

# Visions of Paradise #141



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### Artwork

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Terry Jeeves ... p. 9

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# Out of The Depths

I am not a huge movie fan, partly because I don't have a lot of available time to watch them (without depleting my limited reading time), and partly because movies rarely interest me as much as a good book does.

So when I was selecting my favorite f&sf movies recently (with the intention of perhaps watching them again sometime), the list was not a particularly long one. Not included on this list are animations or superhero movies which, in my opinion, are entirely different categories (which might appear here at a later date). Here is my list in roughly descending order of favorites:

1	The Wizard of Oz
2	Groundhog Day
3	The Time Machine (1960)
4	Dark City
5	Forbidden Planet
6	Blade Runner
7	King Kong (1933)
8	2001: A Space Odyssey
9	Star Trek: First Contact
10	Dr. Strangelove
11	Frankenstein (1931)
12	A Clockwork Orange
13	Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home
14	Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan
15	War of the Worlds (1960)

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About a year ago, a friend recommended the website *Paperback Swap* to me, where I could trade unwanted books for books I select. It sounded like a good idea at the time, but for some reason I did not pursue it until recently. When I finally joined, I posted a list of 38 books I wanted to get rid of, including sf, historical fiction, and nonfiction. So far I have mailed 9 books to other members and, because of that, I have earned credit to select 11 books myself (including 2 books for joining the website). There are literally thousands of books available, including many which

are on my own *Recommended Reading* list, so I ordered the following books:

1. Poul Anderson's career-spanning retrospective **Going For Infinity**;
2. A. Bertram Chandler omnibus **Lieutenant of The Survey Service**, containing 5 *John Grimes* novels. Light reading, but enjoyable;
3. Andre Norton's complete *Time Traders* series in 2 hardcover books;
4. James White's second *Sector General* omnibus **Alien Emergencies**. Books about other than war/crime/thrillers appeal to me a lot, and these novels are always intriguing;
5. the concluding 2 novels in Kim Stanley Robinson's *Science in the Capital* series, **Fifty Degrees Below** and **Sixty Days And Counting**;
6. Murray Leinster's complete *Med Service* stories **Med Ship** (see my comments on White's book above);
7. Jack McDevitt's *Academy* novel **Omega**;
8. Stephen Lawhead's **Byzantium**, a historical era I have grown very interested in recently, having enjoyed Colin Wells' nonfiction **Sailing From Byzantium** and Eric Mayer and Mary Reed's historical mystery **One for Sorrow**;
9. Cecilia Holland's **Jerusalem**. She has been one of my favorite historical fiction writers for several decades, so I am looking forward to this book.



## Will F. Jenkins Day

The Virginia State Legislature has declared June 27, 2009 *Will F. Jenkins Day*, a deserved honor for a man who, writing as Murray Leinster, was one of the true grandmasters of science fiction whose writing not only predated the development of the genre, but who was responsible for many of the iconic ideas in the field.

Although science fiction has always been a fiction of change, only the most talented writers can

keep up with the rapidly evolving eras. Clifford D. Simak first wrote for F. Orlin Tremaine's **Astounding** in the early 1930s, then adapted his writing to such changing markets as John W. Campbell's **Astounding** and H.L. Gold's **Galaxy**. Jack Williamson began his career writing for Hugo Gernsback's **Amazing** and outlived the "Golden Age," "New Wave," and "Cyberpunk."

But in some ways the most remarkable of all was Murray Leinster whose first published science fiction story appeared in 1919, nearly a full decade before the birth of the science fiction prozines. At that time, the most popular writers of science fiction were such pulp greats as Edgar Rice Burroughs, George Allan England, Garrett P. Serviss, and A. Merritt.

Into this select company came twenty-two year old Murray Leinster with the story "The Runaway Skyscraper". It appeared in **Argosy**, perhaps the most successful general pulp of the early Twentieth Century. It was quite an imaginative story, far ahead of its time in its depiction of an alternate dimension. Due to the impact of Leinster's story, that concept has been a science fiction staple ever since.

For the next dozen years Leinster was one of the leading science fiction writers in **Argosy**. It did not take him long to discover the science fiction pulps though, and his talent served him well there. Previously he had been used to the freedom of the general pulps, where science fiction was an expansive amalgam of SF, horror and fantasy. The SF pulps were a much more restrictive market, insisting on strict adherence to scientific principles and extrapolation. Leinster adapted smoothly, and by 1930 he was the most notable writer to bridge the gap from the general pulps.

In 1934 F. Orlin Tremaine, editor of **Astounding**, deliberately tried to nurse the field away from its strict adherence to Hugo Gernsback's scientific extrapolation. Leinster provided Tremaine with many important stories, most notably "Sideways in Time," another innovative story about alternate branches in the time line.

When John W. Campbell, Jr. took over the editorial reins of **Astounding**, he searched for new, creative writers to write stories reflecting his personal philosophy of the future of mankind and the purpose of science fiction. Leinster, who had no trouble adapting to the SF pulps previously, adapted a second time, and wrote side by side with such younger writers as L. Sprague de Camp, A.E. Van Vogt, Robert A. Heinlein, Theodore Sturgeon, and Isaac Asimov. In 1945 **Astounding** published his classic "First Contact," a serious examination of humanity's first meeting with a technologically-superior alien race.

Another decade later, at the age of 60, Leinster published the Hugo-winning novelette "Exploration Team" in **Astounding**. In 1963 he was the Guest of Honor at the Washington, D.C. World Science Fiction Convention, after which his production decreased drastically. But decreased production did not mean eroded talent. He still published several superb "Med Ship" stories in **Galaxy** in the early 1960s, and the excellent satire "Lord of the Uffts" in **Worlds of Tomorrow**.

Several of Leinster's important works are currently available in paperback through Baen Books,

including **Med Ship** (containing the complete series), **A Logic Named Joe** (containing the novels *The Pirates of Zan*, *The Duplicators* and *Gateway to Elsewhere*, as well as the title short story), and **Planets of Adventure** (a collection which includes the Hugo-winning "Exploration Team"). You cannot go wrong honoring *Will F. Jenkins Day* by reading one of these books.

## The Passing Scene

### Homes

In some ways, a person's life can be defined by the various places where they lived. I have lived in six different houses in my life. When I was born my parents lived in an apartment in North Bergen, but they left there when I was two years old, so I remember absolutely nothing about it.

I spent grammar school and high school living in a two-family house on the corner of a main intersection in Cliffside Park, an urban community in southern Bergen County. Six of us lived upstairs (my parents, grandparents, 3 siblings and me). Since there were only 3 bedrooms, I shared the sun porch with my grandmother who was dying of cancer the entire time, and who did not speak to me all the years we were roommates. That was not a particularly joyous experience.

Living in an urban community was convenient since we were able to walk to the stores, especially the stationary store where I bought comic books and science fiction magazines. The town library was within walking distance as well, and I walked there with my younger brother Stephen to take out books with little rocketships on their spines. I read most of the *Oz* books written by L. Frank Baum, which were very good, and I wish I had them in my collection now.

The less said about Epiphany Grammar School the better, but I will give you a flavor of my years there with one story. All 8<sup>th</sup> grade students participated in the school spelling bee and I won it. My cousin Rita, who lived downstairs from us and was my best friend in childhood, won the girls' bee. However, for some reason I have never understood, the nun running the bee disliked me intensely, even though I was probably the quietest student in her class (as well as possibly the smartest, if I can say that without sounding egotistical). She immediately declared that was only the practice round and the spelling bee would be held again. I won the second time though, and she had no choice but to let me compete in the diocesan championship.

Somehow I survived grammar school and attended Bergen Catholic High School, which was a very competitive school at that time. Over 1,200 boys took the entrance exam, with only 240 being accepted. To enhance the caste system, freshmen were placed into homerooms by how high they scored on the entrance exam. I was fortunate enough to be placed in the "A" homeroom, which means I scored in the top 2% of all boys who took the exam.

BC was at the other end of the county from where I lived, so I spent nearly an hour riding the school bus twice each day. That made it inconvenient to stay after school for activities, so I never really participated in high school at all, nor had the opportunity to make any friends there. Thus my memories of high school are mostly nonexistent.

I did well at BC, and with my SAT scores I could have gotten accepted into most colleges, but because of economic reasons I had to attend a school within traveling distance since my parents did not believe in college loans. I attended Seton Hall University, which was about 35 minutes away. My memories of college consist primarily of attending classes, then driving immediately to the local A&P where I worked for 4 years to pay my car and school expenses. College was primarily a job rather than a social or bonding experience. If I were to list the greatest regrets of my life, not having the opportunity to live at college would be one of them.

During college we lived in Whippany, which was my first experience in the suburbs. We had to drive everywhere, but we actually had a yard rather than a house sitting on the curb. No more playing whiffle ball with my brothers in the street, but instead basketball in the driveway.

After grad school I decided getting a doctorate in mathematics was not the most exciting thing I could do, so instead I decided to try teaching since I foolishly thought it would give me lots of free time to write science fiction. Fortunately, I turned out to be a better teacher than a writer, plus I enjoyed it immensely. I taught initially at Paul VI Regional High School since I was not certified to teach, but that's where I met Jean so it worked out.

During the years I was teaching at Paul VI, I spent a lot of my free time with two brothers (Stephen and David) and two mutual friends (Rich and Craig) playing sports and going into NYC for concerts. We saw every major rock and roll band of the 1970s, including Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, The Moody Blues, Yes, Fleetwood Mac, Bruce Springsteen, Elton John, Billy Joel, Bob Dylan with the Band, Paul McCartney & Wings, Emerson, Lake & Palmer, some of them numerous times. Those were the happiest years of my life up until that moment. Little did I know life would only get better afterwards.

When Jean and I got married, we bought a raised ranch in Hopatcong, a lake community at the fringes of Morris County, where houses were considerably cheaper than in the rest of the area. Andy (1983) and Mark (1985) were born there, and we became friendly with our neighbors Alan and Denise, with whom we have stayed close ever since.

We both started teaching in public high schools immediately before getting married, although after Andy was born Jean taught at the local county college for two decades before returning to high school recently. During my first half-year in public school I taught only regular level classes such as Algebra 1 and Geometry. That changed immediately my second year since the school needed somebody qualified to teach computer programming, which I was not, but I learned programming during the summer. Then the Honors Precalculus teacher left mid-year, and no other teachers were willing to undertake so much work, so I have been teaching honors and AP courses ever since. I also switched high schools a few years later to become department head, which I have been for the past 23 years, enjoying every minute of it. I have taught a lot of wonderful students during those years, many of whom I have stayed in touch with, and a few who have become close friends. Other than being home with my family, spending time in the Math Lab with students has been the most joyous part of the past twenty-five years.

Jean and I moved to Budd Lake when the boys started elementary school, which was a good decision since we really love our neighborhood. We've actually lived in two different houses here, spending 6 years in a raised ranch before moving to a center-hall colonial which is so spacious we could not resist buying it when its owner went bankrupt and had to sell it at a relatively reasonable price.

While we both love this house, eventually we will retire and downsize, since it is really too big for two people alone. But I have fallen in love with my office's "wall of books," none of which I plan to get rid of as long as I am alive. So while there might be a seventh house in my future, it will definitely not be one of those "cookie-cutter" little houses where many seniors live. I have enjoyed lots of space for 40 years now, and I have worked hard enough to enjoy a bit of luxury, so I am not giving that up.

Check back with me in another decade for another possible update of my "home" life!

### May 2009

A typical indication of the current state of the economy was that this month we went to Drew's CPA party (Drew is a close friend of the boys who considers himself our "third son") to celebrate his passing it. However, shortly afterwards, his company laid off 20+ accountants, including Drew, so he is currently out of work. Fortunately, as I write this, Andy, Mark and Kate are still all employed.

School was very stressful the weeks leading up to the annual AP tests, but once they passed the level of stress in my classes decreased considerably. Soon afterwards, I finished teaching the AP Statistics curriculum so they have been doing Statistics projects the rest of the year. I have also finished Honors Algebra 2 and I am now teaching them some side topics, introducing them to Precalculus, and they are also working on an end-of-the-year project which consists of group presentations on Statistics. Only AP Calculus continues at a semi-regular pace, although slower and considerably less stressful than previously.

I took a three-day weekend in mid-May, using my last Personal Day so I could do the quarterly FAPA mailing without over-stressing myself. All the zines I received were already in their hanging folders, but I still needed to print out the *Fantasy Amateur*, which I could not do until I got Saturday's mail which contained the last of the submissions. The Personal Day also gave me time to finish writing/editing/printing my FAPA mailing comments zine *Ride the Lightning* which I did not have time to do previously. I finished all that stuff during the day Monday, then returned to school for our monthly *Target Teach* seminar that night.

Mother's Day was another "passing of the generations" for Jean and me as we went to Mark & Kate's apartment to celebrate. They made a nice meal of stuffed flank steak with dinner rolls and salad, then they used their ice cream machine to make homemade ice cream for dessert.

May 13<sup>th</sup> was the *Morris Area Math Alliance* at County College of Morris, at which I was one of the roundtable speakers, discussing "Writing in Mathematics." In addition to me, three members

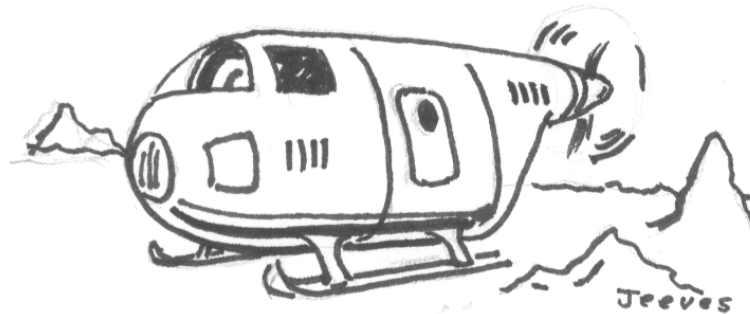


of my family were there: Jean, my sister-in-law Doreen who teaches at CCM, and my niece Janel who teaches 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade math. Slowly we are taking over the local math world!

The three-day Memorial Day weekend is the unofficial start of summer, after which school usually becomes a bit crazy. The halls are already filled with students whom nobody seems to care about getting into classes where they belong. I had a confrontation with a boy wearing an Ipod yesterday, after which I ignored a girl taking pictures with her cellphone, although I told the vice-principal about it and, as expected, she ignored the girl. Very few people do their job, so I need to ignore all the chaos and concentrate on my classes, which are still working and behaving.

Jean's birthday was May 22, so Andy gave her gift cards to Pizza Hut and Blockbuster, while I gave her a new watch and two mysteries by Alexander McCall Smith, including the newest in his *Ladies #1 Detective Agency*, a series Jean, Denise, Alan, and Ceil all love. Mark and Kate visited the next day, and we spent the afternoon working on the huge pile of mulch Jean had delivered, then went out for Jean's birthday supper at Enzo's Pizzeria, which has very good—and economical—Italian food. Peggy Rae and John Sapienza enjoyed that place when they visited..

We got a frantic phone call from Denise and Alan this week that International Buffet is closed. All four of us really liked that place, but the rent in that plaza had gotten so expensive businesses were moving out. I wonder if the buffet will open up somewhere else locally.



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## Wondrous Stories

My “Golden Age” of science fiction was the mid-1960s, when the iconic Big Three of Asimov, Clarke, and Heinlein were no longer at their peaks. The writers I considered Grand Masters were Clifford D. Simak—whose peak lasted much longer than his more-acclaimed peers—newcomers such as Robert Silverberg, Roger Zelazny, Samuel R. Delany, and veteran Poul Anderson.

Anderson did a lot of good stuff in **Galaxy** (his best being “To Outlive Eternity,” the novella which later expanded into **Tau Zero**) and **Worlds of IF** (I recall most fondly the serial **Three**

**Worlds to Conquer**). I only read **Analog** occasionally when it was edited by John W. Campbell, Jr, but still there was some memorable Poul Anderson stuff (the novella “Starfog” jumping to memory).

Over the decades I have bought a lot of Poul Anderson books, including novels such as **The Day of Their Return**, **The Byworlder**, the aforementioned **Tau Zero** and the collection **The Earth Book of Stormgate** (which contained most of his Polesotechnic League stories). About a year ago I bought his posthumous collection **To Outlive Eternity**, which contained several very good long stories, such as the title novella, “[The Day] After Doomsday” and “The Big Rain.” Probably my favorite Anderson series though was *The Time Patrol* about time travelers fighting to keep the past accurate against intrusions from other time travelers, nearly all of which were collected in the two books **The Time Patrol** and **The Shield of Time**.

A book I never read was Anderson’s “career retrospective” **Going For Infinity**. The book was worth the wait though, since it is both highly-enjoyable reading and shows Anderson’s amazing range as a writer. While he was known mostly as an **Analog**-type writer, Poul Anderson was one of the finest, perhaps the finest storyteller in sf, who stories ranged from “hard science” to fantasy to alternate history long before that sub-genre even had a name.

The book opens with one of several award-winners, “The Saturn Game,” a traditional problem-solving story which was not my favorite story in the book. But it is followed soon after by “Sam Hall,” a very clever story about a mysterious man who is a thorn in the side of a totalitarian government, but who in actuality does not exist at all.

Next was a story from the *Time Patrol* stories “Death and the Knight,” which is set in medieval France at the time Philip II was battling the Knights Templar who had gotten very rich and powerful since their creation during the Crusades. This story was too short, and made me want to go read the complete **Time Patrol** collection.

Each story had a long introduction which collectively served as a mini-biography of Poul Anderson’s career. I found the most interesting portion was when Anderson discussed the New Wave. He stated:

...the late 60s and early 70s saw a renaissance of the whole field. It had lain long in the doldrums, most of what appeared being dull and derivative ... almost overnight, came any number of new writers—original, vivid, explosive, with new ideas and new ways of storytelling. They rekindled the fire in old-timers too.

In my naivité, I had not made any previous connection between Poul Anderson and the New Wave, but soon after reading that statement came two of Anderson’s finest stories which were published at the peak of the New Wave: “Goat Song,” which is not only based on the legend of Orpheus, but is obviously strongly-influenced by the writing of Roger Zelazny; and “Kyrie,” an evocative story rich in sense of wonder. If there was any doubt Anderson was influenced by the New Wave, the depth and characterization of his post-1965 stories show that he was no old-timer unable to adapt, but rather a chameleon able to stretch into every corner of the sf writing world

and master it.

The book closes with perhaps Anderson's finest story, as well as one of his most famous, "The Queen of Air and Darkness," which successfully blends traditional hard scientific world-building with supernatural fantasy in a tale which might only have been capable of being written by either Roger Zelazny or Poul Anderson, which gives you some idea of the talents of both men, perhaps the most talented overall of any of sf's grandmasters.

I have 20+ books by Poul Anderson in my collection, a mere drop in the bucket since I also have another 30 of his books on my Recommended Reading list (including most of the *Dominick Flandry* books and the *Psychotechnic League* and *Harvest of Stars* series). There's still a lot of great reading awaiting me. If you haven't read **Going For Infinity** or, perhaps, not much Poul Anderson at all, then this book is highly-recommended reading.

\*

I have always been a big fan of sf prozines. I cut my teeth on *Galaxy* and *Worlds of IF* and read them both faithfully until their demise (although they were never the same after Frederik Pohl quit as editor). I also read *Analog* when Ben Bova was editor, *Asimov's* through most of Gardner Dozois' regime, and *Fantasy & Science Fiction* from 1971 through the mid 1990s. In 1995 I underwent a "mid-life crisis" which, in my case, did not consist of riding motorcycles or spring flings, but giving up reading all sf for about a year. When I gradually returned to the genre, the prozines had fallen by the wayside.

Early in this decade, I subscribed to *F&SF* again for a year, and enjoyed it, but I did not enjoy being committed to a monthly reading schedule, especially since, by that time I had purchased all the 1950s issues of *Galaxy* and I was slowly going through them at the rate of about one issue per six months. I really enjoyed what Gordon van Gelder was doing with the zine though, so after my subscription expired I kept buying their annual double issue, which I mostly put aside unread. When *F&SF* cut back its frequency from monthly to bi-monthly recently, I decided it was time to renew it again, but before reading the current issues I decided to go back and read those annual double issues first.

So this week I have been reading the October/November 2005 issue. It has 3 long novelets about which I have mixed feelings. Paolo Bacigalupi's (what kind of a name is that anyway? When I was growing up in an Italian-American community, we used the word "bacigalupi" as a derogatory term for a person of low intelligence, as in "What a bacigalupi he is!") "The Calorie Man" is a depressing look at a rather dismal near-future, the kind of story I did not enjoy during the Cyberpunk heyday. It is well-written, but not my thing. Matthew Hughes' "Help Wanted" is one of his Vancian stories about ne'er-do-well Guth Bandar trapped as a slave and trying desperately to escape. Like most Hughes stories I've read, it was enjoyable but slight.

The highlight of the issue was Peter Beagles' "Two Hearts" which deservedly won a Hugo Award in 2006 as Best Novelette. The story is a sequel to the famous novel **The Last Unicorn**, and it is marred slightly by a blatant *deus ex machina* ending which is probably the reason the

story is so famous since it is a direct reference back to the novel. But in spite of that flaw, or perhaps partially because of it, this is Beagle at the peak of his considerable talents.

A few more annual double issues and I'll start on the current issues. Now I need to find a way to fill in the gaps in my collection of *F&SF*.

\*

When Harry Harrison was selected as the next SFWA Nebula Grandmaster, my first thought was that he did not seem to have the credentials for such a status. In my column *The Old Kit Bag* for Tom Sadler's **The Reluctant Famulus** I decried Harrison being so honored instead of more deserving writers such as Greg Benford (16 Hugo and Nebula nominations, 2 wins), Michael Bishop (24 nominations, 2 wins), C.J. Cherryh (9 nominations; 3 wins), Samuel R. Delany (30 nominations, 6 wins), Joe Haldeman (17 nominations, 10 wins), George R.R. Martin (30 nominations, 6 wins), Larry Niven (27 nominations, 6 wins), John Varley (24 nominations, 5 wins), Kate Wilhelm (24 nominations, 5 wins) and Gene Wolfe (28 nominations, 2 wins).

I have always considered Harry Harrison a typical example of a "B" writer, whose fiction is enjoyable but not in the category of a Grandmaster. Other examples of "B" writers are Christopher Anvil, Chad Oliver, John Barnes, A. Bertram Chandler, Michael Coney, Suzette Haden Elgin, Randall Garrett, Keith Laumer, James H. Schmitz, Bob Shaw, James White, S.M. Stirling, and David Weber. Enjoyable work, but generally not the type of "A" material one expects from such grandmasters as Heinlein, Asimov, Clarke, Bradbury, Simak, Norton, Bester, Silverberg, you get the idea.

My immediate second thought was that I had not really read much of Harrison's fiction, most of it in **Analog** in the late 1960s when he was one of John W. Campbell's stable of authors. Stories with titles such as "The Man From P.I.G." and the serial **The Horse Barbarians** (which became **Deathworld 3** in book form). Enjoyable stuff, but not the type of fiction I would rave to my friends about.

So to be fair, I decided I should read more Harrison fiction to see if my impression of him based on a handful of **Analog** stories perhaps underrated him. People who responded unfavorably to my column in **TRF** mentioned such Harrison works as **Make Room! Make Room!** and his *Deathworld* series. Since both were currently available in the Science Fiction Book Club, I decided to read three Harrison novels and ordered **Deathworld**.

The first book, aptly entitled **Deathworld 1**, started out simply enough as the protagonist, a professional gambler Jason dinAlt, is basically forced by a man calling himself a planetary ambassador to win a billion credits which the man needs to buy weapons for the settlers on his planet to use in their struggle to the death against the native plant and animal life in order to survive on their adopted world. Initially the story is an easy-paced thriller which bore resemblances to Jack Vance's *Galactic Cluster* stories. I anticipated this was how the entire novel would be, nor was I surprised when it sequéed into a Vance-like mystery as to why the nonintelligent life on a planet is continually mutating into more deadly forms for the sole

purpose of destroying the human inhabitants.

Unlike Vance though, the mystery was not just a thin hook on which to hang a planetary adventure, but was the main focus of the novel, and a fairly interesting mystery at that. DinAlt dealt with the inhabitants of the deathworld's only city as they were inundated with plant and animal attacks daily. He found a way to leave the city and contact the "grubbers," whom the city dwellers considered savages but who had somehow found a way to survive in the midst of the native life. DinAlt was surprised to find they were not savages at all, nor were they under attack, but instead had found a way to live peacefully alongside the native life whose only attacks were focused on the city dwellers.

While I enjoyed **Deathworld 1**, it did not stand up to a lot of thought. How could a mere gambler suddenly become brilliant enough to determine the solution to the inhabitants' endless war with the native life, when for generations they had not only been unable to reach any similar conclusions themselves, but had also devolved almost into fighting machines virtually unable to handle any thoughts not completely related to their survival? This was not a deep book, nor was it intended to be, but the type of light reading good for passing a few evenings after work is over. I recommend it to people looking for enjoyment on the level of Chandler/Schmitz/Laumer/White who will not be disappointed in it.

\*

A quick review: If you like Italian cooking, and are a fan of Mario Batali like I am, you will love the book **Heat**, by Bill Buford. Buford worked for **The New Yorker** before becoming a low-level slave in the kitchen of Babbo, Batali's famous NYC restaurant. The book's setting is about equally-divided between Babbo's kitchen and Italy where we follow both Batali when he learned how to cook Italian food several decades ago, and Buford as he strives to do the same recently. Its themes are equally-divided between how one becomes an Italian chef, what it is like behind the scenes in the kitchen of a popular restaurant, and the legend of Mario Batali himself.

This book is partly humorous, partly head-shaking, and thoroughly absorbing throughout. I recommend it very highly.

## On The Lighter Side

We are in trouble...

The population of this country is 300 million.

160 million are retired ... That leaves 140 million to do the work.

There are 85 million in school ... Which leaves 55 million to do the work.

Of this there are 35 million employed by the federal government ... Leaving 20 million to do the work.

2.8 million are in the armed forces preoccupied in the Middle East ... Which leaves 17.2 million to do the work.

Take from that total the 15.8 million people who work for state and city Governments ... That leaves 1.4 million to do the work.

At any given time there are 188,000 people in hospitals ... Leaving 1,212,000 to do the work. Right now there are 1,211,998 people in prisons ... That leaves just two people to do the work.

You and me ...

And there you are, sitting on your ass at your computer reading jokes ...

Nice. Real nice...

\*

Everybody who has a dog calls him "Rover" or "Boy." I call mine Sex.

Sex has been very embarrassing to me. When I went to City Hall to renew his dog license, I told the clerk I would like to have a license for Sex. He said, "I'd like to have one, too." Then I said, "But this is a dog!" He said he didn't care what she looked like. Then I said, "But you don't understand. I've had Sex since I was nine years old." He said I must have been quite a kid.

When I got married and went on my honeymoon, I took the dog with me. I told the motel clerk that I wanted a room for my wife and me and a special room for Sex. He said every room in the place was for sex. I said, "You don't understand. Sex keeps me awake at night!" The clerk said, "Me too."

One day I entered Sex in a contest, but before the competition began, the dog ran away. Another contestant asked me why I was just standing there looking around. I told him I had planned to have Sex in the contest. He told me I should have sold my own tickets. "But you don't understand," I said, "I had hoped to have Sex on TV." He called me a show-off.

When my wife and I separated, we went to court to fight custody of the dog. I said, "Your honor, I had Sex before I was married." The judge said, "Me too." Then I told him that after I was married, Sex left me. He said, "Me too."

Last night Sex ran off again. I spent hours looking around town for him. A cop came over to me and asked, "What are you doing in this alley at 4:00 in the morning?" I said, "I'm looking for Sex."

My case comes up Friday.