

BOSH

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BoSh #2, 28 Mar 69. A selection of quotes from 20 years of Bob Shaw fan activity presented as a reminder to exercise your vote in Taff. Taff ballots are available from Dick Bergeron, 11 E 68, NYC, NY, 10021, or Steve Stiles, 1809 2nd Ave, NYC, NY, 10028.
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FAN FILE (Quandry 13, August 1951)

I was born in 1931 in the middle of the depression -- our bedspring sags very badly. Due to a piece of thoughtless impatience on the part of my parents my birthday fell on December 31st. This pure stupidity meant that one present squared me for Christmas, birthday and New Year -- say! Maybe they weren't so stupid.

At the age of nine a peculiar effect thrust itself into my notice. In every comic or magazine I bought I always wanted to read first the stories about rockets and space flight. For a while I refused to believe the obvious implications and laughed it off. After all, things like that never happen to people you know. But it was futile -- I found myself standing for two hours at a shop window looking at the ASF cover for Lester del Rey's "Lunar Landing" -- and I wasn't able to get the money to buy it! For years I wandered through life alone and laughed at by friends until I met James White and Walt Willis. The latter had been living less than a mile from my front door all the time.

I knew he was there, of course. The same way astronomers worked out the existence of Pluto by its effect on the orbits of the inner planets and various comets. I knew there was some person who periodically flooded the market (second-hand bookshops) with mags. Periodically too - he drained it, generally just before I got there.

Before I became an actifan I was keen on several hobbies such as living and being human, but I don't get time for that now.

THE GLASS BUSHEL (Hyphen 25, Nov. 1960)

A couple of weeks ago, on a run down to Whitehead, I was motoring along keeping an eye open for a petrol station. Filling stations are scarce on the road to Whitehead -- in fact, you might say they are fuel and far between -- so I was going very slowly when I passed through Greencastle. The sight of the old huddled cottages there, examined in detail for the first time in many years, brought another of those sudden onrushes of memory which have, in the past, proved so valuable when Bushel deadlines were drawing nigh.

This time the Proustian gurglings in the subconscious dredged up an early episode that I have entitled, "The Strange Pond of Dr. Moreau".

When my brother and I were small children my father periodically took us to Greencastle to swim. There is no beach there, just a dismal stretch of mud, seaweed and sharp stones; but my father is a man of simple tastes and these things did not bother him. I have since made extensive enquiries and have not yet come across one other person who has swum at Greencastle, nobody else has even considered it.

I don't blame them. Even at that age I could sense a difference between Greencastle and Miami Beach. My brother and I grew to dread those occasions on which Pater separated us from our playmates with the tidings that we were all going to 'the seaside.

Resistance was futile, so we trooped onto the tram and were taken into town, onto another tram and out to the end of the lines and Greencastle. Dutifully we bared our goose pimples to the reddish light of the evening sun, then splashed around until my father decided we had had enough enjoyment for one evening. Sometimes, as a special treat, he brought a snack with him - usually massive, dry soda farls that we could hardly eat. Very rarely he would slip in a doughnut, but only very rarely - they were few and farl between.

One sombre evening, with a chill wind nipping in from the Lough, I was sitting in near nudity amongst the rocks when I got a strange, wonderful idea that transformed the whole outing into a thing of joy. There were crabs at Greencastle, little mud-colored crabs that I had always pitied because they were doomed to live and die right there. My idea, like all great ideas, was simple. There was a clear, clean pond in the park near

home -- I would bring two crabs back with me, put them in the pond and let them start a whole new breed of crabs. Bigger, better, happier crabs. I could see it all - the crabs would do well in their new surroundings, they would spread all over the pond. Soon it would be noticed, it would be in the local papers, people would come for miles to see them and wonder how they came to be there.....

And nobody would know but me and, maybe, the crabs. Perhaps as I walked in the lonely twilight near the pond my little friends would sense my presence and, out in the centre, a pair of nippers would break the surface in a gesture of humble thanks.

Half an hour later, Robert Shaw - Apprentice God - was on a homeward bound tram, firmly clutching a jam-jar from which two dismayed crustaceans surveyed the changing universe.

One thing about these trips was that they really made us hungry. Home and my mother's cooking never seemed so good as on arrival from Greencastle. Gerry and I usually ate twice as much as a normal meal when we got back, swilling it down with hot weak tea and feeling wonderful about being home. But this time I slipped away before the meal and got into the park just before the gates were closed. It was almost dark when I put the crabs into the still waters of the pond and fondly watched them sidle away into the depths. I dropped in a handful of salt that I had thoughtfully brought along to ease the transition from brime to fresh water, then I went home, feeling uplifted.

Childhood enthusiasm can wane as quickly as it waxes, and the next day I was too busy to go and see how things were with the crabs. Things kept cropping up and cropping up and quite a long period of time elapsed before I finally went back to the park. As I neared the gates I began to recapture some of that magical fervour and my step quickened until I was almost running. Suddenly I halted. The pond was no longer there. They had filled it in and built a football pitch in its place.

Occasionally I drive by that spot, but I never watch the football players because, somewhere under those carelessly pounding boots, my two little friends lie silent in the cindery soil.

I should have left them in Greencastle.

THE COSY UNIVERSE (Warhoon 24, August, 1968)

After a hard day at work, there was nothing more pleasant than dropping in for an imaginary hour or two in some familiar, friendly spot like Mercury. As soon as I realised on which planet a story was set I would, if it happened to be Mercury, relax contentedly and watch out knowingly for the landmarks -- the cold night-side, the fairly habitable twilight zone, and the hellish day-side which was a good challenge to anybody who liked to tackle things 'because they were there.' Sure enough, all those planetary features would appear on schedule, and it wasn't long before I had a spurious but firmly held belief that I knew an awful lot about astronomy. In fact, all I did know about Mercury was that it was first from the sun, was small, and had the three homely regions already mentioned. Had somebody asked me to state something fairly basic, like its density, I would've been flummoxed.

Mars was another favourite stopping off place, with deserts composed of red sand so thinly scattered over relics of ancient civilizations that it wasn't safe to walk on them unless your toes were protected by thick spaceboots. The canals ran deep and straight, and Phobos and Deimos constantly jockeyed overhead.

Venus I especially liked because it came in two mutually incompatible varieties -- swamp or dust-bowl -- and I felt equally at home in either. And so it went on, right out to places like Pluto which would have been a most inhospitable globe without the benefit of George O. Smith's Plutonian lens. On the way out to Pluto one always, of course, braved the journey through the asteroid belt -- nobody would have been unsporting enough to loop up out of the plane of the ecliptic and do it the safe, easy way.

And beyond the Solar System was a whole galaxy dotted with familiar stars in whose light many a drama was enacted -- brilliant Deneb, vast red Betelgeuse, and Alpha Centaurus in the next block from Sol -- all of them playing their part in the affairs of stellar empires of which I was a citizen.....