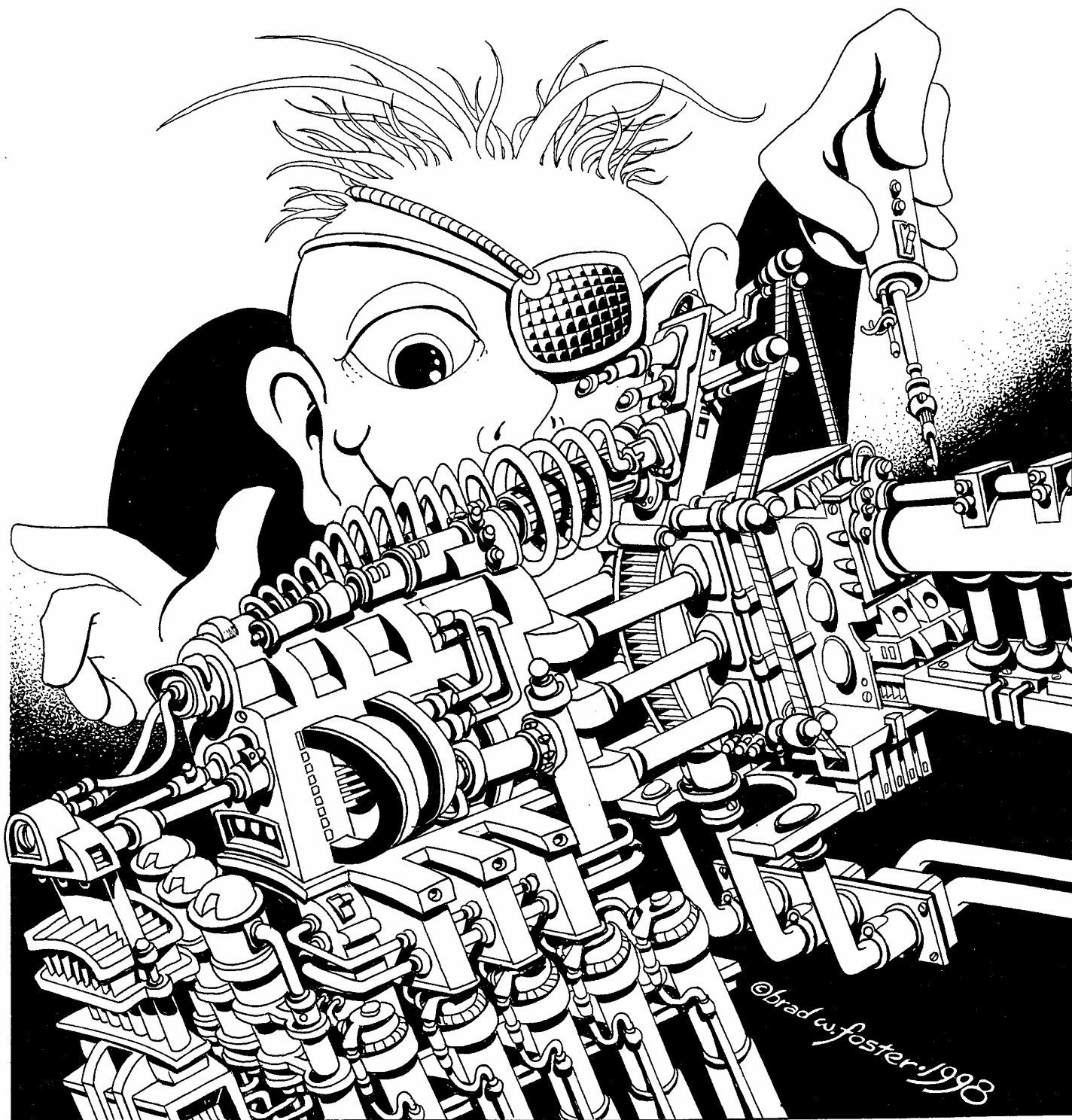


# SPACE CADET

#12

(OR: THE AGING OLD FHART NOSTALGIC TIME WASTER GAZETTE)



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Note: All articles by R. Graeme Cameron unless otherwise credited.

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# THE GHOD-EDITOR SPEAKS!

## ( EDITORIAL )



Greetings! I had such firm intentions to produce an issue of SPACE CADET stuffed full of goodies, twice as much as you see here. A review of the 1929 film MYSTERIOUS ISLAND for instance. But I was bound and determined to get it out sometime in December, and I'm running out of time. Also have the next issue of WCSFAzine to produce for January. I was beginning to feel pressured.

Then I thought, what the heck. It's the Christmas holidays, I'm supposed to be relaxing, enjoying myself. Zine pubbing is supposed to be fun after all. So I'm cutting it short and posting what you see here. There's some fun stuff I believe. I greatly enjoyed reading thru my FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND collection to gain some insight into Forry's approach to his fans, and had just as much fun dredging up out of the dim recesses of my memory my viewpoint and reaction to his zine at the time. I can even remember the way the issues of FM smelled on the stand! Fresh printer's ink and all that. It's hard to convey the sheer excitement of spotting FM on the rack, but I trust I have at least evoked the experience.

Taking a chance with the SPACE CADET article, as I printed it before in WCSFAzine. But this revised version has numerous nifty illos which help illustrate the reasons for my obsession. Enjoy?

Don't take any rocket wash!

The Ghod-Editor, The Graeme

## CONFESSIONS OF AN SF ADDICT: PART ONE

### FOND REMINISCENCES OF THE ACKERMONSTER!

*By The Graeme*

We've all heard the sad news of the passing of Forry the Ackermmonster, Dr. Ackula, 4E, 4sJ, FJA, Forrest J Ackerman. Fandom will produce many tributes (One of the best being MR. MONSTER by Alan White available on Efanazines.com) which will probably cover the entire scope of both his life and his fannish career, such as being the first of the great loc writers in the 1930s, Number one fan in the 1940s and 50s, first to wear a costume at a convention, etc. Many of these tributes will include reminiscences by those who knew him, perhaps by some of the horde who toured the Ackermansion over the years; he touched the lives of so many the possibilities are endless.

My focus will be narrower. Forry was scheduled to be Fan Guest of Honour for VCON 15 in May of 1987, appropriate enough since the theme that year (as conceived by the Chair Alan R. Betz) was "celebrating the history of Science Fiction". Sam Moskowitz was the main Guest of Honour, Alex Schomburg the Artist Guest of Honour. It was a wonderful convention. Unfortunately Forry was unable to attend. Thus fate decreed I would never meet him. Yet he is the one who awakened my sense of wonder about SF&F films, who gave me a life long hobby, an obsession really, that even today gives me endless pleasure. This article is all about how he accomplished this, how he influenced a young lad in the early 1960s. Let me take you back in time...



The first shopping mall in Ottawa opens a block from my home in Elmvale across circa 1958 or thereabouts. The drugstore is a magnet for me. At any given time its racks might hold 1 or 2 Sci-fi pocketbooks (average price 35 cents) or maybe even a sci-fi comic book (12 cents in those days). With a weekly allowance of 25 cents a week much agonized planning – not to mention spending discipline – is required. Walking to the drug store becomes a twice-a-month ritual filled with joyous anticipation, a mini-Christmas if you will.

One fine day early in the summer of 1961 I walk through the door and give the magazine stand a casual glance as I head toward the comic stand, then abruptly stop, my ten year old eyes transfixed by a lurid cover by Basil Gogos depicting the gnarled, radiation-tanned face of an astronaut, his eyes hidden by deep shadow, the radiance of a naked sun blazing off the blue metal of his helmet, stars shining brilliant behind him in the blackness of space.

“SPACEMEN FIRST ISSUE by the editors of FAMOUS MONSTERS NEVER BEFORE SPACE PHOTOS AND STORIES FROM MOVIES YOU DIDN'T SEE”

And it's true! The magazine is filled with photos of movies I never heard of, let alone seen. Films such as RIDERS TO THE STARS, I MARRIED A MONSTER FROM OUTER SPACE, KING DINOSAUR, WORLD WITHOUT END, and many, many more. I am particularly gobsmacked by a two page spread which features photos of the Ymir of 20 MILLION MILES TO EARTH standing atop the Coliseum, snarling down at the Italian army below, THE CREEPING UNKNOWN's tentacled blob-thingie “cornered in Westminster Abby”, and the conical critter from IT CONQUERED THE WORLD with giant claws reaching through a window to grasp a somewhat worried-looking Lee Van Cleef.

Quickly perusing the limited text, I discover commentary that displays an easy familiarity with the films in question, as if written by someone who knows and cherishes his subject, someone who dares to make fun of the films with obvious affection. This isn't a magazine describing sci-fi films, it's a magazine CELEBRATING them! I'm blown away. I never knew there were adults who love the films I love. I thought they all look down on this 'juvenile' stuff. How happy I am to be proven wrong!

But my newfound faith is soon sorely tempted. For months I haunt the drug store, soon other stores within reach of my bicycle. “Have you got the latest issue of SPACEMEN?”

“Sorry kid, had the first issue, but it didn't sell. The distributor stopped carrying it. You can't get it in Ottawa. Not anywhere.”

“Well, gee... what about FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND?”

“Never heard of it. Sounds dumb.”



I console myself by reading SPACEMEN over and over again. Who is this Forrest J Ackerman editor guy? He seems really cool. There's a picture of him poking out the eye of a saucerman. Even my dad, a Royal Canadian Air Force jet fighter pilot, would never dare do that. A single paragraph offers some idea of just how cool FJA is:

*"For 35 years Editor Forrest J Ackerman has been interested in the fantasy of space, both fictional and filmic. Into SPACEMEN he is pouring his meteoric memories. With every 35c you invest in SPACEMEN you are in effect picking 35 years' worth of FJA's brains (both of them). No other magazine (except FAMOUS MONSTERS) can make that statement."*



A year later, another beautiful summer day, and the miracle of a NEW Basil Gogos cover at the drug store, the green-tinged visages of Vincent Price, Peter Lorre and Basil Rathbone! It's FAMOUS MONSTERS issue #19! There are articles on TALES OF TERROR, Lon Chaney, Dinosaur movies, Lugosi, Lorre, Robots & all sorts of nifty stuff, including a photo of Chuck Halpaus of Renton, Wash, sitting in his fireplace surrounded by his enviable complete FAMOUS MONSTERS collection. I can only dream, sigh. But at least I have #19!

Meanwhile there's very little of Forry evident, at least as far as personal info is concerned, but I note that Bernie Bubnis Jr. of Long island is starting up *"the first fanzine to FJA, THE ACKER-ZINE. Famous contributors, unusual anecdotes. For details, accompany inquiry with stamped-addressed return envelope."* Boy, I want a complete collection of those too, but I guess they'll never show up at my drug store. But maybe #20 of FM will!

And it does! With a riveting Gogos cover of a manic Lon Chaney in LONDON AFTER MIDNIGHT. And at last I catch a glimpse of the real Forry, as a boy of 15, when he first met Ray Harryhausen! They were teenage buddies together, along with Ray Bradbury! Now I know FJA was born to be editor of FM. How could it be otherwise? And what hijinks they got up to:

*"Ray Harryhausen chaneyed me into 'The HunchbAckerman of Notre Dame' in 1941 and his effective mask won me a prize at the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Science Fiction Convention that year in Denver. He started out to make me an 'Odd John' mask – albino hair, bulging frontal lobes, and all, as described by Olaf Stapledon in his superman novel of the same name – but the mask somehow came to grief (after quite a bit of grief of my own, lying on my back in his backyard, breathing through my mouth, my face baking in a plaster mold he was making of it, while his great dog Kong padded around occasionally sniffing me or licking my feet); the odd john mask was not completed to Ray's satisfaction by the time of my departure for Denver and so a substitution was made of the Hunchback mask which he had previously created."* I could only hope that my teenage years were going to turn out as cool as his. (They didn't.)

But I dream of becoming an adult, of becoming wise and mature and perfect, just like every other adult, and best of all like Forry, who has the best job in the world and who is universally respected and loved by everyone, just like I'm going to be, once I become an adult and take over FAMOUS MONSTERS OF



FILMLAND after he retires. No need to study at school, all I need to study are the pages of FM. Or such is my plan.

Sadly, issues 21 & 22 are sold out by the time I ask for them. I am heartbroken. Life goes on, unfairly and evilly prejudiced against the desires of kids like myself, yet it continues.



Late Spring of 1963. Issue #23. Another gorgeous Gogos cover. This time a beautiful portrait of Glen Manning, title character of WAR OF THE COLOSSAL BEAST, his radiation reddened face highlighted by a powerful yellow light, perhaps from the atomic explosion which originally turned him into a giant, the right side of his face scraped away (by the Hoover dam) to bare skull, one sad yet threatening eye staring intently into mine. Beautiful, I tell you! Beautiful! And wonders inside, such as a photo from the 1910 Edison film version of Frankenstein showing a bizarre interpretation of the monster; a collection of stills from various DRACULA films (some of which I am proud to have seen on TV's SHOCK THEATRE), and even a cover of Forry's old fanzine Imagination featuring a drawing by a teenage Ray Harryhausen! All very cool stuff!

But I am horrified to learn that the Ackermonger is frequently under attack from so-called fans. Inside 'inside Darkest Ackerman' he describes one such carping letter: *"He calls the magazine stupid, the lizard remake of THE LOST WORLD the best of the prehistoric animal movies (making KING KONG look sick), the filmbook idea lousy, BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN filmbook too long & detailed (should, in his opinion be replaced by an article on MISSILE TO THE MOON – the best space film he's seen in years), considers Karloff's greatest portrayal to be in ABBOT & COSTELLO MEET DR. JEKYLL & MR. HYDE not as the Frankenstein Monster..."* etc., etc. How can anyone be so dumb? What a Maroon, as Bugs Bunny would say. I cannot believe anyone would insult the best and most important magazine in the world in so rotten a fashion. Must be a real jerk of a kid, like the guy who lies in wait for me after school, forcing me to detour blocks out of my way in order to make it home without being bullied. Poor Mr. Ackerman! I know exactly how he feels.

But worse is to come: *"...what irked & ired me was the insult to my motivations and, indirectly, the intelligence of FM's audience by his expression of this incredibly naïve notion: "I agree implicitly with the Nebraska reader that your magazine must indeed be communist inspired. With this letter no doubt comes your weekly paycheck in American money from Premier Krushchev (sic) himself. After all, are you not his foremost agent?"*

Communist? Communist? Forry a Communist? What kind of crazy talk is this? Everybody knows there are NO Communists in Hollywood, only patriotic guys making all those cool B&W war movies that show up on TV in the early afternoon, movies that are all about the bad guys getting defeated. Forry wouldn't devote his every waking moment to films showing bad monsters getting defeated unless he were one of the good guys, right? This weirdo letter writer is attacking NATO by attacking FAMOUS MONSTERS, and Canada is a proud member of NATO (we host the Dew line radars and everything), so this letter nut MUST be a Commie himself! Aha!

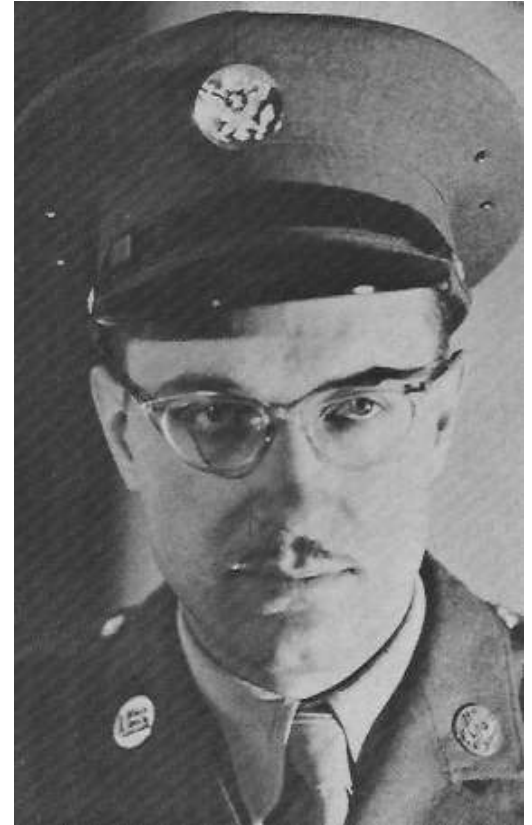
I am so proud of Forry's brave reply: *"The only Mr. K. that I'd care to be the foremost agent for would be Mr. Karloff... I would be very surprised indeed if anyone in Russia even knows of the existence of FAMOUS MONSTERS... My 'daring' young critic is very likely a teenager. That hurts because while he was probably still in a cradle, I – no war lover any more than my dear young brother Alden who lost his life in his 20<sup>th</sup> year in*

*the Battle of the Bulge – I was serving 3 years 5 months 29 days in the Army, from which I was honorably discharged as a Staff Sergeant, so that you could all grow up to read FAMOUS MONSTERS in English instead of (Hitler’s plan) German or (the Emperor’s plan) Japanese....”*

I am stunned, yes because of Forry’s loss (I would hate to lose my brother!), but also because I had no idea the Nazis and the Japanese Imperialists had planned to bring out their own versions of FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND! My mind boggles. What would they have been like? (Heavy on Fritz Lang films is my guess.)

And there’s another attack, of sorts: *“I didn’t at all like your MONSTER KICKS ON ROUTE 66 story (#21). It was a downright insultingly stupid article. The show itself was a real let down, a zero, from start to finish; and that part where Chaney as the Wolfman delivered coffee to a sickeningly unfrightened Marlene Willis was so bad it was embarrassing...”*

To which Forry replies: *“Naturally any publicity puff handed out by a motion picture co. or TV station is going to praise the product & attempt to persuade one in advance that this particular production is on no account to be missed...At the time I was attending the World Science Fiction Convention in Chicago and the word got around that Karloff, Lorre and Chaney Jr. were in town acting in the episode, there was quite a bit of excitement generated...When an airmail special delivery package arrived from New York from my publisher, and out popped pictures of Karloff as the Frankenstein Monster for the first time in nearly a quarter of a century...Lon Jr. recreating his own father’s role as Quasimodo...etc... I feel I would have been derelict in my duty to monsterdom to have withheld the photos. They were of historical significance inarguably, even if you wish to argue – and I would be inclined to agree with you – that the 3 undeniably famous monsters were treated infamously...After viewing the program, as a fan, I thought it was bad. Cheap, heart-breaking, blasphemous. Before I saw it, and after the fact, as an editor, and under publisher’s orders, I feel I did the right thing... LIZARD’S LEG & OWLET’S WING was presented as a horror spoof & my prewriteup was done chetongueek – that’s tongue in cheek...It was no accident but a carefully worked out last line capable of a double interpretation when I concluded “No one will ever forget the nite ‘Route 66’ detoured thru Monsterville via Rue 66.” Obviously you, John, are one of those who would like to try.”*



**Staff-Sergeant Ack Ack**

Wow! This editor business is more complicated than I thought. Sometimes you have to be subtle! And now I bitterly regret missing #21 with its nifty photos of that Route 66 episode. I actually started to watch it, when friends knocked at the door and asked me to join them outside for a game of hide ‘n seek.

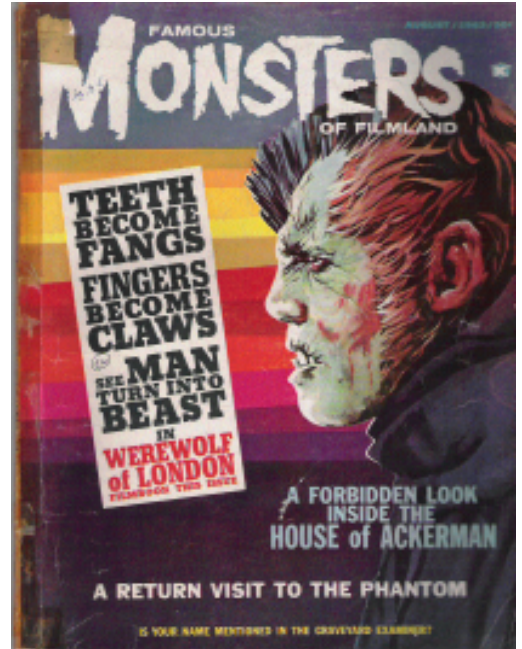
“Go ahead,” said mom. “You watch too much TV. You need to spend more time outdoors with your friends.”

“But Mooom...”

“But nothing. Besides, you can always catch it in reruns...”

So out I went. No doubt I had much fun. Trouble is, I never did see the LIZARD’S LEG & OWLET’S WING episode of Route 66. Ever. It is to arrgh!!!

Mid summer 1963, another Gogos for issue #24! Wait a minute....it's imitation Gogos...The Werewolf of London...done poorly...Gogos style highlight but...but...Oh well, nifty filmbook on said Werewolf, which I am proud to have seen on TV, but most amazing of all: A FORBIDDEN LOOK INSIDE THE HOUSE OF ACKERMAN. Gotta read that! But first I read the editorial... *"This summer several hundred of you will have the opportunity to meet me in your own home. When I told Robert Bloch what I planned to do, he said, "Oh – an Ill Will Tour!" Judge for yourself, all the details are in this issue of FAMOUS MONSTERS."*



Frantically I turn to the appropriate pages: There's a neat photo of a big-headed Forry driving a hotrod, and the following explanation: [in order to attend the World SF Con in Washington, DC] *"he's going to set out at the beginning of August, a month in advance, by auto, driving 6,000 miles back and forth across the USA, specifically so he can call on every possible film monster fan!...Forry will be glad to autograph your magazines for you, answer questions, talk on your tape recorder if you like, look at anything along the monster line which you may care to show him, including, if he has time, home-made monster movies... There is, obviously, absolutely no way to predict how long he may be able to stay at any one place. It may be an hour, it may be no more than 15 minutes. He will try to cover 200 miles a day...."*

MOM!! DAD!! WRITE THIS GUY! HE CAN STAY WITH US FOR A DAY! MAYBE A WHOLE WEEK! MAYBE A MONTH!!!!



*"We hardly think since he is driving directly to Washington that he's going to detour hundreds of miles to come up to Ottawa to say hello for an hour..."*

BUT MOM!!! DAAAAD!!!

(Does there exist any accounts of one of these Forry Visits? Yes! In Dennis Daniel's FAMOUS MONSTERS CHRONICLES Doug Murray writes: *"There was a letter in the box. The envelope had a big SPACEMEN logo on it. That should have tipped me off... Forrest J. Ackerman was coming. To MY house... We had work to do. We cleaned up the basement (where my collection was housed), we sent letters to the other local fans to invite them... Finally the great day arrived...our little group had a great time, and Forry was the centre of attention.... He'd brought some of his collection with him, and we looked on spellbound as he showed us Bela Lugosi's actual ring from DRACULA, a French program book from KING KONG, and a bunch of stills from TV shows and films yet to be released...It was a special afternoon, capped by a 16mm showing of SON OF FRANKENSTEIN, courtesy of another of the area's fans... When Forry left, carrying the painting of THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA one of our local fan artists had done, I made up my mind that someday – someday I would accomplish as much as he had."*)





Well, if Forry wasn't coming to my home, I could visit his! I turned to THE AMAZING ACKERMONSTER article, the first in a four part series! 9 pages! 10 photos! And what photos! Forry is in every one of them, standing next to the Saucerman, eating an alligator, beckoning me to enter, taping the latest FM advance copy (#23) to the side of his piano, on the phone to the widow of the late Willis (King Kong) O'Brien. Wow! Double wow! His house is filled to the brim with books, magazines, photos, paintings and, judging from his 'office', he's just as messy as I am. He's just like me! Only older & got more stuff. But someday...

I settle down to read the article: *"The house, from the outside, is deceptively small. Actually it has 10 rooms, a backporch and a basement – all devoted to fantasy and films... There is no inkling from the outside of the incredible treasures everywhere displayed on the inside... but you know this must be the place because of the huge scarlet reflective three-dimensional initials – FJA – which dominate the south end of the garden wall... Yes, this must be the place for there is a doormat at the entrance declaring ACKERMANSION, and on the door itself, gold and black letters spelling out SCI FI."*

The interview is long and rambling, but full of interesting stuff such as: *"As for a fan-meeting trip I'm purported to have taken across the country in the 30s, it never happened. I wouldn't have had the money in those days, or the nerve.."* or *"You see, at that time I had quite a reputation as a letter writer to the science fiction magazines. It was a tossup between a young Chicagoan and myself, a Jack Darrow, as to which was the most known fan in the country."*

[Current note: as I reread the interview I am astounded to learn that 4e doesn't smoke (neither do I. All these years I assumed it was because of my older brother's habit of forcing me to smoke cigarette butts out of the gutter for the amusement of his friends as I turned green), doesn't drink (I started eventually, but not till my mid twenties. What made me lag behind my peers?), doesn't believe in an afterlife (neither do I, I presumed because of my eclectic readings from Cicero to Marcus Aurlieus, Montaigne to Voltaire, from Huysmans to 'you get the idea'), and *"Sometimes he closed his eyes when he talked, put one hand over his face, crooked one finger and tapped the end of his nose with it or held it against the shaved clean portion of his upper lip dividing his neatly trimmed moustache..."* Son of a gun! That's MY moustache! I've always been clean-shaven under the nose, on the principle of avoiding food dangling from my moustache.... Or so I thought. Was it this interview which shaped my psyche and habits? Was Forry THAT powerful an influence? Maybe, for I was an impressionable young twit.]



I also learn that Jim Warren, the publisher of FM, must be a great guy too, cause Forry reveals *“I think he is the best thing that ever happened in my life. He ‘saved’ my life, in a way; he certainly changed it radically for the better. I had a miserable rotten time of it as a literary agent for nearly 15 years, eking out a peanut butter existence while trying to cope with the eccentricities of a number of nutty editors & neurotic clients. I was a splintered man, irritated, angry, frustrated while trying to earn a living of 10% of about 100 other people. I was around and ready in 1948; even in 1938, I think the world might have had its first movie monster magazine if any publisher had had the foresight to offer me the editorship of it; but it wasn’t till 1958 (actually late 57) that someone came along & took a \$30,000 chance on me – a gamble that paid off at the bucks office... And that benefactor – bless him – was Jim Warren.”*

The late fall issue #25, with a major article on KING KONG slips past my ken. How could I miss it? I begin to suspect that not every issue is distributed in Ottawa. How unfair!



Mind you, the later winter issue #26 more than makes up for my disappointment with a splendid (uncredited) painting of Robert Culp as the Alien in THE ARCHITECTS OF FEAR episode of THE OUTER LIMITS, my all-time favourite sci-fi show on Monday night TV. Even my dad likes the show! The cover, because of the trees in the background, makes the monster look a hundred feet tall! Unfortunately, as I discover when I watch the episode, the monster is man-sized. Still a scary monster though. Love that OUTER LIMITS. Better than TWILIGHT ZONE in my humble opinion. Got monsters in every episode, so of course it's great!

(Issue #26 is quite famous for its article on the Turkish film DRACULA IN ISTANBUL directed by Mehmet Mutar, based on the novel THE IMPALING VOVOLDE by Ali Riza Seyfi, and starring Atif Kaptan, a balding gent who resembles a cross between the former Shaw of Iran and Nosferatu. His servant has a mop hairdo, an enormous walrus moustache and a threateningly pointy nose. Apparently the film no longer exists, & the 7 photos in FM #26 are the only remaining visual record.)

But gosh dang it, rotten anti-fans keep ganging up on Forry! *“Said she (and she shall be nameless, to protect her from being torn limb from tree by the We Back Ack contingency) – said she: “The one thing I like about other monster magazines is that I don’t eternally have to read about Ackerman.” That really rocked me back on my heels, till I realized they crucified Christ, shot Lincoln, some people don’t like Bloch or even Ray Bradbury...I dare say no man in all of recorded history was ever totally universally liked – so why should it surprise me that I’m no exception?... I’m sorry the Forry egoboo in these pages draws an ego boo from the lady in question... I am gratified, from my fan mail, that the majority of you have ratified the policy of FM as a personality publication and that, buyin’ large, you buy the personality of Ye Ed.”*

Yes, yes, yes! You make the zine Forry! Your enthusiasm, your love of the genre, your knowledge of all the inside stuff. And you ARE the inside guy! You know so many people who make these films! You share tidbits of info, neat anecdotes, all through the prism of your humour. You’re one of us. We want to be like you. You share your life experience with us, we live vicariously through you, OF COURSE we want to know more about you, what you think, what you do. You say: *“If it’s lack of Ack you prefer in conjunction with your filmonsterism, you may be sure you’ll find NO Ackerman in overwhelming quantities in Brand X monster magazine. Also brands Y & Z.”* Exactly! That’s why those other zines SUCK! No uncle Forry!

And more comments by Uncle Forry to be gleaned from the continuing ACKERMONSTER interview: *“Before I became editor of FM & SM I ran a big literary agency built up over a period of about 15 years, representing around 100 writers. When, almost over nite, I became so successful with 100% of myself that I didn’t have time for 10% of other people any longer, I had to let most of my clients go. I now represent only a few of the toppest talents – AE van Vogt in the science fiction field. Albert Nuetzell in the art...”* Ah, so not every client was neurotic & nutty. Some were worth keeping.

But Forry wounds me to the quick with the following comments, dispersing my number one dream for my future: *“How can you grow up to be just like me? That’s an easy one – just never grow up! But – seriously – I am getting a little alarmed at the number of monster fans who apparently have made up their minds up to publish or edit a cinema horror magazine when they are about 21. Of course, it isn’t all that easy... I work for myself, my publisher & my fans, and our plans for improvement continue regardless of whether 10 other monster magazines or none... Remember – WORLD FAMOUS CREATURES, MONSTERS & THINGS, WEREWOLVES & VAMPIRES, SCREEN CHILLS & MONSTER PARADE are all as dead as the dinosaurs.”*

(And as for CASTLE OF FRANKENSTEIN): *“Cal Beck has only managed to get out 4 editions since 1959 so those publicity puffs of his about 2000 fan letters and a press run of 200,000 copies sound to these jaundiced ears like a King Kong toothache, painfully exaggerated. Better, I think, to think in terms of becoming a contributor to FM than a competitor. Besides, I honestly don’t believe it’s good to have more than one filmonster magazine on the market...”*



4e in 1930 as 1940 'man of the future'

So Forry wants ME to write for FAMOUS MONSTERS? Yes! I’ll become his Canadian reporter, get the inside scoop on all the monster movies being made right here in Ottawa! After all, I live in the capital of Canada! The government MUST be sponsoring the local film industry! I ask my dad to keep an eye open when reading the paper for any info re the local studios, movie stars, upcoming premieres, etc. Also want him to write a letter of introduction on official Air Force stationery I can use to meet the producers. And, oh yeah, would he buy me a photo lab and convert his basement workshop into a darkroom so I can send Forry a stream of pictures of Canadian monsters? And I’ll need a camera of course, a good one, you know, the expensive kind?

“Ahhh...No. Remember, I’m planning to convert the storage under the concrete steps into a bomb shelter. That takes priority. Gotta save up for the materials. So no camera. No darkroom.”

“BUT DAAAD!!!”

“No. Time for you to do your homework. Go to your room and leave me alone.”

Sob. Sigh. Nobody understands us “filmonsterfanfanatics.” No one but Forry.

Which is why I love him, and cherish his memory still.

TO BE CONTINUED....

# CONFESSIONS OF AN SF ADDICT: PART TWO

## OR WHY SPACE CADET IS NAMED SPACE CADET

*By The Graeme*

(A previous version of this appeared in WCSFAzine. This version has a lot more pictures!)

Hah! Isn't it obvious? I named my zine after Robert Heinlein's juvenile SPACE CADET first published in 1948? Well, no. Though I read another of his juveniles in Grade school, RED PLANET, and loved every page, along with Lester Del Rey's MAROONED ON MARS, and Arthur C. Clarke's SANDS OF MARS, I didn't get around to reading SPACE CADET till my late teenage years. So my obsession with TOM CORBETT, SPACE CADET which originated in my childhood in the 1950s was not brought about by Heinlein's book.

Must be the TV show then? It tumbled from network to network (CBS, ABC, Dumont, NBC) from October 1950 through to 1956, always broadcast live, sometimes 4 times a week, usually only 15 minutes long but with Saturday broadcasts often 30 minutes long. However, we didn't get our huge B&W TV till 1955 or thereabouts, and I don't recall CBC (the only channel) carrying the show. Indeed, highly unlikely, since the CBC had its own space adventure show SPACE COMMAND whose miniscule cast included James Doohan as a crusty, overworked space engineer. Alas, I believe that show was off the air by the time we got our TV. To sum up, I was not inspired by the TV version of SPACE CADET, because I never saw it. In fact, to this day I've not seen but one episode on a poor quality tape. Sigh.

( Just recently in a telephone conversation my older brother astounded me by stating that – during the year my Dad was stationed at Wright Patterson Air force base in Ohio ( part of an exchange program with the RCAF ) – we kids ( the whole family living in a rented house near the base ) regularly watched SPACE CADET on TV! I would have been two or three years old, my brother eight or nine. No wonder he remembers and I don't! )

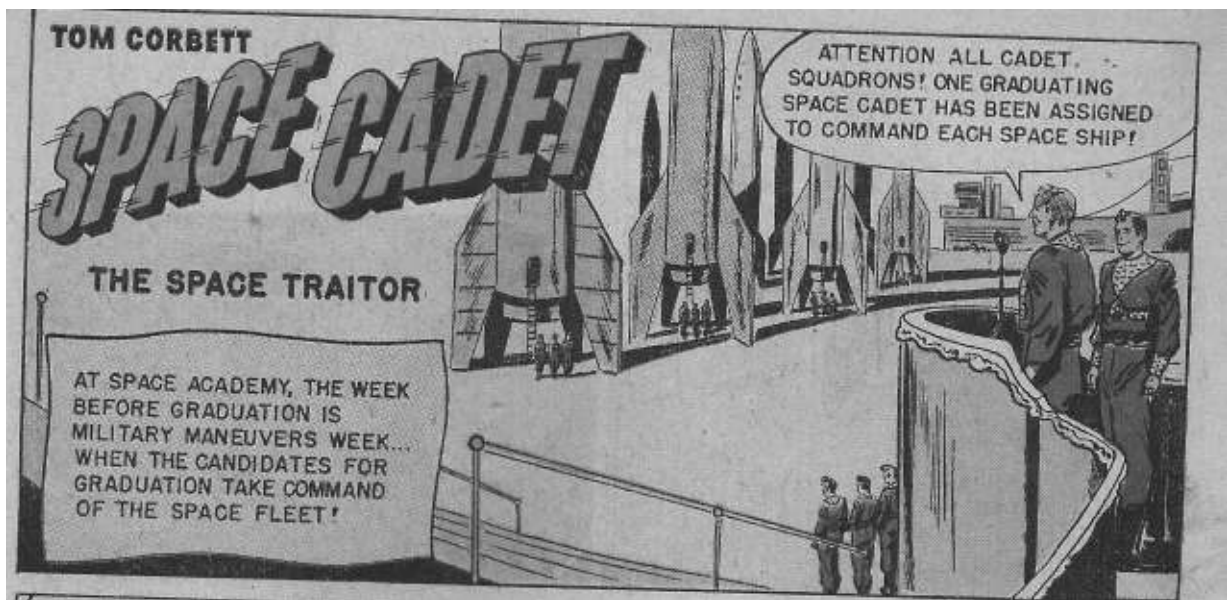


**Space Cadet Space Academy as Seen on the TV Show.**

Interesting aside, I had always assumed the TV show was based on Heinlein's book. Oddly enough, it wasn't. Rockhill studios originally put it together with the aid of Joseph Greene, who prior to Heinlein's book had written a number of radio scripts with titles like SPACE CADETS, SPACE ACADEMY and TOM RANGER OF THE SPACE CADETS. Then, just prior to the series going on air, Rockhill purchased the rights to Heinlein's book and all their publicity concentrated on promoting that angle since Heinlein was far better known than Greene. Heinlein apparently had no direct input into the show, whereas Greene continued to shape its direction, develop its characters, etc, though I'm not sure if this was by virtue of writing scripts or by acting as a story consultant. At any rate, the SOLAR GUARD website has a lot more information on Greene and SPACE CADET. Its URL is:

< <http://www.solarguard.com/sghome.htm> >

So, could it be the SPACE CADET comic books? There were 14 in all, published from 1952 through to 1955. I own a couple now, but I never saw them when I was a kid, for I didn't start collecting comic books till I was eight or nine, beginning in 1959. If any older kid in the neighbourhood had any SPACE CADET comics they certainly didn't let me get my grubby little greedy hands on them.



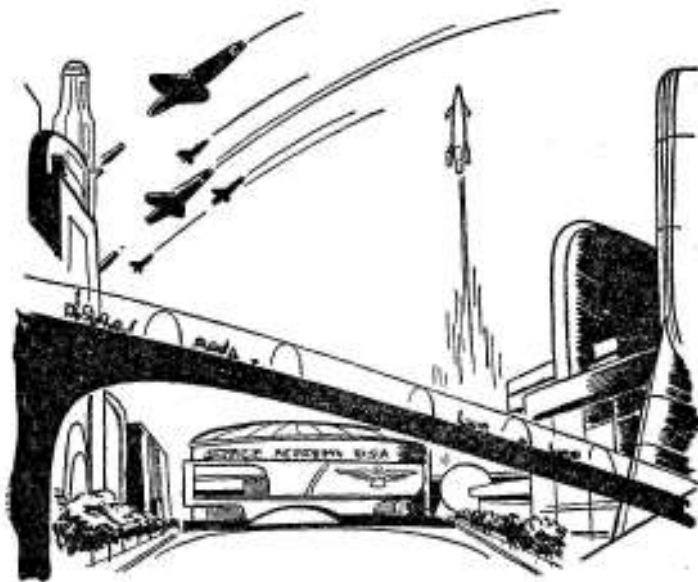
**The Space Cadet Space Academy in SPACE CADET Comic #7, 1953.**

Likewise I doubt I ever saw the daily and Sunday newspaper strip written by Paul S. Newman and illustrated by Ray Bailey. It only ran from September 1950 to September 1953, and considering I was born in 1951 I was a tad too young to be reading the funnies in the newspaper. Besides, I would be greatly surprised if it was ever syndicated in Canada.

How about the eight hardcover books written by Cary Rockwell which were published by Grosset & Dunlop from 1952 to 1956? As a matter of fact, I own 6 of the 8, and they were given to me when I was quite young. I was reading them when I was reading the SEE JANE JUMP SPOT books in grade school and I must say I consider the latter a tad lacking in action and suspense. Indeed, considering what I was reading at home, I rather resented the level I was expected to read in school. If I was precocious in anything, it was in the ability to read.

There's no doubt the SPACE CADET books were a huge hit with me. The adventures of Tom Corbett (Earthman), Roger Manning (Human colonist from Mars) and Astro (Human colonist from Venus) as they fought both Space Pirates and Cadet rivals in their bid to graduate with high marks from the Space Academy ( a worthy goal, though it didn't inspire me to make any effort at school, perhaps because Vincent Massey Grade

School was decidedly lacking in spaceships and field trips to other planets), made a huge impact on my imagination. I identified with those guys. My only criticism, which I felt even when I was reading them for the first time, was that there were no aliens, unless you included the dinosaurs living in the swamps on Venus. Still, dinosaurs were cool, and if Astro wanted to wrestle a T Rex, that was okay by me. I exaggerate. Actually the incident with the Tyrannosaurus involved Tom and Roger, and all they did was empty their space rifles into it until it went away. Quite logical really, even from the T Rex's point of view.



**Space Cadet Space Academy as illustrated in  
DANGER IN DEEP SPACE book 1953.**

Another interesting aside, Cary Rockwell, author of the SPACE CADET novels, was actually the same Joseph Greene who created the TV series. The question of whether the book series influenced the TV series or vice versa thus becomes completely irrelevant. In any case, though I loved the books, and am still very fond of them, they are not the origin of my fixation on SPACE CADET.



**Typical Chapter-Ending Illustration  
From DANGER IN DEEP SPACE**

What then? Could it have been the TOM CORBETT SPACE ACADEMY PLAYSET released by Marx in 1953? It featured lithoed metal walls surrounding the academy tower, over 30 plastic figures of Space Cadets and aliens (!), possibly including robots, plus a rocket car, rocket ships, observatory, futuristic storage tanks and equipment, even furniture for the classroom.

I actually saw this thing, or rather, used to play with the sad remnants of one owned by a friend of mine (probably 'inherited' from an older brother). Only a few figures remained, but I remember the fun of popping their plastic bubble space helmets off and on as I pretended they were floating in the vacuum of space (seems they had a bit of a pressure problem). The Academy Fortress was usually implanted firmly in the sands of Mars

(my sandbox) and frequently under assault by both plastic dinosaurs and metal Dinky Toys. (Odd that the Martians had got a hold of Centurion tanks, Saracen armoured cars and other surplus British war material . Evidently the British Empire in its waning days had concluded some dastardly deal with the Martians! Be that as it may, this playset experience merely added to my obsession with SPACE CADET



**Complete Marx SPACE CADET ACADEMY PLAYSET 1953.**

Another aside, I would love to own a perfectly preserved Academy Playset but one approaching that condition goes for hundreds of dollars on Ebay. Even individual figures can go for as much as \$20. To make matters worse, clever sellers tend to break the set into lots, which must be very frustrating for bidders. You might outbid everyone else to win the plastic furniture, but lose out to a higher bidder on the aliens. In short, if you're life's dream is to own a perfect Space Cadet Academy Playset, be prepared to spend a heck of a lot of money.

So, what DID trigger my life long love affair with Space Cadet? The 3d View Master set simply titled TOM CORBETT SPACE CADET with 3 reels of vivid, wonderfully evocative colour stereoscopic pictures of three dimensional dioramas created by one Florence Thomas circa 1952. They belonged to my brother, and I used to spend hours looking at them even before I entered kindergarten. Don't think I was able to read yet, but I was certainly entranced by the glowing colours and exciting scenes. Fell in love with Mars. Fell in love with fifties style rocket ships. Fell in love with ruins. Fell in love with archaeology. Fell in love with museums. Fell in love with meteorites. All this from one View Master set!

In the first reel, titled THE MOON PYRAMID, the discovery of a tiny anti-gravity pyramid tip (or Ben Ben as the ancient Egyptians used to call it, not that that has anything to do with this story) in the asteroid belt results in an expedition to the moon by our intrepid Space Cadets in their good ship Polaris. There they place the tip atop a truncated (rather small) pyramid, which promptly becomes transparent and reveals a globe of the planet Mars.

The second reel is appropriately titled THE RED PLANET. On Mars Tom Corbett teams up with Joan Dale, chief scientist of the Solar guard. They meet in "*the native room of the Mars Institute Museum*" which is

devoted to artifacts of the long extinct Martian civilization. Their conversation – once I was able to read the booklet accompanying the reels – had the power to send shivers up and down my spine.

Tom Corbett: *“We want to search the junction area of canals 7 and 19. We’re looking for clues to an ancient race who may have had the secret of anti-gravity. Perhaps they are the same race who built the great canals to lead the waters from Mars melting icecaps to the farm regions.”*

Dr. Joan Dale, gesturing at an ancient model landscape: *“This map fragment may narrow the search for us. Notice the pyramid. Once over 1000 feet high, it no longer exists. We know its former site quite accurately. We will hunt there first.”*

They take a nifty flying scooter into the desert and eventually dig up a six-legged monolith with a depiction of the asteroid belt. A 100,000 vacuum tube computer named Mastermind figures out the exact asteroid to search for. At this point criminal masterminds (with fewer vacuum tubes no doubt) kidnap Dr. Joan and zip off to the Asteroid belt. The race is on!

In the final reel, titled MYSTERY OF THE ASTEROIDS, the Polaris chases the ‘pirate’ ship through the asteroid belt till both land on the asteroid they are seeking. The ‘pirates’ drag Joan into the first Alien ‘Time Tomb’ they find, only to get the crap beaten out of them by Tom, Roger and Astro. The Space Cadets are then thrilled to discover a cache of magnetic tape recordings preserving the history of the planet Varth, out of which the asteroid belt formed when the planet broke up. They trigger a ‘movie’ and watch pretty six-legged cat-like aliens floating about on anti-gravity gizmos. All the loot gets hauled back to Earth, and the secret of anti-gravity AND faster than light travel is revealed, along with the fact the Varthians (Varthites?) fled to the stars and might still exist.

Dr. Joan has the last word: *“I hope that someday, some distant tomorrow, we’ll meet them there out among the stars. Then we can say, ‘Thank you!’”*



Cover of Space Cadet View Master Set





**Cover of Story Booklet Accompanying Reels.  
Note the Unprotected Hands!**

Recently I was able to purchase the Space Cadet View Master set via E Bay for a wonderfully low price. For the first time in more than 45 years I am able to gaze on the scenes which have haunted my memory for decades. Here are some of my favourites.



**Incandescent meteor pierces  
the hull of the Polaris.**

The brighter the light source you point the stereoscopic viewer at, the more brilliant the meteor! For some reason, maybe because my first word was “Yites” (for ‘light’), and Christmas tree lights gave and still give me endless pleasure, I was absolutely hypnotized by this scene. For me, this is THE scene which most evokes the sense of wonder.

**More Nifty Space Cadet Scenes**



**Moon Pyramid Reveals Mars**



**Martian Artifacts Museum  
( Note Bad Guy Spying )**



**Anti Gravity Device  
Demonstrated at Space Academy**

Florence Thomas did an incredible job, wouldn't you agree? The quality of modeling, the artful composition, the set design, the brilliant colours, all evocative of the bright, exciting future the fifties promised for the near future. So vividly did these scenes imprint themselves on my impressionable pre-school child's mind's eye that I remember some of them as if they were scenes from movies, complete with motion and sound effects. My habit of watching movies as if I were actually present in the events taking place derives from the hours I spent devouring these View Master reels with all my heart and soul.

Surely modern CGI could bring these scenes to life in an animated short? In fact, I'd love to see a modern retro-style Tom Corbett Space Cadet TV series! And while I'm at it, I'd be quite keen to see some billionaire pay to have a replica pyramid placed on the moon, and a duplicate of the Martian sculpture implanted in the sands of Mars, both for far-future generations to puzzle over.

But climbing down the ladder of imagination to reality, at the very least I can credit this wonderful View Master set for kick starting my second childhood before my first childhood was fairly underway. Working on my third childhood now. Hope to reach my fourth eventually. How to stay young (and immature) your whole life long.

## CONFESSIONS OF AN SF ADDICT: PART THREE

### RETRO BOOK REVIEW: JOHN BRUNNER'S 'TO CONQUER CHAOS'

*by The Graeme*

This is, perhaps, the third Sci-Fi pocket book I purchased for my very own library in 1964 (I was determined to build up a shelf of at least 30 – in fact by 1970 I owned at least 300). An Ace publication, at 40 cents a bit steep for the day, but how could I resist such a striking cover? Futuristic ruins! Spear-chucking grey-uniformed men fleeing in terror! Gigantic alien monstrosity consisting of nothing but tentacles! What could be more perfect? My kind of novel!

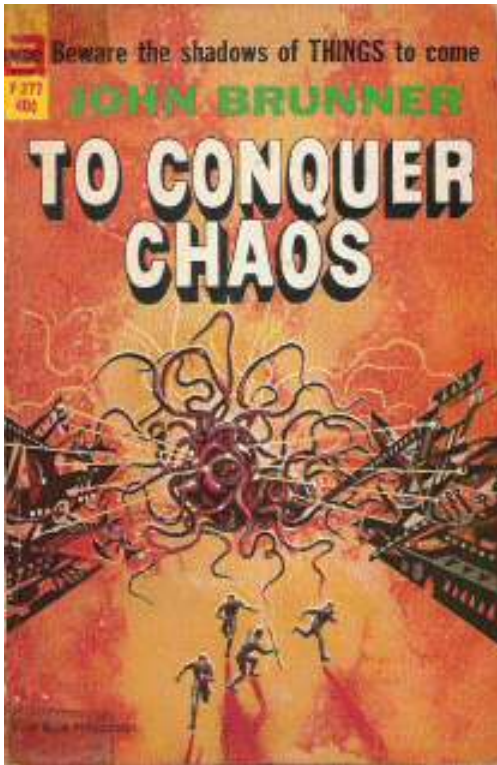
By this time John Brunner had published at least 13 other novels with Ace, novels with titles like SLAVERS OF SPACE, THE SUPER BARBARIANS & THE ASTRONAUTS MUST NOT LAND! These are generally considered to be mere pot-boilers, but are in fact a lot of fun, quite genuinely entertaining. TO CONQUER CHAOS in particular left me with sense-of-wonder archetype imagery that has shaped my taste (?) in science fiction literature.

The front page blurb alone sent chills up my spine:

*The things were always different and always terrifying. Some were big and vicious, some were middle-sized and vicious, and a few were even small and vicious, and there were never two alike.*

*They didn't belong on this Earth, not as far as anybody could tell. They were strictly horrors hatched somewhere out in the unmapped, taboo regions of the frightening Barrenland, and they came roaring out of it one by one to rend and tear and kill. It had always been that way, ever since the rebirth of civilization after the world-wide conflagration.*

*But now they stood in the way of further progress, and the time had come to find out what they were and stop them if it could be done. The story of the effort TO CONQUER CHAOS is an unforgettable novel of future times and forgotten worlds.*



Like most such blurbs, this one is not entirely accurate. Sometimes the small monsters come in swarms of identical critters, but true enough each individual outbreak is always a new species. And it was a plague, not a ‘conflagration’, that brought down civilization. Small matter, it was the combination of the cover and the blurb that instantly convinced me to buy this book.

Brunner switches viewpoint between 3 central characters throughout the book, the better to reveal what is actually going on.

The first character is Jervis Yanderman, a kind of Master Sergeant in the service of Grand Duke Paul of Esberg, who has launched an unprecedentedly huge army of 2,000 men to reach the Barrenland and explore it. Seems the Grand Duke is a man of progress, quite enlightened for the era, all thanks to Granny Jassy, a foolish old woman who frequently has visions of things she doesn’t understand, but by careful questioning when she’s in a trance state the Duke has been able to devise plans for the construction of handguns & gas-searchlights, and even the location of buried cities filled with rusting artifacts. This has made the Grand Duke a power to be reckoned with in a world of few towns and mostly small villages.

Even so, Jervis has his doubts: *Ever since they set out on the greatest expedition of all, to see whether the legendary Barrenland was real, Granny Jassy had been able to tell them of the terrain ahead, not as it was today, but as it might have been in the weird but consistent world of the old tales, when men lived in the gigantic cities of which the ruins had been discovered, when they flew through the air and even – No, that **was** imagination, surely! To fly in the air was vaguely conceivable; birds and insects did it. But to fly beyond the air, to other worlds, was ridiculous. And even that absurdity paled beside the ultimate: the story of **walking** to other worlds than this.*

Even as a kid, when I first read the above I knew instantly that there was something in the Barrenland, some kind of transporter station, which allowed creatures from other worlds to ‘walk’ (or slither!) to Earth. How cool is that? Obviously the wreckage on the cover depicted said station.

The second character, and probably the one the target audience is supposed to identify with, is Conrad, an awkward teenager living in a mental landscape of day-dreaming fantasy (more accurate than that of Granny Jassy) and consequently shunned by everyone in the town of Lagwich: *A prosperous town of many hundred inhabitants and a guard of sixty strong men... We have a strong palisade and a deep ditch with a bridge, and we live safe enough from any danger.* Even so, every night the bully Waygan (always picking on Conrad) blows his magnificent **thing** horn (taken from a monster that slew six men before Waygan’s father killed it) to signal the closing of the palisade gate. It seems that the monsters come out of the Barrenland mostly at night.

However, the occasional daytime manifestation puts Conrad at risk, since his ‘profession’ is making soap in vats out of sight of the town, where he daydreams to his heart’s content, but keeps his bow and quiver of arrows close at hand: *Consequently, when the red and black waving **thing** came in sight at the bend of the path which curved round the Barrenland he jumped to his feet in fright... dived for the bow and arrow he kept propped against a handy rock, fitted an arrow clumsily to the string, and only then looked to see what had appeared.*

The waving **thing** turns out to be a banner born by an advance scouting party led by Jervis Yanderman. Proudly, Conrad volunteers to lead Jervis and his men to the Elders of Lagwich, only to be thrust aside by Waygan at the town gate because he is not worthy. He goes home to his alcoholic father and further abuse. A very sad lad, is Conrad.

The third major character, and this is a very Heinleinian touch, is Nestamay, granddaughter of the stationkeeper, and far more intelligent and resourceful than the few boys available (the others would involve inbreeding) among the small staff of the not-quite-derelict station in the centre of the Barrenland. We meet her heading off for her nightly watch within the station, only to be held up by the lustful young cretin Jasper. Then the creature alarm sounds:

*Once it would have been possible to head straight into the Station and reach the room – Grandfather always called it the “watch office” – where someone always waited during the night for the automatic alarm to indicate the arrival of a **thing**. Long ago, however, the direct passageways had become choked with vegetation, and some of them had caved in, while some of the others held poisonous thorns and grasping plant-tentacles. Nestamay had to use a roundabout route, up twisted stairways and along rickety catwalks, to arrive at her destination.*

Aha! It isn't only animals that come through, but spores and seeds which germinate and infest the vast crumbling dome of the Station with all manner of alien plants, some of which are very dangerous indeed. Still, most of the instruments in the 'watch office' continue to function, and Nestamay is able to monitor the movement of the latest thing and activate the 'electrofence' to drive it into the desert. But she feels no triumph: *Was there never to be an end to this existence? Would they never find the last hole through which **things** leaked from wherever they originated?*

Grand Duke Paul is no fool. He immediately billets the bulk of his army in the village, demanding of the villagers merely a plentiful supply of food, beer, and women. The troops are happy. The villagers sport wide, forced grins. But there's a fly in the ointment. Literally.

Seems a luckless scout is badly wounded by a **thing**. Worse, green 'mould' spreads from his wound and consumes him. The body is burned, but alas, too late. A “fat, buzzing fly” had alighted on the open wound, then visited Grand Duke Paul's head in passing (what has Paul been using for pomade?).

*“Sir! There's a patch of green among your hair!”*

*“Tell no one.”*

The Grand Duke speeds things up a little, recalling his men from the village to the base camp, intending to lead them into the Barrenland while there is yet time to accrue glory. Instead he accrues ever increasing patches of mould.

*They tried, at last, the desperate expedient of cauterization, burning away the skin with hot irons while the Duke sat in his chair, impassive except that his knuckles showed very white on his clenched fists. It was while the cauterization was actually proceeding that they discovered the mould on the whites of his eyes...*

The Duke dies. Jervis Yanderman tries to talk the army into carrying out the Grand Duke's last wish, to invade the Barrenland and destroy whatever it is that spawns **things**.



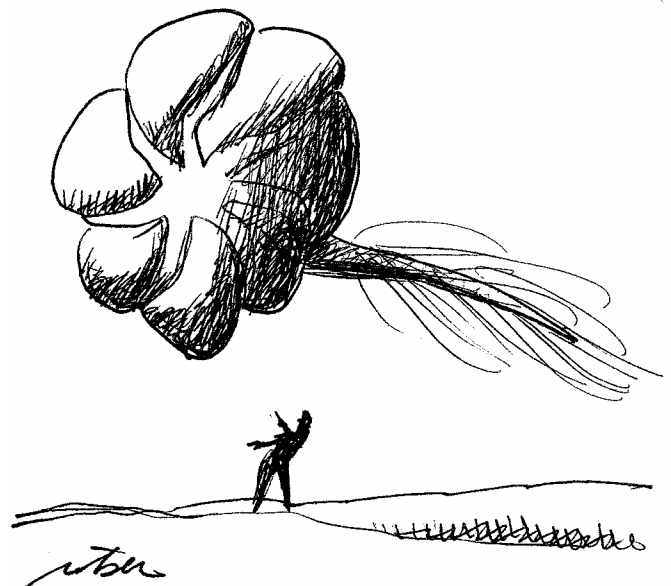
**Frontispiece: Conrad and his visions.**

The troops ponder their choices. Barrenland? Or Village? Murdering, rampaging **things**? Or food, comfy flea-ridden beds, lots of beer, and hordes of almost-willing women? Oddly enough, they choose the latter, slaying the officers, burning their camp, and marching off to the 'town' of Lagwich.

Even more oddly, the Lagwichians have had enough of drunken soldiers, and close the palisade gate. The grand army of Grand Duke Paul (recently deceased, now resembling 50 day old bread) settles down for a siege -- which might take a while, as they lack siege equipment, or any kind of equipment, having burned their camp. Not thinking ahead much, the morons.

Conrad is taken aback, having planned to join the army, what with having been ridiculed out of town so to speak. Fortunately he finds Jervis alive and well, inadvertently reveals he sees visions of the past just like Granny Jassy, and gets volunteered to 'guide' Jervis into the Barrenland. Within they discover such wonderful desert critters as:

*As long as twenty men, the **thing** lay among boulders in the slanting afternoon sunlight. It had no discernible head or limbs – only a vast massing of bulbous bladders of many hues and all sizes from that of a man's head to that of a horse's belly. Between the bladders trailed ragged white membranes, dry and curling at the edges as if the sun was too much for them to withstand.... Now it heaved and bumped itself and tried to move onwards, and the source of the incredible noise was suddenly clear. A sharp boulder struck one of the distended bladders, ripped it, and the gas within came gushing out to the accompaniment of another deafening hoot, leaving behind more of the drying whitish membrane.*



Growing more and more excited at the obvious tourism potential of the Barrenland, Jervis and Conrad press on. Meanwhile, back at the Station, lusty cretin Jasper has turned off the thing alarm to spite everyone for not allowing him to breed with Nestamay. The result?

*It was the most monstrous to be spawned by the incomprehensible forces of the Station in living memory. Fully twenty feet tall, it was recognizable as animal only because it moved and roared; that apart, it was a confused tangle of long grasping tentacles set so thickly on its body it was impossible to see its underlying shape.*

The station crew manages, with some losses, to drive the thing into the desert. Then, just as they begin finger-pointing and assigning blame, something unusual happens.

*There were two explosions in the distance.*

*A pause.*

*Two more.*

*They whirled to stare in the direction from which the noise had come, the direction taken by the injured thing. They were just in time to see it stumble, if such a polypodal beast could stumble, on the lower slopes of the East Brokes. It halted, swayed, began to topple.*

*Two more explosions, and it fell writhing, and from beyond it, from among the random rocks, a figure rose into sight. And another. Nestamay felt the world begin to spin around her.*

*Two strangers. Two strangers! Two new human beings!*

And what's left unsaid, two new **men!** Fresh input into the gene pool. No wonder Nestamay is excited.

Actually, the math is a bit more complicated, plus one **less** man:

*...she was pointing into the darkness of the dome. Something moved there, another monster? No, a human shape. A human shape beginning to scream as it emerged into the open... his head and shoulders were completely covered with a glistening black jelly-like mass, at which his hands clawed hopelessly while his voice grew weak with shrieking...*

Jasper is lustful no more. Oh well, serves him right for shutting off the alarm. Seems he stumbled into one of the alien plant things which decided he'd make a splendid spore-spreading mechanism. I hate when that happens.

Brunner has only a few chapters left to crowd with exposition revealing – through discussion of Conrad's visions – that the Station is run by an electronic 'cortex' or quasi-organic nature, itself infected by the mind-deranging plague of 450 years earlier, and when fully charged by the solar panels it allows in whatever **things** have blundered into Stations elsewhere, but once drained of power through use of the electrofences it sinks into a subconscious state, a **sane** sub-conscious state, and being, by happenchance, a natural telepath, attempts to warn people by means of mental images what they need to worry about. A cry for help, in other words. Well, sure, that makes sense.

Anyway, turns out all Conrad needs to do is fight his way through the jungle rot inside the dome to throw a switch to reduce power, and everything will be OK. So he does.

Turns out the Station operates better on reduced power than it does on full power:

*"Earth! Earth! We got through! We reached Earth again!"*

*And not one man only, but another, and another, and another pouring from the concealment of the alien plants, to stand in a shouting group and laugh and cry and wave at the laughing, crying, waving Conrad and his companions on the platform above.*

*After four and a half centuries he, Conrad, had unwittingly opened the way, and the isolated children of Earth had found it possible to return.*

Where, unless they had brought food with them, they promptly starved to death due to swamping the limited food production facilities of the Station, or wandered off into the desert to die of thirst and heat prostration, or made it out of the desert to be slaughtered by the villagers on the periphery as **thing-devils** in human form, as happened to Nestamay's father years earlier, his dried skin displayed as a banner in Lagwich. Apart from all those possibilities, a happy ending. Especially since Conrad probably got laid, finally.

At the time, TO CONQUER CHAOS had a huge impact on me. Not just by stirring my sense of wonder with visions of incredible monsters, but through conjuring up a painful yet nostalgic vision of civilization in decay, technologies lost, petty yet hopeful new beginnings, man struggling to arise again. Ultimately, a hopeful vision.

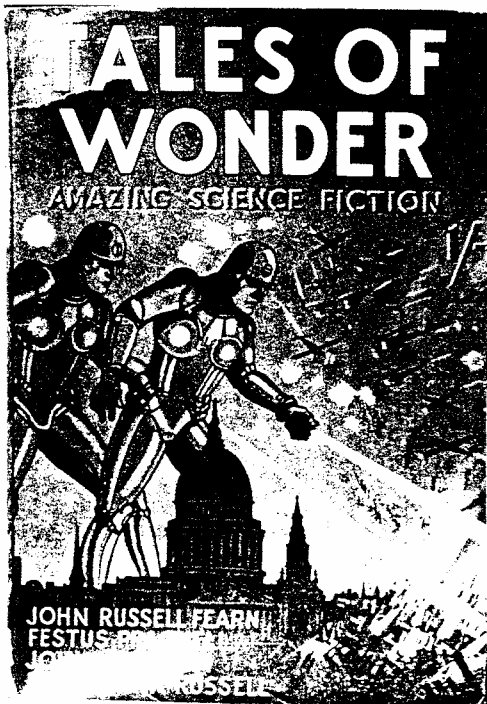
Now, nearly 45 years later, I've read enough history and 'witnessed' enough history to be far more cynical. I know man will always rise again, but rise or fall, pinnacle of achievement or blackest dark age, we are always ensnared in the age-old game of greed and power, and in a sense, it really doesn't matter what level of civilization we're at, we remain the same, always. This is a bad thing. But it can also be a good thing. Or at any rate, interesting, if you're lucky enough to enjoy the status of an objective observer not directly in the path of the latest threat...

I like revisiting the ‘sense-of-wonder’ books and films of my childhood. Even though many deal with end-of-the-world scenarios, they strike me as more innocent and hopeful than what is currently going on in the world. But then, I’m a thoroughly twentieth century kind of guy. This twenty-first century is going to turn out worse than the last one, in my opinion. I hope I live long enough to be proven wrong.

## FILTHY PRODOM STUFF

# FIRST ISSUES: TALES OF WONDER

*by Terry Jeeves*



I came across the first issue of TALES OF WONDER when, as a teenager on holiday, I passed the newsagent's window where the copy was displayed several times before deciding this might be the same stuff as my beloved copies of ASTOUNDING, AMAZING and WONDER. That was July 1937, the mag cost me a shilling, was published by World's Work and edited by Wally Gillings.

The only interior art was a standard printer's ‘filler pattern’ or two, but the cover depicted two armoured giants busily destroying London. The story, ‘Superhuman’ by Geoffrey Armstrong (John Russell Fearn) told of two babies who had been made into giants by regular injections. Their reign of terror was finally stopped by turning them into stone.

‘Seeds from Space’ under Fearn's real name, had Martian weed covering Earth and a weird scientist with a ray which paralyzed everyone. Things looked grim until the weed acted as a bumper against a terrible meteor storm, then dissolved into powder. The scientist (a Martian) kindly de-paralyzed everyone before going home again.

‘Revolt on Venus’ saw adventurers set off for the Moon, miss it and get almost to Mars before they were captured by robots operated by Venusians. Taken to Venus, they smashed the air machines, turned off the robots and escaped home.

‘Man of the Future’ by Festus Pragnell concerned an experiment with glands which created intelligent animals and a superman, leaving the reader to imagine the results.

‘Monsters of the Moon’, by Francis Parnell, saw the hero set off to save his girl from bounding Lunar creatures and a giant snake. In the process, he discovers a lake of ice, thus making himself rich enough to wed.

Eric Frank Russell introduced a nice spot of humour with ‘Prr-r-eet’, a tale of an encounter with an alien.

In ‘Invaders from the Atom’, from Maurice G. Hugi, dwellers on an electron world expand to invade Earth but are defeated by relativity.

Finally, ‘The Perfect Creature’ by John Beynon had three eyes, three legs, four arms and chased an RSPCA inspector – but drowned because it couldn't swim.

The yarns are totally pedestrian by modern standards, scientists build spaceships, create monsters and save worlds, all from the safety of their backyard laboratories. Nevertheless, in the SF-starved pre-war days, TOW



was a wonderful shot in the arm – and best of all, an advertisement on page 39 led me to subscribe to Gillings’ fanzine ‘Scientifiction’ and thus make contact with SF fandom. I still have that first issue of TOW, and a set of Gillings’ Scientifiction and his other fanzines. They make a nostalgic read.

## SUPER SCIENCE STUFF



## ASK MR. SCIENCE!

*The immortal wisdom of Mr. Science first appeared in the July 1987 issue of BCSFAzine (#170) and later on in the pages of the OTTAWA SF SOCIETY STATEMENT, ON SPEC MAGAZINE, and WCSFAzine. I am happy to announce that Mr. Al Betz (Mr. Science's Social Secretary), has forwarded Mr. Science's gracious permission to reprint the entire corpus of Mr. Science literature in serial form within the pages of SPACE CADET.*

Mr. LM, of North Vancouver, B.C., asks:

**WHY DOES LOOKING AT THE SUN MAKE ONE SNEEZE?**

**MR. SCIENCE** - The Solar Sneeze is a distorted racial memory of Sun Worship. An Acquaintance of Mr. Science always, when looking at the sun, sneezes three times, not more, not less. This is the result of the ancient priests so often exhorting their followers to “give three cheers for the sun.” Ra! Ra! Ra!

Mr. RGC, of Vancouver, B.C., asks:

**WHY, DESPITE THE WORLD’S RIVERS EMPTYING MILLIONS OF TONS OF WATER INTO THE OCEANS EVERY DAY, DOES THE AVERAGE SEA LEVEL ALWAYS REMAIN THE SAME?**

**MR. SCIENCE** - The basic idea of the Earth having a molten core is correct, but the presumed liquid is not. The Earth’s hollow core has been filling, not with molten iron, but with water. The remaining empty space is small, and calculations indicate it will be filled about the beginning of May, 1988. Sea level will then begin to rise, U.B.C. is high enough that V-Con 16 will not be affected, but V-Con 17 will probably have to be held at the top of Grouse Mountain.

## PROTEST THE PROTISTS!

We’ve all seen the Steve McQueen film The Blob. Single-celled or multi-celled? Obviously single-celled, a kind of giant amoeba, only very fast moving. Such things don’t exist, right? All single-celled critters need a microscope to be seen? Wrong! The bottom of the ocean is lousy with GIANT single-minded blobs!

Yes, I said single-minded, for they are bent on our destruction! Why else have they slithered in wait for 1.8 billion years?

Protists they're called. News about them has been suppressed since before man began (the intelligent dinosaurs refused to talk about them). They're about the size of a grape, for Ghu's sake. A single-celled bubble that big? Obscene! And generally covered in mud to boot. Now that's a tough-skinned critter. And the hollow space within is filled with blob jelly and sarcasm! Look at the slap in the face they recently delivered the human race!



You see, scientists were very fond of narrow snake-like tracks preserved in fossilized bits of seabed, some dating millions of years before the Cambrian 'explosion of life' which produced multi-cell Ur-human-thingsies. They thought these 'wormcasts' had been left by critters with bilateral symmetry, critters with a face, a backside, and an attitude. This did not make sense. There was no known fossil evidence of multi-celloids so far back in time.

Recently Dr. Mikhail "Misha" Matz from the University of Texas realized there were modern 'wormcast' tracks in the Bahamas and he sent an expedition to find out what was creating them, reasoning it had to be a descendent of the prehistoric track-layers, maybe a genuine living fossil. And he was right! But not in the way he had anticipated:

"We were looking for pretty animals that have eyes, are colored, or glow in the dark; instead, the most interesting find was the organism that was blind, brainless, and completely covered in mud."

What an insult! The first engineering works by our distant ancestral bliateraloids were in fact designed and fashioned by mindless blobs, no doubt not even native to our own planet! Probably Martian migrants!

Wait a minute. Am I not overreacting? Are these not harmless blobs? Don't they "move very slowly, taking weeks or even months to make a track of a few centimetres... using tiny protruding legs known as psuedopodia"?

Lies! All lies! Part of a vast world-wide cover-up to prevent us from disintegrating into blobs of quivering, terrified jelly. Those Protists are fast-moving suckers. My wife knows. She once had a dozen of them as pets!

You see, she used to have a very large cold-water salt-water fish tank which she kept continually restocked with fish. Sometimes things were present in the local sand or local seaweed she employed that separated and grew, sometimes horrifying things, Protists! She complains they traveled all over the inside of the glass consuming algae before other critters had a chance to graze.



And worst of all? Sometimes they'd escape! She'd come traipsing into the living room in the morning, barefoot comfortable on carpet, when suddenly plop! Squish! Icky stuff between her toes! Protists quite disgusting to step on apparently.

My question is, what were the Protists up to surging across the carpet? Where were they heading? The phone? The VCR? What were they going to do? What plan were they following? What hideous plot?

Mankind is in peril! Mankind must be saved! But how?

**Step one:** Destroy all cold salt water fish tanks!

**Step two:** Boil the oceans dry!

**Step three:** If you see a mud-covered grape in your path, STEP ON IT!

You've been warned...

## HISTRONIC HISTORY STUFF

# A POCKET FULL OF HISTORIES: COIN NOTES

By Tara Wayne

*The coins illustrated in these short written pieces are all from my collection. I've scanned each one, and drawn on my own knowledge to describe the coin, the Kings, the Queens, the Emperors, and the times. Certain statements are my opinions only, even guesswork, but that's alright. After more than 2,000 years in some cases, there's nobody around to sue!*



I've been to a coin show! I can never acquire new coins without working up an enthusiasm that has nothing to do with \*value\*, but everything to do with the challenge of new things to uncover, and new things to learn! Take this rather plain bronze coin called a As. (It's pronounced Oz, not Ass, by the way.) Four of these things about the size of a quarter, but thicker, made up a heavier bronze coin called a Sestertius. Four Sestertii made up one silver coin the size of a dime called a Denarius. So you might say this item was 1/16 of a dime, or about 2/3 of a cent. I had seen plenty of Asses in my time, but none quite so early, because it was Augustus himself who established the system of low marker, base metal coinage.

As usual for early imperial bronzes, the reverse side has a large SC in the middle. It stood for *Senatus Consultum*, or loosely "by the advice

of the senate", which wasn't technically supposed to legislate, only advise the popular assembly on what laws were needed. In practice, of course, the popular assembly rubber stamped almost everything the senate "advised". There was no actual discussion of it. Four tribunes representing the assembly had the power to veto senatorial decrees, but were most often wholly bought and paid for by the rich, which is to say the senate. On occasion the public assembly showed a will of its own, but whenever that happened it was almost always a sign of trouble coming -- riots in the streets, mass arrests, civil war, and often as not ending in a dictator calling the shots.

Be that as it may, the inscription around the SC was one I wasn't familiar with. Commonly, Latin inscriptions rely heavily on abbreviations and initials, like "TR. P. III, PP, P. MAX" say. (Which would mean "power of the tribune for the third time, father of the country, and head priest".) But I couldn't remember seeing one like "AAAFFCNPIS" before! After a bit of thought, I recognized that CNPIS is actually a man's name -- Cnaeus Piso. But what was the rest? All American Air Force Fliers? Australian Allied Academies For Feminism? I had to crack a couple of books on this one, but found a simple answer to the vexing question. The initials stood for a commission of three men, who oversaw the minting of coins in the early days of Augustus. Cn. Piso would have been the commission's head that year. What I didn't know, then, was that there were actually \*two\* men's names on the reverse!

The As was weakly struck by its coiner. You can see there is no detail in the same place on either side. It isn't wear. Because of the weak strike, much of the obverse (face) side of the coin is also unreadable. What is clear reads "...EST CAESAR AVG". The rest would have been part of a formula something like TR POTES, or TRIB POTES, both abbreviations for "power of the tribune". I had to consult a book to discover it exactly read "TRIBVNIC POTES" -- I wouldn't have guessed. The odd thing was that usually an inscription begins around 6 o'clock and reads clockwise. That would make the full inscription "TRIBVNIC POTES CAESAR AVGVSTVS", a word order that was unusual to say the least. There was the same problem with the reverse. According to the reference, it shouldn't read "AAFF CN PISO", but "CN PISO AAFF". The only answer was that in this special case, the inscription begins at noon, not six.

Knowing where to begin reading a text in a circle matters! Conventions are not always observed, either.

## LETTERS OF COMMENT

# OOK OOK, SLOBBER DROOL!

**( Note: Ghod-Editor's comments are in brown. I reserve the right to edit LoCs as I see fit. )**

[ A year ago I announced I was contemplating resurrecting my SPACE CADET GAZETTE fanzine. I received the following responses: ]

**From: HOWARD CHERNIAK**  
**Active member of BCSFA & VCON for decades.**  
**December 29, 2007**

I would certainly like to get SCG by pdf, including back issues.

( If you don't already have a pdf converter, I've started using Primo PDF, which is free, and I've been enjoying it. )

*Yep! That's what I use. Works quite well. Of course, the free version only allows you to convert a completed document into PDF, there's no PDF editing capacity or any other bells & whistle, but that's fine, that's all I need it for.*

See ya! Cheers, --Howard

**From: STEVE FORTY**  
**Former Editor of BCSFAzine & Elron Winner.**  
**December 30, 2007**

If you want people who would like to be on your Space Cadet list, I would love to be added. I enjoyed your BCSFAzines, and would like to see some of that old dry humour you showed back then.

*Hope you enjoy my review of Mysterious Island next issue! I know how similar our taste in films is... ☺*

[ And after posting SPACE CADET #11 which had never been distributed, I received the following Locs: ]

**From: ERIC MAYER**  
**Former Editor of the legendary GROGGY**  
**Sept 11, 2008**

Just read Space Cadet 11. Wonderful account of your Wiccan wedding. I'm not saying it would be the kind of wedding I'd go for. (Although I can't argue with dancing to The Time Warp part afterwards) But I like the fact that it was in a park and not a church. I am not very religious and although I've been married twice, neither time was in a church.

Mary and I were married in our living room. We found out that a judge by the name of Valentino lived right down the street from us and he was happy to come over and perform the ceremony. There were a few friends there and that was that. No time warping, though. Mary went for a "knees up" which for those not of the British persuasion is not as rude as it sounds.

*I've heard of the song "Knees up, Mother Brown!" but danged if I know what it means. Dancing a jig perhaps?*

When I used to run I often passed weddings being performed in the park a little ways from the house. My dad loved hiking around the woods and painting watercolors of the woods. He used to say his church was nature, which makes a lot of sense.

*Well, if one accepts the idea the natural world is a creation of the divine, than in theory one should feel closer to God(s) in the midst of his/her/their creation than within the din of a cityscape, the latter being entirely the creation of man. Of course, given the idea that God is everywhere, even a prison cell will do.*

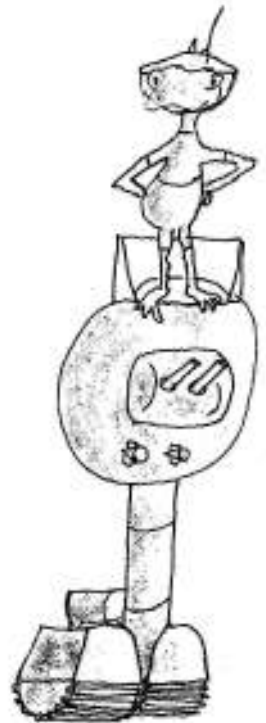
Pretty bad about the broken nose though. But I guess that is all blood under the bridge by this time. ( O.K. I couldn't resist, sorry )

As I said I am not very religious. I was raised United Methodist. Their beliefs, so far as their secular agenda goes, are of the much maligned liberal variety. (Their website sounds like the platform of the Democratic party) Considering the damage organized religion of the know-nothing variety has wrought in the United States, paganism sounds tempting. I judge people by the way they live. If religion helps people lead decent, caring lives I'm all for it. If it's used as an excuse for hatred and bigotry, as is often the case, I'm against it.

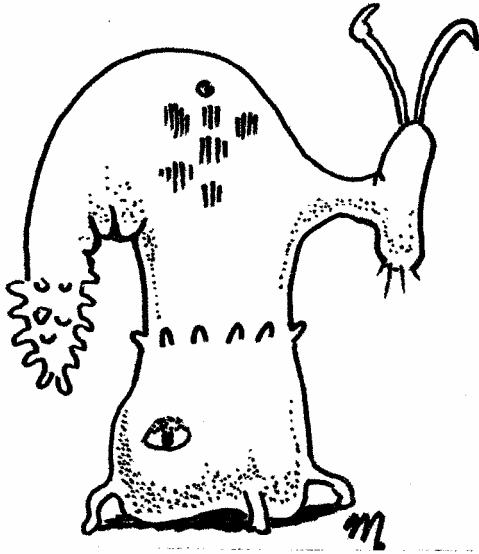
*Being an atheist, I'm not at all religious, but then I'm not opposed to religion either, and can appreciate much that is profound and beautiful in many religions. Over all though, I'm suspicious and cynical about any ideology, religious or otherwise, which can be used to divide people into us VS. them.*

This is a terrific issue and it's great that you can finally disseminate it. I always struggled to finance my zine Groggy, which is why I used a hand cranked ditto machine, and a hectograph, and kept the mailing list around 60 or 70 for most of the time. How I would have loved to be able to publish electronically, more or less for free! Now that that is possible, though, I am no longer inspired to publish. However, when I re-entered fandom, if you can call my limited fanac re-entry -- I decided to confine myself entirely to non-paper fanac. Partly it is to try to make sure I don't allow myself to become overwhelmed ( which would force me to gafiate because I don't have the time I once did ) but also, partly because I remember how I hated the expenses involved with paper and how it limited what I wanted to do. No. I want no part of paper!

*GROGGY was a wonderful zine with extraordinary Hektographed covers, quite beautiful in fact. The BCSFA/WCSFA archive has several copies (originally sent to Susan Wood I believe) which I keep inside paper envelopes to protect them from light. I will undoubtedly review them in a future issue of SPACE CADET.*



*Non-paper fanac is the only choice my finances allow me. Paper fanac doesn't limit my choices, it gives me NO choice. It's not an option. I haven't even printed out paper copies of the last few WCSFAzines for myself, since ink for my printer is so expensive I have to restrict actual printing to important letters to officialdom and such. I hate being a member of the working poor, but at least I'm surviving. There's food on the table. But only so long as the company I work for doesn't go out of business. Keeping my fingers crossed.*



Horrible about the mugging. I lived in New York City for a few years during the late nineties, when crime was at its worst, but luckily had no problems.

*There have been a number of stabbings, drive-by shootings and outright murders in my neighbourhood in the last few months. Several incidents in the vicinity of the nearby Skytrain station. I don't leave the apartment except when I have to. I especially avoid going out at night.*

As for credit cards, I haven't had one for ages. It's a long and complicated story I don't want to get into, but suffice it to say, there came a time when I decided to learn to live without one. And it is perfectly feasible, although, admittedly, it would be difficult reserving a hotel room or renting a car but since I don't like traveling anyway I manage and not having a credit card actually gives you a lot of freedom. Of course if you can just pay the balance off every month, that's fine too.

*Despite living from pay cheque to pay cheque, I actually LIKE paying bills. Once the bills for the month are paid off, I feel a great sense of relief, and much enjoy plotting how to spend the few remaining pennies. In fact, I enjoy the freedom of not owing anybody anything so much I prefer to pay my bills the same day I get them if at all possible. Juggling bills makes me nervous. Paying bills calms me down. What that says about me I don't know. Just trying to live a stress-free existence is all.*

Hope to see a new Space Cadet soon.

Best, Eric

**From: TARAL WAYNE**

**1988 Canadian Unity Fan Fund winner, Legendary Fan Artist & Editor, 2008 Rotsler Award Winner.  
September 11, 2008**

Found Space Cadet on eFanzines last night, actually, and downloaded it. Of course you can use the Capt'n Panda piece if you like. It might be worth noting somewhere that it was drawn freehand without preparation or planning, while visiting another artist years ago. It blew his mind, because he can't do anything without a wad of blue pencil sketches working everything out first. But I've always been easy with integrated concepts and composition. It's been a while since I've seen it, but as I recall it was loosely inked by my standards. Normally I use ball points and ink slowly. That was felt tip pen as I recall, and with that tool you have to be very zen. There's no slow line or fast, just a line. If you tried to go slow it would spread and ruin the drawing.

*I will use the Capt'n Panda piece as cover art, I think for SC #14. I've always been an admirer of your art, and I particularly enjoy your explanation (or any other artist's explanation for that matter) of how the art is created. In this instant gratification age, people enjoy glancing at striking images, but there's little appreciation or comprehension as to how the images are produced. Hence comments such as the above are both educational and intriguing (at least to someone like me who can't get past stick-figure level).*

**From: BRAD FOSTER**  
**Hugo winning Fan Artist.**  
**September 11, 2008**

Great to hear you plan to begin pubbing new issues of SPACE CADET, and love to see that piece of art be used as a cover, since that is what it was originally drawn for. Looking forward to seeing it in print. (er, in print, or only online?)

*Online only alas. I'd have to win a lottery to get into paper pubbing – but if I did everything would be hardcover with fancy leather covers and multicolour illos!*

Speaking of only online, it's kind of hard to keep up with the zines that pile up on efanazines, so if you could drop me a line when you pub something there with something of mine, I would appreciate it. Only way I'll know for sure you've used some work, and I should send you more.... Just pop me an email as you use the stuff, and I'll make sure to keep you supplied with new pieces.

*Thank you! Music to the ears of a fanzine editor.*



Speaking of which, attached are three new fillos for you to make use of in either Space Cadet or WCSFAzine. Just let me know when they show up.... It has taken three attempts to load these pics, as my connection went out three times. Once after I'd loaded two, and halfway through the third. When it breaks, it knocks out the whole procedure, and have to start over again. Bummer! Like having all the benefits of the 21st century technology, but for some reason having to use a steam-driven power source that leaks.

*I have the feeling the 'alternate' fuel everyone is dreaming about will turn out to be coal. You can maintain a 'modern' civilization with steam power. I remember that a construction company I used to work for maintained a yard stocked with steam-powered ditch-diggers, bulldozers & the like which they had used in the early 1900s. I advocated donating them to a museum. I believe they just scrapped them instead. Oh well. Recently they got Babbage's mechanical computer to work. Maybe we'll all wind up with a delicate system of steam-powered gears to pub our ish. Failing that, we can always go back to mud tablets, though the postal cost will possibly be prohibitive....*

Keep on pubbing, I'll keep on drawing.

Brad

**From: LLOYD PENNEY**  
**1998 Canadian Unity Fan Fund Winner, two-time Aurora Winner, Legendary Letter Hack.**  
**September 13, 2008** < [penneys@allstream.net](mailto:penneys@allstream.net) >

Dear Graeme:

Hello! It's good to see the Space Cadet Gazette title again, issue 11! Can it be ten years? And, good to see pictures of your Big Fat Wiccan Wedding. I've never been in your depressed position, but I am glad you found something like Prozac to point you in the right direction. It sounds like it gave you your life back. It must have been some time after all of this that you started WCSFAzine.

*Roughly six years later I think.*

Barry Kent MacKay is a name from the past. I think he's still around, still working as a wildlife artist. Where'd his artwork go?

*It still exists, in the pages of any zines he contributed to, assuming they are preserved in private collections. In the case of MacKay's fillos I employ, I purchased a batch of about 50 of them from Taral back when he was raising money for C.U.F.F.*

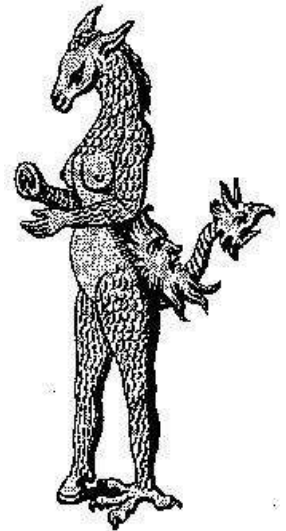
When Yvonne and I got married, she had little stuff, and I have much less, being a relatively new graduate from Ryerson. We started in a tiny one-bedroom, got as big as a three-bedroom, and now we live in a two-bedroom. You never really know how much stuff you have until you've got to move it someplace.

*Sad story, when I first moved in with Alyx, I had to discard half my book collection (among other things) in order to reduce my possessions to manageable size. I thought I had heard Alyx say she hated Jack Kerouac for some reason, so I threw out all my hardcover editions of his works, along with books about the 'Beats' and anything by Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs, etc. Turns out Burroughs is her favorite author, with Kerouac as a close second. She's never forgiven me for throwing them out. On the plus side, the last of the Hippy general store guys in Kitsilano salvaged most of the books from the dumpster and had them on sale for mere pennies the very next day. Unfortunately I didn't find out Alyx's true opinion of Burroughs & Kerouac till much later.*

*I don't normally throw books in the dumpster, but I was running out of time and all the people and bookstores I contacted weren't interested.*

*This Christmas was rather lean, but I did manage to present Alyx with the recently rediscovered and never-before-published novel **AND THE HIPPOS WERE BOILED IN THEIR TANKS** jointly written by Kerouac and Burroughs before they became famous and popular. Partial amends as it were.*

You must ask Christina Carr and Martin Hunger about their marriage vow renewal, held in a Scarborough park some years ago. Yvonne and I were in charge of catering the event, and though we tried to be authentic with foods only available in mediaeval times, people brought potatoes, tomatoes and watermelons, just to name a few. We fed the masses while Chris and Martin were queen and king, having their big day and the renewal they had always wanted. Your Wiccan wedding reminded me of that day. (There were no dogs in attendance, but a handsome horse for Chris to perch upon and have her picture taken.)



At my own wedding, I got to say little beyond "I do". The same thing happened at the reception...I didn't get to say anything! We got some beautiful presents, but the best gifts were the ones that were most useful at the time. Yvonne's mother Gabrielle created Yvonne's wedding dress and the dresses for our bridesmaids, while her sister Denise catered the reception, and created the world's most alcoholic wedding cake, just for us. This past spring, we celebrated 25 years together. May you and Alyx have that, and many more.

I would have liked to have purchased that 1939 Worldcon programme book. I wonder who was selling it, and why? The programme within it may have seemed dull and short to today's sophisticated and spoiled fan, but 70 years ago now, it was the first such attempt at a global gathering, and it was a wondrous and exciting time. And, it saw The Great Exclusion Act of 1939. Should time travel ever become a reality, I'd go back to attend the Nycon, and see what it was like.

*Taral recently posted several 1939 Worldcon reports online at [edfanzines.com](http://edfanzines.com), which includes a splendid illustration of the main meeting hall. Gives you some idea.*

The local is nearly 10 years old, and some of the correspondents have passed away or gaffiated. I'm sure I wrote up a loc for issue 10, and I'd have to dig a bit, but I'm sure I could find it.

*I know I received locs for #10, but if I kept them the file is apparently buried somewhere in the archive.*



Now that your bankruptcy probationary period is up, a credit card is nearly necessary. You need to use it to build up a good credit rating again. You're doing the right thing to pay it off, and then use it again.

*Someone told me, or I read somewhere, that if you pay off your credit card every month, it has no effect on your credit rating. Apparently you have to let a little bit remain each month, but always pay off the bulk of the amount owing. THAT improves your credit rating. Odd, but supposedly true.*

I composed a lot of this loc at my new job. It's getting off to a slow start, but things should pick up next week. And, I am actually typing it up at the Globe and Mail. This is how I get a lot of my locs done these days. The more time and the more computers I have access to, the more I get done, especially with managing my time efficiently.

I will send this out to you directly...if you list who letters are from, please list my home e-mail. Take care and see you the next time you produce a zine.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

## THE HOUSE OF PAIN!

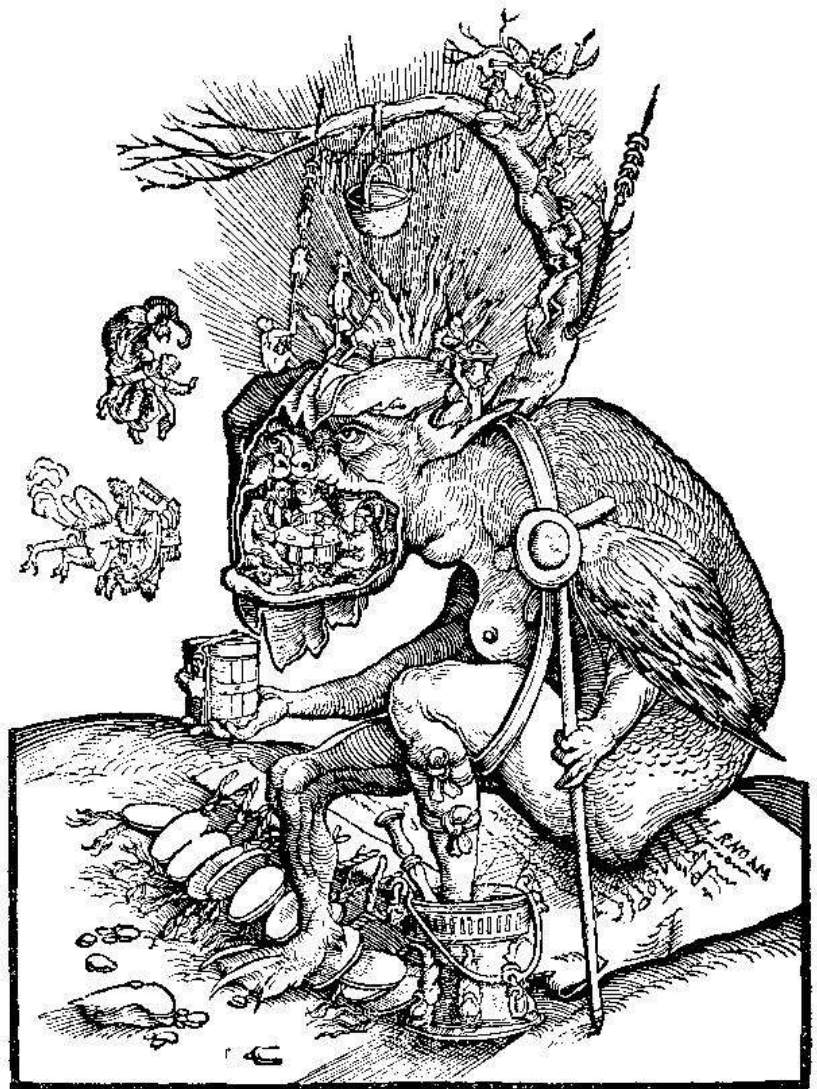
*Fiction by R. Graeme Cameron*

*I once had dreams of earning my living writing science fiction. All I managed to do was earn rejection slips, for many obvious reasons. Rather than let these old manuscripts molder in my closet, I thought I'd print them in SPACE CADET and see if the rot spreads to your brain cells. After all, how better to define a perzine faned than to reveal him to be a narcissistic sadist? Don't say I didn't warn you!*

*Here's a story I wrote in 1988:*

### SEE THE DANCING MARTIAN!

Old man Rollins, his exoskeleton socketed to the floor grid, stood before a station porthole, watery eyes blinking as he gazed at the planet below, the earthlight a pale caress on his wan, parchment-like skin. He knew the staff and the other patients called him Skull Face behind his back, one of many reasons he preferred to be alone in his cell to think and hate and stare down the Earth like a petulant God. Now a machine had come to him and he hated it too because of the fools who had sent it, hated all machines for serving man, for he hated humankind most of all. He was happy to have outlived millions.



**The Huckster from Hell**

“With any luck, a thousand die with my every breath,” he muttered to himself.

“Pardon, sir?” came the annoyingly human voice of the Camrob as it hovered unseen behind him. “To begin? Begun?”

“Don’t expect me to turn around,” warned Rollins. “Not going to waste time looking at you, not when I can watch the Earth die. I especially love Hurricanes, love to blow on the glass and add my strength to those whirling demons. Our glorious technocracy claims to be omnipotent, yet it still can’t control mere storms. Makes me laugh.”

Half-subliminal hesitant whirring from the Camrob as it stirred uneasily in the zero gravity. He was confusing it. Good. He hated the modern fad for stream of consciousness monologues. Whatever happened to the good old days when they used to interview people? He hated minimalist journalism.

“Topic,” thundered the robot in a stentorian voice, indicating the official beginning of the broadcast. “Reflections on his accomplishments by the Solar System’s oldest man, River Rollins, the first human to reach three hundred years of age.”

It wasn’t all that great an achievement, mused Rollins bitterly. He’d been the first to sign up for the orbiting retirement hospital, been the first to be able to afford it, and he’d been only seventy at the time. Most people wait too long before... Christ! Two hundred and thirty years he’d been stuck up here. What prison sentence could compare?

“I suppose it began with my participation in the manned Mars expedition. Of course, not being the Captain, I wasn’t the first to set foot on Martian soil.” He remembered planning it otherwise. He had snared a position with the ramp team by furtive brown nosing, and as soon as that sucker dropped he had planned to rush past the Captain and shout “River Rollins, first man on Mars!” before they could think to shut down the relay. He remembered chuckling as the ramp lowered. It would have made him famous, and infamous... and rich.

“We landed in the middle of a dust storm. Dangerous of course, which is why we did it. NASA’s funding problems were enormous; we needed all the public interest we could stir up. Anyway, couldn’t see a thing at first.” Not with all that damned dust blowing to beat hell, thought Rollins. The air was thin, but the winds were ferocious, he remembered his helmet visor being sandblasted into opaque junk as he stood in the hatchway impatiently waiting for the ramp to bite down. “Then, as I lifted my outer visor for a better look, for a moment the air cleared... and there stood Fred Astaire...”

Rollins paused, his body shaking with a small spasm meant to be mistaken for laughter. “Who’d expect Fred Astaire to be waiting at the foot of the ramp? Took the wind out of my sails, I tell you. Course, at the time we didn’t know he was Fred Astaire. We just knew he was a Martian. A BIG Martian, big as a house. You’ve seen the pictures... like a red leather boiler on four stilt-like legs, with weirdly glittering tiny blue eyes studded all over and an absurdly small mouth at one end. I have to admit we hesitated.”

Hell, mused Rollins, we turned in a panic and fought with each other to get back inside the ship. Good thing the cameras had not been on them. The taxpayers would have taken a very dim view of terrified heroes. He remembered giving the Captain the boot. Ahh, fond memories.

“Has anybody seen Ginger Rogers?” were the Martian’s first words. That beastie could broadcast on all frequencies and to this day nobody knows how. I’m very proud of the fact I turned around and said, ‘Fred Astaire, I presume?’ because I was right, though it was just a lucky guess.” And, considered Rollins, it made him the man on the spot as far as the public was concerned. It marked the beginning of his rise to wealth and power. Bless the dim-witted alien for that.

“Bang went our carefully planned expedition”, snorted Rollins. “Instead of exploring, we sat around interrogating Fred. For example, was he indigenous to the planet as he claimed or, since there seemed to be no

other Martians, was he in fact from somewhere else? We asked him many times, but he'd always twist the conversation back to his desperate desire to dance with Ginger Rogers. Apparently he'd been monitoring television broadcasts from Earth and, of all things, become enamoured of old Astaire/Rogers dance films, particularly FLYING DOWN TO RIO. He even boasted he had sculpted the great face and accompanying pyramids on the Cydonian Plateau to attract a mission from Earth, a big disappointment to those training to be Marchaeologists. Everyone on the mission became depressed. Suddenly we weren't important. World attention was focused on him, or it."

"Sponsors request more glee," stated the Camrob, its unctuous voice a jarring intrusion.

Rollins ignored the machine and went on, "You see, Fred wanted us to haul him to Earth, and the public was quite taken with the idea. Some questioned the wisdom of bringing him back in lieu of the tones of rocks we'd originally planned to pick up, but an international organization that sprang up known as The Friends of Fred overran even the most intelligent opposition. Most scientists at the time were of two minds; some feared he was a Von Nuemann device gone mad, others worried about the little matter of possible bacteriological contamination. Yet all were eager to meet him face to face, so to speak. Fred was only keen to dance, didn't care about anything else."

"Glee, if you please," insisted the Camrob. "More glee."

It had been a glum return trip, Rollins recalled. Like the rest of the crew, he had assumed the mission would set him up for life, he had never expected to compete with anything more newsworthy than a handful of Martian lichen. And like the rest of the crew, he had loathed Fred.... At first.

"Going home, everyone was too busy to pay attention to Fred, sad to say. Yet he had no material wants, needed no food, no drink, nor company for that matter. He was perfectly content to squat in the storage bay humming dance tunes. Finally, out of sheer boredom, I took to visiting him. We got to know each other rather well."

Rollins remembered how his vague intent to pump Fred for information gradually evolved into a perverse delight in tormenting the neophyte dancer. "How you gonna wear a top hat? It'll slide off!" had been one of his favourite taunts. "You sure as hell can't carry a cane. No arms, dummy!" was another. Yet this abuse always failed to unnerve Fred. Then, one frustrating shift when Rollins could think of no further insults, the full implication of Fred's imminent arrival on Earth suddenly struck him. Fred was going to be the star, the big show, the whole kazoo. Why not get in on it?

"Fred, good soul that he was, trusted me, and I certainly respected him. So it's only natural he asked me to be his agent."

Rollins struggled to keep from laughing out loud. The Martian had not known what an agent was, but once the concept had been explained to him he became desperate to sign. Since he lacked appendages capable of gripping a pen, they made do with his hoof print instead. Fortunately, later court challenges failed to invalidate it. Rollins still bore a grudge against the crew for trying to horn in on his exclusive contract, but they were all dust now, and he could accept that.

"We hit the talk-vid circuit at first to drum up excitement over the prospect of his debut performance. I did most of the talking, at least on subjects other than dancing, cause dancing was all Fred cared to talk about. This peeved a number of hosts, who found him obsessively single-minded. One prominent critic went so far as to label Fred "a monomaniac anomaly" but the public – bless them – didn't pay any attention. They knew Fred was a true artist. They wanted to see him dance."

"Remember, glee is the catchword of the decade," intoned the Camrob. "Do not gloom the viewer."

Yet I knew Fred couldn't dance, thought Rollins, pausing, hoping the audience would grow bored and switch away. What did he care about sponsors? The contract was his, the money soon would be. To hell with the sponsors. Ahh, he could still taste the sweet contract he had been on the verge of signing after his return to Earth that would have paid him – in advance – more money than the entire Mars expedition cost. By the time of the actual Tri-Vid broadcast he had planned to be safely hidden away in the Lunar Pleasure Domes. Then disaster struck.

“We went on the ‘Man of Steel Hour’, the first insult talk-vid hosted by a robot, a tin-plated bastard who introduced a woman in the audience as “the one and only Ginger Rogers.” Before I could stop him Fred bounded clean over the host's desk and landed centre stage. “I want to dance!” he shouted, and began a classic Astaire routine to tumultuous applause.”

Rollins shuddered, recalling the scene in his mind's eye. Fred had hopped about like an insane jumping bean with legs. It probably was an Astaire tribute, but his movements were so frenetic and so bizarre who could tell? Rollins remembered hoping Earth's gravity would exhaust Fred quickly, but it was not to be. Still, the contract for the upcoming debut special was hardly threatened as the talk-vid reached only a limited audience – insult robots not yet having caught on – but then Fred had to go and fling himself into ‘Ginger's’ arms.

“Unfortunately there was an accident. Eighteen people crushed to death and forty others wounded. After all, Fred weighed in excess of fifteen tonnes. Needless to say, the critics turned on him with a vengeance and that was the end of our career.”

Rollins closed his eyes. “There was one subsequent offer that I can recall, from the ‘DeSade Dayshow’ on public vid, but they weren't going to pay very much and I figured it would only lower his reputation further.”

Rollins eyes drifted open, strings of moisture parting from the eyelashes. “As for Fred, he was shattered, and became more and more despondent. “I killed Ginger Rogers” was all he could say, over and over again. I tried to tell him she wasn't the ‘real’ Ginger Rogers, but he was too far gone. One day his mumbling dropped to a whisper. The next he stopped moving. He'd gone catatonic. That was the final straw, that and the money running out. So I left him. Some corporation bought out the contract for practically nothing. I was a nobody again. Tough on me, I tell you. Didn't seem fair.”

“Remember, your contract calls for glee,” warned the robot.

Rollins closed his eyes again. He felt very tired. “Obviously my fortune eventually improved,” he continued, “because I'm the richest guy on Earth, off Earth I mean, both. I went back to NASA and signed on for the first Venus expedition. Nobody expected to find life, let alone a trio of Elvis impersonators. I signed them up quick, you bet. Ugly and green, but boy, could those Venusians sing! They had talent, not like poor Fred. He was strictly amateur, should have stayed on Mars. The funny thing is, he was a better architect than dancer; people pay to see those pyramids of his. But you know how it is. Even aliens can make bad career choices.”

His voice drowning in fatigue, Rollins murmured on, “Last I saw of Fred, he was in a carnival freak show revival – one of those genetic engineering fads – performing the old dancing chicken routine. You know, stick him on a giant hot plate and turn up the juice. Made him hop like a kangaroo with fleas. “See the dancing Martian!” shouted the barker. Made me sick at heart, it did. I was glad to escape to this station.”

“Polls indicate glee marginal!” snapped the Camrob, turning toward the exit hatch. “Sponsors declare contract voided!”

A last whisper to the departing machine. “Ever see a Martian cry? ... Hundreds of brilliant blue eyes.... Thousands of glittering green tears.... Martian rain I calls it.... The only rain in a million years... and I'm to blame....”

# COLOPHON

## THE SPACE CADET GAZETTE #12 – DECEMBER 2008

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The Space Cadet Gazette is free via download from Bill Burn's Excellent < <http://efanzines.com> > web site.

All past issues are available in PDF format from the web site above.

SCG is open to submissions, especially (short) articles reminiscing about your personal experience within the SF genre, be it fandom or your favourite books, movies, conventions or whatever. But in truth I will consider anything that evokes the 'sense of wonder'. No payment, but lots of egoboo.

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## AFTERWORDS

Next issue will have a film review, a zine review of something non-Canadian (I reserve Canadian retro-reviews for WCSFAzine) chosen at random from the zines preserved in the WCSFA/BCSFA archive, part two of my reminiscences about the Ackermonster, and a whole bunch else besides (including an avalanche of locs?). Look for it sometime in March of 2009.

Very, very few people have checked out the older issues of SPACE CADET archived online at [efanzines.com](http://efanzines.com). I'm hoping the fact this is now a contemporary zine will attract more viewers. At any rate, if you have taken the trouble to read this far you must be zine fanatic and good for you. Please feel free to loc and let me know what you think of the 'new' SPACE CADET GAZETTE.

Of course, I'm rather isolated from current events in fandom, even from the local perspective. Expect SPACE CADET to be a very personal and very retro take on Sci-Fi, enlivened somewhat by my alleged sense of humour and sometimes off-the-wall approach. In terms of 'late-breaking' news I am more of a columnist than a reporter. I deal mostly in the past. I am a fan historian after all. So if delving into the past of zinedom & filmdom, etc., is a comfortable exercise for you, something you enjoy, then sit back and let me entertain you as best I know how.

Cheers! The Graeme