



AskeW #9

June, 2014

A paper-only personalzine from John Purcell

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ARTWORK: scan of paperback by me - 1;

((((()))

***The Cometeers*, by Jack Williamson.**

Above is the cover of the very first science fiction book I ever read, discounting the Tom Swift, Jr., books I read before. My dad was an avid mystery reader and owned a few hundred paperbacks and hardcover books, so besides reading the Tom Swift, Jr., Hardy Boys and Chip Hilton books my parents gave my brother and I for birthdays and Christmas, whenever I had the urge to read something I would peruse dad's bookshelves. As a result I was reading mysteries a lot as a kid between the ages of 8 and 12, but one day I found the above book wedged in among the Ellery Queen and Rex Stout paperbacks. It looked interesting, dad said "it's like a grownup Tom Swift story," so I read it. No, let me rephrase that: I devoured *The Cometeers*. Read it in one night. Loads of fun for a twelve year old boy to read. When I asked dad if he had any other books like that, he said, "Yeah, there's another in here somewhere," and after a bit of searching he pulled out M.P. Shiel's *The Purple Cloud*. It wasn't as much fun as the Williamson book, but I still liked it. From that point on – this was early in 1967, before my 13th birthday – I read as much science fiction as I could find at the St. Louis Park, Minnesota public library. Yep, I was hooked for life.

But I still read mysteries, plus other fun stuff, too. I just wanted to pass along this little story because April 29, 2014 would have been Jack Williamson's 106th birthday. One of my fondest memories at a

convention was Minicon 12, the Dododecacon, when I met Jack Williamson and told him that *The Cometeers* was the first sf book I ever read. He smiled. I don't remember what he said, but that smile said it all. Thank you for getting me addicted to this stuff, Jack.

News from the Medical Front

Back in March I turned sixty years old. The big 6-0. Another decade down. Ten more years shot to hell. With aging come certain Things One Must Do, as in having an annual wellness checkup with my GP, so in April I took care of that. My doctor said that overall I am in very good health. As near as he could tell from the physical examination, everything checks out as normal, plus I had lost 7 pounds since the previous checkup, so that was another positive. The requisite blood work was done, and when those results came back I was informed that the only thing off was that my iodine level was a bit low, and they would like to run that again in three weeks' time so double-check that to see if the initial test was done correctly. Two days ago I went back in to have that done, and have yet to hear back. Since it is Memorial Day weekend here in America, I probably won't hear back on that until next Tuesday, May 27th. Odds are this fanzine won't be completely done by then, so I can do an update at some point.

The other medical examination required of people reaching the mid-century mark and upwards is to have another wellness check done, namely a colonoscopy. My family does not have a history of cancer, but because of my age – remember, I'm 60 now, getting older, as my loving wife enjoys telling me (repeatedly) – and the big honking internal bleed-out I had 15 years ago (read Dave Locke's fanzine *Time & Again #4* on efanzines for that story, reprinted in Guy Lillian's *Challenger #34*), it is A Good Idea to have that colonoscopy done. Okay, fine. So on May 20th that was taken care of, and the scoping didn't reveal anything nasty going on down there; however, the doctor was a bit concerned about some inflammation in the lower colon. Nothing supremely worrisome, just something to be aware of and watch the diet, yada-yada, you know how this goes. In other words I am in essentially pretty good health with the expected wear and tear one could find on an active 60 year old American male.

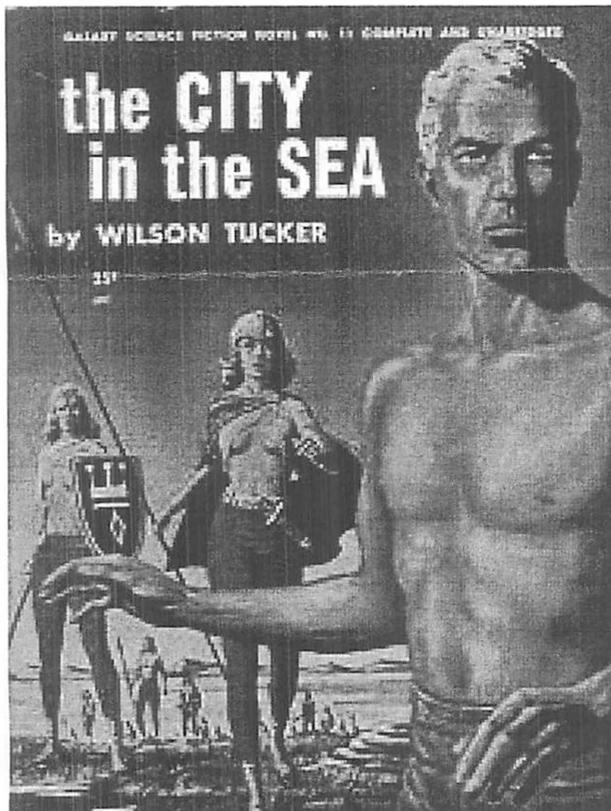
Valerie wants me to emphasize the word "old." I would rather not.

Still reading those WorldCon Freebies

The common thread running through all eight of the freebie books acquired at LoneStarCon 3 is that none of them – at least, of the ones I have either read or attempted to read so far – could really be classified as Science Fiction. Of them all, I think only one – *A Private Little War* by Jason Sheehan – comes close. That book is the 7th in the stack; right now I'm on the fourth book, having recently finished the third one from the pile. The current book is *Redlaw*, by James Lovègrove (2011, Solaris pb), and it falls under the category of Urban Fantasy, a pretty popular subgenre these days. Next issue I will do a full-blown review of this book, but for now, here's what I can say since I just started reading it two days ago and am now on chapter 7 (page87), which is a good sign. The setting is modern day England –

London, to be precise – and once again vampires are the problem, having emigrated from Europe in droves over the past decade or two. (You British really need to do something about your immigration policies, like requiring photo ID's with those Undead Passports. But I digress.) To keep the undead under control and away from the normal populace, they live in what are called Sunless Communities (isn't England always like that?), and policing them falls under the jurisdiction of SHADE, the Sunless Housing and Disclosure Executive. One of their captains is John Redlaw, who has a reputation as being SHADE's toughest, feared and respected officers. He is described as a living legend among the undead, which I think is a nice turn of phrase, even if it does seem a bit trite. For the most part the Sunless don't cause much trouble, and their hunger for fresh blood is kept at bay by tanker-truck shipments of cattle blood, which is okay, but not as tasty or fulfilling as good, old-fashioned live human blood. Well, incidents of the Sunless getting out of hand are increasing, which results in the human population getting more violent toward the Sunless, so to defuse the situation Redlaw is assigned to go into one of the larger communities to find out what's going on, who's responsible for goading the Sunless into these acts, and so on.

The writing style is brisk, lots of action, and the characterization is relatively believable considering the stereotypes that a writer could easily fall into given that books about vampires and other supernatural entities are literally a dime a dozen right now. Lovegrove does a good job of sticking to the story and makes it interesting without getting into nasty, gory descriptive passages. He keeps that under control, which helps. At least Lovegrove realizes he is supposed to tell a story, so he does just that, which means I am very likely going to finish this book.



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No, I don't have this book in my collection, but I sure wish I did! This is included here because I was looking for a bit of artwork online that would fill in some space here, and when I entered the name of the great Ed Emshwiller on an image search, this was one of the multitude of results. The artwork of Emshwiller graced many magazines and paperback covers back in the day, and his style was clean and unadorned. I always liked his sense of proportion (both human and alien) and perspective. This particular cover is a fine example of both. I just wanted to share it with my readers not only to show my appreciation for Emsh, but also to find out if any of you have read this particular book. If anybody has, feel free to let me know. Naturally, I am keeping an eye out for it whenever I hit used bookstores or conventions.

Skewed results

Getting only two locs is my own fault for not sending out enough copies of the 8th issue a couple months ago. I shall definitely rectify that situation as this, the 9th issue, gets into the mails, so expect to get a couple of envelopes or just one fat envelope. Feel free to write a loc on the 8th issue, too. I'm not particular. The 10th issue will play catch up on letters of comment plus a delayed sort of con report.

So my responses here are in Franklin Gothic Demi Condensed, size 11, while letters will be in my standard fanzine font of Calibri size 11. Pretty damned obvious that way. Therefore, without further blatherings on my part, here's a loc from Joe Major:

1409 Christy Avenue
Louisville, KY 40204-2040
itmajor@iglou.com

March 30, 2014

Dear John:

Susan Baugh put me on to Hundred Zeros, a website that lists (sometimes) free Kindle books. You get what you pay for, all too often, and in the time I've been looking at it, the site has shifted more to romances. Just like the paperback section of most bookstores.

As the market grows, writers quest for a niche. Thus, the "fantasy" section of Hundred Zeros is heavily biased towards vampire romances. But then, *Fifty Shades of Gray* is a vampire romance — really, it was originally a *Twilight* fan fiction work. In his review of the book, Dave Barry (he read it so we don't have to) didn't mention that, but it was clear the book fit the romance paradigm. Now if (as I did) it had been not beautiful but vapid Bella, er, Anastasia Steele interviewing billionaire Christian Grey, but Dr. Raoul Duke ("we were halfway to Seattle by the time the drugs began to kick in"), that would have been interesting.

Like Brad W. Foster, I have many family Christmas gatherings to go to. And if I hadn't been so tired last year, I would have gone to more. Some of my relatives have done very well.

The fanzine lounge at LSC2, as I recall, was an alcove in the convention center. Then there was the time the fanzine lounge had to relocate, at Philly.

I am acquainted with another Joseph Major. He lives in South Carolina. The name that really recurs in my family is "James Major". My great-grandfather was James Major, my grandfather was James Major, my uncle was James Major, my first cousin his son is James Major, his oldest son is James Major — a lot of middle names get used. And that's just in my direct ancestry. I know a James Major IV. (Then there is Edgar Evans Cayce IV . . .)

Big MAC was my first WorldCon, too. At least I won't have to share a room with a freight-train-through-a-tunnel snorer. Did you go to Heinlein's Guest of Honor speech?

Namarie,

Joseph T Major

{ Yes, I did attend Heinlein's GoH speech at Big MAC, and remember being very surprised at how he was booed at times during it. While I did not agree with many of RAH's points during his long stream-of-consciousness ramble onstage, the booing bothered me. This was, after all, the WorldCon's Professional Guest of Honor, one of the field's major writers, a multiple award winner, and I felt he was due some respect despite his statements. It wasn't until the next year, I believe, when rumors began circulating that Heinlein had a brain tumor, but - according to the Heinlein Society's biography on their website - he did suffer a Transient Ischemic Attack in 1978 that reduced the flow of blood to his brain. That brings up the obvious question, "was RAH's speech an early warning sign of the TIA he would eventually have?" It's an interesting thought, although I feel one that's subject to wide swings of interpretation. }

Like I noted above, I did get another letter in the mail, this time the old-fashioned way: typed and mailed! Plus the correspondent included a bit of artwork, too. Always good, says I. Her letter has been edited down for space considerations, among other editorial reasons.

25509 Jonnie Court
Gaithersburg, MD 20882

30 May 2014

I add my congratulations to yours for Curt Phillips. I look forward to his trip report after he has enjoyed the bejabbers out of LonCon 3 and dazzled the local fen with his fannish brilliance!

(Not sure whether to say *Askew* or *Askance* - you get to pick and fill in the blank, should oe appear...or is this really my first look at *Askew*? Since I don't believe I have been getting *Askance* either, not sure...so, as I say, you get to figure it out.)

Your comments about *The Concrete Grove*, from my perspective, scream "ya gotta stretch the word count \$o..." [sic, sort of. - ed] This may make (ahem) cents to the author, but definitely not to the reader. If one is hoping to get readers to pony up money for future epistles, then this is not the way to win friends and influence people.

Brad Foster is just too organized! At one point I kept a lot of records, but that was for two separate purposes. One was to document fan artists throughout the ear (by output, zines, breadth of contribution, etc.). The other was to document covers on zines and on paperbacks (but since the bookstores are now all gone, that one is a lost cause). I have a lot of sketches scanned in but not touched beyond that and it is frustrating - yea, one day RSN...

I don't have the cultural basis to understand what the brouhaha was about over Jonathan Ross' choice and I must admit I am on the periphery and *still* have no idea. But you are right in that fen usually are not hesitant to speak up. Your comments about his show (which I have never seen) make me wonder why he would have considered in the first place – guess you had to have been there.

Your zines received list reminds me that I have not yet seen Andy Hooper's zines. Hmm, so one is actually a paperzine (in what appears to be the current parlance what used to be zines – period – sigh). Maybe when (HA) I catch up on the stacks I have waiting and those sketches have been dealt with...yeah...rioght...

So thanks – keep on pubbing!

Sheryl Birkhead

{In order, you were sent *Askew #7*; that issue was mislabeled by accident. My bad. (*) I can't stand padding out novels and stories, but sometimes self-editing is damned difficult. That's what "real" editors are for, I guess. (*) I have been through phases of organization throughout my life, but my collection cataloging effort just Makes Sense for the time when I finally shuck this mortal coil: it should make things easier for my family to take care of my estate – that word definitely makes my junk sound important, doesn't it? – when that time comes hopefully many years from now. (*) Yup. Fans have big mouths. 'Nuff said. (*) Andrew Hooper is on my mailing list, so when he sees this I am sure he will do the proper fannish thing and add your name and address to his mailing list so you can start getting *Flag* as well. The other fanzine he co-produces with Carl Juarez and Randy Byers – *Chunga* – can be viewed at www.efanzines.com. }

FANZINES RECEIVED IN THE MAIL

Quite a few have landed in the Purcell mailbox in the past couple months. Here are the most recent mail invaders:

LOFGEORNOST #115 (May, 2014)

This is Fred Lerner's FAPA zine, and he is kind enough to send it off to folks who are not in the Fantasy Amateur Press Association, sf fandom's longest running APA (since 1937), and it is always a fun and literate read. Fred recently retired, which he notes in this issue, and he recounts yet another trip abroad with his wife, Sheryl, this time to the jungles of Costa Rica. Again, Fred does a fine job of describing the sights, sounds, smells, and tastes of their travels – he's a very sensory writer – and makes me wish I could travel as much as they do. After the trip report, there is a brief "topics" section followed by letters of comment, which are just as literate and interesting as Fred's, from a wealth of respondents, such as Dan Goodman, Lloyd Penney, Bob Jennings, and others. Needless to say, getting *Lofgeornost* in the mail is a treat greatly enjoyed.

AVAILABILITY: Fred Lerner, 81 Worcester Avenue, White River Junction, VT 05001. USA. E-mail address: fred_lerner@dartmouth.edu. For FAPA mailing #307 and limited outside circulation. Try asking him for a copy or send a fanzine in trade.

SCIENCE FICTION COMMENTARY #86 (February 2014) & #87 (April 2014)

Okay. I am climbing out on a limb – probably a very thick and strong branch, for that matter – and state that this fanzine is the best sercon (serious and constructive) fanzine currently being published, and has held this position for many, many years. There is a lot of writing about the fiction and the people producing the fiction – in the 86th issue, for example, there are articles about Robert Bloch, John Clute, Arthur C. Clarke, and others – plus remembrances of fans Peter Darling and Graham Stone. The 87th issue has a focus section on Michael Bishop, a writer not often discussed, but Paul di Filippo does a splendid job giving an overview on Bishop's fantasies; and Bishop himself contributes an article about Steven Utley's Silurian tales and also an original poem. Lots of letters in this issue, which has more of a fannish bent, but is still extremely literate and enjoyable. Why this fanzine doesn't get nominated for awards more often is beyond me.

AVAILABILITY: Bruce Gillespie, 5 Howard Street, Greensborough, Victoria, 3068 AUSTRALIA. Preferred means of distribution is via eFanzines.com, but a limited print run does exist. Email address: gandc@pacific.net.au. Definitely worth asking for a print copy, if he has any extras at hand. Otherwise, go to www.efanzines.com to read it.

SPARTACUS #3 (May, 2014)

Happily, this is another small, paper-only fanzine that some of us fanzine-type fans are beginning to appear. This one comes from Guy H. Lillian III, producer of the oft-nominated fanzine *Challenger*, and I like the way Guy puts it in his colophon box: "A zine of opinion." It is that. This third issue starts off with his viewpoints on the late Fred Phelps and his Westboro Baptist Church, and I doubt many will disagree with Guy's opinions that this "church" is more of a cult following a charismatic leader filled with hate-filled delusions. Other topics Guy delves into are transgender identity, Donald Sterling and the Los Angeles Clippers, the recent blowup regarding Tim Bolgeo's fan GoHship at the upcoming ArchCon, and fanzines. The lettercolumn is solid, and includes two locs from yours truly: he didn't have to publish my loc on the first issue, but I am glad it wasn't left wandering in the vacuum of cyberspace. All in all, an interesting personalzine, one that's bound to generate more interesting letters.

AVAILABILITY: Guy H. Lillian III. 1290 Holly Avenue, Merritt Island, FL 32952. USA. E-mail address: GHLIII@yahoo.com (roman numeral 3 after the initials). Via trade, art, letter of comment, and request.

It was noble music, but the uneducated chipped in and spoilt it, just as the congregation used to do on earth."

from Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven, Mark Twain (1907)

OTHER FANZINES RECEIVED:

A MEARA FOR OBSERVERS #17 (May 2014): Mike Meara. contact e-mail is amfocontact1@virginiamedia.com . "A paper copy is available for emoc, loc, poc or toc, and for agreed upon contributions of articles or art; the PDF route is now preferred for most trades." So there.

DITKOMANIA #93 (May 2014): Rob Imes, 13510 Cambridge, #307, Southgate, MI 48195 USA. Available via the usual means of expressed interest, trade, art, article, or loc. E-mail: robimes@yahoo.com.

FADEAWAY #41 (June-July 2014): Bob Jennings. 29 Whiting Road, Oxford, MA 01540-2035 USA. Available via the usual means of expressed interest, trade, art, article, or loc. E-mail: fabfickbs@aol.com.

THE RELUCTANT FAMULUS #99 (May-June, 2014). Thomas D. Sadler. 305 Gill Branch Road, Owenton, KY 40359 USA. Available via the usual means of expressed interest, trade, art, article, or loc E-mail: tomfamulus@hughes.net.

KATZ KON KORNER

I get it now. It may have taken me a few years to figure this out, but now I understand Arnie Katz's logic: if you can't afford to get to a con to meet a bunch of your fannish friends, host a con and have them come to you. Devilishly clever of that fellow, this.

Here is Arnie's latest endeavor. It is called Toner 2, and I received the announcement zine of this fanzine fan's convention on June 11th, entitled the *Toner 2 Times #1*. So this is a Progress Report providing the necessary poop on when and where it is being held: Las Vegas, Nevada (naturally, since that is where the Katz's live), and at the Palance Station Hotel-Casino from Friday, October 31 to Sunday, November 2, 2014. Even though it will be held in a separate facility with its own programming, Toner 2 is riding piggy-back on another science fiction convention being held that weekend in Las Vegas, GalaxyCon , in an entirely different hotel on that very same weekend. Funny thing: Joyce Katz, Arnie's wife, is listed as the Fan GoH at Toner 2 on the GalaxyCon website. . Not only that, but on page 2 of T2T #1 is the information that "GalaxyCon has just announced a special deal for Toner 2fans that includes GalaxyCon's star-studded Saturday evening banquet as well as the Toner Sunday brunch!" The upshot is that for \$75 a body can register for GalaxyCon AND Toner2, thereby getting a two-fer SF convention deal. And this is courtesy of GalaxyCon's chair, Woody Bernardi. Go to this website <http://www.galaxyconlv.org/> for even more dastardly information about this most confusing development designed to get even more science fiction fans to come to Las Vegas.

Yes, indeed. This is fiendishly clever.

LATE 'I ALSO HEARD FROM' LISTING:

Rodney Leighton – letter and fanzine to be properly acknowledged in the next issue.