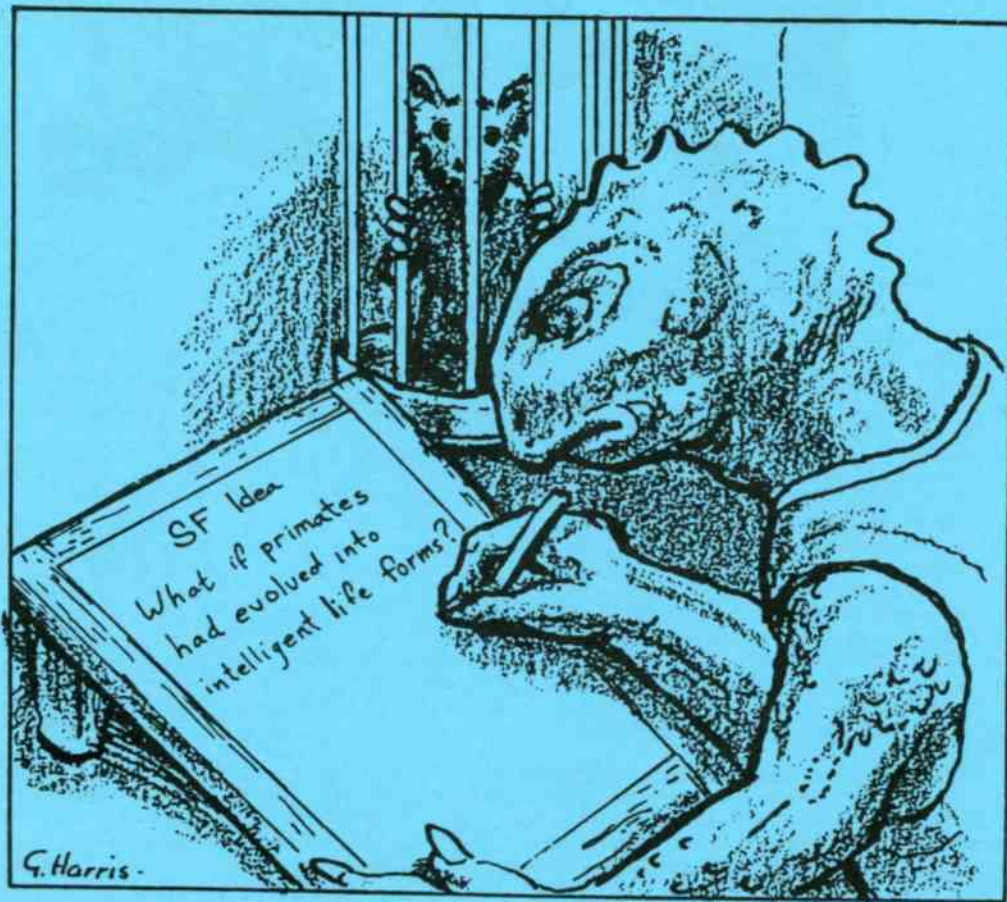


Tightbeam 183



"Parallel Universe"

September 1993



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Tightbeam 183 was edited by Diane Miller, 5311 Chestnut Street, Grand Forks, ND 58201-8007; with editorial assistance from Amy Sisson. TB 183 was completed on August 24, 1993. The editor for the November issues #184 is Diane Miller.

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TRIVIA CORNER

by Barbara & Charlie Brown
"Star Trek Movies"

1. Name the actor who played all 3 aliens: Romulan, Vulcan & Klingon.
2. Where was Star Fleet Headquarters located?
3. Name the author & title of the book Spock gave Kirk for his birthday.
4. Who had Spock's katra and where did Sarek want it taken?
5. What was the full name of the most notable survivor of the Eugenics War?

000000

1. Mark Lenard: Romulan in "Balance of Terror," Vulcan in "Journey to Babel" and "Search for Spock," and Klingon in ST:TMP.
2. Marin County, California (Earth). The Golden Gate bridge can be seen in the background in ST:TMP.
3. Charles Dickens, "The Tale of Two Cities."
4. Doctor McCoy, Mt. Seleya.
5. Khan Noonian Singh.

Editorial

by Diane Miller

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Ah, the joys of editing! First - Corrections for the last issue:

Don Franson's history appears in TNFF. I miss wrote Rogow's book as Fanspeak instead of Futurespeak on page five. I miss wrote the title to Zelazny's book which should be: A Night In The Lonesome October (I took it off of an audio interview, and had not seen the title). And Catherine and I conspired to misspell William Rotsler's name - my apologies to William and anyone upset by these mistakes. I see that William is in the membership list for ConFrancisco. Editorial policy: I take full credit and blame. Corrections from the membership are always welcome, but I will only acknowledge and correct those that I feel are substantive.

Now, to introduce my Assistant Editor -- Amy Sisson. Amy lives in Grand Forks too, and found out about the N3F from me. She will be living here in Grand Forks, at least till next school year, so has agreed to help me out till then. She has a Mac so we are now Mac computer compatible. Letters on disk for either IBM or Mac are greatly appreciated. Saves us tons of typing!

Anyone who, because of poor eyesight, needs a large print version of Tightbeam without art, in addition to their regular copy, needs to let me know. One of our members, Sunnie Andreau, has volunteered to bear the expense of computer printing and mailing a large print version; if the number of requests does not get out of hand.

My trip to California was wonderful, balmy 70 and 80 degrees most days. My husband, Al, and I

attended two reunion parties that were fun, with lots of good food, friends and family. One reunion was my husband's family. We had a picnic in the park with lots of kids (my husband comes from a big family), a water balloon toss, squirt gun fights, and a pinata. The other was for high school friends of my husband. His first "real" girlfriend was the hostess, and she and I finally got to know each other. We had fun telling stories on Al.

The last full day I was there, we went to Disneyland. Al & I ditched the kids and went to Aladdin's Oasis for dinner. Fun dinner show based on the Aladdin story and wonderful Middle Eastern food - three kinds of unleavened bread, rice pilaf with nuts and raisins, shesh-ka-bobs, cold greens, and hot garbanzos with squash and hazel nuts. Semi-sweet chocolate shaped like a "magic lamp" filled with chocolate mousse and sitting in raspberry syrup was the dessert. I couldn't finish mine so I took it with and shared it with our kids during the wonderful new laser and light show, Fantasma.

Friday, the 13th of August was a very special day for me. I rented a Geo Metro (which will not go up hill with the air conditioner on - too much strain on the rubber bands). Daryl Mallett met me, and we drove to Forrest Ackerman's home. For those who don't know; Forry (4E) has turned his home into the "Ackermuseum" with wonderful SF & F artwork and movie props. 4E is in his early seventies, and hasn't lost a bit of his wit. He is well known for his Famous Monster's of FilmLand, both the book issues and the magazine. It was a

real pleasure to spend most of the day with one of our founding members and one of our newest members of N3F. I think 4E's book collection surpasses that of our local public library and he says that he has read every last word of his collection. When ever he gets a new book for his collection, he turns to the last page and reads the last word!

Daryl had also arranged a surprise for me. The Van Vogt's came up to 4E's and we all went to lunch at the Spaghetti Factory. A. E. Van Vogt is an impressive looking man in his early eighties and his wife Lydia is beautiful and elegant. Van Vogt wrote Voyage of the Space Beagle, Slan, and The Weapon Makers among others.

After leaving 4E's, Daryl and I went and visited with Bruce Pelz, a fanzine historian and former N3F member. Bruce gave us a tour of his storage sheds which contain: 1) comic books, 2) fanzines and prozines, and 3) WorldCon equipment like art show panels. His house is great, with a swimming pool and hot tub in the back yard. He has quite a collection, but

he and Elayne have a long way to go to tie 4E. This was supposed to be research for Daryl and for me, but it surely was fun too.

We went out to dinner, and had Thai food, which I had never eaten before. I discovered that I love Thai iced tea.

On Monday, the 16th of August, my family and I attended an Angels' game at Anaheim stadium. Our nephew, David, is coming back to live with us again (age 12), so he was there with my daughter, Amanda, and her best friend, Amanda (ages 14). That's right, two Amandas. Daryl Mallett, his wife Annette, and their three month old son, Jacob Logan, met us at the game. Jake is a gorgeous kid; big brown eyes and already grinning. He had a cold, but was hardly fussy at all. The Angels lost to Detroit 7-2, so we all went out to dinner afterward to drown our sorrows.

All and all, a great trip. Next issue, Amy will give us a report on ConFrancisco, her first WorldCon. And I will tell you about our little local con - ValleyCon.

Til' next issue, *Diane*

Presidential Notice:

by Catherine Mintz

The directorate has voted favorably on the N3F 1993 advertising mailing proposal. Unfortunately, the August issue of *TNFF* was already printed when I got the news. I am writing to *Tightbeam* to give members a head start if they are interested in having their material included in this pre-holiday season mailing. Members are always entitled, on a space-available, at-the-discretion-of-the-editor basis to post ads in *TNFF*, but this is your chance to reach your fellow members with a full-sized flyer for only \$25 plus 300 copies of your advertisement. If you prefer to save postage and have us do the copying, then it's \$50 for single-sided black on white paper; \$60 for single-sided black on colored paper; \$60 for double-sided black on white paper; and \$70 for double-sided black on colored paper. A flyer is defined as one 8.5 by 11 inch sheet of paper. Rates for heavier items will be negotiated so

that postage costs are covered. Member rates apply only to a member's business, not to any partnership where some of the partners are not members. Your ad will be travelling in good company; this year's advertisers already include DAW books and JDT Associates, a Paramount licensee selling a ST:TNG poster of the Enterprise. Contact Sandra C. Morrese, 7 Shade Oak Ct, Waldorf, MD 20601, for further information.

Assistant Editorial by Amy Sisson

I don't remember who first brought it up, but I feel strongly that it would be wrong to change the name of *Tightbeam*. Any name can be construed to offend somebody in the world for some reason, and the suggested reason for this name change is extreme hear (insensitivity to those with the new strain of tuberculosis) weaker than most. If you change the name every time a new situation made it potentially offensive or insensitive, you wouldn't have the same name for more than one issue.

Letters of Comment

Barbara Brown
18520 Prairie St Apt 5
Northridge CA 91324

I really enjoy Deep Space Nine, especially Odo, and I think it should have come out before ST:TNG. They say that Odo's facial makeup has been changed. Has anyone noticed it? I really don't see any difference except it seems more like a real face now.

Some interesting information for TV fans out of Hollywood. Babylon 5 will air 20 episodes in 1994. Also Next Generation, Deep Space Nine, Kung Fu and Time Trax have been renewed for 1994.

William Sullivan: I suggest that you read *Tightbeam* with an open mind and realize that we do talk about a lot of different things. There have been debates on the homeless, politics, the Space Program, abortion and adoption rights. We have also talked about "Is there life on other planets" as well as the latest Sci/Fi shows, books and conventions. If people just talk about one subject it gets pretty boring. It's nice to see we can talk about anything we like, most newsletters/zines are very rigid. I myself don't care for politics (I think it's all fixed anyway), but you might just overlook the letters if you're not interested in replying to them like I do.

The discussion was not originally on fem/hygiene, it started out as a discussion on Communism vs. Capitalism. In this case how the Soviet planners didn't provide correctly for the needs of females in their country.

So hang in there William — I think you'll like *Tightbeam* and its letters of comment if you give it a try.

David Rubin: Try around here! A movie trip costs \$10-20. It costs \$8-10 for the movie (depends on which movie is being shown as well as the time and day you go), \$2.50 for a medium soda and \$2.50 for a medium popcorn. Most theaters don't carry candy anymore, but you can get corn chips with melted cheese for \$2-3. If there is candy it goes for about \$1.50-2.00 a box. So it's pretty high around where I am too. That's why I like the TV! I don't have to stand in line to answer nature's call. I don't

have to struggle to see over someone's head or listen to anyone chewing away or whispering behind me. I can be barefoot and in a nightgown and no one complains. Sooner or later that movie comes to TV.

Last time I paid for a movie was when I got stuck babysitting a 12 and a 14 year old girl. I got stuck with a double header: Purple Rain and The Never Ending Story. SHUDDER! That was a nightmarish afternoon that cost me close to \$40!

Like Lynne I remember people going to a sanitarium when they got TB. I see nothing wrong with the "TB" for short. The trouble with Hailing Frequencies, Closed Circuit and Sub Space Transmissions is that they have been used a lot by zines. For some unknown reason people who do an SF newsletter/zine think the title has to have something to do with "space" in it.



Laurence Gray
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North Little Rock AR 72118-3343

Here is N3F's token musician weighing in with some comments on issues #180 and 181 of *Tightbeam* as well as the June 1993 issue of TNFF. (Due to space limitations, we will print Laurence's comments on the Filksinging Bureau in the next TB. — Ed.)

Concerning *A Wealth of Fable* by Harry Warner, Jr., I agree with Diane Miller and Don Franson. It is a good book. I thought it was interesting. Especially if you have attended as many SF Cons as I have. I have attended approximately 50 conventions since my first one in Feb. 1978 (Roc*Kon Two).

There were some good reviews and articles in *Tightbeams* #180 and 181 — especially the ones by Amy Sisson, Sally Morem, Lynne Holdom, Jeff Kasten, and Carol Klees-Starks. I also liked the poem in #181. The cover of #181 reminded me of the song "Breaking Up is Hard to Do." *Forward the Foundation and Beggars in Spain* originally appeared as novellas in Asi-

mov's. I haven't watched "Babylon 5" yet, although I've taped it.

One of the members of the local SF Society (as Sherry Boyd insists on referring to this group of mixed nuts) is originally from Fordyce (four dice), Arkansas (population 4,729) which is 68 miles south of Little Rock. Susan occasionally goes home on weekends to visit her parents in Fordyce and she told the SF Society that the local cable system in Fordyce has the Sci-Fi Channel. We don't have the Sci-Fi Channel here in North Little Rock (or in Little Rock) yet. Little Rock and North Little Rock are served by the same cable company.

Who drew the silly picture on page 8 of TB #180? On the inside of the front cover nobody is given credit for this picture.

I agree with the person who jokingly referred to Kira Nerys as the "Bajoran Bitch With An Attitude."

Diane Miller: I was impressed by your first issue of TB and I hope you can keep up the good work. Judging by what you ate while you were in Chicago, it sounds as if you are a carnivore. I was born in Chicago and my earliest memories are of growing up on the south side of Chicago. My father worked at the Univ. of Chicago and we lived close to his job. I haven't had a chance to experiment with virtual reality yet.

Charlie Brown: In our letter in TB #180, you mentioned some papers you wrote in 1948 and 1949 on the role of government in our society. Your comments made me think of the following question. Should a government be judged by how well it takes care of the weakest, most feeble, least-able-to-manage-for-themselves members of society?

The Kinko's here in North Little Rock is open 24 hours and I am not afraid to go there at any hour of the day or night. However, this Kinko's is located in an upper middle class neighborhood with a low crime rate. The only grocery store in North Little Rock which remains open 24 hours is a Kroger store in a lower middle class, blue collar neighborhood. I would shop there at any hour of the day or night and sometimes I do.

Barbara Brown: About your quote on Law and Order in the 1960s: "I have a gun and a badge — I am God!" Somebody said that if you really want to learn the truth about a person's character and personality and/or lack of same, you should give them a badge and a gun. Then

watch how they behave. A few years ago, I remember reading in Time Magazine that Johnson & Johnson sells lots and lots (~~Diapers and~~ ^{Wipes}) of Pampers in Saudi Arabia.

David Rubin: When you commented in TB #180 that you didn't think we would see your LOC until April, May, or June, you were more right than you knew you were going to be. When as issue of TB arrives, I write the date of arrival on the cover and #180 arrived on June 5, 1993.

I saw "Beauty and the Beast" and I thought the Disney animators had outdone their earlier efforts. I haven't seen "Aladdin" yet but I have heard it is good. Last month, I saw "Made in America" at a local theater. The tickets for myself and my date cost a ~~grand~~ total of \$7. I recommend this movie. Both myself and my date thought it was very funny. I don't think we should change the name of the N3F zine from *Tightbeam* to something else.

Debra Lucas: I didn't vote for Clinton because I know too much about him. I have been a resident of Arkansas for most of the time that he was governor. I have more resp than I do for Bill. No, I didn't vote for Bush and Quayle, either. I voted for the Apathy Party candidates as a protest.

I haven't read the memorial issue of Asimov's yet.

I have read the fourth book of the *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* trilogy and I recommend it. If I remember correctly, there is now a fifth book which is titled *Mostly Harmless* (this is how I suggest you try to think of me).

Yes, fan is short for fanatic.

Sally Morem: I liked the Star Trek episode "The Inner Light." I thought it was one of the better episodes from that season.

I am wondering if Ross Perot isn't the crazy uncle who should be kept in the basement instead of the crazy aunt (as he refers to the Deficit)? Of course, I am the last person who should be discussing this Deficit since I am an ~~overworked and underpaid~~ employee of the Federal Government. My salary is supposedly part of the money which our government spends too much of.

I hope Jeff Kasten will do more synopses of Star Trek episodes (yes, Jeff, this is a hint).

Lynne Holdom: I don't think the name of N3F's zine should be changed from *Tightbeam* to something else.

Yes, the Borg came back and frighteningly so with some help from Lore. How are they going to get out of this situation? Unfortunately, it seems we will have to wait 2 or 3 months before we find out.

I bought and read the book *Orbital Decay* by Allen Steele because I had read and enjoyed his stories in Asimov's. I was somewhat disappointed by *Orbital Decay*. I think the stories in Asimov's were better than Steele's book. Music from the 1960s and 1970s might be popular in the future as part of a nostalgia craze. This wouldn't be the first time something like that happened. Yes, it is entirely possible that new musical forms might be developed by the middle of the next century.

Did you or anyone else reading this letter ever think that one of the biggest hits of 1974 would be a piano piece which an African-American composer named Scott Joplin copyrighted in 1902? I certainly didn't. I am referring to "The Entertainer" by Joplin which is much better known as the theme from the movie "The Sting." Yes, I can play it from memory and, if asked nicely, I will play it even though it isn't my favorite piece by Joplin. Most people don't realize that Joplin was a pianist who wrote a lot of music for his favorite instrument. Some of Joplin's other music is better than "The Entertainer."

Eunice Raymond: I like your picture of a snake and a turtle on page one of the June 1993 issue of TNFF. If the snake wasn't explaining who designed them, I would have thought they were designed by a grunge fan.

Joy Beeson: When I talk about an SF Con to a mundane, I refer to the "Masquerade" as a "Costume Contest" to avoid confusion and save me some time and trouble trying to explain. I have never entered a Masquerade as a contestant (?), but I do like to watch them. This is one of my reasons for attending SF Cons. I go to conventions primarily to filk and to socialize with other fans (does this mean I am a socialist?).

Carol Klees-Starks: I did watch "After the Warming" and I didn't agree with most of it even though I did find it to be interesting. I watched this program because I had watched one episode of Burke's series "Connections" which really interested me because I had no trouble paying attention to it.

I hope the so-called experts who think that this planet is warming up are wrong because

the summers here are already hot and humid enough for me. Did you see the episode of Nova where they discussed global warming? Since you seem to be interested in this subject, I recommend that you watch this episode of Nova. It was interesting to me even though they didn't reach any conclusions.

Have you read *Fallen Angels* by Larry Niven, Jerry Pournelle, and Michael Flynn? It is set on Earth in the near future during an Ice Age. Most of Canada and the northern tier of states are covered by a glacier. The weather patterns to the south have been affected also. I thought the changes in the weather were depicted realistically in *Fallen Angels*.

Michael Harper: I liked your Video Bureau report in the June 1993 issue of TNFF. I am sure that anyone who helps to run an SF Convention or has done so in the past knows exactly how to do an impression of a headless chicken. I have found it helps to remember the advice from *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* about not panicking and holding on to one's towel. Since I have five towels, I never panic when the time comes to put on our local convention, Roc*Kon.

I haven't seen "Terminator Two" yet. If this makes me a minority of one, that is fine with me. I do plan to watch it Real Soon Now. I will have to rent it, since I will probably watch it at home on my VCR, I didn't think it would be appropriate to say Reel Soon Now. In a music class, we watched the first act of the opera "Wozzeck" by Alban Berg on laserdisc. I do prefer laserdisc to tape, like you.

After looking at Craig Boyd's cartoon on p. 13, I am beginning to wonder if editing TNFF and helping to run Roc*Kon is affecting his abnormal in sanity. Trying to run the Filksinging Bureau and being Filking Liaison for Roc*Kon can't affect me because, like most musicians I am already crazy. Anyone who willingly spends as much time alone slaving over a cold piano as I do isn't completely normal.

R.S. Miller III
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Clio MI 48420-236

Calling All Artists

I am asking for contributions for the Art Bureau/Artist's Workshop. I have only my own stuff right now, and will need contributions for those



who write-in with a need of artwork. I will also strive to assist those who feel they need help with their art. I'm not an expert, but I will try to point out ways to improve for those who wish. I hope we can make this a contributing factor in developing good artwork for all those with zines who need it.

Comments:

The latest announcements show that a 7-year Federal Government study proves conclusively that media exposure is responsible for a marked increase in violent behavior patterns of American generations over the last 30 years.

The surprising thing is that the media is accepting the blame, finally; three thousand similar studies over the years drew the same conclusions and were patently ignored by those in charge of content and programming for the networks and movie companies!

My biggest complaint is their lack of desire for contents based on something close to reality. According to the movies the American west would have been won and lost several times over in a quarter of the time it took in history!

After all, the cowboys and settlers and cavalry slaughter the Indians in prodigious numbers in every western, and the American Indian couldn't possibly have survived anyway: just look how stupid he is in most westerns! But then history has a habit of being portrayed inaccurately in text as well as in film.

Did you ever question some of those action scenes in film/TV? I always wondered about the vehicles that catch fire and explode as they fly into space off a sharp turn, or some such. . . . must be denser air? You know, friction build-up as it cuts through that denser air heats up the gasoline in the tank and causes it to erupt in flaming explosion. The same goes for someone who bumps, shoots, or rolls a vehicle. They all catch fire!

You can even pop the TV with some object and it will spark, sputter, flash and burst into fire. . . . *Do we want such dangerous devices in our homes?!*

Authors' Licence???

Electricity is portrayed as something akin to gasoline insofar as causing flashes, sparks and fires in movies. But then these are the same people who put a noise suppressor on a revolver (silencer); it isn't practical nor possible as a revolver has a gap between the cylinder, where the rounds are, and the barrel, so if you

screw a silencer onto it it would only back up the report/concussion to the gap, causing a very noticeable flash and report near the hand of the shooter.

Speaking of which, silencers are properly called noise suppressors, as they do not silence but merely reduce the volume by about 60%, making a forty-five sound about like a twenty-two. Generally speaking they run about 12 to 18 inches, not cigar size! Also, an automatic pistol becomes a single shot since the suppressor neutralizes the power which operates the semi-auto action, except for a special few government-designed firearms which have a built-in suppressor. Anyway, that blows away the James Bond/Assassin bit about bumping off people in a room next to an occupied room with no one the wiser.

Speaking of which, the problem with Dirty Harry using a .44 Magnum is that the recoil makes it hard to get off a quick second shot, a distinct disadvantage in a gun battle with the bad guys. Of course, Callahan says he uses .44 Special loads, not Magnums, but the real prop has a .45 Colt cylinder installed because .44 ammo/blanks were too hard to find around Hollywood!

Which brings me to the Brandon Lee accident! They said they used a real pistol because they couldn't find a prop like they wanted? They loaded dummy brass with bullets in it, so they could do a front-on close-up, showing the deadly looking bullets in the cylinder? They then removed the dummy ammo and replaced it with blank ammo for the shooting scene? One of the bullets accidentally became lodged in the chamber and didn't withdraw when they removed the brass? Then when they fired the blank rounds it propelled the bullet as it would a loosely loaded round (plausible in an exceptionally careless chain of circumstances!?), and the police let the whole thing go as an unfortunate accident???

Hollywood!!!

OF COURSE THESE ARE THE SAME PEOPLE WHO BOUNCE PEOPLE AROUND IN SPACE CRAFT WHEN VIOLENT THINGS OCCUR IN THEIR VICINITY TOO.

Anyway, I DO still enjoy the movies (TV. . . . Bah, HUMBUG!!!), the special effects are better than ever, and the distinction between fantasy and reality is becoming very blurry (YAY!), so things should look better even if the media —

news people as well as directors and actors — can't get their facts straight. To be honest, I suppose they mostly depend upon someone to do their research, so maybe they are only indirectly to blame for their inaccuracies???

After all most people are aware that sound and shock waves do not travel in a vacuum, but space shoot 'em ups are still top-draw for entertainment.

But then why is it that even newer model cars have a sound track like a suppressed hotrod, with a modified exhaust system???

Think of a lot of other problems with the reality as presented on film???

I'll leave it to you to pick it up from here.



Catherine Mintz

**1810 S Rittenhouse Sq 1708
Philadelphia PA 19103-5837**

I see in the July issue of *Science Fiction Chronicle* that Harlan Ellison, David Gerrold, and D.C. Fontana are writing scripts for "Babylon 5." Could it be they are actually going to try having real plots? The mind boggles. I'm sure something will intervene.

Also "Beyond 2000," the Australian-produced science show shown on the Discovery Channel, had an interesting update on one of Donald Franson's articles a couple of issues ago. Don mentioned that green tea had been found to reduce the chances of getting cancer. It appears that Japanese researchers at the National Cancer Research Institute in Tokyo have found the active ingredient in tea that is a cancer-preventative is part of the tannin in the leaves. One cup of green tea contains about 200 milligrams of it, many Japanese drink 5 or 6 cups of green tea a day. The ingredient appears to work by preventing the promotion of genetically damaged material into active cancer. They had some shots of the experimental mice who lost the coin-flip for "Who gets the medication?" with skin cancers like raspberries. Skin cancer research is a matter of particular interest to Australians, where fair-skinned people are experiencing an explosions melanomas, due in part to the depletion of the Antarctic ozone layer, and in part to the local fondness for intensive sun-bathing. The Japanese scientists hope to produce a once-a-day pill, and are con-

tinuing research to determine if that active ingredient is also effective against intestinal cancers, since the cells of the skin and the intestine lining are similar. Preliminary studies suggest that this is so.

Green tea holds an interesting place in Japanese society. Although most present-day Japanese take it as a quick cuppa, it is traditionally prepared and drunk at elaborate ceremonies in which the ingredients and the tools are prescribed, and the clothing, gestures, and even the conversation of the participants are highly stylized. There is even a correct attitude for watching the water for the tea come to a boil.

I have a question for those of you interested in words, writing, and films. Alfred Hitchcock used to call the device or thing which makes a story go — the Maltese falcon, for example, in the book and movie of the same name — the maguffin. Or perhaps that's the mcguffin. Or even the MacGuffin. I have seen all three within the past weeks in professional periodicals, two versions appearing in different issues of the same magazine. I've only heard it spoken and it certainly sounded like "maguffin" to me, for what that's worth. The dictionary was not helpful. Anyone?

Irene Harrison

**27 Jarvis Rd
Manchester CT 06040**



I am hoping to find an archivist among your readers. I am looking for an old issue of *Tightbeam*.

In one of the bibliographies, *Tightbeam* is listed as having three articles on Andre Norton in No. 30, May '81. I would like to purchase this issue or arrange to pay for a photocopy of these articles.

(NOTE: using higher match, I subtracted issue No. 30 from the current issue and did not come up with the May '81 date. I may be looking for either No. 30 or the May '81 issue).

Please reply by mail to the above address. I might be interested in the "Round Robins" if someone would only explain how they work! I'm most interested in the Andre Norton RR. I actually interviewed Andre during the 1992 World Fantasy Convention and have the video tape to prove it.

Eunice Raymond
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SUN CITY CA 92584



Hmm... I'm wondering what became of some book reviews sent by yours truly and some other folks, mentioned way back in #176. Hope they haven't been swallowed by the BEM's of the Slush Pile! [me too! I don't have them.- D]

Re: the vanishing mailing of the October TNFF: a longtime pal, Betsy Hutchins, founder of the American Donkey and Mule Society, sends loads of mail, and asserts that missing items are swallowed by a black hole, which spits 'em out into the Mirror Universe. I wonder what our Mirror alter egos do with it all? And how come we never get any of their mail? Guess the black hole only works one way.

Paul Doer: (#179) I could believe a Komodo lizard ("dragon") 6 or 8 feet long; I'm not quite sure about 10 feet. But 10 feet high? I'm reminded of an old B. C. comic, featuring a talking rock, flower etc. As I recall, B. C. had put the broken rock back together, whereupon it announced that it would grant him a wish. Said B. C., "I wish I could meet the nut who draws this thing!"

Did you see the scandal-rag headline about "child raised by goats eats tin cans and old shoes?" Or the farmer who shot a 6-foot butterfly? Some of those photos look so faked, you'd think the publishers would be embarrassed to use them, but there really are people who believe that hogwash.

William Sullivan: Non-fiction topics do have a way of popping up in fannish letterzines. The feminine products discussion resulted from mention of lack in Eastern Bloc countries of those and other items the average American takes for granted. Often we take them so much for granted, we have no idea how the other half gets by without them.

About fan fiction: I don't know many people who write professionally, so I haven't yet encountered the "Do you write THAT stuff? (sneer, sneer!)" attitude. The reaction I do

encounter from non-writers is "Why don't you write something that pays?"

What makes them think it doesn't pay? They're thinking in terms of money, of course, but money isn't the only way to profit from an activity. If it makes us happy to write fan fiction, then it pays.

When we write for sheer love of what we're doing, then we write what moves us emotionally. If what moves us happens to be essentially derivative (fan fiction), so what?

Charlie Brown: Your ex-wife's opinion that SF female crew members "serviced" all the males reminds me of remarks my dad enjoyed making about Lt. Uhura! It was typical of his outlook on life.

Barbara Brown: Yep, some things were more simple in the 1800's, but others were not, having spent years doing my laundry by hand in a bucket, I can name one thing that isn't simple! I can barely keep myself in wearable clothes - the ol' gray mare not being what she usta be - doing a regular family wash would be a killer!

Sally Morem: (#178) You seemed to be commenting on my LOC in #176 when you mentioned interspecies reproduction. However, that wasn't what I was commenting on at the time! The key word was dropped from the sentence, which should have read: "Can you believe even a half educated adult thinking a cross-species transfusion wouldn't kill the patient?"

T.V. Guide ran an item about a medical student who claimed to have been inspired by Dr. Crusher. My advice there is that she'd better invest in lots of malpractice insurance if Crusher is her inspiration!

Donald Franson: Whatever became of the story contest entries from about two years ago? (Or whenever?) I never got mine back, and have heard no more about the reported backlog of stories to be returned. What's doing in that department?

Mike Whalen: I'm also interested in translations of fannish terms. I'm still hazy about some of them. While we're at it, what about someone

clarifying some of the abbreviations found in friendship books? NNP means "no new pals" (or, "Help! I'm swamped!") A/A is "answer all," W/S is "write soon," & IRC is for International Return Coupon. Beyond that, I begin to get lost, although I do enjoy friendship books, especially those that have been around to several countries. And can someone tell me where the "Slam," the friendship book's cousin, gets its name?

Don Fitch & Jefferson Swycaffer: Funny you fellows should mention "squaw." Talk about coincidences! But as the Flying Dutchman (played by James Mason in Pandora & The Flying Dutchman) said to Pandora Reynolds (Ava Gardner): "What is coincidence? I don't believe in coincidence."

I have, on loan from a friend, "Sacred Path Cards" with accompanying book, by Jamie Sams. The cards are used more or less like Tarot, but with an American Indian theme. Ms. Sams, a member of the Wolf Clan Teaching Lodge of the Seneca Nation, developed the cards based on traditions and beliefs of various tribes. Ms. Sams explains "squaw" quite differently from the definition you've heard:

"When the Boat People (Europeans) came to Turtle Island (the Americas), they came to the Eastern shore and coined the word "squaw." This word was adopted and used as they moved west. The other Nations of Native America did not know where the word came from, and it has been used to name areas of land across the West. In truth, this word is a defamation of woman. It comes from the Algonquin word Nues-quaw or "No-squaw," which means "no penis." The Algonquin women screamed these words as they were being raped. To call a Native Woman a squaw is to call her a penis, and destroys our honoring of women as well as opens old wounds. If the Moon Lodge teachings and tribal honoring of

women were violated by a Red Man, those violations were punishable by death."

That puts a whole new perspective on "King James' Squaw," doesn't it?! Anyway, it seems obvious that the Algonquin language had no word for rape; and therefore the assaulted women pleaded, "no penis!" I would guess the Iroquois were one of those "other nations" who didn't know the origin of the word the white men were using, and adopted it in the fashion of Pidgin English (which actually was coined by someone named Pidgin, by the way).

The coincidence here is that, a day or two before TB #182 arrived, I'd been considering mentioning Ms. Sam's cards and book, and the origin of the above-mentioned word.

Hmmm... maybe the Iroquois did know what "squaw" meant, and "Kinjamesqua" was originally applied as poetic justice of a sort? Who knows? [More on Jamie Sams, next issue. - D]

Don Franson: In STARLINK #26/27, Margaret Wander Bonanno advises that John Ordovery has threatened to wipe out ST fanzines. I won't be surprised if he tries, but although it may create a lot of bad will and a big stink, I wonder if the effort would hold water after all these years. Roddenberry, Desilu, and later, Paramount and Pocket, have collectively known about and permitted ST zines for about 25 years, ever since SPOCKANALIA came out during the show's initial run. The fact that they are derivative, and that the Powers That Be have "been bending over backward to ignore the existence" of ST zines (tacit permission), begins to seem like a legal loophole to me. Copyright laws do permit other than copyright holders to create derivative works, I believe. Well, time will tell. [There is a big debate going in Internet under alt.fandom.cons about the potential of copyright law prosecution of ConComs for the film rooms at sf cons. - D]

The definition of "derivative" has

opened a pail of worms in the graphic arts field. Seems Big Brother has ruled that if you have your art copied, the copies are derivative, and the person making the copies canglom onto rights. It makes no difference whether it's a big name company making limited edition prints, or Charlie Brown running photocopies at Kinko's (Do you read me, Charlie? Interesting thought, there!): if someone is assigned to copy your artwork, it becomes a derivative work to which they can claim rights. This subject has been discussed in recent issues of The Artist's Magazine.

Wouldn't it be interesting if someone tried to apply that ruling to fan fiction? Could 25 years of permission-by-default give fans a claim on ST literature?

Sally Morem & Katharine Duncan, et al: As far as legalizing drugs goes, most people apparently don't realize that restrictive drug laws are relatively new. Until rather recent times, anyone could buy narcotics without prescription. Laudanum, an opium derivative, was part of nearly everyone's medicine chest; patent medicines often contained opiates or cocaine, etc. Coca Cola was so named because the original formula did include cocaine, as an old ad run in National Geographic confirmed in an article on cocaine.

Hasta Luego

* * *

Debra Lucas

110 1/2 N MAIN

AUBURN IN 46706

Hmmm is it the generation gap, or just a difference of tastes? I was talking to my mom. She's the principal of an elementary school. She said all the kids were talking about JURASSIC PARK so she had to go see it to "get with it." She thought it was a "dumb little horror movie!" I liked it. Wouldn't go as far as to say it was my all time favorite, but I really liked it. I thought the concept of recreating a dinosaur from a preserved mosquito, and then populating a park was a neat idea. I



mean they actually do have bits and pieces of bugs and leaves and such trapped in amber. Heck, now amber of any sort, clear or with bug, is starting to sell like hotcakes in jewelry stores. Naturally, the amber with a bit of the Jurassic period in it is much more expensive than clear.

Haven't had a lot of time to do "extra" reading, but noticed a TV Guide that gave time to science fiction. In it they revealed that ST:TNG will have its' last season. They are letting DS9 carry on the ST line. I gather the NG cast is getting ready for a Star Trek movie where original meets NG.

Heavens yes!!!! The Rama series with today's technology in movie making would be fantastic. So would John Varley's Gaia novels.

OOH, Just got a copy of 7th Guest for computer-cd rom. Fantastic graphics. Great if you're a person who likes to solve puzzles. The images are based on actors and actresses. It is one of the more life-like computer games I've seen. And with a boyfriend who is a computer techie, I've see ALot.

As always, I am amazed at the depth and breadth of the neffer "family." The famous names. Those that started a neffer and later became famous. I love it.

Part of my problem with the other SF TV is that they are on so late at night, I can't stay up to watch it without risk of turning to a zombie at work the next day!! I would like to see TIME TRAX. It's on at 12:30 am. Yes, I could tape it, but I hardly have time to watch shows that come on at the time they come on, let alone find time to watch a tape!!!! It gives me an idea of where network programmers rate science fiction in their line-ups.

Jefferson Swycaffer: Re: art: modern. I once read where a woman had her cat step in paint and walk across a canvas. She put the "paintings" in a gallery and sold!!! some. Meow. I have 3 cats. Could I make 3 times as much money? :-)

Diane: I can never remember if the

common cold is a virus or a bacteria. Your are right, I believe, a virus. There are too many strains and variations and mutations of viruses for them to come up with a vaccine. That's why I just have to grin when I hear of someone's doctor prescribing antibiotics for their head colds!!!! The symptoms can be treated, but not the virus causing them.

Hey, where are all the Douglas Adams fans? I'd like to join a Douglas Adams RR, but there doesn't seem to be anyone interested except me!!

Take care, all. Deb Lucas

* * *

Katharine Duncan
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Another TIGHTBEAM, another LOC. Since you asked about large print TBs, I'll put in my opinion. I have very bad eyesight. I am told I was a late walker because my eyes were so bad I couldn't see across a room and so was afraid to venture into the unknown. Now I wear contacts and glasses. The contacts allow my glasses to be thinner than coke bottles. Nevertheless, I am very uneasy about large print zines. Sure it would help me but with a 24 page limit, it would cut down on the size of the zine. Your type is already larger than Lynne's was so I feel I am getting less. A large print zine would do this even more. I can use a magnifying glass, honest.

Dan Goodman: I have only had two presidents to predict performance for: Bush did better than I expected (though not very well) as I thought he'd be terrible; Clinton is worse than I expected even and I didn't expect much.

Donald Franson: I liked Zombies of the Gene Pool. I don't know that much about present day fandom as I am only peripherally involved in it and even less about 50's fandom. But I do know from my parents that SF was much less respectable back then. While the characters are said to be losers, they are not homeless, doing drugs, shooting people or problems to

society in any real way. The life style they have may not be to everybody's taste but they are more or less happy. Certainly they are less pathetic than Rock groupies, to give one example.

Debra Lucas: I like boats. In fact since I live near the Mississippi, that's just as well. No, St. Paul isn't under water or even seriously flooded and my place was never threatened. I do feel sorry for the people downstream. My brother went to Des Moines to help clean up (all I did was donate some bottled water and a package of Pampers) and said you couldn't imagine how bad it was, especially the smell.

I read an essay by Asimov about the Ice Ages and he put forth the theory of the Milankovitch Great Year which is caused by slight perturbations in the Earth's orbit. Right now we are entering Great Autumn so the earth should be cooling off (personally, I could believe as it's been a very cool summer in which it hasn't reached 90 even once.) But just as you get Indian Summer when it's warm, so we could be getting warming even going into Great Autumn. In fact Fallen Angels by Niven, Pournelle, and Flynn postulates a coming ice age caused by cleaning up the atmosphere. You see it was pollution that kept off this coming ice age. It's also a fun story with a lot of fannish references. Another factor to consider is that the weather got very erratic and wild as Earth went into the Little Ice Age back in the 14th century so our wild weather could be leading into a major climate change of some kind. Also there seems to be some correlation between sunspots and global temperature. The more sunspots, the warmer the temperature. We've had a lot of sunspots lately. During the height of the Little Ice Age, there were very few. In short, I don't think humans affect weather all that much. We should clean up the air because it is better to breathe clean air, not because it will help the weather.

Jefferson Swycaffer: I agree with

your statement on war and I don't like it either. According to my sister-in-law, once you contract TB, you never get rid of it. But you can, by taking drugs, make the bacilli dormant and asymptomatic. People with HIV get TB (drug resistant or not) because their weakened immune systems, can't keep the bacilli in check. But TB is highly contagious and IS a threat to health care workers. For this reason, health care workers have to be tested for TB once a year and have had to be for years. TB isn't the only disease to become drug resistant, gonorrhea has also.

Bye, Katharine

* * *



Daryl F. Mallett
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Diane: Thanks for the sample issues of TIGHTBEAM. I'm delighted to be included in your publication and con report. I'm also pleased to now be included as a member of N3F... it's been around for a long time, and I'm delighted to be involved.

Wow! I know Donald Franson (hello, Don) and Howard DeVore (hello, Howard) and Jeff Swycaffer (hello, Jeff), but I had no idea Harry Andruschak was still alive (sorry, Harry). I've read his name forever in fanzines and the like, and heard numerous stuff from Forry, the late Rick Sneary, Bruce Pelz, and others, and I'm glad to hear reports of your demise were greatly exaggerated. ☹☹

Jennifer McKay: Yes, I remember seeing the video, but I can't remember anything else. I've the audiocassette soundtrack, but not much else. Will keep my eyes open though.

Mike Whalen: We're plodding along in the space program. In the 1960's Kennedy and his successors instilled our nation with a sense of pride in the space program, not to mention the fact that we were in a race with the Soviet Union. My father-in-law worked on the APOLLO missions and the space shuttles and you can still hear the pride in his voice and see it in

his eyes when he talks about those halcyon days. Now, when we should be working with the Russians and the Japanese, and other technologically-developed nations to build a space station (where the United Nations headquarters should be stationed... to keep it totally neutral!), to colonize Luna, to "seed" and colonize Mars...

Would the Challenger STS-511 crew approve of our stopping the space program after their deaths?

As to why, it's because the politicians and BUREAUCRATS (a foul word) are tangling up a very simple process. I believe Larry Niven once said he could build a working space station in five years with five billion dollars, if only the government would go away and leave him alone for those five years...but it ain't gonna happen.

The National Space Society is working towards privatization of the space program. And recently, THE LAST ACTION HERO movie starring Arnold Schwarzenegger, bought advertising on the side of a rocket, to the tune of six or seven figures, to help fund the mission!

People like you and me can write letters to our Congressmen, our Senators, our President, and other influential people and encourage them to get off their asses! [Especially since most of us have an advantage - we know how to write. - D]

Catherine Mintz: As a writer writing for television (wrote the premise and initial story behind STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION: BIRTHRIGHT; and have a NORTHERN EXPOSURE, two TIME TRAX, and KUNG FU: THE LEGEND CONTINUES in the works), I'm all for bad SF over no SF. BABYLON 5 and TIME TRAX have both been picked up for a new season of 22 episodes each through Warner Bros. or Lorimar Television. WB is also premiering a new show called THE ADVENTURES OF BRISCO COUNTY, JR., starring Bruce Campbell. Set in the Old West, it also has magic, science, and puns up the kazoo! It's stupid, it's cliché, but it's fun...and I'm going to write for it! QUANTUM LEAP

died a premature death while I was finishing a script for them; NIGHTMARE CAFE was here and gone; COVINGTON CROSS was a greatly needed fantasy show which disappeared; SPACE RANGERS was fun and campy, reminiscent of the great SF pulp tradition; STAR TREK:TNG goes the way of the dodo this year...and so on. I'd rather have bad SF shows which I know I can write for, than no SF shows for which to write at all.

I do, however, agree with you about fence-walking the middle ground. Don't go overboard praising bad SF. Write to the producers, tell them you're glad the show exists, and gently suggest ways in which they could improve it...

General Stuff: Can someone send me a Xerox of Roberta Rogow's article "Having Fun With Fanzines" in the December 1992 issue of Writer's Digest? Thanx.

What's a COA? [post officese for "change of address," I don't think this one originated with fandom. -D] And while I'm asking, would someone please (at the risk of exposing my youth and ignorance) explain to me (in detail; don't just say "it's sort of like a telegraph/teletype thing to send messages") what the hell a TELEX is?

Katharine Duncan: It sounds as though you need a change of jobs. Yes, money is nice, but if you don't enjoy your job, why do it? You only go around once. Become a writer...NOT!

Jefferson Putnam Swycaffer: Hullo, Jeff! Since we live close to each other, but only manage to run into each other once in a great while (I now have a picture to prove we were both in the same place at the same time!) I'll just talk to you in TIGHTBEAM. Sigh.

But your sideburns don't make you look like Isaac. You look more like Stephen King. And I, too, have Asimov's Disease... I want my name on EVERYTHING! See you (or saw you) at ComicCon.

Joy Beeson: No, I don't need to write or read this big yet...

[Oh yeah? Who was supposed to be navigating, and couldn't read the street signs? -D] Oh, and theatre trivia... fresnel is pronounced "freh-nel." I'm going to have to agree with you on the not pining away for past centuries... As a libido-ridden male, I'd hate to think about birth control as cheesecloth...never mind making your own soap afterwards for cleaning up!

DEATH NOTICE: I'm sorry to report that Thomas D. Claeson has passed away (1926-1993). Tom died on July 6, 1993 at his home in Wooster, Ohio. He is best remembered for founding the Science Fiction Research Association and editing Extrapolation for a number of years.

Thanks for letting me participate, and I hope to continue to do so!

Cheers, Daryl F. Mallett

* * *

Harry Andruschak

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Thanks for sending TIGHTBEAM #182. To update my LOC on page 14, I should note that I decided to write up and send my CORFLU TEN report to FOSFAX. FOSFAX is always looking for articles and columns. As for my own next INTERMEDIATE VECTOR BOSONS #38, that may take some time.

Why? I have finally started actually writing up my 1990 five weeks in Africa vacation. I still have all the notes, it is just a matter of putting them into a coherent narrative. Also, this October my mother will be on a 30 day vacation to India and Nepal, and has said she will write it up for my fanzine.

As always, I am amused and irritated by NASA apologists like Goodson, telling us how wonderful the Space Telescope really is. Look if I paid good money for a Rolls Royce, and received a Ford Festiva, I do not want to hear how wonderful the Ford Festiva is. It may indeed be a wonderful car, but I could have bought one at a far less price than paying for a Rolls Royce. The American taxpayers were promised a Rolls Royce of telescopes. Getting a

Festiva of a telescope, no matter how good the mileage and engineering, is not what we paid for. End of rant.

Not much else to say this time around, I still have a large number of other fanzines and letters to acknowledge. Too many, actually. I need to cut back, somehow. I just don't know how.

Oh, yes, one comment to William Wilson Goodson Jr. and other pro-space readers. Many years ago I was a Life Member of the L-5 Society. When L-5 was swallowed up and became part of the National Space Society, I was assured my Life Membership would be honoured, yet I have received nothing from the NSS for over a year. Letters to the last known address have had no reply. Is the NSS still in action? Or can I kiss my Lifetime Dues goodbye?

Yours Aye... Andy . * *

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TB 182 looks good, congratulations. What exactly is your research project. Where are you attending, and how did you get involved in all this? [Gee, I thought you'd never ask... My project is the sociology of becoming a member of the subculture of science fiction fandom; I am attending the University of North Dakota; and I became a fan. -D] The idea of SF as a base for serious study seems both welcome and amusing to me. This isn't derogatory - I use my own biological studies to amuse myself with xeno-biological musings. I'd like to know just who the Science Fiction Research Association is open to? [Anyone willing to pay the money to join. I will/did forward an application on to you for your information. - D] Concerning Bimbos and Zombies - did anyone bring up the idea that Sharon won an award because her mystery novel thumbed it's nose at the rival fandom of Science Fiction? [Why do you consider them rivals? The same people got the BoucherCons (mystery fan cons) going as are running the bid for the LACon.

And a mystery novel should win a mystery award for being a good mystery, in my opinion.]

Mike Whalen: Hmmm. If you are confused by FIAWOL and FIJAGDH, then you must not know my friends. The FIAWOL are the people who do not have a life beyond fandom. All of their friends are fans, and they live this life from one Con to the next. They are so caught up in fannish activities that there is no other reality. The FIJAGDH people, on the other hand, are those with more going on in their lives. They have "mundane" friends and look forward to "mundane" activities. And they talk about "mundane" subjects, often getting bored with the nothing but fannish conversation of the FIAWOL. In turn, the FIAWOL get bored with the mundane conversation of the FIJAGDH.

Since I try to make a habit of not looking down on other people, I really don't align with either group but try to stay in the middle.

A good test for FIJAGDH vs. FIAWOL is to ask a fan if he, she, he/she, it or whatever has read Sharon McCrumb's Bimbos of the Death Sun. If the fan is offended or upset by the characterizations in the book, that fan is FIAWOL. If the person finds it to be absolutely hysterical, then they are FIJAGDH.

Katharine Duncan: I still think you are being picky. The science I proposed for Hevisol was biological, and I felt that it was pretty sound. IF I had chosen to tackle the question you picked on, the life span of the star, I probably could have come up with something. The higher amount of radiation from the sun would increase the mutation rate, and therefore speed up evolutionary processes. Something like that. But when you explore more than the question at hand, then you're on your way to writing a book. Or perhaps a whole series of books.

Debra Lucas: - I would also think that writers would want to get a start on writing in fanzines - but there is plenty of bias against

people who put fiction in fanzines from the readers. However, there are two serious drawbacks to starting a career in fanzines.

1) the career you start is one of writing for Fanzines. Fanzine writing will take all that you can give it - thereby sapping your time and energy from projects that could be professional.

2) The pressure to better your writing is off. Fanzines offer a lot of egoboo and support for neo-writers, but not much hard criticism. There's no real competition for space, with the prize of publication going to the best writer.

But if you control your commitments and if you can maintain an internal pressure to improve, then; fanzines are a good place to showcase your work. And you can learn, in a low-pressure atmosphere, how to prepare manuscripts, work with editors, and communicate. GOOD LUCK.

Jefferson P. Swycaffer: Sure, if you want to be nobel, dashing, shining, knightly, and a champion of all that is right, I can do. Plenty of room for cannon fodder in my stories.... Your name would fit as a Lord in my Quasi-fantasy novel that's mostly for fun, anyway. The characters ride horse and swing swords, write each other with ball-point pens, and keep statistics and records on computers.

Antibiotics work against bacteria, not viruses. The difference? Bacteria are living cells, and the antibiotics gum up their replication and energy making machinery. Viruses are nothing more than packages of DNA or RNA that go in and hijack a cell's own reproduction machinery - and that's why antibiotics don't work against viruses. But antibiotics can help viral infections by keeping the already weakened cells (from the virus) from being attacked by the eager bacteria cells.

Joy Beeson: Isn't that brownish Muslin they sell in the fabric stores unbleached? What's the difference? We've got tons of that stuff here; but Ohio is in the middle of a quilt craze.

My children have some all-cotton play-clothes. Permanent wrinkle. I haven't made any outfits for them yet (my friend made these) but I plan on getting into another sewing blitz Real Soon Now.

* * *

Susan Kennedy
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TB 180:



Charlie Brown: Why should honor and service to others be the ONLY rewards for hard work and inventiveness? I'll grant they should be at least primary motivations, but fail to see why they should be the only ones. The human animal simply does not operate on that level. Also, re: your comments to Taras about German and Japanese business placing primary emphasis on quality while American business is till primarily profit oriented and dependent on advertising, don't fool yourself. All business is profit oriented. It's the nature of the beast. The reason Japanese and German business place the emphasis on quality is that they have realized something that many American corporations still haven't - Quality Sells! K-Mart almost went out of business before they realized that. They thought that if they provided cheap merchandise at the lowest possible price, people would flock to their doors. What they didn't realize is that in the long run, price means very little. If you buy the cheapest available version of a product and then discover that you are going to have to buy another one every week/month/year (depending on the product), pretty soon you go out and spend the extra 25% to buy something more dependable, because it's really more cost effective in the long run. When K-Mart realized this, they began to provide better quality merchandise (most of their stuff these days is at least medium-well made) at the lowest possible price they could give and still make a profit. They are still in business today because they were smart enough to figure out why people

didn't keep coming back.

By the way, how do you suggest the US troops disarm the warlords and their gangs in Somalia? The only way to see that they stay disarmed is to blow them away, and I think that would cause more problems than it would solve. As you said, I've never found war to be a satisfactory solution to a problem. either. But what good is it to put down what IS being done, if you're not going to offer an alternative?

Barbara Brown: Do you really think the government wanted those reporters in Somalia when the troops got there? Do you have any idea how foolish that makes our government look? The media could get there before the soldiers did? And we don't need to teach the Somalians how to "fish," they already know how to raise their own crops, etc. The problem is, as Lynn already stated, that the food is being stolen from them by armed thugs. Maybe you have a better solution than sending in armed troops? I know I don't, but I'd sure be glad to hear one. Because I believe this is a big planet, but all of it is home to me.

Your comment on the ST:TNG episode where the Romulan was flung out into space through the wall didn't make sense. Was something misprinted? You said "they ran through walls, but when the Romulan was tossed against the wall, he went outside the ship." The Romulan was in the same state as the other two, so of course the wall didn't stop him. My problem with that episode was that they could walk through the walls, and yet the floors, which are logically made of the same material, and would be just as displaced in time as the walls, held them up. That did not make sense to me.

Carol Klees Starks: I found your comments about the networks being biased very interesting, but I don't think all that much of the public takes their word as "Gospel" anymore. The public is rapidly coming to realize just how biased the media really is. Of course, some of us still haven't learned to think for

ourselves, but that's our problem, not the network's. I really see the problem as more along the lines of it being hard to make an enlightened decision on where you stand on an issue when you've only heard one side of the story -- and for that, the media is responsible!

Al Gore is reputed to browbeat people for opposing his environmental views? He must not be all that strong for abortion, then. He stood by and said "nothing" while the Pope blasted us for allowing abortion to be legal.

Sally Morem: Thanks for the info on the "Space Fantasy" stamps. My son is a stamp collector.

Re: Lynn's comments to you on alcohol and school children - that depends on what you call criminals. I had family members who tried to feed my children booze when they were just babies, until I found out and put my foot down.

BTW, I really enjoyed Lola' poem "Children" in this issue.

Debra Lucas: I can swim, and I still will not go into a boat without a life jacket. In an accident, you could be knocked out, and then it won't matter if you can swim or not. I don't think I would want to risk my life on the possible idea that the water in my face would wake me up. I'm inclined to think that's a legend - otherwise why would so many people who DO know how to swim, drown?

Did you hear the explanation Perot gave when he reentered the race? about how some nut case had threatened to wreck his daughter's wedding if he didn't drop out of the race? It would have been much more believable if he had announced it when he dropped out, instead of when he came back. But I wouldn't have risked my daughter's happiness for any election either. Besides, I'm not at all sure he wasn't just "testing the waters."

Jefferson P. Swycaffer: You commented that most video games can't be set aside and then picked up again. That depends on where you are playing. The commercial ones can't of course,

but we have the super NES system, and it has the ability to pause any game, and just sit there until you come back to it. Unfortunately, we have only one TV set, so it doesn't usually stay paused very long!

Harry Andruschak: Maybe in California women walk around in mini-skirts 4 inches above the knee all the time, but not out here. I hope to God we learned our lesson the first time around. It's too *@* cold out here to wear those things in the wintertime! And we had the same difficulty sitting down as you would in a short kilt. Also, haven't you heard that the fashion industry has been trying for years without success to bring the mini-skirt back in vogue? Not that nobody wears them, just that most of us know we don't look good in the darn things.

William Wilson Goodson Jr.: I had no idea the Hubble had done so much already, nor that the error was so small. Interesting report.

I also enjoyed Anne Valley's article on Piers Anthony, who is one of my favorite authors. I enjoy his comments at the end of the books almost as much as the books themselves!

Welcome to all the new members!

* * *

Bruce J. Connolly
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I received my appointment to the Correspondence Bureau a little too late to make the latest issue of TNFF. As most members know, the leadership of N3F has been asking for members to step forward and accept positions of responsibility within the club. After all, the club cannot run itself, it takes active members. It has been my recent good fortune to be permitted the opportunity to take on the position of Bureau head for the Correspondence Bureau.

For those in the club who don't know me, I joined the N3F in 1988 and have been on the WelCommittee for about 3 years. N3F has been one of the most beneficial things that I have ever come across and I love

being a member. Perhaps I have been merely fortunate in that I have had, almost from the beginning of my membership, a large number of pen pals within the club. However, I think that my actively seeking out pen pals and some of them seeking me out has a lot to do with it.

Being on the Welcommittee, I write to many new members joining the club. It has been my experience that many of these people join with high expectations, only to leave the club after a year. Why? Well, while I haven't done any hard research, it seems from the contacts that I have had with new members that many of them come into the club and expect that they will immediately be inundated with letters from new pen pals. Unfortunately this is not the case. Many members fail to renew because they lose interest in the club.

N3F is like almost any other endeavor in life, you only get out of it what you put into it. If corresponding with pen pals is your goal in joining the club, that is not that difficult to accomplish--provided some effort is put forth. Round robins are a great way to meet a group of new people who are interested in the same subjects. As with anything else, however, round robins have limitations and aren't for everyone. Most of us in the club know that it takes sometimes many months before a round robin that you have signed up for actually shows up in your mailbox. Once you're on the mailing list, that robin still might only show up once a year or so. And this isn't a criticism, just an observation of fact. I've been in and enjoyed lots of robins since being in N3F. If nothing else, it is one of the great ways to meet new individuals that you may wish to correspond with on an individual basis outside of the robin.

Individual correspondence is something that may be a little harder to get involved with, particularly when you are new to the club. This
[Continued on back cover]



Reviews



Star Trek: The Next Generation Companion
by Larry Nemecek
Pocket Books, November 1992, Oversized
Trade Paperback, \$13.00

In many ways, this is THE book Next Gen fans have been waiting for, and it is a must-purchase for those who want to have lots of details about the show's production in one place. *Next Gen Companion* is very timely; it goes to the end of the fifth season, which finished airing only five months before the book came out. Despite what had to be a rushed production, it has an excellent layout, with very few typos or inaccuracies. Only the photos are less than excellent — a few stills are slightly blurry, and the overall selection is somewhat uninspired.

Next Gen Companion is most useful in the way it mentions minor details about episodes which I'd missed or forgotten — I hadn't realized the show mentioned Andorians or Tholians in several episodes, and it was also nice to find out the pen names of script writers and repeat appearances of minor characters.

Despite all this, the *Companion* is frustrating to read, due to the tone of the commentary. With a few exceptions (notably "Shades of Gray"), episodes are either praised or have their shortcomings ignored, even though a pretense of objectivity is made. This may have been necessary to insure the book's production, but it's annoying nonetheless. Far worse is the slighting of fans throughout: scripts submitted by fans are consistently referred to as "fan" scripts (as if all writers not on the staff are "just" fans), and there are some gratuitous insults against fandom as well, such as its comparison to the Pakleds of "Samaritan Snare" (p 86) and where justified fan criticism

of a plot hole in "Unification" is dismissed (p. 185). Nemecek also lies about the Crusher/Pulaski changeovers to keep in line with the official Paramount explanations. Among other things, we find out that the campaign to bring Beverly back sparked the first real protest by fans (p. 64); presumably the earlier campaign to get rid of Wesley was a phony one?

Recommended, but it's a shame the commentary isn't more honest about the weaker episodes.

— Reviewed by Jeffrey Kasten



"So I Married An Ax Murderer"

Last Thursday, I saw an advanced preview of "So I Married an Ax Murderer," starring Mike Myers. The blurb that came with the free pass said "Directed by Thomas Schamme" (never heard of him). "So I Married an Ax Murderer" is an offbeat comedy (ever heard of an onbeat comedy?) about a bachelor afraid of commitment, who finally meets the perfect woman. Unfortunately, he comes to suspect she may be a notorious serial killer.

I give it two stars. It wasn't terrible, but not better than a really good episode of "Cheers" or "Designing Women." It was very formulaic, but it had a few funny moments, some of the scenes reminded me of Hitchcock, and I loved the fact that they found a new ethnic group to make fun of: The Scotch!

"So I Married an Ax Murderer" will make its official opening in August, and hopefully this review will come out first!

— Reviewed by David Rubin

An Interview with John E. Stith

by Rob Miller

In the September 1993 issue of the Science Fiction Book Club's *Things to Come*, one of the Featured Alternates is entitled *Manhattan Transfer*, by John E. Stith. This is neither the first nor the last work from this author, whose writing interests include humor, science fiction, suspense, and mystery. He has published short stories in sf magazines as well as articles in computer publications. He also writes a review column for *Mystery Scene*, which covers both science fiction and mystery.

Stith was born in Boulder, Colorado in 1947 and currently makes his home in Colorado Springs. After receiving a B.A. in Physics from the University of Minnesota, he served in the Air Force at NORAD in Colorado Springs and even in Alaska for a year. Afterwards, Stith entered private industry at Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland before eventually returning to Colorado Springs. Since then, his work has included software engineering and management in addition to his writing.

The following questions and Mr. Stith's replies were transmitted via computer modem.

Which of your books is your favorite? "Probably *Redshift Rendezvous*, primarily because the latest work always seems to be the favorite. (Might be *Manhattan Transfer* now — R.M.) It took a lot of homework, but it's provided me a very gratifying feedback."

Do you find more fun in the creation of the story background material, or the spinning of the tale? "It's hard to separate. In *Redshift Rendezvous*, I had to do a lot of homework to invent a starship aboard which the speed of light is ten meters per second. At the same time, I was able to deal with issues that were important to me."

Do you have a favorite author? "It's really hard to narrow down to one. In SF, I've enjoyed many people from the big three to modern writers... such as Orson Scott Card. In mystery, I love Dick Frances and Alistair MacLean."

Is your favorite reading done in SF&F or in another area? "Most of my pleasure reading is split between SF and mystery."

How long have you been interested in the SF&F genre? "Since grade school. I can't actually remember what year I started reading SF, though. I remember my mother bringing *Citizen of the Galaxy* home from the library one day when I was sick. That book and others made me wish I could stay home sick a lot more."

How active were you in SF&F fandom before becoming an author? "Not very active. I actually joined N3F for about a year in the early 70s, but I didn't wind up spending much time in fandom, mostly because too many other things were happening."

Do you feel that you will do writing outside of the SF&F area in the future? "That's hard to say. I like mysteries a lot too, but I can write books that combine both SF and mystery, so those books may be enough to satisfy that urge."

Which of your works has brought the greatest reader response? "*Redshift Rendezvous*. Building a career takes a long time, and each book seems to get a few more readers than the previous book."

Who, if any, would you like your works to be compared to? "I guess a dream-come-true blurb would say the hard sf of Hal Clement, the humor of Robert Sheckley, the fast-paced action of Alistair MacLean, and the characters-you-care-about of Theodore Sturgeon. I'll never come close to that, but everyone needs goals."

How often do you participate in SF-cons? "Two or three times a year. I go to MileHiCon in Denver and WorldCon if it's in the U.S. (NASFiC if not) and then perhaps one other smaller con."

How do you pronounce your last name? "Stith rhymes with Smith."

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MARS: OUTPOST OF THE IMAGINATION

by Sally Morem

Mars Base I

Before we can fully plan a Mars base, a Lunar base will have to be established. That's the only way to get the necessary experience in constructing underground habitats, setting up a workable life support system, and establishing food growing areas on an alien planet. A Lunar base will take much of the guesswork out of the work that will have to go into a Mars base.

Most heavy equipment will have to be sent ahead in the unmanned cargo ship so that it will be ready at the site when the astronauts get there. Several Space Station-based habitat modules, a nuclear power module, a Mars rover, construction cranes and soil-moving equipment, communications equipment, as well as the Mars gas station will make up the bulk of the Mars base.

The crew will busy itself by excavating the sites for the habitats. These will be put in place and will be covered by several feet of Martian soil because the atmosphere will be too thin to protect crew members from radiation.

Along with the habitats, large recreation and farming structures will be set up. Growing plants may require reflecting mirrors to focus solar rays since the sun is too far away from Mars to give Earth plants the required amount of energy. Horticulturists will find out how plants react to the low Martian gravity.

The crew will melt permafrost for water, air and additional fuel. They will also set up a laboratory to study how various processes work in Martian gravity. The entire base will be powered by a nuclear generator capable of producing one to ten megawatts of electricity. The Mars base will be kept in continuous communication with Earth by placing satellites in orbit around Mars.

Explorations

In order to explore Mars, the astronauts will have to be supplied with efficient spacesuits designed specifically for the Martian environment. Apollo and Space Shuttle suits are too bulky for a planet with one-third gravity and an atmosphere, so the suits will have to be skin-tight and flexible with the ability to recycle body wastes.

The astronauts will thoroughly explore Mars by taking thousands of photographs, choosing samples in interesting geologic areas, leaving ground instruments for future monitoring, taking core samples, and analyzing both air and rock samples for very detailed chemical compositions.

There will be much to explore. The vast, extinct volcanoes, mountains that look like pyramids, the vast canyons of Valles Marineris, the great river valleys, the broad plains, and the polar ice caps will give people things to study for centuries to come. A thorough exploration of Mars may give us answers to questions on the history of the climate and geology of Mars.

One of the most curious things about Mars is the Tharsis Bulge. How did such a huge structure form? Scientists believe that volcanic activity began 3 billion years ago at what was then the north pole. Since there was no plate tectonic activity — the crust of Mars is in one piece — the volcanic material had nowhere to go. It piled up in one place.

However, the stablest alignment that a spinning object can achieve is having the most massive objects farthest from the axis of rotation. On a planet, that's the equator. When the Tharsis Bulge developed at the north pole, the weight created an instability. To compensate, the crust as a whole moved until the volcanoes were near the equator. Everything shifted, including the old poles. The resulting

pressure ripped apart the surrounding area, creating Valles Marineris.

Astronauts will be able to study such things as deposits made by ancient ice caps now near the equator and the direction of impact of old craters to check out this theory. Confirmation will add immeasurably to planetary science.

Scientists also believe that the atmosphere of Mars forms a natural laser. Carbon dioxide causes Mars to emit radiation at the same wavelength as commercial lasers. It's believed that Mars produces over one billion kilowatts of power each year in this manner. A careful study of this phenomenon by astronauts could be used to construct satellites made up of carbon dioxide which could generate power in the same way.

The crew would certainly want to visit the old Viking landers. Viking 1 has been made an official part of the National Air and Space Museum. When people finally visit it, it will be named a Smithsonian museum in its own right. Astronauts on the first manned mission may indeed conduct the official ceremony.

Going Home

As the time approaches for the return to Earth, the crew will be busy packing samples, Mars-grown plants, equipment and supplies for the long trip home. They will then close down the base so that everything will be carefully preserved for the next crew.

A regularly scheduled Mars transportation system would allow the base to be permanently manned. As the first crew prepared to leave, another one would arrive. The first crew would return to Earth on the ship that brought the new crew. New crews would expand and improve the base until it could truly be called a Mars colony.

At that point, some people may choose to live there permanently. They would earn their living by mining Mars, growing food and providing services for visitors. Eventually the Mars colony would become self-sufficient. New colonies could be established. The set-

tlers could set up fuel refineries for travelers to the Outer Solar System and ship nitrogen and other needed materials back to the Earth-Moon system for use in space. They would live at the outpost of a rapidly growing Solar System Civilization.

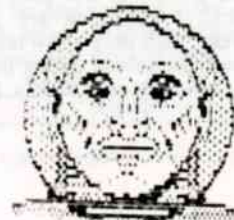
Advanced Propulsion Systems

At that point, spacecraft which coast most of the way to Mars with chemical rockets will no longer be good enough. Faster delivery of passengers are good will be greatly appreciated. An engine capable of continuous thrust at one gravity would take a spaceship from Earth to Mars in two weeks, a large improvement over the present ten months. But how could the required energies be acquired?

A wide variety of technologies are possible. A laser propulsion system would create high temperature plasma which would transfer energy to a hydrogen propellant, creating the required continuous thrust. If Solar Power Satellites are developed, microwave energy could be beamed to an array of solar cells on the spacecraft which would allow it to move with no fuel on board.

A mass drive could use lunar base-derived technology to launch cargo to Mars. Metal fuel accelerated by magnetic fields would provide the thrust for an ion drive ship. Pulsed fission would use, in effect, small atomic bombs to drive the spacecraft. This idea had been developed in the 1960s under the code name NERVA. A fusion reactor would also create the required energy. In a century, we could be moving about the Solar System in a matter of weeks instead of years.

(To be continued...)



STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION

SEASON SIX REVIEW

BY JEFFREY KASTEN

INTRODUCTION

This season of *Next Generation* is far harder to review than the previous ones have been. The debut of *Deep Space Nine* has made a strong impact on both the viewers and the production staff of *Next Gen* in ways that are still unclear. As I go along, I will make an attempt to sort things out.

The second reason for my more subjective reviewing is that the episodes themselves have turned into something of a puzzle. As I will try to demonstrate, the shows this season can be neatly split into two parts (future information about the actual time frame regarding purchasing of scripts and production order of shows will determine if the split is actually so neat).

In any case, I currently see a split as happening after *The Quality of Life*, the ninth episode. The first nine episodes are largely mediocre, but otherwise seem fully in the tradition of the previous three seasons. Starting with *Chain of Command*, things get much more bizarre. The stories are often solo pieces, and the influence of the simultaneously produced *Deep Space Nine* seems to creep in, often to *Next Gen*'s detriment. Here are the "eras" of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* as I now see them.

1. The early period (first 13 episodes, up to *Datalore*) are the early, infamous "Wesley saves the Universe" episodes. They have many promising story ideas, but are largely sabotaged by weakly thought out characters and sloppy production. Data is the only really good character in this period. Many Old Trek fans gave up on the show during this time and have never returned.

2. The growth period (Later first season and second season: 35 episodes) featured better developed characters (especially Picard and Worf), much less emphasis on Wesley, and the introduction of Guinan and Dr. Pulaski. Stories were inconsistent, but generally better than the early episodes.

3. The mature period is the longest era of *Next Gen* by far, lasting from the beginning of the third season to *The Quality of Life* partway into the sixth (87 episodes). Episodes are generally good through this era, with only a few real failures. Riker and Troi slowly improved during this period, as did Wesley (by leaving) and Worf's background was filled in.

4. We are currently in what could be called the late TV period, from *Chain of Command* on, which should add up to 43 episodes if the seventh season is completed as planned and follows recent trends. This period has so far been marked by very inconsistent stories and bungled attempts to compete with *Next Gen*'s offspring - *Deep Space Nine*.

5? Movie period? This hasn't started yet - keep watching for further news.

You may disagree with this list, but it's with this split of the episodes in mind that I present my reviews. Most were written immediately after the airing, and I've deliberately revised them as little as possible so you can see my doubts about characterization and peculiar seeming scheduling as I did at the time.

EPISODE REVIEWS

TIME'S ARROW, PART TWO

(*Data and Guinan in 1893 San Francisco*). This is a pretty satisfying conclusion to the somewhat shaky first part. I successfully predicted the porter would be someone famous (he wound up being Jack London) but my more tentative conclusions were wrong. Surprisingly little was done with the aliens, although the FX in the cavern were nice, and it's obvious they were just an excuse for a historical costume piece. A minor quibble: if the landing party had no money for rent, where'd they get the extra clothes? Some more history minded friends had a bigger problem with this: was San Francisco egalitarian enough back then to have ANY black, even Guinan, accepted by high society? I don't know.

REALM OF FEAR

(*Barclay vs Transporter Room*) Barclay makes his return in a distinctly better episode than his second appearance, *Nih Degree*. We get to find out much of the history and technology behind the transporter in a clever and unobtrusive way - it seems to have been considerably improved over the ones used during the time of the old show. Considering what a deus ex machina it's been in recent seasons, here at least its operation makes

sense. Dwight Schultz is fine as usual, and the story is pretty good overall, even though the monster looks a bit too much like the one from *Alien*. Two ideas later developed (badly) in upcoming weeks make their debut here: use of the transporter as a method of escape (*Relics*) and of subspace as a story device (*Schisms*).

MAN OF THE PEOPLE

(*Troi begins aging rapidly*). This is very much a cross between *Contagion* (Dr. Pulaski ages, and itself a remake of *The Deadly Years*) and *Violations* (Troi picks up the wrong guy and suffers for it). Remakes of remakes, alas. A more honest and meaningful version of this idea would be Troi getting some venereal disease, since she seems to have suffered in almost every other way from men she meets. There must be something about Troi that makes the writers, as well as many fans, want to put her through these psychotic soap opera (which seem to leave her unchanged afterwards - wouldn't a real woman begin to get paranoid or something after a while?). In *The Game*, one of Riker's casual pickups almost captures the ship, but otherwise we haven't seen the male characters getting punished for their own healthy libidos.

Actually, this is not a bad episode, just a familiar; one, the age makeup on Troi is outstanding (granted, they've had lots of practice by now) and the whole thing is pretty scary and sometimes funny as well. The scene where Troi tells off a woman she's counseling is priceless. Unlike other "negotiating" episodes, we also get to see the parties involved, giving a better than usual feel of authenticity. The main plot problem is the baddie's "mother": why didn't she tell on him? There's a suggestion of continued psychic control, but it's not nearly explicit enough and seems more like nobody involved thought of the possibility.

Relics

(*Scotty's return*) *Next Gen* finally goes head to head with the old, and loses! Admittedly it's not a fair fight: Doohan only has to steal a few scenes, since most are given to him up front, and Geordi is one of the least developed new characters. It's worth noting the different importance of characterization on the two Treks: we don't actually don't know more about Scott than LaForge - we've no real idea why he became an engineer, no knowledge of his family, etc. But Mr Scott has always been popular, even though he's a stereotype. When compared with the old show, *Next Gen* is more drama than adventure, the stories are less plot driven, and the characters are no longer larger than life (especially since all viewers are eighteen years older!), so there's more

need to get inside our heroes and find out what drives them. This has never been done with Geordi (or Dr Crusher or Troi, for that matter).

Oh, yes, the plot. That's the least important part of this story, especially when Scotty gets to say things like "Captains are like children. How can ye get a reputation as a miracle worker if you tell them how long it'll actually take?" Not much is done with the Dyson sphere, and of course no further attempt to investigate it is made once they escape. The little details of engineering and the transporter all ring true, making it the more frustrating that they screw up the big ones (I can't believe the cruiser could be made to fly without a major overhaul; nothing is made of its failing life support, which would have added tension. The *Enterprise* would be in no danger from flares if it moved to near the outside of the sphere). A fun story, but one that emphasizes everything *Next Gen* does wrong.

Schisms

(*Aliens from subspace kidnap Enterprise crewmembers*). It's amazing how anybody could turn such an intriguing premise into a boring episode, but this is painfully slow until Riker's kidnapping. The whole story is hopelessly loaded down with made up and sometimes inaccurate jargon as well as blatant mistakes (after being told all crewmembers are safe, we find out one died; the starfields in the crowded cluster are standard uncrowded shots; the usual nonexistent elements are mentioned). What's worse is how the crew all seem to be on quaaludes, since nobody seems particularly worried at the danger. I'd blow the damn cargo bay the minute the problem came up and study it with sensors! Subspace hadn't been used as a story springboard before this season, even in any fanfiction I've read, and it deserves a better fate than this misfired attempt. Only the last act of this is as good as the whole story could have been.

True Q

(*High school student winds up being a Q*) This is a slightly more optimistic distaff version of *Charlie X* in which the unknowing alien leaves somewhat more willingly. *Charlie X* was atypical of old Trek, since the emphasis was entirely on guest star Robert Walker. Here the focus is not surprisingly more on Q and less on Amanda, making for a less moving and of course far less original story. Still, it's done well enough to stand out as a pretty good episode in what's shaping up as a weak season.

Rascals

(*Enterprise crewmembers turn into children*). This

remake of the animated *Counter-Clock Incident* starts off as just another mediocre episode - once I got into it, I expected Troi to lecture them on adjusting to their new life, while the others searched for a cure and found one just before the last commercial. What happened instead was vastly worse. The quick and bloodless Ferenghi takeover of the *Enterprise* and its recapture were totally unbelievable, as bad as anything seen in any *Trek* incarnation, and almost sickening to watch. The acting of the kids is variable: the young Picard was mildly unconvincing, the young Guinan brilliant. But why weren't Alexander and the other kids more upset about what happened? Overall this episode is a total disaster and about the worst ever made. It's painfully obvious at this point in the season that too many talented people are working on *Deep Space Nine*, leave too few for *Next Gen*. This script was written by one Allison Hock, presumably a pen name for a writer who realized that the final script was terrible.

A Fistful of DATAS

(*Holodeck western*) A humorous remake of *Spectre of the Gun*? Well, at least it's not done straight, and the comedy mostly works. Very surprisingly, it's Troi who steals this episode; she gets all the best lines and saves Worf besides. Brent Spiner is very good as well, but his western villain isn't given enough depth to be interesting. What sinks this story are the stale ideas: malfunctioning holodecks have been vastly overused on the show (you'd think they'd have fixed it or scrapped it by now); TV westerns mostly disappeared about the same time *Trek* classic did, and nobody learns from their experiences, making the whole thing somewhat pointless.

The Quality of Life

(*New artificial life form created at mining station*) In this episode writer Naren Shanker, *Trek*'s science "advisor" (Presumably they just don't listen to him much) makes a laudable and all too rare attempt to base a story on real science, with mixed results. There are some interesting discussions and Dr Farolan (the mining engineer) is a fully developed and believable character, but overall the episode is unmemorable and predictable. We've already seen the exocomp's type of life many times before. Picard and the other crewmembers get overly sanctimonious, and the climactic crisis is rather contrived.

Looked at from a later perspective, this episode marks a turning point on *Next Generation*, as seemingly the last episode made before the influence of *Deep Space Nine* becomes apparent.

After this point the stories become darker and characters become tougher, sometimes less than convincingly. There's also a hiatus in production or at least airing of *Next Gen* episodes; except for *Chain of Command*, no more new episodes are seen for two months.

CHAIN OF COMMAND, PARTS 1 & 2

(*Picard captured by Cardassians*) This sets up the events in *Deep Space Nine* quite well, and is a chilling, brutally told story. Perhaps too brutal; some fans have complained that the torture sequences were too prolonged. Plotwise, things hang together fairly well, although it's a shame O'Brien doesn't have a part given his impending departure. Some of the details of the spy operation, notably Beverly getting up after the rockfall, don't ring true and seem very secondhand. I also have grave doubts about the mine-laying sequence; it seems like a very easy solution, even though it sort of agrees with what we've seen about nebulas in *Wrath of Khan* and other places. Notable in all this is how Captain Jellico (very well played by Ronny Cox) is presented ONLY as a martinet, and not as being stupid in any way. Overall this is a very good story despite a few weaknesses.

Ship in a Bottle

(*Dr. Moriarty attacks the Enterprise*) This is the long awaited sequel to the second season's *Elementary, Dear Data*. They always planned to do one but were held up for legal reasons. The plot is ingenious enough to be worthy of Conan Doyle, featuring several genuinely unexpected shifts that explore in depth what the holodeck can and cannot do. I really believed Moriarty had gotten out, which is no small suspension of disbelief. Daniel Davis is very good again as Moriarty, and Barclay makes his first appearance in a supporting role. The only thing wrong with this story is the moronic idea that two planets colliding can form a star, a new low in this season's staggeringly long list of science errors.

Aquid

(*Geordi falls for woman accused of murder.*) A very unusual story in many ways, this seems like a case of *Deep Space Nine* rubbing off on its parent show. The scenes of Geordi reading Aquiel's diary were eerie, and the lonely relay station was an unusual and well developed setting. The conflict between Riker and Geordi was also something we don't see much of. However, there were several flaws that kept this from being a very good episode. I suspected the dog fairly early, but no one else did. It's also never specified what exactly the Klingons

were up to, and Picard is quite out of character in being so nasty during his scenes with them. After all, they rescued Aqueel and never even got a thank you for it! Perhaps this is all a deliberate attempt to "toughen up" *Next Gen*. If so, it's too abrupt to be successful.

FACE OF THE ENEMY

(*Troi aboard Romulan ship*). If sheer edge of the seat excitement is the criteria, this episode marks a high point for *Star Trek*. The action never lets up for a moment, as Troi finds herself smuggling refugees away from the Romulan empire in what is essentially a solo story. After five and a half years she finally sheds her wimpiness early in the episode. What a relief! Virtually everything in the story is done flawlessly, from the sets to Sirtis's acting; it's especially noteworthy that the "villainous" Romulan captain is actually a moderate, and the side Troi claims to support are the actual baddies. The problem is that the episode (for once) starts TOO fast: where and how Troi was kidnapped never gets mentioned, giving the early part of the episode a feeling that we've missed some important information. I presume there was some debate about making this a two-parter. It would certainly be superb at ninety minutes and is excellent in any case.

TAPESTRY

(*Picard relives turning point in his life*). This curious story is even more of a solo vehicle for Picard than the previous one was for Troi, which is a strange bit of scheduling at the very least. This is a very surreal episode, loaded with metaphysical questions: did Picard actually die? Was it all a dream? And wildest of all, is Q really God? The last idea is hardly suggested seriously, but it might provoke some interesting discussions nonetheless.

Metaphysics, aside, the central flashback storyline is not all that exciting. As with most time loop stories, the action gets a bit repetitious. Picard's buddy is also such an ass that we want the baddies to stab HIM and be done with it; and I'm sure it wasn't originally intended to make him such a complete idiot.

One additional fact: although Picard has met Q twice this season, he didn't ask how Vash was on either occasion, although SHE immediately asked O'Brien how Jean-Luc was in her *Deep Space Nine* appearance.

BIRTHRIGHT, PARTS 1 AND 2

(*Worf finds colony of captured Klingons*). If this story seems strangely disjointed, there's a reason:

the two parts look like (and have!) different writers and directors, which is not the first time this has been tried. I've no idea why *Next Gen*'s producers ever thought they could get away with this, but here it hardly works at all: the first half is a sloppily plotted ensemble piece; the second part is a sharper focused but not very impressive solo adventure for Worf (the third solo piece in four episodes). The problem with the first half is that most events are sketchy. We are led to believe the story will feature *Deep Space Nine*, and then hardly see it: we never find out who the informant is; the proximity of the Romulans to the Station seems unlikely; and how Worf can disappear so thoroughly is left unexplained. Most importantly, Worf is portrayed as an idiot throughout. He enters the prison without checking it out properly, tells no one where he's going, and generally screws up. This could be explained as just evidence of Worf's desperation, but there's no tangible visible or verbal evidence that we're intended to feel this way: it comes across as simply dumb plotting.

Part 2 is somewhat better, but slow. Worf's romance is a bit contrived and the details of the society are rather vague, given how much time Worf spends there. Also, to put it very simply, Worf ends up being the bad guy of the story. He wrecks a viable society by blundering into it, hardly the stuff of heroes. As if matters weren't confused enough, Part 2 writer Rene Echeverria also ignores the subplot with Data and Bashir, leaving it totally unresolved. The combination of sloppy writing and nonexistent editing makes for a tantalizing but bad story, despite a few excellent parts such as Data's dream sequence.

STARSHIP MINE

(*Aliens attempt to steal fuel from Enterprise*). An interesting, but strangely done story. At first I thought the baddies were planning to steal the ship outright, but they just wanted it temporarily. This makes the plot much more believable, and it needs all the help it can get. Aren't there safeguards for such a situation? How did the aliens infiltrate the cleanup crew? Where was the rest of the crew when the senior officers were taken hostage? And how convenient it was that there was an electrical outlet on the floor (!) just where Picard needed it! The chase through the ship and the details of the cleanup were interesting, but the plot holes make this only a so-so story. There is an interesting parallel between this and *Face of the Enemy* though; in much the same way as Troi toughens up once she accepts her Romulan disguise, so does Picard when he claims to be Mort (the story's nicest plot twist). In previous seasons he would have admitted his identity upfront without hesitation, regardless of the consequences.

LESSONS

(*Picard falls for new officer*) This is not a great episode, but the plot is pretty seamless, uses a little real science for once, and it's not a surrealistic solo piece. This makes it a welcome break from the intense but often sloppy recent episodes. The romance is trivial but pleasantly written and acted. Once the woman was sent on the landing party, I figured her for a goner, but they didn't make it so simple. The music was nice too. The references to *The Inner Light* were very interesting and overdue: after all, he spent decades there! My only real complaint is that the scene where they play together in the Jeffries tube, one of the most beautiful ever on the show, was somewhat damaged by bad editing. When they pan back at the end to show them playing together, the cut to engineering comes much too soon. Oh well.

The Chase

(*Search for race of ancient genetic engineers*). This is a pleasant story with no major weaknesses, but as with so many *Next Gens*, the ending seems like a bit of a letdown. Perhaps the story simply promises more than it can reasonably deliver. ("That's IT?" the Klingon said). There are definitely several ways the ending could have been punched up - either giving the various races some small reward for their efforts or refusing to do so would have been a little less anticlimactic, although the latter would have seemed a cheat in its won way. Another lost opportunity was the failure to identify the aliens as The Preservers, mentioned long ago in *The Paradise Syndrome*. Perhaps most frustrating was the story's complete lack of mysticism in a plot that cries out for some. The destruction of the first alien ship was never explained either. On the plus side, everybody's in character this time and the confrontation on the planet (with Picard and Beverly keeping out and making the others seem like children in a schoolyard) was nicely handled.

Frame of Mind

(*Riker put in insane asylum*) Jonathan Frakes' haunting performance makes this bizarre episode work. The plot resembles the *Twilight Zone* episode *Where is Everybody?* (or a typical Philip K. Dick story) more than it does *Trek*, and the ending (where we find out that almost everything seen beforehand has either been a drug induced nightmare or a flashback) is disappointing, especially in the easy way Riker escapes.

I think a much better ending was possible. His final dream (where he thinks he has been rescued) might have been better if it really had been how he

got out. The episode could follow with him finding himself back in the asylum, only to discover that he IS really back on the *Enterprise* and that it's now the asylum that's a dream. Troi could then point out that such experiences aren't erased so easily. The next week he'd be back to normal, of course, but it would still be less pat. Even with the weak ending, it's a frightening and powerful story.

Suspicious

(*Beverly involved in shielding experiment*). There's nothing wrong with the basic plot elements in this story - a scientist is found dead after an unsuccessful experiment - but in its own way, this episode is even more offensive than *Rascals*. There are several major flaws in the plotting: Beverly has

no business being involved in such nonmedical research without some good reason, and either Data or Geordi would be much more logical protagonists. The experiences wasn't a failure, either; it was about 99% successful, and everyone's calling it a failure shows no understanding of how science actually works. Also, the alien might have been alive during his autopsy and then gotten up, but his BODY would still be gone. So much for getting away scot-free.

However, what's most annoying here is that every regular in the story is totally out of character throughout. Beverly is out of her field and too assertive. Picard is too cold, and is more worried about offending some Ferengi than helping her. Riker is condescending. Guinan insults her. Everybody else ignores her problem completely, except her nurse. The whole thing is almost as much of a nightmare as *Frame of Mind* - except this time, it's reality! If I were Bev, I'd transfer to another ship, and fast. I thought they were supposed to be her friends. If they really wanted want to toughen up the characters a la *Deep Space Nine* (the only reason I can see for the radical changes of late), they should do it gradually and believably - the opposite of what they've done here. It's painful, and stupid, to see six years of relationships junked for no good reason. One of the worst episodes ever.

Rightful Heir

(*Kahless the unforgettable returns*). As a minor supporting character in *The Savage Curtain*, Kahless was misused (along with everybody else in the episode) and had made only occasional fanzine appearances in the 24 years since. It's a pleasure to see his return, even in a rather contrived episode. I find it hard to imagine Klingon scientists doing such cloning, even if such techniques were invented

(and mostly discarded) by the Federation two centuries earlier. I find it even harder to believe they'd admit to them so freely. My feeling is also that Kahless would have lived more than ten to fifteen centuries previous and been much less of a philosopher. A few other details ring false as well. Wouldn't Worf be utterly differential to Kahless once he accepted him? Instead, he treats him as just another Klingon (this flaw seems like sloppy direction). However, this is an interesting and largely successful story despite all because it does do many things well. The Klingon code of honor is well handled, the interrelationships among the Klingons are nice, and Gauron is excellent as always. Overall, this is a much better story than *Birthright* (which it nicely alludes to) and a worthy, though hardly outstanding, addition to the cycle of Klingon episodes.

SECOND CHANCES

(*Riker finds he has a duplicate*) The advance publicity for this episode mentions that LeVar Burton directed it and that shuttle astronaut Mae Jemison was in it. Burton does do a nice job in his directorial debut, and Jemison has just a tiny part - what's really important here is how the once puzzling Riker/Troi relationship is finally defined properly. It's a pleasure to watch them, in this episode, especially when you consider the utter lack of chemistry between them in *Next Gen's* early seasons and how out of character everybody was on the show just two weeks earlier. Lt. Riker is nicely differentiated from the one aboard ship, and in some ways a more sympathetic character. I thought his "I won't make the same mistake again" line to be one of the best moments of the season. Adding to the tension is the very real chance he'll be killed - I actually expected him to be for a while, and was pleasantly surprised when he survived. A very good story, and also one that cries out for a sequel.

TIMESCAPE

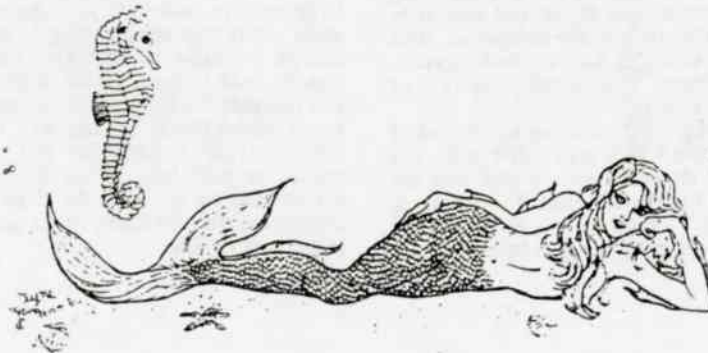
(*Enterprise* trapped by a time thingie and has to be

rescued). This is not a bad story either in idea or overall execution, but the excessive technobabble makes it a lot weaker than it could be. The four century gap between us and *Trek* makes it very hard to do a story like this seamlessly - they're simply using too much science that hasn't been invented yet, and then it's very tough not to pull rabbits out of hats right and left. The most we can hope for when watching is internal consistency, no obvious cheats, and interesting surprises. Here at least there was nothing that made me mumble in disgust, and it WAS a fascinating situation. Tedious dialogue aside, the plot grew so complicated that I never did figure out whether the aliens were bad guys or just confused, and what exactly happened to the Romulans.

DESCENT, PART 1

(*Return of the Borg*) The opening of this, with Stephen Hawking playing himself, is a lot of fun. Somebody wondered whether having him in an episode would cause them to pay more attention to the science, and sure enough, this episode has no major science blunders. Another nice touch was naming a starship *Gorkon*, and the final moment (very reminiscent of the last episode of *Blake's Seven*) is certainly about as exciting as it could be. I also think having the Borg mutate in the wrong direction due to Hugh's interference is a nice idea.

Having said that, I must now add that I'm amazed this story is as rambling and mediocre as it is. Even assuming the Borg and Lore were out to trap Data, his treachery still needs more explanation. Killing off redshirts twice is borrowing from elements of the old show that are best forgotten. Having Picard put Dr. Crusher (!) in command is stupid beyond words, and the entire sequence of most of the crew visually combing the planet for Data is pathetic. Worst of all is the way they get themselves trapped. So after a nice setup and first act, this episode goes downhill fast, and overall it's much worse than any other two part opening to date. Unless they bite the bullet and kill off a regular, it will take an act of genius to salvage the second part of this.



This was a real roller coaster of a season, by far the most inconsistent in any incarnation of *Trek*. There were about as many great episodes as *Next Gen*'s third season: there were also some as bad as anything ever seen on any version of the show. I'll be curious to see if fandom winds up agreeing with my choices. In the first part of the season, four of the last five episodes are quite weak, only *True Q* being up to par. Then we get a two month gap in aired episodes, aside from *Chain of Command* (presumably to give *Deep Space Nine* undivided attention.).

When the show returned, it quickly became obvious that things aboard the *Enterprise* had changed. *Ship in a Bottle* is a "traditional" episode, but *Aqui!* isn't. Geordi is not only in love, but also on the verge of insubordination. His clash with Riker and Picard's dealings with the Klingons in this story are MUCH tougher than what we'd seen previously on *Next Gen*. The next week, in *Face of the Enemy*, Troi finally asserts herself. She's also probably out of character, but things happen so fast that it's not too important in this one case. But as the season proceeds, this proves to be the exception. In *Birthright*, Worf is a stupid blunderer. In *Starship Mine*, Picard won't admit who he is. *Suspensions* outdoes all of these and has EVERYBODY out of character.

What's wrong with these later episodes of the season is not the toughening of the characters - that's way overdue - but that it's done too quickly and sloppily to be believable. Rather than rely on already established characterization, and then deepening or changing them in a harder direction, things are visibly happening only because somebody said so.

Most of the season's other flaws are ones that have dogged *Next Gen* since the beginning, and I'll only restate them briefly. No scripts by print SF writers. Unmemorable music. A lack of genuinely exotic aliens. Almost no aliens from the old show, and a continued refusal to do anything new with Vulcans. No episodes filmed outdoors. A general lack of excitement. Continued lack of development of Dr. Crusher and Geordi. And last but not least, "science" that is increasingly bogus and internally inconsistent. Examples include the transporter, time paradoxes, and all kinds of biology and physics. Episodes like *Suspensions* show a complete lack of feel for how science works.

Aside from having regulars acting totally out of character, this season of *Trek* also suffered from a number of episodes that were simply bad, and use of ideas that should have been rejected. *Rascals* is the worst example: aside from a few good performances, there's nothing that can be said in

defense of this story. *A Fistful of Datas* is another story with a truly lame plot, although the humor makes it watchable and it seems to be quite popular with many fans. *Schisms*, *Birthright*, *Suspensions*, and probably *Descent* have better ideas, but all are stories with woefully weak execution. Here the show's long tenure helps: with such an experienced set of actors and production people, it's possible to partially cover for a weak script in ways they weren't able to do, say, back in the first season. But this doesn't answer the question of why such weak scripts were put in production in the first place. Is the writing staff really stretched too thin trying to write for two shows, as I theorized earlier? Or is there some other explanation? Certainly the average episode quality is down from last season, and the dropoff from the Third and Fourth seasons is even sharper. This does not auger well for next year, which is promised to be the last for the show.

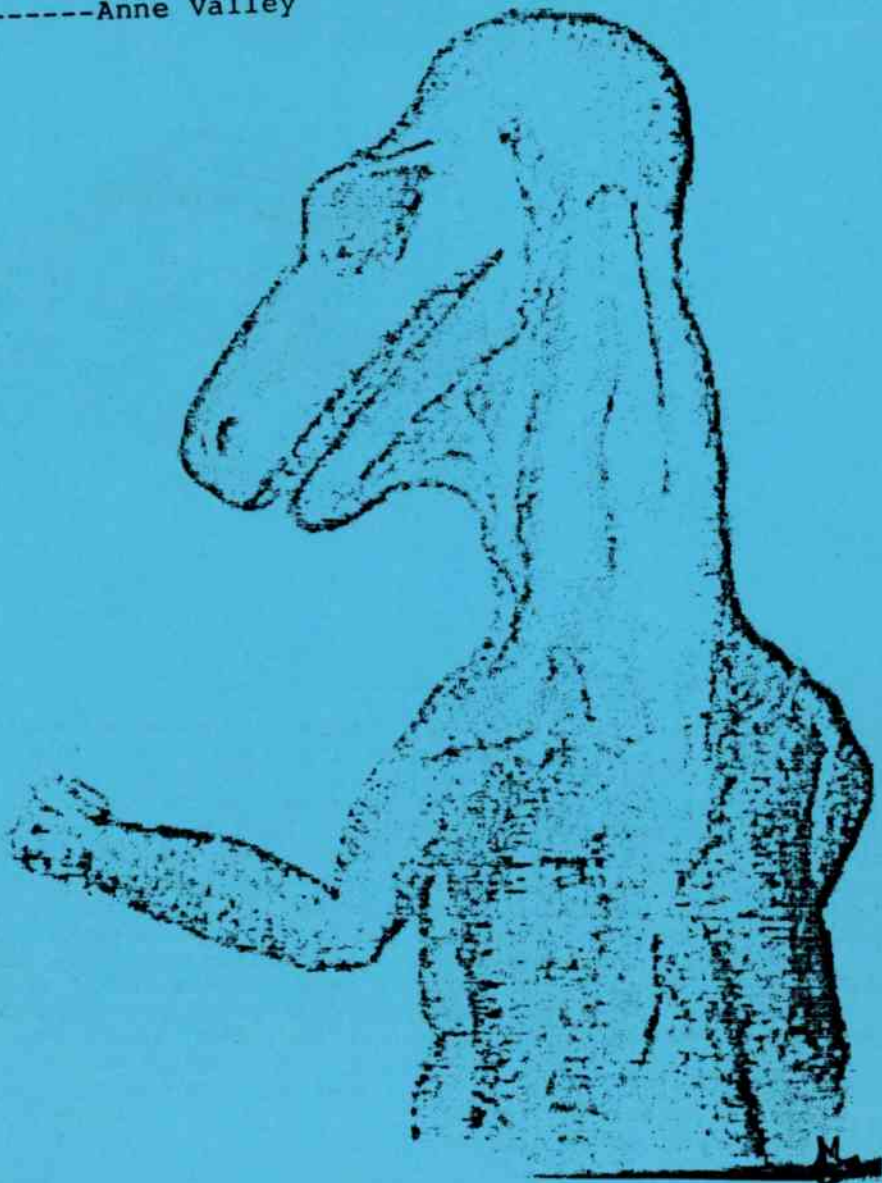
Despite all the old flaws in the show, which will probably never get fixed and are affecting *Deep Space Nine* to some degree as well, there were some bright spots this year, and a good number of outstanding episodes (probably more than last season). The puzzling Riker/Troi relationship was definitively handled at last in *Second Chances*, and both of their characters had good seasons outside this episode as well. Q, Barclay and Moriarty all made reappearances that were as good, if not better, than their previous ones on the show, demonstrating that *Next Gen* can handle sequels properly and with energy. There were also some delightful and unique episodes such as *Lessons* and *Face of the Enemy*, as well as a good number of solid, if flawed, stories.

The most encouraging news for fans is that the season's big trends - toughening up the characters and doing solo pieces - aren't necessarily bad ones, if handled right. Many people seem to want good solo episodes, if the Hugo nomination for last year's *The Inner Light* (*Next Gen*'s only one since *Encounter at Farpoint*) is any indication. And in many ways these trends are good ones, reflecting an attempt to change a show that was settling into a comfortable but increasingly mediocre rut. With a large built in audience, just one season to go, and some actors that are planning to move on, there's a chance for some much bigger changes next year, which could include deaths, transfers, promotions, and (maybe) the introduction of new characters that might shake things up the way the now dropped into oblivion Ensign Ro did. Hopefully the producers will learn from the mistakes of this season, and try to finish the show with stories that understand the characters better and harden them in less obtrusive ways.

MUNDANE'S LOC

a mundanian wrote to the fen
decrying their fantasy pen
angry fen did search
found & put her in TIME WARP LURCH
angrily decrying her pen

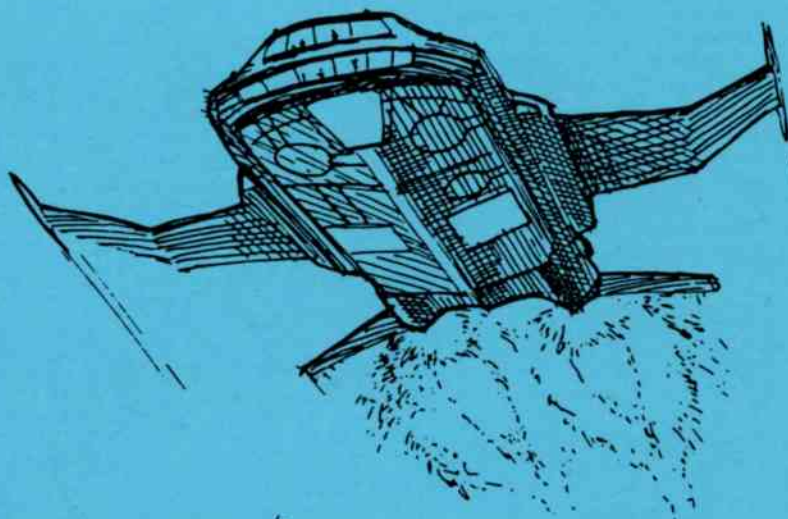
-----Anne Valley



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BRUCE PELZ
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G. Harris - '93

[Continued from page 17]
is something that I wish to address
with the Correspondence Bureau.
There are people who don't want to be
involved in round robins or who want
pen pals in addition to robin
correspondence. Matching up people
interested in individual
correspondence is my goal with the
Bureau. Individual correspondence
has always been my favorite activity
within the club and I want to help
other people get the maximum out of
their membership, for both their
benefit and the benefit of N3F.
Currently in development is a form
which will be used to build a data

base of interested members looking
for pen pals. All interested members
are invited to send me a line
requesting the form. Once I get the
data base built, I will send all of
the initial parties lists of matching
names and addresses. Once the group
is set up, however, I will send lists
only to new persons asking to be
included in the data base. Updated
lists of compatible members will be
available if you send an SASE. This
is our club, let's make the most of
it. In the meantime, I hope to be
hearing from many of you soon.

Bruce J. Connolly
