

THE TEXAS SF INQUIRER

ISSUE 25

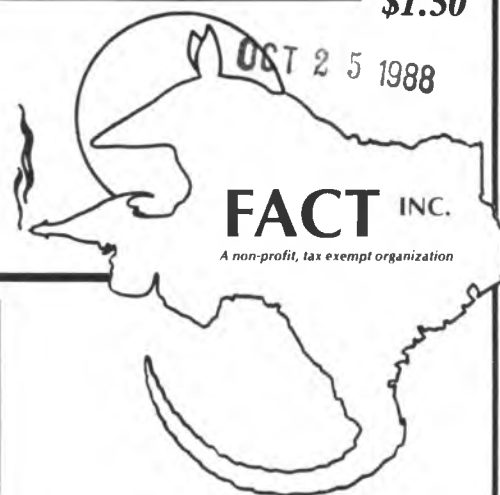
Editor: Scott M. Merritt

Asst. Editor and Production: Monica Stephens

Asst. Production: C. Mara Lee

Published by F.A.C.T., the Fandom Association of Central Texas, Inc.

\$1.50



The *Texas SF Inquirer* is ostensibly published bimonthly by FACT, the Fandom Association of Central Texas, Inc., a 501(c)3 nonprofit literary and educational organization. All opinions expressed herein are the personal opinions of the contributors and editors, and do not necessarily reflect those of FACT. This issue copyright © 1988 by FACT; all rights return to the contributors.

A six-issue subscription is \$6.00; samples are available for \$1.50 or the usual. If you join FACT (\$15/year), a subscription is included with your membership. Send news, reviews, articles, art, fanzines, or letters of comment to *Texas SF Inquirer* c/o Scott Merritt, 5812 Woodsetter Ln., Arlington, TX 76017. The FACT address (for memberships, etc.) is Box 9612, Austin, TX 78766.

Contents

1987 State Fair Model Contest Winners	5
1988 Hugo Awards	1
1988 Nebula Awards	2
A Disjointed and Possibly Inaccurate Report on the Nebula Awards	2
Area Author Weds	3
Book Reviews	13
<i>Arrows of the Queen</i> (Oscar Kitzner); <i>Arrow's Flight</i> (OK); <i>Arrow's Fall</i> (OK); <i>Gate of Ivrel: Claiming Rites</i> (OK); <i>Emprise, Enigma, Empery</i> (OK); <i>Shadow Dancers</i> (Ardath Mayhar); <i>The Man-Kzin Wars</i> (Brad Sinor)	
Brother Card Takes on the Fundamentalists (Larry Tagrin)	12
Clubs Around Texas	18
Convention Report: Eclecticon (Cl. Crouch)	18
Fanzine Reviews	16
<i>Pirate Jenny</i> ; <i>Anvil</i> ; <i>Austin Writer</i> ; <i>The Blake Bunch</i> ; <i>ConGames</i> ; <i>Tarriel Cell</i> ; <i>Longbow</i>	
Gnotes From the Ghaming Ghetto (Rembert Parker)	12
Here's Your Chance	12
In Memory	6
Letters of Comment	20
Mea Culpa	5
Midnight Excursions, Part I (Lawrence Person)	8
News Notes	2
N3F Story Contest Open; Warren Norwood Fund; Who News	
Sei-Un Awards	1
SMOF Is Back	3
The State of the Art: Today's Comic-Book Scene (R.A. Jones)	4
Texans Win Fan Hugos	1

This Issue: Articles and reviews — John Moore, Dennis Courtney, R.A. Jones, Alan David Laska, Monica Stephens, Scott Merritt, John Steakley, Lawrence Person, Rembert Parker, Lawrence Tagrin, Cl. Crouch. *Letters of Comment* — Brian Brown, Harry Andruschak, John Shirley, Lloyd Penney, Jeanne M. Mealy, Roy Tackett, Barney Rapoport, L. Sprague de Camp, Jay Mauffray, Lillian Stewart Carl, Aya Katz, Mercedes Lackey. Art — Brad Foster, Jan Sherrell Gephardt, Bryan Gibson, David Martin.

1988 Hugo Awards

The 1988 Hugo Awards were announced at Nolacon, the 46th World Science Fiction Convention. The awards are voted on by the members of the Worldcon. The winners for 1987 were:

Best Fan Writer: Mike Glycer

Best Fan Artist: Brad Foster

Best Fanzine: *Texas SF Inquirer*, Pat Mueller, editor

Best Semi-Prozine: *Locus*, Charles N. Brown, editor

Best Professional Artist: Michael Whelan

Best Professional Editor: Gardner Dozois

Special Award: SF Oral History Association

Best Dramatic Presentation: *The Princess Bride*, produced by Rob Reiner and 20th Century-Fox

Best Other Form: *Watchmen*, Alan Moore and David Gibbons, DC Comics and Warner Books

Best Non-Fiction: *Worlds of Wonder*, Michael Whelan

Best Short Story: "Why I Left Harry's All-Night Hamburgers," Lawrence Watt-Evans

Best Novelette: "Buffalo Gals Won't You Come Out Tonight," Ursula K. LeGuin

Best Novella: "Eye for Eye,"

Orson Scott Card

Best Novel: "The Uplift War,"

David Brin

Other awards announced at the Hugo presentation included:

John W. Campbell Award for Best

New Writer: Judith Moffitt

The First Fandom Hall of Fame

Award: Lloyd Arthur Eshbach,

David Kyle, Charles Hornig,

Neal R. Jones (posthumous)

Sei-Un Awards

The Japanese word *sei-un* translates to "nebula," but these awards are voted on by the Japanese fan community and are essentially equivalent to the Hugo Awards.

Best Foreign Novel Translated to Japanese in 1987: *Norstrilia*, by Cordwainer Smith (posthumous).

Best Foreign Short Story Translated to Japanese in 1987: "The Only Neat Thing To Do," by James Tiptree, Jr. (posthumous).

Big Heart Award: Andre Norton

Texans Win Fan Hugos

The *Texas SF Inquirer*, edited by Pat Mueller, and Texan Brad Foster were recipients of the Best Fanzine Hugo and Best Fan Artist Hugo, respectively, for 1988. The awards were given at Nolacon II, the World Science Fiction Convention. This was

Foster's second Fan Hugo, as he received one at last year's Worldcon, Conspiracy.

The current staff of the *Inquirer* and the FACT Board of Directors heartily commend and congratulate Brad and Pat for their achievements.

A Disjointed and Possibly Inaccurate Report on the Nebula Awards

by John Moore

The Nebula awards are given at the culmination of a two-day conference presented by the Science Fiction Writers of America (SFWA). Cost is \$50. Because I was only there for the award banquet, I decided I had to do a lot of drinking to get my fifty bucks worth, which is why this report is the way it is.

This year's affair was pretty static — no fistfights that I saw and everyone was pretty much civil. Maybe they were just tired. It was held at the Roosevelt Hotel in Hollywood, an elegant structure of tiled floors, marble staircases, and only two elevators. Dinner was quail on a bed of wild rice, prompting objections from several people that they were "too cute to eat."

MC Norman Spinrad started out with a few jokes that fell absolutely flat. But that was okay, because he had a trump card. An unannounced guest, David Rappaport, star of *Time Bandits*, gave a short, witty speech in praise of SF and SF writers. Rappaport had worked as a stand-up comic and knew all the right strings to pull.

With everyone now in a good mood, it was time for the eulogies. Frederick Pohl gave a warm speech in honor of Clifford Simak, and Jerry

Pournelle gave an upbeat encomium for Robert Heinlein. The keynote address was given by a speaker from NASA, whose name I have charitably forgotten. He was pushing the joint Soviet-US Mars Mission, and although he made a lot of good points, his halting and uncertain delivery lost his audience.

While he was talking, I read the *SFWA Bulletin* and discovered that Jim Baen described Steve Gould's story "Poppa was a Catcher" as a "personal favorite."

"They spelled my name wrong," groused Steve.

And so on to the Awards. Pat Murphy won best novel for *The Falling Woman* and best novelette for "Rachel in Love." Showing great self-restraint, she only thanked half a dozen people this year. Kim Stanley Robinson won best novella for "The Blind Geometer." Kate Wilhelm won best short story for "Forever Yours, Anna." Her award was accepted by Ellen Datlow. Alfred Bester was awarded Grandmaster. He had been told of the judge's decision before he died, so that was cool.

The Nebula award consists of a mass of glitter, arranged in the shape of a spiral galaxy, sealed in a tremen-

1988 Nebula Awards

Best Novel

The Falling Woman by Pat Murphy

Best Novelette

"Rachel in Love" by Pat Murphy

Best Novella

"The Blind Geometer" by Kim Stanley Robinson

Best Short Story

"Forever Yours, Anna" by Kate Wilhelm

Grandmaster

Alfred Bester

dous hunk of plastic. It weighs, I estimate, about eight pounds and chips at the slightest mistreatment. To the lovely Kris Rusch befell the job of delivering this monstrosity to Kate Wilhelm, and she could be seen gamely lugging it throughout the party that followed the award ceremony. When I left at midnight, I found myself walking down 12 flights of stairs with Rusch, whose arms were now four inches longer. I would have offered to help, but I had a drink in my hand.

News Notes

N3F Story Contest Open

The National Fantasy Fan Federation has announced the opening of their 1988 Short Story Contest. Cash prizes totalling \$50 will be awarded. The contest will close December 1, 1988. For a copy of the rules, send SASE to N3F Contest Manager, Donald Franson, 6543 Babcock Ave., North Hollywood, CA 91606.

Warren Norwood Fund

Artist Mel. White reports that after recent surgery, Warren Nor-

wood was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. He is determined to beat the cancer and the statistics. However, since determination will not pay mounting bills, a benefit fund has been established at the Citizens National Bank, Weatherford, TX, in Warren's name. Contributions can be sent to the fund's administrator, Joy G. Spiegel, 3750 W. 4th St., Fort Worth, TX 76107. Make checks payable to the Warren Norwood Fund. Joy will forward donations to the bank and add contributors' names to the list of acknowledgements for Warren's attention.

Mel. adds her own plea for contributions of knowledge. If you have information about financial resources available *quickly*, help agencies, research, social resources, *anything*, please send it to the Fund c/o Joy Spiegel. And *any* information on pancreatic cancer, no matter how medically detailed, would be gratefully accepted.

Who News

The BBC has given the go-ahead for season 26 of *Dr. Who*. Producer John-Nathan Turner will leave the series at the end of season 25.

Area Author Weds

Report by Dennis Courtney

The engraved invitation read: "... the wedding will be at Biff's ... Old Vickery Park ... April 1, 1988 ...". So began the adventurous trek to celebrate the marriage of John Steakley and Lori Jones. The curious selection of April Fool's Day should have been an omen of the comedy of errors that was to plague the happy event.

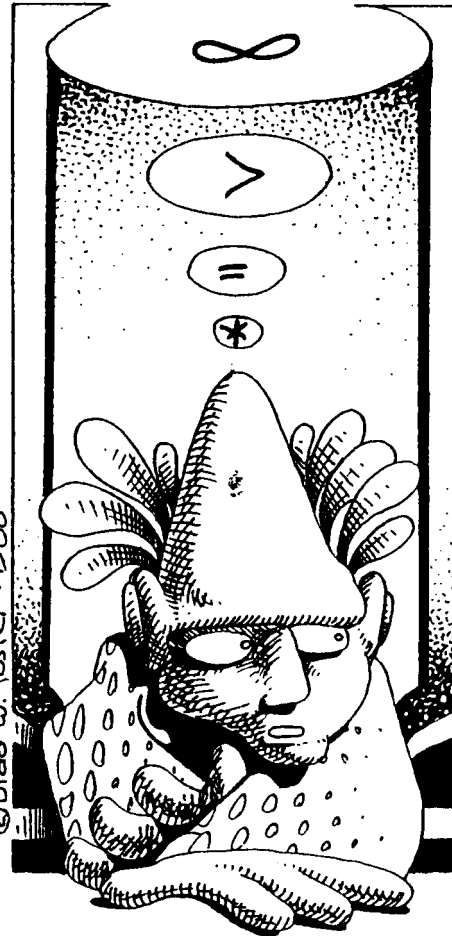
Lori had mentioned at the March Dallas Fantasy Fair that some friends and family members weren't exactly tickled at the choice of date (April 1 was also Good Friday, a quite somber occasion). So I knew the wedding invitation wasn't some elaborate practical joke when it arrived in the mail. Nor did I suspect on April Fool's Day itself, when I tried to call Biff's Restaurant — which has a beautiful area overlooking Old Vickery Park in North Dallas — to check whether it was just a reception or the full wedding that was being held there ... only to be answered by Ma Bell's "this number is no longer in service."

My deep-seated doubts surfaced for an instant, though, when I pulled into an almost-vacant parking lot at Biff's. No Greenville Avenue restaurant would be THAT empty on a Friday, private party or not. Fortunately, a large white delivery truck with a helpful banner taped to it (and a more-helpful alien — the English-as-a-second-language kind — with hastily mimeo'd maps) was there to redirect me to the actual site of the gathering.

Okay, good, a map. But looking closer, a Subaru car showroom?! A mental picture of John and Lori sitting somewhere with a bottle of champagne, laughing their heads off, while filling out wedding invitations for Halloween (the originally announced date) flashed through my mind as I drove back onto Greenville toward Northwest Highway ... to Steakley Chevrolet/Subaru.

Thankfully, upon arrival there, the showroom was empty of cars. And there were people. Dressed-up peo-

ple, not late-evening car shoppers. In one corner, a band had its instruments set up on a small stage. The opposite corner revealed the buffet table and wedding cakes. And rows of chairs neatly faced the ceremony area. Yup, this was the right place. At least it wasn't an Isuzu showroom with Joe Isuzu standing out front with his "Would I Lie To You?" smile.



After a short while of mingling among all-new-to-me faces, with a drink from the sales counter/bar, I was greeted by the arrival of novelists C. Dean Andersson and Nina Romberg (who also collaborate as "Asa Drake"). Then, about a half-hour after I'd arrived, John Steakley, Jr. himself, in a tuxedo and boutonniere, emerged from one of the back offices and joined the guests. There were even a couple of fandom attendees who had driven from New Orleans that evening: two young ladies who were long-time *Armor* fans.

Chatting with John while awaiting Lori's entrance, I discovered that Biff's had indeed "gone under" in the preceding weeks, leaving John without his four-figure catering deposit. Other bad news was that John's University Park home had been burglarized twice ... the culprits making off the first time with Lori's trousseau, among other things.

But, lost treasures notwithstanding, Lori soon emerged in a lovely wedding dress with a flowered garland in her hair, and introductions to family members and close friends and schoolmates soon followed. Then the couple joined Lori's parents at the head of the seating area, and the announcement that followed removed all doubts about the evening's intent.

"There will be no wedding!" Mr. Jones declared to the assembled group. But he continued after a brief pause, "Lori and John were married on February 14th!"

The happy couple had eloped on Valentine's Day after deciding that Halloween was too long to wait. They had just returned from their honeymoon in Mexico the weekend of the March DFF at which they started announcing their "plans" for the April 1 "wedding" ... so that family and friends could join in the celebration. The couple circulated among the well-wishers, then the traditional cake-cutting and groom-feeding followed, with toasts and photographs aplenty. The rock ensemble began playing shortly after that, and the party lasted well into the late-night hours. A happy ending for April Fool's Day 1988.

SMOF Is Back!

That's right. The SMOF-BBS is back in action. If it's been a while since you looked in, or are curious about what an electronic SF bulletin board is all about, tell your computer to call 512-UFO-SMOF now!

The State of the Art

An Overview of Today's Comic-Book Scene

by R.A. Jones

"Hey, Kids — Comics!"

This was the catch-phrase prominently displayed atop the spinner racks of comic books which could once be found in every convenience store in the United States.

Times have changed. You don't see many spinner racks anymore. Convenience stores carry few, if any, comic books on their shelves. The audience for these pulp fantasies has dwindled to its lowest point ever.

Only the public's perception of comic books has remained unchanged. Ask the average person and — provided they are even aware that comics still exist — they will be sure of only two "facts" about the books: they are only about costumed superheroes, and they are only read by children.

Right.

And Fantasy is only about elves.

And Science Fiction is only about *Star Wars*.

The truth is vastly different than the perception. Go into any comic-book specialty store, and you might be amazed at the variety of material. There is no denying that the majority will be devoted to superheroes — just as the paperback racks of most convenience stores are dominated by books representing only two or three genres. But — also like those paperback racks — there is more here than may at first meet the eye.

The purpose of this column is to acquaint you with the varied fare on today's comics menu.

A handful of comics have managed to break out of the literary ghetto which is their usual home, gaining media attention by their unorthodox approach to illustrated storytelling. The grandfather of such titles is *Love and Rockets*, by Gilbert and Jaime Hernandez — featuring adult tales from the barrio. *Maus*, Art Spiegelman's autobiographical story of the Holocaust, has been widely acclaimed as a true work of art. The equally

autobiographical *American Splendor* has brought nationwide recognition to its creator Harvey Pekar, who has appeared several times as a guest on *Late Night with David Letterman*.

Until the mid-1930s, American comic books were simply reprints of existing newspaper comic strips. That tradition is kept alive by the many publishers who produce compilations of classic newspaper strips: *Dick Tracy*, *Prince Valiant*, E. C. Segar's *Popeye*, *Li'l Abner*, *Little Orphan Annie*, *Steve Canyon*, and others. In addition, DC Comics is currently publishing two original series based on venerable comic strip characters (the Phantom and Flash Gordon).

Original comic books developed in the '30s as an offshoot or continuation of the pulp fiction that reached the zenith of its popularity in that era. And the pulp tradition is carried on in comics today. Two of the greatest heroes to ever emerge from the pulps — Doc Savage and the Shadow — are presently starring in comic book series of their own (both from DC).

To shamelessly blow my own horn for the first (but not last) time here, I too have attempted to recapture the flavor of the old pulps in *Fist of God*, a four-issue mini-series being published by Eternity Comics. Set in 1920, it is a romantic adventure which pays homage to the lesser-known pulp efforts of Robert E. Howard and Edgar Rice Burroughs.

Comics — like television and motion pictures — can do an excellent job of taking the printed word and bringing it visually to life for us. Current examples include *Myth Conceptions*, Apple Comics' continuing adaptation of the novels of Robert Lynn Asprin; *The Cases of Sherlock Holmes* from Renegade Press, which presents marvelously detailed illustrations in accompaniment to the text of the Conan Doyle mysteries; and First Comics' productions of ongoing

adaptations of Michael Moorcock's *Eternal Champion* — *Elric*, *Hawkmoon*, and *The Chronicles of Corum*.

Along with Hollywood, comic book publishers have discovered that the American public is ready to re-examine its participation in the Vietnam conflict. The most widely recognized comic to cover this national nightmare is *The 'Nam*, from Marvel Comics. Less well known, but also worthy of note, is *Vietnam Journal*, written and illustrated by Don Lomax, and published by Apple Comics.

Comics are without honor in America, the land of their birth, but are a highly respected art form in Europe and Asia. Imports from these regions are presently making a big splash in the U.S.A. Catalan releases several of the finest European graphic albums here each year. Half-a-dozen of the most popular of Japanese *manga* are being translated and distributed in America: *Akira* from Marvel's Epic Comics line, *Lone Wolf and Cub* from First Comics, and *Mai*, *Kamui*, *Area 88* and *Xenon* from Eclipse Comics. Comics from Korea and Hong Kong are also beginning to filter into our market.

And yes, publishers do produce comics that are highly suitable for children — of all ages. First Comics is responsible for a series of graphic novels — written and illustrated by Eric Shanower — devoted to life in the mystical land of Oz. In addition, First plans to revive the *Classics Illustrated* series. Gladstone publishes several Disney comics, bringing us old and new stories of Mickey Mouse, Uncle Scrooge, and the rest of their clan.

But, as publishers are trying to alert the public, comics aren't *just* for kids any more. In fact, several are for adults only. Such neo-undergrounds as *Cherry Poptart* (a wildly erotic spoof of the Archie Comics) and *Tits 'n' Clits* (written and illustrated by female creators) are most decidedly

for an older crowd. Only slightly less so are books labeled for "Mature Readers" — such as my own *Scimidar* (Eternity), which portrays a science fictional superheroine whose adventures are laced with liberal doses of violence and eroticism.

Other books worth noting: from Kitchen Sink comes *Kings in Disguise*, and *Melody* (the true story of a

nude dancer); *Concrete* (from Dark Horse) is a highly humanistic story of a man trapped in a stone-like body; *Tales from the Heart* (Entropy) is the autobiographical story of young women serving in the Peace Corps.

Finally — in what I promise is my last bit of self-promotion — is *Dark Wolf* (Eternity), the story of a violent, demonic costumed hero who pos-

sesses the body of a middle-aged Catholic priest; and coming in February from Renegade Press, we have *Straw Men* (co-written with Michael Vance), a science fiction suspense mini-series.

Comics *aren't* just for kids. They *aren't* just about superheroes. They *are* a vital, vibrant art form desperately searching for an audience.

Maybe searching for you.

1987 State Fair Model Contest Winners

Alan David Laska

Every year, many model builders compete in the exhibition at the State Fair of Texas. The State Fair is usually held in the first few weeks of October, but models must be entered 4-8 weeks prior to Fair opening. It would be best to write for rules and information to this address: State Fair of Texas, Creative Arts Department, Fair Park, Dallas, TX 75210.

These are the winning entries from the 1987 State Fair of Texas' Model Contest that pertain to Science Fiction and Fantasy.

Adult Scale Model Kit Division

2nd Place

Dragon by Stephanie Hanna — a small well-painted dragon with wings done in bright green.

2nd Place

XF5U-1 Flying Pancake by J.D. Saurge — an experimental aircraft built during World War II. This aircraft looks like a flying saucer with propellers. This plane was designed as a short take-off fighter plane, but the project was abandoned in 1949 in favor of jet fighters.

4th Place

J40 FLUGZEUG by I.L. Wilson — a futuristic fighter machine in grey. This looked like it had seen action in space. The model combines

things from *Star Wars* and the roleplaying game *Battletech*.

Adult Scale Model Kits (more than one shown)

2nd Place

Regult Pods On Cirus 5 by Paul Rutherford — two Zentraedi Battle Pods from the *Robotech* series; very well painted, so the pods look like they've been in battle recently.

Adult Model Kit Conversion

1st Place

Tabian Scout by Paul Rutherford III — a speeder-bike design with rider. This looks like something from *Return of the Jedi*.

Scratch Built

1st Place

Jet Unicycle by Paul Rutherford III — a jet-powered unicycle with single rider; very well painted in olive green, brown, and black.

Adult Diorama Division

Honorable Mention

Space Station Center by Patrick Zastiupil — a model showing the proposed NASA Space Station to be built in the next decade (pending Congressional approval), with the Space Shuttle Atlantis docking along the side of the station.

Mea Culpa

This issue is horribly late, and everyone has reason to be very angry about it. The first several weeks' delay was unavoidable (kidney infection, yuk), but the rest is entirely my fault. All I can say is I'm sorry, and try to get the next issue out in just a couple of weeks (please, O Great God of Publishing).

— Monica



In Memory

Robert A. Heinlein: 1907-1988

Robert Heinlein passed away in his sleep May 8, 1988. He was 80 years old and had been in ill health for years. Death was due to emphysema, congestive heart failure, and complications of old age. He is survived by his wife Virginia. His remains were cremated and scattered at sea with full military honors.

Heinlein was an enormously popular author with worldwide sales in excess of 40 million copies. He influenced generations of children. There are those who called John W. Campbell, Jr. the father of modern science fiction. But Campbell could not have revolutionized the field without the talents of Robert Heinlein.

Heinlein was the first modern sf author to place his stories in one coherent universe with a fully realized timeline. He was the first to sell outside the genre to *The Saturday Evening Post*.

His proselytizing of space travel in his juvenile fiction influenced (and continues to influence) a generation. His work was adapted to television and films: *Tom Corbett*, *Space Cadet* and *Destination Moon*.

He was a four-time winner of the Hugo award, for *Starship Troopers*, *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*, *Double Star*, and *Stranger in a Strange Land*. In 1975, he was given the first Grand Master Nebula Award by his peers for lifetime achievement in science fiction.

There is so much more that could be said about Robert Heinlein. All I know is that his books were what first got me interested in this genre. The field has suffered an immeasurable loss and it just won't seem the same when I read it anymore.

I won't go on; other, more talented writers will be writing tributes for months to come. Best just to close with a partial bibliography. If you missed any, why not go read them?

Space Cadet, *Rocket Ship Galileo*, *Stranger in a Strange Land*, *Methuselah's Children*, *The Un-*

pleasant Profession of Jonathan Hoag, *Waldo & Magic Incorporated*, *Red Planet*, *Farmer in the Sky*, *Between Planets*, *The Rolling Stones*, *Starman Jones*, *Tunnel in the Sky*, *Time for the Stars*, *The Puppet Masters*, *Double Star*, *Citizen of the Galaxy*, *The Star Beast*, *The Door Into Summer*, *Have Spacesuit — Will Travel*, *Glory Road*, *Starship Troopers*, *Podkayne of Mars*, *Farnham's Freehold*, *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*, *Time Enough for Love*, *I Will Fear No Evil*, *The Notebooks of Lazarus Long*, *The Number of the Beast*, *Expanded Universe*, *Job: A Comedy of Justice*, *The Cat Who Walked Through Walls*, *To Sail Beyond the Sunset*.

Clifford D. Simak: 1904-1988

Hugo- and Nebula-winning author Clifford Donald Simak died April 25, from emphysema and leukemia, at Riverside Medical Center in Minneapolis after an illness of several years' duration. Memorial services were held at Lakewood Cemetery in Minneapolis. He is survived by his son, Scott, his daughter, Shelley, and a brother.

Simak was the first writer to win both the International Fantasy Award and a Hugo award (the '59 Hugo for the novelette "The Big Front Yard," and the '52 International Fantasy Award for *City*). He received another Hugo in 1964 for *Way Station* and a Nebula and Hugo for Best Short Story in 1981 for "Grottos of the Dancing Deer." He was chosen as Grand Master by SFWA in 1977. He was Guest of Honor at the 1971 and 1981 World Science Fiction Conventions.

Robert Anson Heinlein:

In Memoriam

by John Steakley

All you can do is make a few personal observations. Nobody really knew him well the last several years except for a few close associates. Jerry Pournelle could write something definitive about his recent life — they

spoke or saw each other all the time. And maybe one or two others could actually tell us something about him.

But the rest of us can only think of this loss in terms of what it means to us. Of him, The Man, and what he meant to us. We can only guess about what we meant to him.

Somebody said something to me about our having lost one leg of our Triad, meaning Heinlein, Asimov, and Arthur C. Clarke. And they made a good point, I think. Asimov, Clarke, and Ray Bradbury are possibly the most famous SF writers of our times, but Bradbury has been out of the scene for quite awhile. And those of us in the field thought of Asimov, Clarke and The Man as the Big Three.

But why? Why those three?

Asimov is obvious. The child prodigy, the Boy Genius, with an IQ somewhere in the stratosphere. Possibly the only man on earth who truly comprehends what Sagan means by "billions and billions" because that's how many books he has had published. Asimov is famous for lots of reasons. He's incredibly visual with all that hair and that New Mexico string tie, so the TV people interview him a lot about SDI or the space program or just about anything scientific. He also writes for *everyone*. For in-flight magazines and Sunday supplements and "TV Guide." Isaac Asimov is a media celebrity.

He also writes *very good* science fiction stories.

Plus his last name begins with A. Why Arthur C. Clarke?

2001, *A Space Odyssey* was what the trade calls a boffo hit movie. It was, at one time, one of the top five highest-grossing motion pictures of all time. The sequel was done pretty well, too.

He also writes *very good* science fiction stories.

Plus his last name begins with C.

Some of you are thinking: What is it with this initial stuff, Steakley? Sure. "A" and "C" and Heinlein begins with "H." So what?

So, a lot.

Think back. You have just discovered SF, probably in your early teenage years. You go to a library or bookstore, find the SF section and, since damn little of it is in Hebrew or Aramaic, you begin at the top stack going left to right and find Isaac Asimov, Poul Anderson, Piers Anthony, Ray Bradbury, Edgar Rice Burroughs, and Arthur C. Clarke.

Remember? And those covers! We wanted to go there and be a part of those adventures! Look at that space ship! Look at that *monster*! We'll take this one and this one and that one and . . . uh oh, there goes the allowance until my junior year in college. Better put some back. Come back later, after we've read these three.

And of course, we liked them because they truly were good tales, so we went back to those same authors because we trusted them to take us to neat places.

And I don't know how rich you were, but I was dead broke before I even *looked* at the H's.

And to this day, people just turned on to SF follow the very same pattern. The stuff they've read, other than different titles by the same guy they *first* read at their cousin's house, is from that same section of the bookstore shelves. I don't know many neofans who've read maybe one or two authors past the letter D.

Now, I'm not saying these guys all sold these books just because they were first up, because it simply isn't so. Rather, these folks were *revealed* as being talented right away. And that helps. A lot. Ask any book store manager. Ask any librarian. Or, for that matter, publisher.

So what has this got to do with The Man? It has to do with a sense of proportion. The Man has outsold all those guys for thirty years and will probably continue to do so *without* a big movie or *Good Morning, America*. With few public appearances of any kind and without *any* publicity at all outside the field of SF.

And with a name beginning with H. Why? Because he wrote the best SF of his time. The BEST.

Oh, we can argue about individual books. And we should. His later work, for instance, was considerably different from his early stuff and some would say half as good. Others might make an argument that, say, this book or that was better than anything The Man ever wrote and let's agree with them for now. But that isn't the point. The point is that The Man's work as a whole simply overwhelms the competition. There are lots of great books out there. But no one else turned out so many as Robert A. Heinlein.

Sit down someday and gather up everything he wrote between, say, *Double Star* and *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* and you'll see what I mean.

Then read them again. If it's been more than a year since the last time, I promise you've forgotten how good they are.

Like I say, these are just random scattershots. None of this is meant to be definitive or the last word on the subject. That will take more time and more perspective and an objectivity I clearly (and happily) lack.

But it's interesting, is it not, that this giant was almost totally unknown outside his field? Everyone seems to have at least heard of Isaac Asimov and Arthur Clarke and, well, Ray Bradbury. But Robert Heinlein? Mundanes simply stare when you mention the name, though some of them do vaguely remember reading *Stranger in a Strange Land* in the sixties. Or was that *Tommy* by the Who?

Another question I'm asked is who will be the next Heinlein? Who will be the next Man? I dunno. But I will say this: there *will* be one. Life goes on. I'll even go further than that. There *should* be one.

But who? And will he or she be from this generation, "Heinlein's Children" as we are called? Could be. It'll take someone who writes well and often, who turns out a substantial body of quality work in a consistent fashion. And it'll have to be SF, not fantasy. Some people think it'll be Larry Niven. Some thought it would be Joe Haldeman. Some still do. But the next Man will have to do what the first one did, create a pervasive influ-

ence throughout the entire field. Bill Gibson has made a good start. Scott Card has made a helluva good start and seems more prolific. But I can think of at least half a dozen other names. Hell, how about Lew Shiner?

But this is just speculation and nonsense and grief. As for me, I'd rather get drunk with Jubal Harshaw. Wouldn't you?

Kirk Douglas Thompson - Remembrance by John Steakley

Those of you fortunate enough to attend a con in the southeast may have run across the infamous Blackshirts from Chattanooga, Tennessee, a mad-cap crew of party outlaws infused with a quasi-official pagan worship of Jack Daniels Black Label and about the best company to be found in fandom. Perhaps the best of these was Kirk Thompson, who died May 19 just as he had lived — driving a Chevy Sprint, of all the bloody things, at 100+ miles per hour. Those of you who don't recall the name may recall the Blackshirts and, if you do, will certainly remember the one with the bright red hair and beard and glasses, thin and strong and grinning.

This is, quite frankly, an incalculable loss for those privileged to know this fine man. He was a computer whiz, an expert marksman, a raconteur, a born success and precisely the kind of man you'd like to have your daughter marry *but not date*.

I loved Kirk as much as any man I knew and I was just one of many, so I'll only offer a couple of things:

I never met anyone who knew him who didn't love his company; he was known as an incomparable companion.

And:
We will all be dead for ten thousand
thousand years
Floating in the Darkness
And remembering
That, for a Time
Some of us
But not All of us
Were Swordsmen

Tanstaaf!, Kirk.

Midnight Excursions

On The Persistence of the Small Press and Other Periodic Horrors – Part I

by Lawrence Person

This is the first of a three-part series of in-depth reports on the small-press horror field.

A quick quiz: How many major magazine markets are there for science fiction?

Well, “not enough” is always the correct answer, but when you think about it, SF is not doing that badly. After all, you have *Analog*, *Asimov's*, *F&SF*, *Omni*, and, what the heck, let's throw *Amazing* and *Aboriginal SF* in there as well, not to mention foreign markets like *Interzone* or *Hayakawa's* (for those of you who write Japanese), or the fact that major markets like *Playboy* occasionally pick up an SF story. Still not enough, to be sure. But, all in all, not too bad.

Now, the second question: How many major magazine markets are there for horror fiction?

(?)

That's a stumper, isn't it?

You've got *Twilight Zone*, whose emphasis isn't on straight horror, and you've got *F&SF*, which publishes a little, and that's it. *Night Cry* is gone, *Fantasy Book* folded, and the sometimes-almost-annual issues of *Weird-book* hardly count at all. And who knows whether the latest incarnation of *Weird Tales* will survive the slings and arrows of outrageous newsstand fortune?

With such a dearth of outlets, is it any wonder that the horror small press is the most numerous, active, and professional in the entire genre? And “small press” is the correct name for it, for there is no way you could categorize such excellent-looking magazines as *Eldritch Tales*, *Dark Regions*, or *Grue* as being part of the “amateur press” or as “fanzines” — their quality (though not quite up to that of the major markets) precludes that. In addition, such a tag is entirely

incorrect when professional writers like Joe Lansdale, Mort Castle, and J.N. Williamson make frequent appearances in their pages, and others (like Jessica Amanda Salmonson) are driving forces as editors and publishers.

The Slicks

Though most of the magazines reviewed here are members of the Small Press Writers and Artists Organization, there is a wide variation in the styles, formats and moods of the various participants. Perhaps the best place to start this review is a look at the “Slicks,” the fiction magazines with the most professional look.

Among the most sophisticated and long-lived of all the periodicals received is *Eldritch Tales*, a magazine that's won two Balrog Awards and is edited by Crispin Burnham. Physically, *ET* has a fairly professional look, with a digest-size format that's recently moved from heavy textured to slick stock for its covers. Its one continuing graphic problem (uneven borders on certain pages) seems to have been eliminated in the most recent review issue received (#13), very possibly due to *ET*'s acquisition of a Macintosh Plus computer to assist in layout. In fact, the only puzzling thing about their format is their constantly changing size (issue 9, for example, is bigger than 12, but smaller than 13). Puzzling, but not serious. Other good features include “Eldritch Lair,” a continuing column that's usually chock full of information about the horror field, and “The Eldritch Eye,” a semi-regular horror film review column by Gary A. Braunbeck. One drawback, shared by many of its SPWAO brethren, is the lack of a regular book review. This is especially unfortunate since there are so many horror novels being published that the

genre needs reviewers to help readers separate the wheat from the chaff.

As far as stories go, the issues made available to this reviewer contain a number of good tales, and several others that show promise. Starting with issue nine we have Gary A. Braunbeck's “Voyeurs,” a skillful character study about a horror writer who is told by ghostly figures that his stories are fantastic, brilliant . . . and will never be published or appreciated in his lifetime. Also good is Frederick W. Croft's “Skipping,” a story effectively and simply told about of a time travel experiment gone wrong. Both of the above are fine examples of well-done, low-key horror stories, something that seems to be, unfortunately, somewhat rare in the small press. Also in this issue is Thomas Ligotti's “Dream of a Mannikin, or the Third Person,” a tale that Ramsey Campbell once listed as one of the ten best horror stories published after 1940.

ET #12 also ranks well, with “From Childhood's Hour I Have Not Been,” unquestionably the best story read of all the small press publications received, also from the pen of Gary A. Braunbeck. Though centered around an old idea (The Horrible Thing in the Womb), this story is anything but stale, and his masterful characterization and skillful prose make it a chillingly well-done tale. Issue 12 also contains Peter Cannon's sharp Lovecraft send-up, “The Thing in the Bathtub” (concerning several dark aspects connected to that obscure pulp writer, Howard Ashton Howard) and the third of four installments of Joe Lansdale's “Cowboy Zombie Epic” (Sam Hurt, are you listening?) *Dead in the West*. Other pros who have stories in this issue include J.N. Williamson, William F. Wu, and Steve Rasnic Tem.

Speaking of professionals, now is

perhaps a good time to present a caveat about their work in the small press. To be truthful, most of the work by professional authors you see in the small press doesn't measure up to their usual standards (though here the Wu piece is interesting and the Lansdale a lot of fun), and frequently you see work that might not see the light of day elsewhere, sometimes for good reasons. Occasionally, however, you get pieces from professionals at this level merely because they are too strange to find a home anywhere else, and this is especially true concerning much of Steve Rasnic Tem's work.

But as good as *Eldritch Tales* and many of the other small-press publications are, there are a lot of stories by non-pros that, to be blunt, would never have been published in a professional magazine. Now, that's not always a condemnation. For example, Donald Broyles appears in all three issues of *Eldritch Tales* mentioned here with very short mood-piece vignettes, only one of which ("Norombek the Sorcerer" from #9) really works. But the unusual length and approach of the pieces would virtually preclude their publication anywhere else.

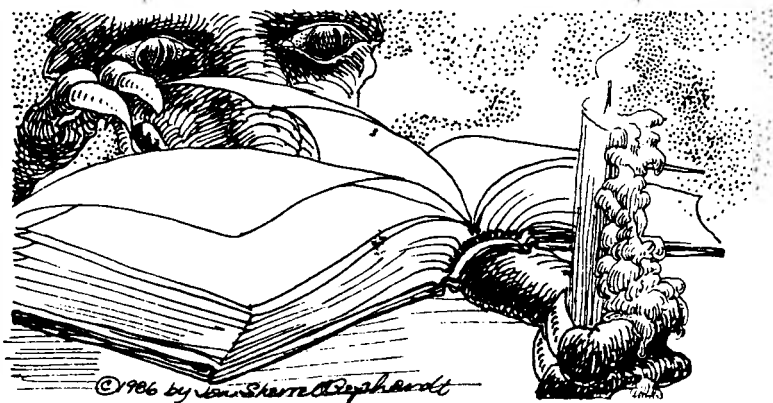
However, in most cases these stories would not be published because they are not well written or professionally polished, or in some cases are just plain bad. An example of the latter is William R. Barrow's "No Such Thing?", a haunted house tale that is cloying, poorly written, unbelievable, and almost painfully bad.

It is disquieting to say such a thing, because a beginning writer should never be discouraged, and Barrow may very well become a master wordsmith someday. But this story is an embarrassment, and never should have been published. So be forewarned — even at the top of the heap there's a lot of muck to wade through before you find the gems.

Issue #13 contains Jean Sullivan's dark and powerful (if not fully formed) "Bloody Waters," a nasty tale of

abortion and revenge; J.J. Travis' "Halloween in Arkham," a nicely executed story with a good twist ending (though the Arkham setting is, to my mind, totally superfluous to the story); two skillful stories by pros, Steve Rasnic Tem's "Wake" and Ardath Mayhar's "That Thing in There"; and the conclusion of the Lansdale piece. Also promising is Rickey L. Shankin's "Blood of the Lamb," an interesting mixture of melodrama and originality.

Eldritch Tales is one of the longest-surviving veterans of the small press, and issue #14 came out while this was being written. At \$7 an issue, it's far from cheap, but you get a lot of magazine for your money (issue #13 had 123 pages set in 9 point type). It's also one of the few places where you'll



find stories of over 5,000 words, usually serialized (just make sure you get all the issues!).

Though its emphasis on *Weird Tales*-type stories may not be for everyone, you will find some of the best stories available from the small press here. In any case, it's well worth your time and money to pick up at least one issue to see if it's to your tastes. Subscriptions are \$20.00 for four issues, or \$24.00 for four issues sent First Class. (Crispin Burnham, *Eldritch Tales*, 1051 Wellington Road, Lawrence, KS 66044.)



Another fine small-press publication is *Grue*, an impressive, digest-sized magazine edited by Peggy Nadramia. While *Eldritch* tends to feature stories in a Lovecraftian vein, *Grue* tends toward the type of stories that *Night Cry* published before their

untimely demise: dark, hard-hitting, and sometimes brutally sharp. Though not endowed with as many features as *ET*, *Grue* has established itself as one of the best in the field after just six issues.

Issue #4 contains several good stories, including Tim Coats' highly original "The Buildings are Falling," another example of a nicely done, low-key horror story, and Charlotte Brown Hammond's hard-hitting "Uncle Sherm (A Fantasy)," the chilling story of a child molester and his well-deserved demise. This last is another example of a story that would never see the light of day in a large-press magazine, since its subject matter (though not explicit) would still be too disturbing for many audiences, even in

these post-Clive Barker days. Also good are Mort Castle's black-humored vignette "Sharing," David Starkey's black "Confession," W.H. Pugmire's "Swamp Rising" (written in a style best described as "Cthulhoid Realism"), Richard Singer's daft "Pop Stars," and two short,

humorous twist-ending tales: Paul Haberman's "Ouija" and William P. Dillon's "One April Day." Other professional contributions to the issue include J.N. Williamson's much praised "Townkiller," James Kisser's "Small Talk," and a poem by Joseph Payne Brennan.

Grue #5 weighs in with Thomas Ligotti's "Dr. Locrian's Asylum," still another fine example of an excellent and understated idea; Thomas F. Monteleone's wonderful Your-Life-Doesn't-Have-To-Be-This-Way tale, "Yesterday's Child" (I must admit I am a sucker for the good "second chance" story); and Joe Lansdale's dark "The God of the Razor," which ties into his novel *Nightrunners*. Also worth a look are three dark tales, David Starkey's "Trimmings," Wayne Allen Sallee's "A Matter of Semantics," and J. Hunter Davis's "Ten Times Black," plus Steve Rasnic Tem's surrealistic fairy tale,

"Mother Hag." Interesting from a critical viewpoint is Dennis Jordan's "Radionda," mainly because it appears to be the first Lucius Shepard knock-off (demi-magical happenings during a future war in Central America) to come down the pike.

And issue #6, which just came out as of this writing, continues the trend. No instant classics, but some solid work from Addie Lacoe ("Bayou Exterminator"), J.L. Comeau ("Stinkers"), and Dale Hoover, who turns a gonzo (if uneven) tale in "Proctor Valley." In fact, there is not really a bad story in the bunch, and even the two stories in here that are strangely oblique and incomplete (A.R. Morlan's "The Last Bedtime Story" and Janet Fox's "Strands") have a skillful, visionary quality about them.

If Peggy Nadramia and crew keep up the good work, *Grue* should stay one of the best sources for horror short stories in the field. A good, solid effort and, at \$4 an issue, one of the best values in the small press. (Note: *Grue* is one of the few publications reviewed that is available anywhere in Texas — Future Visions in Houston had copies of the latest issue at last check.) A three-issue subscription is available for \$11.00. (Hell's Kitchen Productions, P.O. Box 370, Times Square Station, New York, NY 10108.)



Another good, graphically clean entry in the digest format is *Dark Regions*, a biannual edited by Joe Morey. Though new, *Dark Regions* is already an attractive publication, and its dual subtitles ("The Short Story Anthology/Magazine of Weird Fiction") are not far off the mark. The issue received (#2) includes a number of stories that might be better classified as light fantasy rather than dark, though there is plenty of that as well. *DR* has a valuable column called "The Writing Corner," which should help everyone aspiring to publication, and issue #2 contains a book review from Jeannette M. Hopper, though it is not certain whether it is a regular feature or not. No movie review col-

umn, though considering the time lag in a biannual magazine, that is not too much of a loss.

Dark Regions #2 has some good, interesting work, including Albert J. Manachino's "The White Orchard," a demi-fantasy which is set in his bizarre and continuing Madonna/Moloch series, and Marthayn Pelegrimas' touching afterlife tale, "Insufficient Baggage." Among the more straightforward horror work, A.R. Morlan's "Double Dare Ya" features a good portrait of childhood taunts (in this case with deadly effect). Other works worth a look include Leo Bigley's "The Gardener" and Barbara Prozenza's bleak "The Right Choice."

Dark Regions is probably a good choice if your tastes run to the bizarre, and this eclectic mix includes everything from light fantasy to re-worked mythology (Keith Hudson's "Mine is Forever") to overt humor (Charlotte Brown Hammond's "The Recipe"). This is definitely another magazine worth looking into. Available for \$4.00 per issue, or two-issue subscription for \$7. (*Dark Regions*, P.O. Box 6301, Concord, CA 94524.)



Another newcomer to the field is *New Blood*, a publication emphasizing the grotesque, shocking and explicitly graphic side of horror, edited by Chris Lacher. Though definitely not to everyone's tastes, *New Blood* does live up to its title, with bloody tales by up-and-coming authors. Except for some poems and the editor's introduction, there is nothing but stories in either of the two issues out so far. Though not as physically attractive as the magazines mentioned above, *New Blood* #2 is a considerable improvement over #1 (the "Red" issue, in paper-bound digest format, without illustration or title on its red covers), and features a large, 8½ x 11" format with full illustrations. Still, the type could be more attractive and the layout just a touch cleaner.

The premier issue contains a number of notable (if bloody) tale, including Rick Garrett's "Sebastian,"

worthwhile despite its inconsistencies for Garrett's easy and humorous prose style; David Bruce's "Netherface," the tale of a bitter, psychotic sleazeball who picks the wrong woman to rape; Thomas Burchfield's humorous "One Hell of A Guy" (I'm the Anti-Christ? What a bummer . . .); and William Reilling's "The Infinite Man."

New Blood #2 contains Wayne Allen Sallee's powerful and disturbing "Threshold." I spent several days trying to decide if I liked this story or not. Another "Cthulhoid Realism" tale, at first it seemed like Sallee was doing nothing more than throwing the most shocking and painful images he could find at you. After a week or so, I decided any story that keeps gnawing at you that long must have something going for it.

Others worth looking at include Mike Baker's "New Stuff" and Ron Lemming's "Zombie Powder." Among the other pleasant topics for this issue are rape (Jeremy Forsyth's "Stablemates"), molestation (Jeannette M. Hopper's "Her Own Children"), and castration, which plays a role in both Ray Gorton's "Active Member," and John Gorecki's obvi-





ous and unsubtle revenge piece, "The Mutilators."

Once again, *New Blood* is not for everybody. Those shocked or offended by explicit gore and/or graphic violence should steer clear. On the other hand, if you're the type of person who finds Clive Barker's work too subtle, *New Blood* is just what you've been looking for. It's \$4.95 an issue or \$14.00 for a three-issue subscription. (*New Blood*, 2249 S. Grove Avenue, Ontario, CA 91761.)



Haunts, the final short story "slick" on our list, has been around longer than anyone but *Eldritch Tales*, but just recently went through a considerable upgrade in graphic quality. Edited by Joseph K. Cherkas, *Haunts* is now up to issue 9/10 (a double issue), and the new white interiors are an enormous improvement over the ugly yellow paper in previous issues. This plus its new, cleaner lines gives *Haunts* a much more professional look. It has no review columns, but plenty of stories, many by people you don't see elsewhere in the small press.

The premier issue contains two memorable stories, oddly shuffled to the end of the magazine. Sam Gafford contributes "Machina Ex," a very good tale about a struggling writer whose talent is suddenly unleashed by a new typewriter. Such a story is especially difficult for a beginning writer since any error would be glaringly obvious to anyone familiar with the field. However, Gafford's work is always skillful and true-to-life. Also good is Thomas E. Sniegowski's "The Way," a richly textured story of a man who enters the wrong subway station. Another tale worth a look is Hugh Danielson's "The Blue Man," a tale rich in atmosphere but weak on causality.

Danielson is also responsible for the best piece in the second issue, "Ball of Fluff." Other than this, *Haunts* #2 is notable only for Mike Hurley's "Vameleon," perhaps the silliest self-referential story ever written. Issue #3 contains two stories worth a look, Barry Radburn's intelligent twist on the werewolf theme,

"Summer Moon," and Joe Clifford Faust's "Angels," a story with a nasty, skewed ending.

Haunts #4 contains Ron Leming's flawed but tremendous "Fox Goes Fission," a story so good that it was included in the compiled list of great short stories in J.N. Williamson's *How to Write Tales of Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror*. This forceful tale might be the ultimate in haunted lake stories; it concerns the efforts of an Indian groundskeeper to wrest the souls of his wife and daughter from the black and evil depths of Moon Lake. Despite a hundred tiny beginner's flaws (awkward sentences, clumsy word choices, etc.), Leming's forceful and fast-paced style makes for utterly gripping reading. Though far from perfect, "Fox Goes Fission" burns with an intensely powerful and original vision. This gem of a story is the type of diamond-in-the-rough that makes forays into the small press worth the effort. Another good piece is Richard M. Bell's horrific, demi-Lovecraftian twist on "Genesis." Number six was a weak issue, with only Wayne R. William's powerful fragmentary tale "Post Cards," and D.E. Colley's well-told "Halloween Story" to recommend it.

In Mr. Cherkas's most recent effort (the aforementioned double issue), we find another good Halloween yarn (Andy Honeycutt's "October 31"), Rudy Kremberg's humorous, action-filled "Twenty-One Minutes," and S.M. Secula's clever "The Missing Dumbell." Also worth a looking is Mike Hurley's "Witchwood," largely because it shows Hurley's growth as a writer (he seems to appear almost exclusively in *Haunts*).

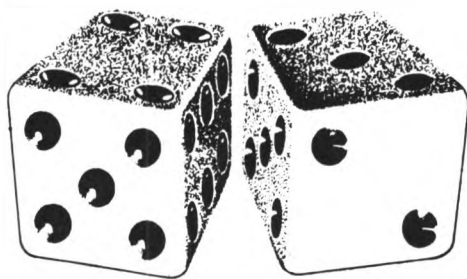
Though not as strong as many of the younger pulps, Cherkas seems to have *Haunts* on the right track, and at \$3.25 an issue (\$6.50 for a two-issue subscription), it's not too bad a risk. (Nightshade Publications, P.O. Box 3342, Providence, RI 02906.)

Midnight Excursions, Part II takes us on a tour of paper-bound zines and those which worship great Cthulhu.

Texas SF Inquirer #25

Gnotes From the Ghaming Ghetto

by Rembert N. Parker



In an effort to more readily serve its chosen market, FACT recently did some market research (translation: it sent out a questionnaire). This is part of an effort to define the mission of the organization, which has been floundering somewhat since its successful NASFiC. FACT is not alone in its search; at about the same time, a second group (Eternacon) ran a convention (Eclecticon) at which a survey was distributed to the convention attendees. While the results are still being tabulated, one thing is no doubt going to appear in the final results: a significant percentage of fandom is or has been involved with gaming.

I myself got involved in a very roundabout way. Once upon a time, long ago in a state far away, I found myself running conventions for a science fiction club in a small town [Evansville, Indiana]. To raise money for the SF convention every fall (*Contact*), the club ran a gaming convention every spring (*Glathricon*). The expenses of running the gaming convention were very low (no guests to contend with), but they attracted a different group of people than *Contact* did. By simply adding several scheduled gaming events to the SF convention, we were able to attract them to both conventions. We discovered something which really shouldn't surprise anybody — the gamers read as much speculative fiction as those who came only to the SF convention. Granted, their choice in authors tended towards a different group, but it's very easy to invite several writers to a convention and please everybody. A more surprising revelation was that a

number of the SF fans would occasionally stop in the gaming area to share war stories or play a short board-game of some sort.

Let's face it, at one time or another almost all of us have rolled up a *Dungeons and Dragons* character and tried to figure out why some people play the game so much. Granted, it may be chic to admit that you have now left that game behind ("I haven't played *D&D* for years; do people still play it?") and a whole new generation of game systems have cropped up (notably the Chaosium systems, a raft of systems from West End Games, and something called *GURPS* from a local Austin Company), but gaming is not that alien to any of us. I prefer writing gaming tournaments and modules to "real writing" because I don't have to remember whether the comma goes before or after the quote marks, and the competition is a lot less fierce.

So if you aren't interested in gaming, at conventions or elsewhere, leave the rest of us alone. We don't stalk the halls looking to bash filkers and fanziners and Trekkies, so just pretend we aren't here and we won't bother you.

For the rest of you, I will be writing up reviews of new games and game systems (upcoming items of note include the looooong-awaited *GURPS Supers* and *Space*, the rewrite of *AD&D 2*, and a few

surprises from a new kid on the block named NIPI) as well as musing about gaming at conventions from time to time. Perhaps if the interest is there I can even address a few of the Play-by-Mail games as well.

If you have any questions I might be able to answer here, or suggestions, or just generally want to correspond, I can be reached via US Snail at P.O. Box A3981, Chicago, Illinois 60690 or via phone (if Illinois Bell gets their burned-out exchange repaired) at (312) 462-7954. A UPS shipping address is available on request if you just can't wait to send me something I don't already have a copy of for a review.

Here's Your Chance

Are you dissatisfied with the contents of the *Inquirer*? Well, now's your chance to do something about it. At ArmadilloCon, we will have a computer or typewriter available so you can contribute anything you care to sit down and write. You can give us letters of comment, articles, interviews, con reports, reviews, whatever.

The *Inquirer* is here for you. We need your help and participation to make it even better. Please stop by and help us make this truly your magazine.

Brother Card Takes on the Fundamentalists

Tape review by Lawrence Tagrin

One of the most thought-provoking audio tapes available is Orson Scott Card's "Secular Humanist Revival Meeting." Card is a thoughtful and intelligent person who looks at this entire question of Secular Humanism as a religion with compassion and wit. He shows delightful in-

sights as he explodes the fraud of "Creation Science" and the flim-flam of some of the self-annointed leaders of the Evangelical Christians. If you are capable of maintaining an open mind on the topic, I would suggest you get a copy of this tape as soon as possible.

The Printed Word

Book Reviews

Arrows of the Queen
by Mercedes Lackey — DAW
Books, \$2.95
reviewed by Oscar Kirzner

The Setting: Among the Hold Folk in the Borderlands of Valdemar. Valdemar is another of those slightly sanitized, semi-medieval fairy-tale kingdoms that abound in fantasy novels (don't get snippy — the readers want them sanitized). It's sheep country. The chief occupation of young people is sheep-sitting and, if female, wool carding, wool spinning, wool dyeing, wool weaving, and so forth ad itchium. The chief occupation of the older folks seems to be holding the border against those on the other side. This causes a shortage of males suitable for marriage. That leads to a society of polygynous households with a Firstwife holding sway over the later-acquired Underwives.

The Chief Character: Talia the adolescent, barely hitting puberty and always in trouble for daring to use her brain and having a mind of her own. She's busily wool carding and reading an old, worn, clothbound book of heroic fiction about Heralds, Companions, Bards, and Herald-mages fighting the bad guys.

The Predicament: Happy 13th Birthday, Talia! Time to get you married off to someone. They get women breeding early among the Holderfolk. She's allowed to express some preference as to whether she wants to be a Firstwife for some young man or join an established household as an Underwife. For Talia, this is a Fate Worse Than Death. She declares that she wants to be a Herald and flees the house.

The Deus Ex Machina (The Gim-mick): Clap, clap, tinkle, tinkle. The sound of hooves and bridle bells reach her. Only Companions, the magical "horses" that Heralds rode, wore

bells all the time. She rushes down to the road to see what a Herald looks like and only finds a riderless Companion. Little does she realize (perhaps less, since these beasts can play with your mind) that she has been chosen by this Companion to become a Herald.

She mounts the white stallion and off they go to the capital city, Haven, where she learns of the Heraldic selection process, is enrolled in the Collegium where Heralds are trained, makes friends and enemies, is nearly assassinated, becomes nanny to The Royal Brat, Elspeth, and generally begins her new career as a Herald-in-training. This is where we get down to the real plotline.

Speaking of plots, there is one afoot to wreck the kingdom and we start to get intimations of it here. In fact, unless the author has more stories in mind, we never get back to Talia's dreary beginnings. After this, we don't have to worry too much about technological anomalies — most of the rest of the interesting events and abilities are magical and we can pay attention to the interplay of characters, amusing events, and Talia's personal growth.

I must admit that I didn't care too much for the beginning of the book. It seemed to me to have some kind of strident, feminist message. But once Talia gets away from her original predicament and is enrolled at the Collegium for Heralds (no relation to the Herald's College established in 15th-century England), the story takes a turn familiar to anyone who has ever left home to attend a college.

It's a good story for those who like fantasy but others might not like its hocus-pocus premises as much. I can definitely say that it's much closer to my tastes than some fantasies I have read. The story moves quickly enough, there is no attempt to describe the various characters down to the last

errant eyebrow hair, nor is there any long, boring discussion of philosophy or motives. The major characters are given personality without a chapter being devoted to each. A good deal of fantasy reading involves the willing suspension of disbelief and this story moves well within this context.

Arrow's Flight
by Mercedes Lackey — DAW
Books, \$3.50
reviewed by Oscar Kirzner

This is book two of the Arrows Trilogy. Except that the publisher or author decided to change the name of the trilogy to *Heralds of Valdemar*.

As you may recall, Talia, our heroine, has gone to the Herald's Collegium. Well, she's gonna graduate. And someone only tried to kill her once. She's more or less grown up now and the writing takes a more adult turn.

These stories have been written from Talia's point of view. You can almost, just almost, get inside her mind. The only one who does get inside her mind is her Companion (magical white horse), Rolan. He can play benevolent censor and plant false memories if need be. It sort of reminds me of Asimov's most recent *Foundation* novel. I just don't like that kind of stuff. It smacks of brain-washing. I must have read Orwell's 1984 or Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* too intently.

Talia has managed to civilize the Royal Brat, so Princess Elspeth gets Chosen by a Companion to become a Herald. This is extremely important since the people who sit on the throne in this land have to be Heralds first. Heralds, being the selfless types they are, make fairly decent monarchs — even if some of the other nobility in this kingdom don't always think so.

Even more important is the fact that Talia is destined to be to become the "Queen's (or King's) Own."

That's because the demigod (Companion), Rolan, belonged to the last holder of the job and gets to pick the replacement. This is a rather special governmental position. This person "held the special position of confidant and most trusted friend and advisor to the Ruler. Thus the Monarchs of Valdemar were assured that they would always have at least one person about them who could be trusted and counted on at all times."

Okay, that makes sense. If you're going to have a totally selfless individual as monarch, it's nice to get the same type as chief vizier. And the Companions are always there to fix up their psyches should both of them start to do dastardly things for the purest of motives.

Anyhow, this book describes how Talia spends her eighteen-month internship riding her circuit with another Herald, loses her virginity, deals with a minor-league bad guy (child abuse), gets to shovel vast amounts of snow, and has a bunch of other travels and learning experiences that prepare her for the next book, *Arrow's Fall*.

Arrow's Fall

by Mercedes Lackey — DAW Books. \$3.50

reviewed by Oscar Kirzner

This is it. The last book of the *Heralds of Valdemar* trilogy (originally the Arrows trilogy). The story covers about seven or so years of the life of our heroine.

Talia has completed her heraldic field internship and is returning to Haven, capital of Valdemar, to take up her duties as The Queen's Own Herald.

Now she's involved in the process of dynastic alliances and the consideration of offers of royal marriage to Princess Elspeth from a neighboring kingdom, as well as the nitty-gritty affairs of deciding on military budgets, etc. It's the stuff with the neighbors that forms the meat of this book and, believe me, this is no romance novel.

In the previous book, Talia had dealt with a minor villain. This time, she's going to run afoul of some

people who give Vlad Tepes competition for a mean streak. For those not familiar with Rumanian history, Vlad was the ruler of Wallachia and parts of Transylvania during the mid-fifteenth century. He was known for strict law enforcement. Very, very strict. He is also known to history as Vlad the Impaler. He got the nickname Drakulya (devil).

One thing I appreciate: things have gotten less sanitized than in the first book. I think that Lackey has grown as a writer. Another thing I appreciate are the maps of the kingdom and the Herald's Collegium area. If you haven't gotten all three books yet, get the third one just for the maps. They make things considerably easier to understand.

The conclusion does not tie everything up with a neat, little, pink ribbon (maybe a blood red ribbon) but leaves room for additional stories. There is also a blurb in the front of the book for another novel coming sometime this summer. This is a good sign.

Music plays a significant part of



this story and Mercedes Lackey got inspired to write songs. There is a 25-page section at the end of the book with the lyrics to songs mentioned in the story, as well as others which bear on parts of the trilogy and some simply set in the same world.

Gate of Ivrel: Claiming Rites

from the novel by C.J. Cherryh.

adapted and illustrated by Jane Fancher — The Donning Company/Publishers, \$6.95

reviewed by Oscar Kirzner

Jane Fancher is obsessed. She picked up C.J. Cherryh's first Morgaine novel years ago and *Gate of Ivrel* has been on her mind ever since. She's been obsessed by the need to add real visual imagery to it, not just leave it for the mind to fill in the gaps when we read descriptions. Fortunately, this Seattle-area artist can do more than draw stick figures.

About three or four years ago, she produced a black-and-white graphic novel version of the entire book. In fact, I'll use the "c" word — it was a comic book version of the novel. The only thing in color was the cover; the rest was done on that cheap newsprint that'll dissolve into yellow dust before the average reader is old enough to retire. As comics go, it was pretty fair and it didn't butcher the story too badly. But unless you had read the book, it wouldn't have been very meaningful.

(On the other hand, how many of you based your book reports on Monarch Notes or Classic Tales when you were in school? Did you really think you could get all of *A Tale of Two Cities* in 42 pages of pictures and dialog balloons? How do you think Herman Melville would feel if he discovered that *Moby Dick* had been packed inside a single tuna can?)

That first attempt at giving pictorial life to *Gate of Ivrel* obviously did not satisfy her obsession . . . but it did lead to a close collaboration with C.J. Cherryh to produce a greatly expanded, full-color, 8½x11", slick-paper version of the first three chapters of the novel. Even better, she

and Ms. Cherryh produced a glossary and pronunciation guide for the book. That alone makes it a good buy. So, go out and read this high-quality comic and/or the original novel. I'm not going to review the original for you, but I will tell you that they make a good companion set.

Ms. Fancher has gone all-out to cram as much detail and storyline from the original into this work as possible, and has even added a few scenes and characters to the introduction to help set up this universe. The art in this version is also much more loyal to the story than the previous work. In this edition, Morgaine is attired as befits the middle of winter, as opposed to the original paperback cover art by Michael Whelan — which had Morgaine wearing a white loincloth, bikini top, gloves, flowing cape, and brown, fold-top boots (with Vanye in loincloth, high-top sandals, and brass helmet). [Whelan is a good artist, but I suspect he was told to paint something that would catch the eye.]

You'll have to be patient to get the whole novel in graphic form because the original has ten chapters. It's my guess that it'll take at least two additional issues to complete the deluxe, graphic version of *Gate of Ivrel*. (It is my understanding that Ms. Fancher has moved to OKC so as to better improve her collaboration with the author. Also, I believe that C.J. Cherryh is doing some of the art for the next issue, *Gate of Ivrel: Fever Dreams*.) Ms. Fancher can then start work on the graphics for the next Morgaine novel, *Well of Shuan*.

Emprise

Enigma

Empery

by Michael P. Kube-McDowell

reviewed by Oscar Kirzner

These three books, published by Berkley Science Fiction, are part of a series called "The Trigon Disunity." Because of the nature of the series, it is hard to say if these books form a complete trilogy or if they will form the basis for further stories.

Emprise begins with a declining civilization in the near future. The threat of nuclear war has been erased by a new scientific development. Unfortunately, so has the promise of even the safest forms of nuclear power. The fossil fuels are running out and solar power hasn't been implemented on a large enough scale to make up the lack. Things are running down. The politicians blame the scientists for the fix the Earth is in. Scientific research is moribund in all but a few areas; researchers from the physical sciences and mathematics have gone into hiding and/or taken jobs far removed from their former positions (e.g., bartender).

One dedicated radio astronomer has rigged a clandestine dish in Idaho with equipment that is barely capable of handling the meager tasks set before it. One spring day, he picks up some signals that are neither noise nor pulsar. They have a repeating pattern. They have all the trademarks that one would expect of a contact attempt by someone or something from "out there."

He realizes that this is the greatest scientific discovery of his life — one worth his life to get the news out. The story continues with the translation of the message, with the King of England helping "turn up the fires" of our civilization, and with the creation of an interstellar-capable, sub-light ship being sent out to meet the "Senders." The rest you'll have to read for yourself.

The next book takes place over a century later and the third one almost as many years after that. Naturally, the relativistic effects of near-c travel play a major part in all the plots. Just think: the best way to get rid of someone may not be a slow boat to China but a *fast* ship to Ursa Major.

As a trilogy, the books hang together well, yet they are all so well written that each could stand on its own. The major characters have depth and are immensely believable. There is a good dose of science, politics, sex, humor, and suspense in all three books. I recommend them highly.

Shadow Dancers

by Lillian Stewart Carl — Ace,
\$2.95

reviewed by Ardath Mayhar

With increasing strength and control, Lillian Stewart Carl is creating fantasy that is woven intricately upon a web of solid classical knowledge, yet is also colored by a creative imagination of great scope and power. In this novel, the third dealing with the almost recognizable antique world that holds Sabazel and Sardis and Minras, she carries forward the tale begun in *Sabazel*.

Andrio is the son of Danica and Marcos Bellasteros. Now mature, married to a wife he adores, at peace with those who were traditional enemies, he has not allowed himself to sink into sloth. He has, however, found his faith in Harus, the falcon-god of his father, waning as the doubts of maturity enter his mind. Among other matters, the events in this book reaffirm the validity of the gods.

The shattering of his contentment is precisely and poetically delineated. In fact, the entire novel has the power and delicate precision of the best poetry, and there are many "found poems" scattered like gems within the prose.

"The window slits were as empty as gouged eyes." This is the sure voice of a poet, which rings through all the story, lending it a timeless validity.

There are, in addition, tantalizing glimpses of our own antique world, interestingly altered and yet recognizable. Crete and the Minoan culture, much of Greek tradition, the Amazons, who managed to coexist with inexorably patriarchal societies, all of these peep at us from scenes and conversations, giving the story an extra dimension that feels like true history.

Anyone who believes that fantasy must contain magic and elves has never read the work of Mary Renault, who turned Greek myth into reality for a whole generation of readers. In Lillian Carl we seem to have found another who can offer her readers an

alternate reality that will live inside the mind long after the book has been finished and the pages closed.

The Man-Kzin Wars

edited by Larry Niven — Baen \$3.95
reviewed by Brad Sinor

The latest variation on the shared-world anthology is what Larry Niven has christened "the Franchise World." To create one, you take a big-name author who comes complete with an already established series and you let him open it up for other writers to come and play in his backyard, so to speak. *The Man-Kzin Wars*, set against the background of

Known Space, is the second Niven series to be franchised, the first being the Warlock cycle.

Unlike so many of these anthologies, which usually contain eight to a dozen stories, this volume has only three. The first is a reprint of the original story to feature the fierce Kzinti, "The Warriors." It is accompanied by two 40,000-word novellas, "Iron" by Poul Anderson and "Cat-house" by Dean Ing.

Anderson's story deals with a group of humans who stumble on a plan by the Kzin to establish a base in Known Space from which they can launch new attacks on the human race. Ing's entry concerns the fate of a man

who ends up on a zoo planet run by unknown aliens. There he encounters Kzin from many thousands of years in the past, Kzin who have no problems with working with humans.

Both stories mix the Niven background thoroughly with their own author's style to produce tales that are good original tales and still Nivenesque stories. While both are excellent, Anderson's "Iron" stands out for me just by the merest fraction above Ing's story.

Oh, by the way, in addition to the other writers who have been invited to contribute to this series, both Ing and Anderson have done sequels to their stories.

Fanzine Reviews

Unless otherwise noted, reviews are by SM.

***Pirate Jenny* #1**

The new zine from the former editor of the *Inquirer* is out, and yours truly couldn't wait to get his hands on a copy to see what Ms. Mueller could produce freed from FACT's fetters. In almost all respects, this is what we expect to see from Pat.

The zine is physically impressive, from its Teddy Harvia cover to the nicely laid out, eminently readable interior. Pat has gone back to the three-column format she first used in the *Inquirer*, and her new lasersetting capabilities provide good typography. Generally good reproduction on white stock. The three-color con report in cartoon format by Teddy Harvia had to be the highlight of the issue.

Inside, we have a news column which is clear and entertaining, though I do have to take exception to a few items in the "Mutiny for the Bounty" item on the changes in FACT. Indeed, it is true that I at first thought the *Inquirer* was not eligible for the Hugo for the reasons stated. However, after having the appropriate section of WSFS bylaws cited, I very publicly recanted that position (within 48 hours as I recall) and no mention was made of this. As to

mimeo paper: it's true that AB Dick will no longer be manufacturing the paper and I at least have found other papers to be inferior and overpriced. The main consideration as I understand it is that when you take the labor factor into consideration, mimeo is no longer the cheapest way to produce a zine. Sorry for the misunderstanding.

As to the rest of the quibbles, I feel that there is always room for FACT (or any other organization) to improve its performance, and as far as I can see, the new board is trying to be more representative of the general membership. I see little profit for anyone in starting a fan war.

Getting back to *Pirate Jenny*, we have a very informative convention calendar, Edw. Graham's book review column, more book reviews by ArmadilloCon co-chair Fred Duarte, Teddy Harvia's pictorial Minicon 22 report, and an allegedly humorous column by Edw. Graham (again) on how to behave at a Worldcon. The real highlight of the issue for me, though, was John Moore's article on "Buying Science Fiction Art." This was an excellent introduction on how to buy art at a con from the art show. Hopefully, Mr. Moore will contribute an article on print shops since they are becoming more and more prevalent under ASFA

guidelines. Lastly, there were personal anecdotes by Kip Williams and Pat, along with several cute illos.

This was an impressive first issue and I'm looking forward to seeing what Pat (and Dennis) do with this zine. This is well worth the \$3 it costs. Available from Pat Mueller, 618 Westridge, Duncanville, TX 75116.

***Anvil*, #46**

Anvil is the zine produced by the Birmingham (AL) Science Fiction Club, edited by Charlotte Proctor. This issue had a variety of material: an interesting cover by Taral in Japanese anime style, fanzine reviews, one reviewer's picks of the best books of 1987, an article on editors by Buck Coulson, an excellent article on communism by Bruno Ogorelec, a variety of personal articles about people from the area, and several pages of letters. Typeface by typewriter, lots of cute illos, reproduction by mimeo (actually readable!). Easily worth the \$6/year or the usual. Available from BSFC, c/o Charlotte Proctor, 8325 7th Ave. South, Birmingham, AL 35206.

***Austin Writer*, Feb. 1988**

This is the newsletter of the Austin Writers' League, and right from the start you can see a difference. It is

***Texas SF Inquirer* #25**

a textbook example of desktop publishing that has been professionally printed. It contains a wide variety of articles of interest to Texas writers, including news, market notes, and much more. Available from the Austin Writers' League, 1501 W. 5th #108, Austin, TX 78703.

The Blake Bunch

This is an unusual critter among zines. It is of the species Filkzine, genus Mediazine — Blake 7. This is a nicely put-together songbook; all of the lyrics are readable, the majority even scan. The cover is sufficiently heavy that the book shouldn't fall apart with any reasonable care. The illos by J. Medina are rather crude, but the characters are still recognizable. Not for everyone, but *B7* fans who have any interest in filk will want to check it out. Available from Inverted-A, Inc., 401 Forrest Hill, Grand Prairie, TX 75051.

ConGames, #4

This is another specialized zine aiming for a limited audience. It is for people who run conventions, and those interested in how conventions are run. Each issue runs a survey and details the results of the last survey, with locs on particular questions. A worthy effort indeed from editor Bruce Farr, and the Central Arizona Speculative Fiction Society, Inc., Box 11743, Phoenix, AZ 85061.

Tarriel Cell #1 & #2

Reviewed by T'pell Wilson

Tarriel Cell is the official newsletter of the Organized Response to Avon's Call (O.R.A.C.) fan club for *Blake's 7*. This is an extraordinarily attractive club newsletter. The professional-quality typesetting and layout give it a clean, easily read appearance that is quite rare among amateur publications, particularly club newsletters. As mentioned in the editor's (Brenda Erwin) column "Bits and Bytes," the first two issues are quite large, containing articles not planned to be repeated in later issues. Continuing columns include "Ethernet," a capsule recitation of club minutes and

business; "Eventqueue," a listing of cons of interest to *B7* fans; "Troop Movements," which appears to be more in-depth information on the nearest events of possible interest; "Peripherals," the ad section; and the "Bits and Bytes" column.

In addition, in issue #1 there is a "Personal Dossier" column which recounts the current activities of major *B7* artists; "Rebel Network," listing six *B7* fan clubs; and part 1 of a transcription of a question-and-answer panel with Paul Darrow in the hot seat.

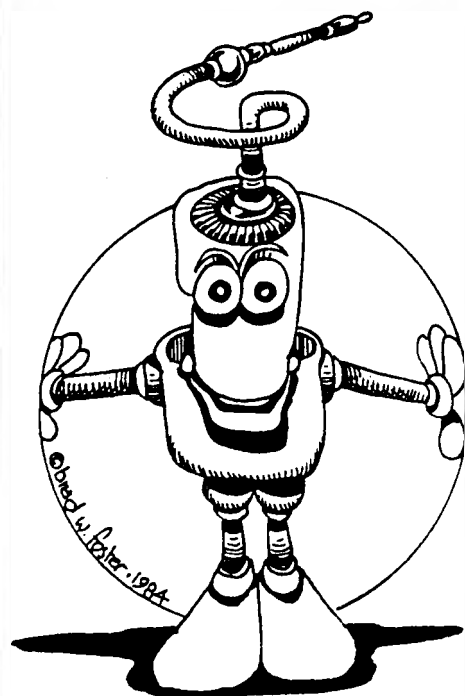
Issue #2 has a detailed review of DSV 1, a con held in Newark, NJ, this last January; part 2 of the question-and-answer session; a comparison of *Blake's 7* to *Robin of Sherwood*; a fanzine review, and a book review. It also includes a "Convention Survival Kit," a concise, clearly written guide for the neo-fan on everything they might need to know before attending their first con, with advice ranging from the obvious (make reservations, make them early, be polite to the hotel), to the less-than-obvious (*checking* the front of the line before you stand in it to be sure it's the correct one), the amusing ("panels can be the highlight of a convention; panels can also be a tragic bore"), and the absurd (bathing is mentioned twice). (Not-bathing may be a social faux pas; mentioning it so prominently makes it sound as if fandom has a problem. I've experienced identical unpleasantness, and a lot more often, from femme-fans wearing too much perfume, but I don't consider it necessary to point this out to neo-fans.)

The writing styles of the various authors are clear and enjoyably readable; I don't recall seeing any typos, spelling errors or poor grammar, so either the writers or the editor has done an excellent job in eliminating the minor irritations. (There are four errors in addresses which are corrected in the same or the following issue.) The only thing I really missed was a table of contents. Hey, guys, want to try for "perfect"?

In all, I'd give *Tarriel Cell* an A +

on style, appearance and the contents of the first two issues. Here's hoping they can keep up the good work.

Available from ORAC, PO Box 566123, Dallas, TX 75356.



Longbow #1

Reviewed by Lynn Bell

For the fans of the British series *Robin of Sherwood*, which starred Michael Praed and Jason Connery, this is a very enjoyable fanzine. The stories and poem follow a theme about the death of Robin of Locksley and the replacement of him by Robert of Huntington. There is an emphasis in all of the stories on the mystical bond between the two young men and their love for Marion. This particular theme is melancholy, but at the same time generates an air of optimism.

The artwork is consistently good to excellent. The stories are on the whole well-written and support the theme of the zine. Some of the poetry is very evocative and enjoyable, however some of it is less well written and is almost bland.

The editors of *Longbow*, Sue Rutherford and Sandy Williams, are to be congratulated for the excellence of this zine. Hopefully, future editions will match the promise shown in this issue.

Available for \$12 from Celtic Hart Press, 2611 Rockbrook Dr., Plano, TX 75074.

The Fannish Connection

ECLECTICON

reviewed by C.L. Crouch

April 29-May 1, 1988; Austin, TX; attendance 500+. Guests: George R.R. Martin, Kelly Freas, Richard Garriott, Robert Asprin, Joy Marie Ledet, Martin Wagner, Sam Hurt, an unnamed "Ghost of Honor," among others.

Can a member of a con committee be trusted to write an impartial review of her own con? She can if she has on record some blisteringly honest reviews of disaster-cons in which she's been involved — and *I have*.

A nickname of a con usually tells it all, and Blood-Sweat-Tears-&-Laughter-Con is appropriate. MiracleWhip-Con and Ressurecti-Con also. Some of you already know that barely a month 'til "E-Day," we lost the hotel-of-choice, the Waller Creek, due to their illegally ignoring the signed contract. But the Driskill kindly found a little extra space and we crowded in, rearranging our events, and sadly truncating the size of the

dealers' room — but we still had a con! Whew!

First, let me list the main problems we had. Not enough gofers, space, time, and money. Most of that can be laid in the lap of Waller Creek's behavior. We also had a program guide that was too hard to read quickly, two rooms that people had trouble finding (one because it was so far from everything else, and the other because the Driskill had no name on the door!). Parking was valet only, meaning if one had no room in the hotel, one had to park on the street. And *in* that same street were two major events, The Pecan Street Festival (which drew over 140,000 people) and a film crew doing a fantasy about Elvis Presley, both of which made parking impossible for blocks around. Except in the wee hours — in some places — on Tuesdays.

Nor was that all. Friday night, some brats (*not* connected with the con) kept setting off the fire alarm, so we all had the opportunity to stay up

late and chat with new-found friends outside on the sidewalk. And somehow, not one con-commer remembered to schedule keynote speeches for the guests of honor. And the rules for the Art Show/Auction were never posted . . . the "Silly Room" wasn't silly enough (though some of the events in it were so successful we've been asked to upgrade them to main programming next year!), and the anticipated "Memory Book" never materialized. Well, maybe next year.

But, despite it all, or maybe because of some of it, we had fun — though the con-com was so busy gofering we actually had to learn to have fun not doing con-stuff exactly . . .

The good stuff? Well, okay, but have mercy on a veteran of mumbly-mumble years of conning, and forgive me if I forget the order of events.

Saturday, generally the most-attended, if not the best-programmed day of any con, proved the most of both for Eclecticon. Every member of the con was given a "Guest" ribbon to accentuate our attitude that each member should be treated with courtesy — a refreshing notion, I must say! In fact, the con-com went out of its way to think of original programming (the Silly Room, for example, with its Clay Wars, alien pet show, pun-off, and other "silly" activities). Or the two showings of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, one for the screamers, and a prior one for those who wanted to find out why they should scream. Or the "Fannish Inquisition & Survey," when the con-com *faced* the guests to get feedback. "Take the money and run" seems to be most con-coms' motto. Not Eclecticon!

There's simply not enough *room* to tell you ALL that went on. This paper has an editor, remember? But I can't leave out some memorable high-

Clubs Around Texas

Austin Science Fiction Society — P.O. Box 1651, Cedar Park, TX 78613.

Blake's Several — P.O. Box 1766, Bellaire, TX 77401. \$10/yr.

Cepheid Variable — Box J-1, Memorial Student Center, College Station, TX 77844. 409-845-1515. \$5/yr.

Earth Defense Command — P.O. Box 515942, Dallas, TX 75251-5942.

The 1st Bangalore Pioneers — c/o Pat Elrod, Quartermistress, 4800 Kilpatrick Dr., Ft. Worth, TX 76107.

The Gallifrey Connection — c/o Karen Robertson, 6111 Abrams Rd. #1000, Dallas, TX 75231. \$5/yr. For a sample newsletter, send SASE to Kat Nickell, 215 E. Park Pl., Lancaster, TX 75134.

Gallifrey Legation — P.O. Box 1485, Hurst, TX 76053. 817-268-6140.

Lonestar, NCC 2121/03 — c/o Lt. Cmdr. Yolanda Contreras, Wilma Bass Hall, 3616 Worth, Dallas, TX 75246. 214-414-2745.

Lucas' Film Fan Club — P.O. Box 111000, Aurora, CO 80011. \$8/yr.

The Nonpariel Club Of Ft. Worth — c/o Susan Beasley, 3712 Venice, Fort Worth, TX. 817-589-2386.

O*R*A*C (Organized Response to Avon's Call) — P.O. Box 566123, Dallas, TX 75366. \$7/yr.

SDF Fort Worth — 4928 El Campo #215, Ft. Worth, TX 76107. 817-731-7388.

Spotlight Starman — P.O. Box 273440, Houston, TX 77277-3440.

United Earth Space Probe Agency — P.O. Box 1485, Hurst, TX 76053. 817-268-6140

Vortex — 2211 Lawnmont #221, Austin, TX 78756. 512-451-4976.

Vulstar / Pegasus — P.O. Box 150471, Arlington, TX 76015-6471. 817-572-5547.

9-28-88

Dear FACT member:

This envelope contains two zines: your newest TEXAS SF INQUIRER, and a copy of NOVA EXPRESS. We hope you enjoy them both!



As part of the process of catching up on the eleven (I think) issues by which TSFI is currently behind on its obligations to members, the FACT board has voted to send an issue of NOVA EXPRESS as fulfillment for one of these issues. (Those of you who are already NOVA EXPRESS subscribers will get an extra issue added to your NE subscription.) We think that NOVA EXPRESS compares in both size and quality to TSFI, and we hope you'll enjoy it.

If the response from you, the TSFI subscribers, is good, we will contract with NOVA EXPRESS' publishers for a few more issues. On the other hand, if the response is unfavorable, we won't. Let us know.

Now, as to TSFI itself: This issue is late, again. This is not the fault of your new editor, who submitted copy on time, but of the people doing production. Very embarrassing; if it even starts to happens again, we will find production volunteers who have more time. However, work is far advanced on Issue #26; we hope to see it mailed within a couple of weeks.

Now . . . how about writing something for us?

Thank you -

Steve Jackson
Chairman, FACT Board of Directors

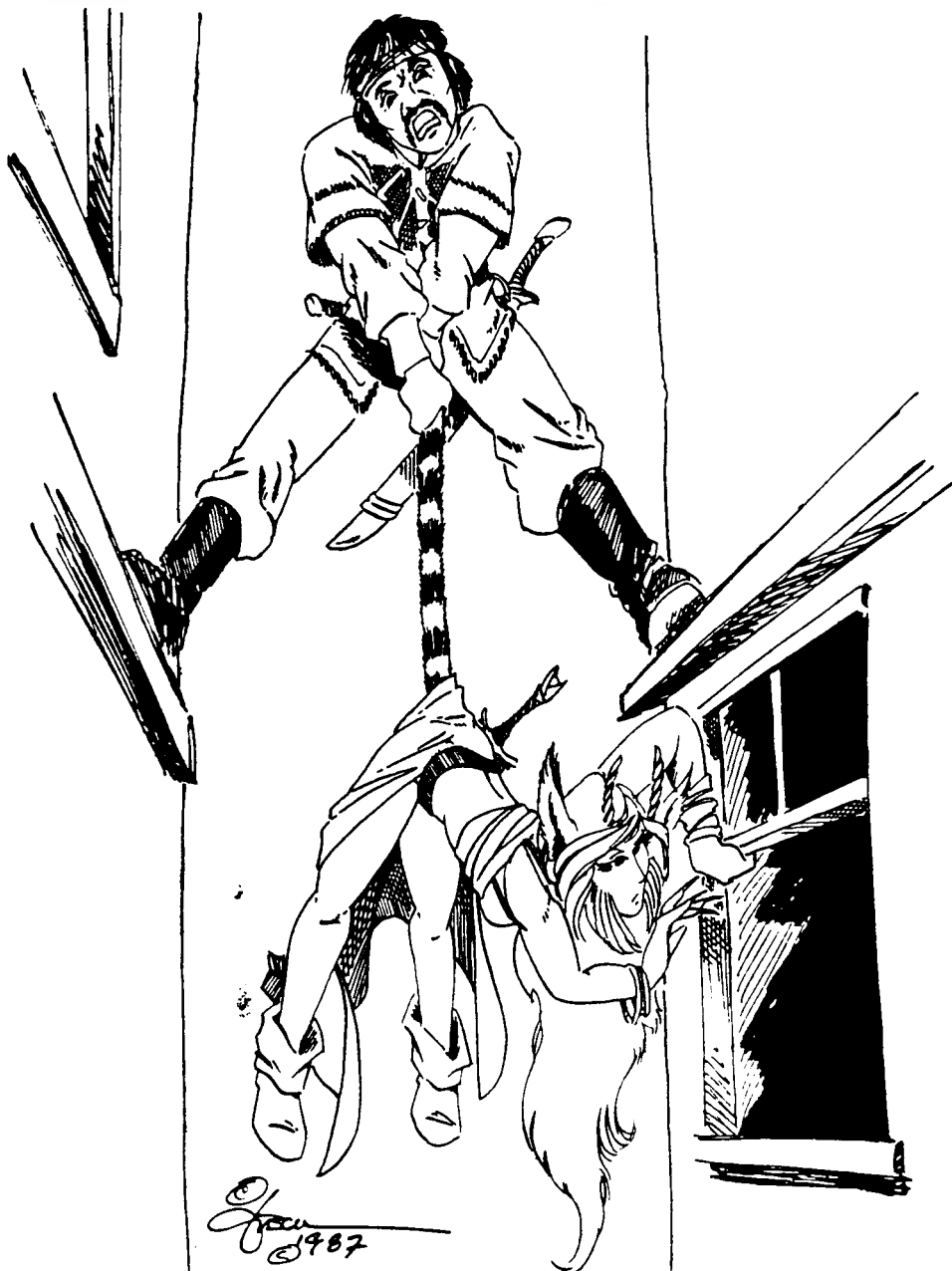
lights, such as "The Cat Boxe Theatre," a "Gorilla"-theatre group that does twisted versions of famous fairy tales (slightly bawdy — Disney, it isn't . . .), with members of the audience participating with hilarious results. They did "Sleeping Cutie" at the Masquerade (and delighted all, judging by the howls of laughter), and commercials during the "Inquisition," among other stuff. *They'll be back next year . . .*

Random sights . . . Kelly Freas with an inflated plastic dinosaur propped up in a chair behind him, its toothy grin and paws directly in front of something booze-colored. The fabulous costume that should have won Best-of-Show but didn't. (Q. — Do the same people who train umpires train Costume Judges? Hmmm . . .) The E-Con version of the "Purity Test," a computerized questionnaire which was supposed to determine one's "purity" based on a series of questions that were "rated R, if not a hard X." Just *taking* the test dropped one a point! And upstairs, says an impeachable source, a sign was spotted on a door which read, "Ladies! Interested in losing purity points? Inquire within!" 100 was purest. I got an 84. Sigh . . . back to confession . . .

Speaking of computers, mustn't forget *Midi-maze*! "Kill a Happy Face," it said in the program guide. "It'll make you feel better!" And it did.

Steve Gould's SF Band! Yeah! Encore! ("But we only *know* 14 songs!" they protested). Hey Steve, next year come prepared to do a whole show! Have any of you conners ever heard filks done to serious, *good* rock music? And the lyrics and arrangements were hilarious! Boogie, y'all.

Asprin was not at two events, but down at the bar, so I heard. There's no good excuse for that, Bob. You were supposed to be Toastmaster, after all. [Mr. Asprin was not scheduled to speak at the banquet (or in fact to speak at all). — Ed.] In spite of that, at \$10 a plate, the banquet was a sell-out, and looked to be successful, as was the masquerade, which Teresa Patterson hosted in *her* usual . . . um



. . . fine form . . . if you've seen her, you know what I mean. (Bet Bob was sorry he missed the Masquerade now — hmmm, Bob?)

The Blood Drive took up more than its share of my time (again, that problem was an offshoot of the saga of Waller Creek), but it was a qualified success. The last donor was Mayor Cooksey — up for re-election. He came straight from the Festival, two beers to the wind, and said, "Sure! Why not?"

There were two sets of previews, one never-before-seen, of *Willow*, the new fantasy film from Lucas Productions. Mark Schellberg kindly scheduled a showing just for the Dead Dog party, as we had been too busy to see it, even though extra showings had been scheduled. And he tacked on a

special short of his own, *The Legend of Mystery River*, a truly spooky film, which was nominated for an award.

So, okay, Eclecticon had problems. Enough to even spawn a saying: "Throw it over the balcony." (Besides lots of stairs, which we got tired of climbing during the fire alarm, the Driskill has these enormous balconies . . .) But it was a miracle we *did* whip it into shape, and E-Con became "Ressurrecti-Con." And if you don't put your ten' bux for next year down *now*, *you* belong in the silly room. We're shooting for a thousand "guests" next year, and at that price, it's a *steal*. And if I, who *literally* gave blood, sweat and tears — and still wound up with laughter in the wee hours Monday morning — can say that, then it has to be true.

Letters of Comment

4/21/88

Dear Pat,

Got your letter announcing your canning from *TSFI* the same day *TSFI* #23 arrived. Somehow, and I know this sounds critical, but I suspect the two month gap between publishing #23 and mailing it out may have had something to do with your non-tenure there now. I know with great confidence that your successor won't publish as good a fanzine as you did or anywhere as frequently as they think they will. [Certainly not as frequently as we were *hoping* to. — MS] I'll keep in mind your open invitation to contribute to *Pirate Jenny*, but I'm terrible about finishing up articles that I can't just first-draft onto stencil.

The originals to #23 are just dynamite to look at. The printed pages suffer the usual deficiencies of mimeo printing. If you can find a lighter font, I suggest using that.

I find myself skimming over the articles and right into the loccol. Was amused that you reprinted my gripe about large-print blurbs as a large-print blurb. *Touché*. Embarrassingly, I didn't realize you'd done that till after I'd reread my loc. John Shirley shows a sense of humor in his letter, something not often obvious in his more diatribic articles. He says conventions are all alike, and they are since they exist more as social gatherings of the faithful than as modern language assoc. conferences. Seriousness about SF still seems to be best placed in a fanzine. Shirley also thinks he's a fan writer because he writes for fanzines. Wrong — a fan is an SF fanatic and Shirley proves himself that by his intense concern for its direction and politics.

I can see cyberpunk as "modernist SF" because modernism as an art style was prevalent during the '40s (we're post-post-modernist today), and Gibson's novels are closely structured after '40s crime novels and film

noir movies. Since I can't write any smaller than this, I'll have to end this loc.

Best,
Brian Brown
11675 Beaconsfield
Detroit, MI 48224

4 May, 1988

To Whom It May Concern:

I have received the *Texas SF Inquirer* #23. However, I have also received a letter from Pat Mueller saying she is no longer editor. So I am not sure who to write to, and am using the main FACT address.

First, please note my New! Improved! Change of Address. I am now using an extra-large PO box to enable me to receive fanzines without them getting squished or mangled.

Next, can you send me information on a future editor? The reason I am asking is that I do a fanzine review zine. I reviewed *TSFI* and sent off a copy of *The March of the Fanzines* to Pat [yet to be received]. Alas, I have no more copies left.

I will be reviewing *TSFI* #23 in my next zine titled "You have no reason to Believe This Sentence," but that will not be out until at least June, since my ditto machine is in the repair shop due to feed problems.

By the way, could you run a request in the *Inquirer* that I would like to meet any other ditto printers still active, at a party at Nolacon II? I want to know how many of us Writers of the Purple Page are still left. [Oh, well, maybe next time. I'm real sorry 'bout that. — MS]

As a sort of trade until my next zine comes out, I enclose a short six-page zine I did a couple of weeks ago, during my last trip to Norman, Oklahoma. (Ask David Thayer all about Norman.)

Harry Andruschak
PO Box 5309
Torrance, CA 90510-5309

May 26, 1988

Dear Texas SF Inq. editors,

In issue 23, you reply to my letter of comment of Oct 20, 1986 (!), responding to my stated dislike of fannish lingo, beanie illos, childish drawings of dragons, etc., with: "I realize that overuse of gung-ho acronyms and pix of fen in propeller beanies is not 'serious' and 'professional' — but the inherent nature of a fanzine is to be an *amateur publication*." Listen, *Texas SF Inquirer*, I didn't say anything about how you should be serious or professional. My objection to excessively fannish nick-nacks, cutesy acronyms and expressions is not that they are amateur.

It's that they are inane, old-fashioned, obsolete, irritating, unimaginative, adolescent, and smugly insular.

When I "styled myself" a "fan writer," as you had it, I was of course joking. I'm nothing of the sort. Not that there's anything wrong with being a fan writer. I was making fun of myself for my own lack of tolerance for fannishness.

This latest issue is badly printed — impossible to make out the print in many places. The book reviews are rather reactionary.

But you're still the Wise Guy fanzine and that's the right attitude.

Best,
John Shirley
221 Green Lea Place
Thousand Oaks, CA 91361

May 10, 1988

Dear *TSFI* Editors:

Thanks for another issue of the *Inquirer*. I'd address this to Pat Mueller, but I gather she's moved on . . . no matter, good luck to Pat's successor. Let's see what I've got to say on all this . . .

Re Strange Bedfellows: Most fans look at the term "fannish politics" in a negative light . . . I don't. Fannish politics ensures that the concom posi-

tions get filled, the convention gets organized and staffed, the apa gets its collation and disty, and the ish gets pubbed. While all the PMs, MPs, PHs, etc., help form the bare-bones structure of fandom and fanac, they should be careful not to regard the Joe/Jo Phans out there as the apathetic deadwood.

Re Recliner: Cyberpunk was dreary, but didn't say anything different. I prefer the positive image in a story or novel myself; as I've said in earlier locs, dystopian lit does nothing for me. The writing was good, but I wasn't attracted by the subject matter.



Re letter from John Shirley: The cons are not identical . . . sure, they share common elements, but there are different conventions everywhere. There are also differences in management styles here and there. A fairly set group of people run the conventions and plan the programming . . . they share common interests, so I think this is what makes the programming similar from con to con. Now for every concom member, there are between 10 to 25 times that number in general convention attendees. So, there's a lot of people out there content to sit on their asses and bitch, when they could be making constructive suggestions for programming. Ante up, people . . .

Re letter from Michael Gould: I get the feeling that with three- to six-book series (or even larger series) and 600+ page books, and the ease with which these monsters are published,

Texas SF Inquirer #25

the writers with the true skills seem to be the short story writers. There's a ton of books out there that are poor, bloated prose, doorstops of books that are in severe need of a sharp blue pencil. (Notice these days how many authors' names are three-parters? Does anyone publish with just their first and last names anymore?)

Re letter from Allan Burrows: I wouldn't go so far as to say panels are for rank neos . . . I think I'm past the neo stage, and I still get to a panel or two per con, depending on whether or not it appeals to my varied interests.

Time is short and so is the paper. Thanks for another good read.

Yours,
Lloyd Penney
412-22 Riverwood Parkway
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M8Y 4E1

April 19, 1988

Hello Pat,

Thanks for the *Texas SF Inquirer* #23. Quite a cover! And the ToC page has an alphabetized egoscan section, too — a very nice touch.

Edward Graham, Jr. wrote a stingingly-topical piece well. The P word is something I try to avoid, but I'm acquainted with many of the categories he came up with.

G.W. Teal's LoC is great. Is that from Dennis? It had his wicked humor. I love a good tasty hoax now and then. Fandom can always use a few more.

Now, I know *this* LoC is from John Shirley. (A heart attack or two?!) Glad you caught him on several points — if cons seem boring or all the same, liven 'em up! Besides there ARE people that appreciate the stuff that others have grown tired of, for whatever reasons. A few new things were tried at Minicon this year, and were popular. Gosh! (The Easter Candy Orgy Table and the Apa Challenge Twinkie Toss were planned; the elevator waterfall was NOT scheduled.)

David Thayer wasn't pleased that I prefer his cartoon people to his other creatures . . . I think that might mean

that I like his writing more than the wingnuts drawing style, but I'm not sure. Maybe I take too much for granted. (I was warped by watching cartoons as a kid. I sometimes see situations or jokes in cartoon-style! Recognizing bits of classical music from cartoons can be embarrassing, too . . .)

Oooooogh, bad repro on page 13.

Amazing that people like Harry Warner are just now finding out about David Thayer's multiple personalities! That David, what a (wild) card . . .

I agree with Martin about liking to do things outside of a convention. It's very difficult to tear oneself away, but worthwhile in most cases just to be with fans who see things differently. And what would be the point in traveling to Australia or England and never getting out of the hotel? Apply that same logic to places in your own country and see an opportunity to round out the trip. I'm still fuming about not getting anywhere in Atlanta . . . I wonder how many people would like to see more local sights at cons — there aren't many outside planned events that I've seen, and that's a shame. Every area has something that out-of-towners would like to see.

Allan Burrows really let loose a broadside about con descriptions! He sounds like just the person to tackle such a task. Right? (On second thought, if he got THAT wrong . . .)

Good news about the long-delayed *Rune*: the next issue won't be out for awhile, true, but it'll be a little easier to create. Dave finagled a Mac from his mom! We've got lots of stuff, and hope to put out a larger issue than last time. It'll be sent to everyone who attended Minicon, plus everyone else on our mailing list who didn't make it there this year.

What's this horrible news about Ms. Mueller being bounced from the *TSFI* staff??

Jeanne M. Mealy
4157 Lyndale Avenue S.
Minneapolis, MN 55409

Actually, Pat resigned as Inquirer editor because of time constraints and a desire to devote more time to personal projects.

7 April, 1988

Dear Pat,

Well now, I got this here 23rd issue of the *Texas SF Inquirer* and I must take issue with your answer to M.M. Wooster's inquiry about your listing Vardebob as a "Texas area" writer. I suppose it depends on one's point of view but from here, Texas is the state immediately east and south of New Mexico — which would make an assortment of people in your part of the country "New Mexico area" writers. You don't really want to get this started, do you?

Edw. (he's Welsh?) Graham's article on the political make-up of fandom, or rather the political types involved, is amusing but . . . Ed should realize that political games are a basic in any organization. There are always those individuals who want to feel they are in control. Their egos long for that feeling of POWER that comes when they think they are running things. My own feelings are "more power to them." If these clowns want to work their butts off to put on conventions and run clubs or whatever so that I can enjoy the results without having to get involved with it all — that's great. Let the SMOFs do the work. If I meet one, I'll tell him "great job" or some such as I refill my martini glass. I hope Ed realizes that the "lockout at the first Worldcon" involved real politics and not just fannish game politics. If fandom was as politicized now as it was then, we'd probably all have to register with the Attorney General . . . and we'd probably all be walking different roads.

It is good to know that Brad Foster has managed to achieve some sort of professional publication. Cartooning would seem to be a vastly overcrowded field and I imagine that not too many make good in it.

Back to Edw. Graham — I must admit that I had not noticed that Shiner, Shepard, Cadigan, etc., had brought a bleak, dark and depressing soul to the genre. But then I must also admit that I've not read anything by them. I want to thank Graham for calling them to my attention, though, and

I shall remember the names and make a point of not buying any of their books. I have no interest in stories that are bleak, dark and depressing.

Lots of letters; considering the number of issues covered, there should be. The comments on Sercon are causing me to rethink possible attendance at that one, though. The first reports on Sercon I had read led me to think it would be a good con to go to: Interesting discussions and none of the fringe nuts. However, if it is mostly a get-together where writers and editors meet for the purpose of selling books — not the place for me.

Well, my goodness, too. Alan Burrows certainly takes this con rating business seriously, doesn't he? See comment above on fannish politics; if Alan wants to take on the job of rating the conventions, I'll be happy to let him. Still, it bothers me a bit to think that, after 50 years of fanning, Alan would consider me a rank neo. After all, I go to lots of panels at conventions and find most of them interesting.

So it goes,
Roy Tackett
915 Green Valley Road NW
Albuquerque, NM 87107

Dear Pat,

I think Bob Tucker's proposal to rate conventions is a good one, and I'd like to answer the objections raised in *TSFI* #23.

The main objection is that fans have differing responses to each convention, so that no rating could satisfy them all. The solution is to divide fans into different categories. Each fan could be tested by mail and then expressed as a coordinate position among several psychographic axes. Fans with the same coordinates would have the same response to conventions. These coordinates, when computed with the raw rating number assigned each convention, would yield the appropriate rating for each fan. Similar raw ratings could be assigned to clubs, fanzines or even individual fans, so that everyone gets the most out of fandom.

The other objection seems to be

that no opinion of a convention could be objective. What is needed is a heuristic model of conventions. If all the physical and social interrelationships were determined, the overall quality of a convention could be inferred from a small sample of quantitative observations. Field agents of the convention rating board might keep count of the pedestrian traffic at mathematically determined points, for instance, or measure decibel levels, or take breathalyzer readings. No con committee could argue with such factual data.

The convention rating board could also maintain ratings of guests for the benefit of planners. At the end of every convention, they could distribute number-two pencils and bubble sheet forms about each guest, similar to teacher evaluation forms, to the attendees. They would fill in "yes" or "no" for such statements as "Comes unprepared to panels," "Does not socialize with fans," "Is overly aggressive in huckstering books," or "Brings bottle of whiskey to programming events." The results would be averaged for publication.

On to the rest of #22 and #23.

Allen Varney's trip to the Hood River Social Complex belongs in the next *Fanthology*. His wit and invention were a delight, adding bouyancy to the deceptive frothiness of the light touch of his satire. I look forward to the next installment. "The Greatest of Them All" — I wonder who that can be?

Edw. A. Graham, Jr.'s book reviews are so laid-back and down-to-earth that they barely register as blips of personality, but this wry level-headedness served him well in "My, What Strange Bedfellows We Have." I'm new to fandom, but I can appreciate a little of what he says, having received *Rebel Rouser*. I've also started noticing his cartoons. Those furry critters are about due for a name. Perhaps they're what happens when the DNA of gophers and gofers are recombined.

Any fanzine that attracts William Gibson and John Shirley is doing something right. I hope they're hold-

ing up well when Allen Varney pays a visit.

Neil Kaden's lucid article explained several puzzling phenomena. Kip William's illustrations had an effective look, even if the captions were illegible. The letter column was very entertaining. I tried to think of a quote you could pull for a large print blurb, but couldn't come up with anything.

Since your explanation at Lunacon, I understand that toxic mimeo fumes are to blame for your erratic repro. But *TSFI* 23 was a new low, especially the right side of the odd-numbered pages. Page 13 really should have been done over. Maybe you could get one of those portable gas masks worn by Steve Martin in *Little Shop of Horrors* and Dennis Hopper in *Blue Velvet*, and keep it filled with oxygen.

I hope Ferk and *Cheap Truth* catch up to your new schedule. And I hope you can keep it up. I'd hate to see you go to jail for mail fraud.

Best Wishes,
Barney Rapoport
PO Box 565
Storrs, CT 06268

25 May, 1988

Dear Scott:

Thanks for sending me issue 24 of the *Texas SF Inquirer*. You might remind Ms. Jean Martin, with reference to the picture on p. 9, that when you think about it, it is obvious that the horn of a unicorn foal would not develop until after the animal was weaned.

Kaor,
L. Sprague de Camp
278 Hothorpe Lane
Villanova, PA 19085

5/28/88

Dear Scott,

Enjoyed issue #24 of the *Texas SF Inquirer*. My new address: Joseph L. Mauffray, 3423 McFarlin Ave., Apt. C, Dallas, TX 75205.

Sincerely,
Jay Mauffray

May 31, 1988

Dear Scott,

I'm pleased to see the *Inquirer* back again. It's looking nicer than it has for a long time.

I have to object though, to Aya Katz's review of *Destiny II*. Katz not only harassed Terry Nation for his personal beliefs — apparently as an excuse to sneer at *Blake's 7* — but then had the nerve to report her bad manners as a reflection upon Nation! Katz may like or dislike *Blake* as she pleases; the point is that such rudeness to a convention guest is appalling. And the *Inquirer*, as a voice of Texas fandom, shouldn't condone such behavior by printing it. [Aya Katz's response follows in next letter. Ms. Katz is an attorney admitted before the Bar in the state of Texas. I'm certain that any misunderstanding she had with Mr. Nation was cordially handled — Ed.]

I notice that the usual *Inquirer* reviewers are oriented toward science fiction. While I take "S-F" to mean "speculative fiction," and place all sorts of things under its banner, I know not everyone feels this way. So I'm putting in my two cents in favor of historical/mythological fantasy.

I do both fantasy and s-f, of course; one of my science fiction stories was nominated for the Theodore Sturgeon award last year. It's happenstance that all my published novels are fantasy. Publishers are notorious at type-casting authors. (Among other things . . .)

For a further exploration of what fantasy is all about — and why it's so popular — you might look for an upcoming non-fiction article in *Amazing*, the first of two written by Susan



Shwartz, Judith Tarr, Katharine Kerr and me.

I won't be at the July Dallas Fantasy Fair — we'll be in Scotland (yay!). But I'll catch up with you in November. Keep up the good work!

Musically yours,
Lillian Stewart Carl
3012 Glenhollow Cir.
Carrollton, TX 75007

June 8, 1988

Dear Lillian,

I'm afraid you misunderstood my report on *Destiny* and my encounter with Terry Nation. I am an ardent fan of *Blake's 7* and have devoted a whole filkbook to singing its praises — *The Blake Bunch*, Inverted-A, 1988. One of the reasons I enjoy *Blake* is that it aptly addresses issues relevant to my own concerns in the real world.

Mr. Nation was not being harassed. He graciously made himself available to the fans, and I engaged him in conversation, as did others. True, in certain mundane circles, it is considered rude to speak of religion or politics, but the fans have not yet been brought to that level where the only appropriate subjects are the weather and one's health.

As it turned out, Mr. Nation and I differ in some of our political views.

Noting differences is not a personal attack. Nor is the correct labeling of same to be considered slander. "Socialist" is not an epithet. Rather it is the designation of one who adheres to an ideology started by the late Karl Marx and accepted in most of the world. Socialism holds that people are powerless to take care of their economic well-being individually, and that the government must insure it for them. I happen to disagree. But the many who embrace this view (no doubt out of genuine concern for the well-being of others) have no reason to hide it.

Similarly, the anti-gun sentiment is professed widely in the U.S. I don't happen to share it. But surely for the people who adopt this position, it entails no stigma.

The fen are naturally curious about the personal views and ideas of fandom notables such as Terry Nation. Conventions provide an opportunity to find out, and reporting legitimately spreads the word.

Aya Katz

March 12, 1988

I work for an airline. It probably hasn't escaped your notice that flying seems *dangerous* these days.

You're not being paranoid; it is. We're dealing with an overloaded Air Traffic Control system, *more* planes and *fewer* controllers than before the PATCO strike, and more planes, more borderline companies, and *fewer* FAA inspectors thanks to that grand and glorious partnership of Uncle Ronnie and Elizabeth (Fix It With A Press Release) Dole. Did you know that the fine for an infraction is a whopping whole thousand dollars? Needless to say, that hardly frightens most companies. I also have a few stories which I Cannot Put In Print Or I Will Lose My Job, but buy me a drink sometime.

Trouble here is, SF folk spend a lot of time in planes. Now there isn't much you can do (unless you are VERY good at PK) about losing an

engine over Burbank. But those of you who may have seen the Public TV Nova segment called "Why Planes Burn" will know that in a survivable crash (and a lot of them have been survivable), it isn't the fire that gets you. It's the smoke. Plane interiors are built to flammability standards that would make a mobile home manufacturer blanch. Everything burns, and it all gives off toxic smoke, mostly cyanogen. If you aren't out that door in a few minutes (the FAA figures three) . . .

There is a solution to this problem; it's a kind of non-flammable baggie called a "smoke hood." Scoop it on over your head and you have a couple of minutes of clean air in there, plus the smoke stays out of your eyes so you can see the blamed exit. Fits in the seatback pocket with the magazine and barf bag.

But airlines won't install these hoods — they claim passengers aren't bright enough to stick their heads in a bag in an emergency. Maybe they think Joe Passenger will try to stick his head in the barf-bag, I don't know. I do know this: ~~there~~ are a lot of air personnel in England (including the fellow pushing for installation of hoods over there), who have bought their own and carry them with them.

As an airline employee, I think people who fly frequently are narrowing the odds every time they get on a plane. If you have a line on a smoke hood, buy one. Carry it with you. But if you don't (I couldn't find where to buy one), there is another solution.

For the total of \$15.95 at my friendly neighborhood Army/Navy surplus store, I bought a civilian model WW2 gas mask. It is designed to be used in smoke — exactly the kind of smoke you get in an aircraft fire. It comes with a little pamphlet beginning with the immortal words, "This is your gas mask. It could save your life some day." It took up about as much space in my carry-on as a pair of women's shoes or one man's shoe. And (I made the trial run this weekend, into and out of California) you can get it past the airport X-ray. Ap-

parently the only metal parts on it look like a couple of oversized earrings and a can of hairspray or deodorant. Nobody even gave the X-ray picture a second glance.

I don't want something as stupid as a lungful of smoke taking any of you out. Every single one of the 40-odd folks who bought it in the Air Canada fire in Ohio (including folk singer Stan Rogers) **would have survived** if they had had smoke hoods or gas masks available. *That* fire was due to somebody chucking a cigarette into the trash receptacle; *some* airlines (but not all) have installed smoke detectors. Well, that's fine — but just last week they caught somebody freebasing in a lavatory; imagine what could have happened if the flight attendant hadn't taken a head count and wondered why there were five people in there. And in this case, the smoke detector wouldn't have helped. It didn't go off since there wasn't any smoke and wouldn't have been any until it was too late — and lav doors open inward. There were *five* people in there. You figure the likelihood of getting that door *open* to use a fire extinguisher.

As I mentioned, I work for an airline — and there's a lot of us picking up the masks now that I know you can get the sucker through airport security. And I might mention that FAA regulations now *require* such breathing aids (as of July) — for crew. But not for you. Gosh, wonder why. *We* don't like the odds, especially lately. This is a reasonable sort of paranoia. It's only going to cost you about \$16, it's equally useful if there's a hotel fire, and if you never need it, you can always use it to make a statement about smoking at parties, use it when you're burning leaves, or get a laugh in the hotel bar. But if the time comes when you *do* need it, well, it's the cheapest life insurance policy I ever heard of — and the payoff is that you live to tell the story afterwards.

And you can't beat that with a stick.

Mercedes Lackey
Tulsa, OK