



BRUZZFUZZEL NEWS

THE BATON ROUGE
SCIENCE FICTION LEAGUE
NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 55
JUNE/JULY, 1988

RANTINGS AND RAVINGS BY CLAY

Well, folks...we have only a few lines available to us here...so I feel that it's time to wish all of you a happy and fannish summer, full of hot books and sweet videos!
Notice that the BRSFL Board of Directors will have the annual election at the first meeting in July...those wishing to run for office are included in this issue. -CLAY

BUSINESS NOTATIONS: MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS

March 10, 1988: One of the smaller and more informal meetings of late. Our intrepid editor, Clay, is working at the annual Bag-a-thon for public broadcasting while other members were also conspicuous by their absence. Programming consisted of J.R. reading all sorts of juicy bits from the latest issues of LOCUS and SCIENCE FICTION CHRONICLE to the underwhelmed membership. Conversation was prompted on the subjects of recent deaths in the field (C. L. Moore, Randall Garrett, Lin Carter among quite a few others), the situation with SF clubs in the Soviet Union, and dumb sci-fi movies. Janet complained bitterly about not yet receiving her program book from Conspiracy and, in retaliation, was dunned by the rest of the membership to "write a letter to the concom"! The rest of the hour was filled with gossip about various members of the NolaCon II concom and the impact such tales have on the hearer since these are the folks that are DOING the WorldCon this year -- nervousness and fear are two of the top emotions that come into action.

-- J. R. Madden

MEETING FOR 6/9/88

Marine brought copies of the Comic Buyers Guide article on the recent SWAMPCON (Thanks Mike Curtis!) The proposal from the Sheraton hotel for SWAMPCON 8 was reviewed...looks good. Clay brought up the Board of Directors election and received declarations from five people (for five positions...the convenience!). Diane collected dues from unsuspecting members (Mike's wallet suddenly emptied...Diane smiled.) The 4th of July parade was discussed. A DR. WHO theme was decided upon for this year's entry. Marine brought up the Halloween party...beginning Bruzzfuzzel's 10th year of wonderment. It will be at Diane's clubhouse on the 29th of October. Various local cons were discussed. Ruby, a soon-to-be member, volunteered to build a TARDIS for the upcoming parade...everyone screamed "YES!" Food substances were then partaken of.



SPECIAL NOTATIONS

The BATON ROUGE SCIENCE FICTION LEAGUE, INC. will hold its annual election for The Board of Directors at the first meeting in July. There are five positions to be voted. Below are listed those who wish to be considered for the 1988-89 year. -CLAY

GLENN ALLEN - 6/9/88

I, Glenn J. Allen, wish to announce my intentions to run for membership in the Board of Directors of the B.R.S.F.L. I seek the position because I enjoy the B.R.S.F.L. and wish to become more active and give my full support.

CAROL DEWITT - 6/9/88

I intend to run for re-election to the Board of Directors of the Baton Rouge Science Fiction League, Inc.

JANET HETRICK - 6/9/88

I, Janet Hetrick, hereby declare myself running for the Board of Directors of the Baton Rouge Science Fiction League.

VAUGHN LANDRY 6/20/88

I, Vaughn Landry, wish to run for membership in the Board of Directors of the Baton Rouge Science Fiction League, Inc.

JAMES MADDEN - 6/8/88

Once again, it is that time of year. I tried to dust off one of my previous efforts at this but found them all to have crumbled to dust with age and shame. So, I have to come up with something original despite the depressed brainwave activity with which I am restricted.

The BRSFL may be facing some changes in the coming months. Activity within the club is at a low ebb. We have seen few new members join in recent years. Energy levels are way down. Enthusiasm is lacking. We need to do SOMETHING. I hope to have some good ideas and look forward to their implementation. With that in mind, I would like to announce my candidacy for the Board of Directors yet again. I would hope the remaining members of the club will support my election and work with the whole Board in getting the club lively again.

DIANE YOUNG - 6/9/88

I, Diane Young, hereby state that I am running for the Board of Directors of the Baton Rouge Science Fiction League for the year of July, 1988 to July, 1989.



BRUZZFUZZEL NEWS is published 6 times a year by the Baton Rouge Science Fiction League, Inc., P.O.Box 14238, Baton Rouge, LA 70898-4238. Subscriptions are \$10 per calendar year (includes membership in the club) Also available for TRADES and CONTRIBUTIONS (Type all materials in 5 1/2" columns)
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BRAINSHOW

A COLUMN BY ROBERT CRAIS

BRAINSHOW #2: "Working with 'Monsters': A True and Horrible Story of The Twilight Zone"

by Robert Crais

I was in the little cabin, overlooking the lake six thousand feet up in the San Bernadino mountains, where I had gone to write the novel after five stormy and frustrating and Don Quixotic years of trying to get something worthwhile and true and mine done on television. It was the beginning of December, and cold, and there was a fine fresh powder of snow on the redwood deck and the sort of clear winter sky that shows the Milky Way to fine advantage. There was a full moon. Far up on the ridgeline away from the other cabins as I was, the moon made me think of werewolves, so the Colt Python was on the table by my word processor. The bullets weren't silver, but you do what you can.

The phone rang, and I answered, and Alan Brennert said, "Twilight Zone is coming back as a series and I'm going to be on staff and how'd you like to write some scripts for us?"

Alan Brennert is a nice man. Though he doesn't remember it, we first met during the summer of 1975 when I was in East Lansing, Michigan, attending the Clarion Writers Workshop. He had attended the workshop two years before, and was then an UpComing Young Pro, having sold to Galaxy and P&SF and Analog and several Terry Carr anthologies, and been nominated for the John W. Campbell Award as Best New Writer in the SF field. Alan had dropped by the '75 workshop for a couple of days to say hi to Roger Zelazny and lord it over the rest us. He lorded well. Years later, Alan and I met again out here in The Land of La, and our mutual affections for science fiction and comic books and 60s tv and the island of Maui evolved into what has been a consistent friendship.

"I can't, Alan," I said. "I'm in the middle of my book." Something hard scraped the deck. Branches moving with the breeze?

"Boooooobbbb, it's THE TWILIGHT ZONE!!!!" he said, his voice incredulous that anyone with my interests and background and loves would hesitate to write for The Zone.

"Alan," I said, "I'm out of episodic tv. I'm writing books now, where you get to say what you want to say the way you want to say it without forty-seven imbeciles and their acephalic offspring dummifying-up your work by forcing their "contributions" on you!"

[A Brief Aside: I had stopped writing episodic television six months before and you should know why: though Max Headroom or Moonlighting or Star Trek: The Next Generation may, in your zeal to immerse yourself in an alternate reality and thereby escape the burden of taxes, pimples, and nothing to do on Friday night, conjure in you a heart-palpating fantasy-image of how wonderful it is to be among those creative few who have somehow been elevated above mere flesh and into the flickername realm of the TEE*VVE W*R*I*T*E*R*!!! -- gleaming macro-humans residing in plush towers, having their fever dreams appear full-blown and Faery-like on the magic looking glass, and, best of all, knowing Linda Hamilton personally -- well, lemme tell ya, the fantasy beats the high holy kaka outta the reality, friends. Truth be known, out here in Hollywood, the writer is treated like dog turds. And after five years of putting up with that, of fighting and struggling and chasing the dream -- and actually doing it -- having a part in some of the best television on television, and being recognized for it with Emmy nominations and Humanitas certificates and the like -- I had grown to believe that there was no surcease; no matter how proven you are, no matter how impeccable your credentials, the morons and the braindead still dirty your work, still "improve" you into oblivion by inflicting their stunted sensibilities on what you have wrought. It is the stuff of madness, and I was certifiably mad, and so I left. End of Aside.]

Alan made his voice soft and haunting. The wind blew. Snow tapped against the window with the sound of hard nails. "Remember 'Kick the Can,'" he said. "Remember 'The Monsters are Due on Maple Street.'" Remember 'Will the Real Martian Please Stand Up?'"

I glanced again toward the window. Had something dark quickly ducked beneath the sill?

"Remember 'The Shelter,'" he cooed.

I picked up the Python and went to the window.

"Remember 'Walking Distance.'"

The dreams of childhood. Show me a man who won't chase such dreams, I'll show you a man with no heart, a man of straw.

You have to understand: growing up, I lived for The Twilight Zone. Rod Serling, the winner of more Emmys than any other writer in history, was my hero, and to write anthological fantasy for a show such as The Zone had always been a dream. More than that, it was an homage to a writer whose own work had played such a large part in my development.

So.

Up on the mountain, six thousand feet above the Los Angeles basin in the dark and cold December night, there was the sound of gigawatt electrical generators whining to life, of great steel doors opening, and releasing the parts of me that I had carefully stored away, the parts that had been made hard and cynical and mean in the blast furnace caldron of the television mill. In that small little-boy place within me, the soft and vulnerable part where the soul lives and from where the dreams and wild fancies fly, the-part-of-me-that-chases-dreams-even-when-it-knows-better flipped heavy copper switches and activated the machine and prepared me once more to work in The Arena.

(Alone in the mountains, one is given to dramatic effect.)

I said, "Who's your executive producer?"

"Phil DeGuere," Alan said.

The scree of nail on glass.

I knew the name, Philip DeGuere, and knew his credits, and hearing that he was to executive produce The Zone gave me pause. After all, The Twilight Zone was what it was because of the insight and humanity and sensibilities of Rod Serling. One would think that in resurrecting such a series, a creator of similar talents would be sought, yet such, clearly, had not been done. To wit: you're CBS, you're going to bring back The Twilight Zone, you search all over town for a successor to R*O*D S*E*R*L*I*N*G, and the best you can do is a studio journeyman whose loftiest achievement in television drama is Simon & Simon?!?!?! Phil DeGuere had given us such television milestones as Whiz Kids and Simon & Simon and the more-than-forgettable and thankfully-failed Doctor Strange pilot. He was by no means the worst producer in town; if we examine his work, we find that he is simply another particulate floating in that gray amorphous jelly of mediocrity we deem Average. A perfect choice if you're going to bring back, say, Charlie's Angles or The Rookies. But Twilight Zone? I have a strong stomach. I do not give "pause" easily. Yet, you see, Bruzzfuzzlians, how the mysteries of television can make even the strongest among us swoon with incredulity?

The wind blew.

I took a very deep breath, and let it out. Despite my resistance, I very much wanted to write for The Twilight Zone -- to grab that chance at being even peripherally connected with the genius, Serling. After all, Alan would be on staff, and there was talk that Harlan Ellison might come on the show In a maelstrom world, you take your bit of sanity where you find it. In TV, where strange things happen, maybe, just maybe, there was a chance for this to work out.

"Sure, Alan," I said. "I'd love to write for The Twilight Zone."

The snow fell, but silently, now, and the wind died. I had heard the sound of the werewolf, I just hadn't recognized it.

Once The Zone was on my plate it was impossible to ignore. Ideas dropped down from the ceiling, climbed out of my word processor, and hid in my shoes. Dreams and notions and fantasies that I thought would never find a market finally had one and ran wild in an helter-skelter through-the-looking-glass plunge for realization.

One came to the fore, a nifty little idea that stayed with me and woke me in the middle of the night and wouldn't let me concentrate on the book. It would make a perfect Twilight Zone. It was a small story about a boy who loved monsters and his father who shared that love, and about the relationship that grows between the boy and a lonely old man who moves in down their block. Forget the particulars of the story because they are not important now. More than anything else, this was a story about love and need and aloneness, and was, I now think, years after having written the thing, a love note written to all of us who share an affinity for the fantastic.

I called the story, "Monsters!"
Here's what happened to it.

Several weeks later, I came down from the mountains and had lunch with Alan at a sushi place across from CBS Studio Center in the San Fernando Valley, where Twilight Zone maintained its offices. Alan had earlier told me that The Zone was overbought in gimmick stories, and that they desperately needed material that revolved around character and the human condition. I had boiled down the couple of dozen ideas I had had to five or six favorites that filled that requirement, and wanted to see what Alan thought.

He loved "Monsters!"

We arranged a meeting for the following week when I would come in, meet with the TZ staff, and present my ideas. This is called the "pitch meeting," and, in my multiple capacities as writer/story editor/producer/supervising producer, I had taken part in several hundred such events and was comfortable with the system. When an established writer was involved, the initial meeting is usually more a social situation than any other, to allow the staff to grow comfortable with the writer and the writer to grow comfortable with the staff. Alan had already guaranteed an assignment to me, so I didn't need to convince them that I could write; we simply had to agree upon a suitable story. De rigeur.

So there I was, having gotten to the TZ offices a few minutes early, sitting in their communal room talking with Alan and story editor Rock O'Bannon and the TZ secretaries. Nice offices. Nice secretaries. BUT, strangely, there was an uneasy tension present, noted in the way people sat and moved and glanced at each other, and in a decidedly nervous quality to the banter. I didn't think much of it then; a series just gearing up for production is fraught with deadlines and too much work and overloaded synopses. I'd seen it before and thought nothing of it now. It's part of the job.

A few minutes later, Jim Crocker showed up. He looked tense. Jim Crocker was Supervising Producer of The Twilight Zone, and Philip DeGuere's second-in-command. Alan introduced us (me smiling pleasantly: the cordial professional meeting another professional), and Jim Crocker, whom I did not know from a bean, immediately said, "I read the short story you published in Twilight Zone Magazine. We're not doing anything like that here." He then turned away and disappeared into his office.

Strange tensions.

FLASHCUT: I am in my little cabin in the snow and the wind is screaming through the towering Ponderosa pines and something is on the deck, something large and strong and feral, something that makes scraping sounds on the redwood, something I think I hear . . .

Alan and Rock and I followed Crocker into his office, a large, nicely appointed room with Crocker's desk and a couch and several chairs and a round glass table. Phil DeGuere was not present, and, though Harlan Ellison made a brief appearance, he was involved with the filming of a script he had written and soon departed.

When we got the small talk out of the way, I started going through my story ideas, directing most of the pitch to Crocker, because he was the senior member of the staff present. I won't detail each story; suffice it to say, I was confident with the stories presented, and so was Alan Brennert.

So. The first story, Crocker didn't like.
The second story. "Ennn, not quite right."
The third story. "Don't think it's quite right for us."

Somewhere in here, Crocker got a phone call. It must've been from the White House, because he jumped up and ran out. Maybe they had threatened to take away his parking space.

When Crocker got back, we went through a couple more stories. Big Jim didn't like them, either.

Do you see, O Aspiring Tee Vee writer, how much fun this can be? As an experienced, proven professional possessing great familiarity with the field of sf (far more experience than Jim Crocker could ever hope to possess, cause I grew up in fandom and he didn't), I had laid out five (5) story ideas which I knew to be outstanding, but which -- incomprehensibly -- didn't strike Mr. Crocker as "quite right." We went far past the point of personal preference here, friends. We were in the dark gray land of SOMETHING IS WRONG HERE.

Even Brennert and O'Bannon were looking confused.

So, finally, I laid out Monsters!. Crocker frowned, leaned back in his chair, and fufmufed. Maybe he was nervous about something. Maybe he had an ear infection and had only heard every other word. Maybe, without realizing it, I had slipped into gutter-Russian and hadn't been understandable.

Alan, who looked about as shell-shocked at all of this as I probably looked angry, finally couldn't stand it any more and took control of the meeting. "Jesus, Jim," he said, "I think Monsters! would make a terrific

Zone. I love the relationships and the characters. And there's a sort of poetry to the piece reminiscent to Walking Distance that we can't have enough of."

More fufmufing. "Well," Crocker said, clearly uncomfortable, "maybe."

I stared at Alan. Alan stared at Crocker. What was going on here??? "Jim, this is just the kind of thing we need. It'll make a lovely Twilight Zone."

More fufmufing. More staring. Finally, Crocker stood and said, "Well, if you feel that strongly about it, I guess we could buy it." Then he gave me a smile. A nervous, I-hope-everything-is-gonna-be-okay smile.

I didn't think it at the time, but maybe he had heard the sound of the werewolf, too.

So I wrote the script. I won't tell you about the interim intrigues that came with writing the outline, or the death of my father, or the dummed-up ending certain CBS executives wanted to fob off on the story which prompted me to threaten to send back the money, you keep your money, I'll keep my story! The first draft was thirty-nine pages long, which I cut down to a tight thirty-one, and then to a bow string-taut twenty-nine, and they were the best twenty-nine pages I have ever written. Nothing I had written before and possibly since has been as special as Monsters!. If I was ever going to do anything that would reflect my love of the field and of Serling and of all things magical and wonderful, this was it. I was as pleased as William Proxmire at a Flat Earther's meeting. You could hear my giggles from the Santa Suzanna mountains, all the way across the valley from my house. I smiled so wide I cracked a tooth.

I turned in the script.

That evening, Alan called. He was effusive in his praise. He loved it. He thought it would be one of the top three of four episodes of the year, right up there with Ellison's Paladin of the Lost Hour and his own, Her Pilgrim Soul. He opined that the sun must rise and set from some lower portion of my anatomy. I purred. I always purr when people say such nice things.

In the next few days, the rest of the staff would read the script, meet internally to discuss casting and director selection, and then get back to me. That's usually the way it works.

What I got was silence, silence akin to that found within the heart of a nuclear device. A dark, empty silence from the land of the dead.

FLASHCUT: The cabin windows are sheeted with snow and ice as the wind screams. The lights flicker, darken, then go out. Power line down. Shadows move across the frosted glass. A hand fills the window. Nails like tent stakes etch furrows through the frost . . .

.....TO BE CONTINUED.....



WANDERING RUMBLINGS: THE FANNISH TRAVELS OF J.R.MADDEN

On 12-13 December 1988, the Dr. Who Tour visited Baton Rouge. The show includes: a semi-rig with memorabilia from the show inside the trailer, a sales area of Who stuff, and "Bessie," the car driven by Jon Pertwee's version of the Doctor. And, for a while at least, Jon Pertwee was along to talk to his fans and sign autographs. Inside the trailer, costumes of various of the Doctor's enemies from across the years were displayed behind glass with lighting effects confounding any attempts at photography. The exterior of the trailer was painted in garish colors with impressions of the show's settings.

Louisiana Public Broadcasting (LPB) was going to

be doing some remote work from the site as part of the conclusion of its WinterFest fund raiser. All the local science fiction clubs were asked to volunteer labor to help in the event in return for free admission and discounts on merchandise. Jon Pertwee was to make several speaking appearances and sign autographs.

The location was a small shopping mall (slowly dying) in the south central portion of the city near our home and very accessible from the Interstate. The crowds were never that huge despite such expectations on the part of the BBC personnel in charge. There are a lot of Who fans in the Baton Rouge area but nothing like the numbers in the bigger cities like Los Angeles.

Mr. Pertwee was a nice enough fellow but one could see the huge ego that was present in the actor. He would balk about having to wait around for the remote crew to get everything ready to tape the breaks even though he must have dealt with such delays throughout his career. The crew, some professionals with the station and some volunteers helping as part of the fund drive, did their best to be ready to roll when Mr. Pertwee was willing to come to the set. Each day of the show, he was scheduled to "perform" twice for those who paid their \$5 to hear him and to view the van contents. His shows were about one and a half hours long and consisted of anecdotes about the show plus answering questions from the audience. He was very courteous to his fans and would sign autographs after the shows for what seemed like hours.

The BRSFL turned out in good-sized numbers and some Who club members from New Orleans drove up to help. I was there only on Saturday, the 12th, and I think enough folk came back on Sunday to continue the work. Late Saturday afternoon, most of the folks went over to the nearby WLPB studios to man the phone bank for the evening which was to feature two long episodes of the Pertwee era of the show.

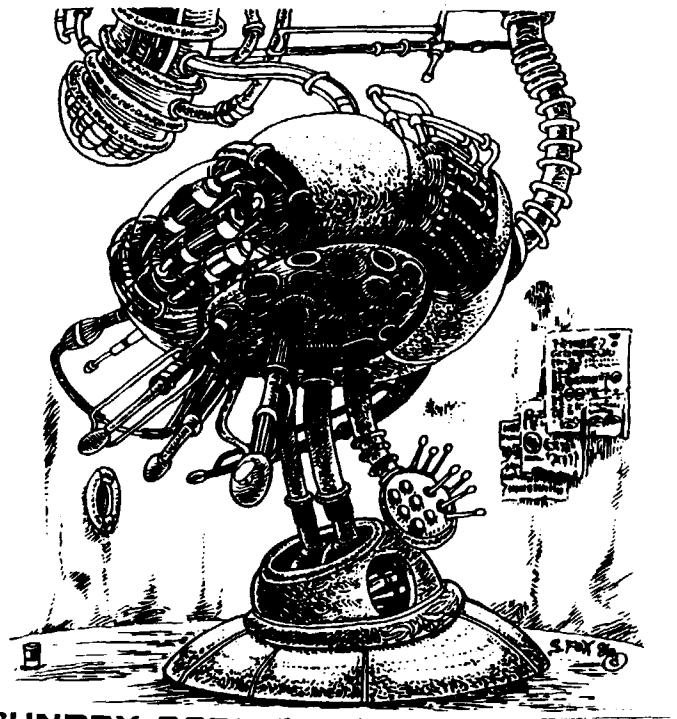
Mr. Pertwee made some live appearances during the breaks and we took some large pledges for the fund drive. In an effort to help with the pledges, he offered to talk over the phone to those folks who would pledge a specific, large amount to the campaign. It was helpful to have actual representatives of the BBC on hand to explain some of the problems U.S. public television has from a different viewpoint. In Great Britain, the BBC is financed through a tax which is collected annually on every television set in the country. Quite a difference from here.

Personally, I am not much of a Who fan. I do have some of the books about the show but I have only seen a few of the Tom Baker episodes and, before that evening at LPB, I had not seen any of the Pertwee episodes which came as a big surprise to one of the Who fans from New Orleans. She asked how many times I had seen the episode that was showing on the monitor and I replied that I had never seen it before. A sort of glazed look came over her and she walked away. Maybe the idea that I was there to support LPB primarily and did not particularly have much interest in Dr. Who was a concept she couldn't handle.

Which brings to mind an occurrence at the mall during one of the taping spots. They wanted a group of fans to arrange themselves behind Bessie which had been the background of all the shots so far. One of the on-camera "talents" wanted to ask questions of the fans and asked for those who were members of LPB (had sent money) to hold up their hands. Out of the thirty or forty folks there, I was one of the two that raised a hand! Here are these fans who love this show so much but they won't shell out any money to help keep it on the air. Clay has talked about these folks before; people will ask why LPB doesn't show this program or that program and he will ask when did they send in any money to help with the program costs. Most times, they answer in the negative. They want the shows but they don't want to pay for them.

+++++
 EDITORS NOTES: It's interesting to view a "lay person's" ideas on television production. Maybe, as a TV producer, I'm just used to it, but neither I nor my crew found Jon Pertwee to have either a "large ego" or start "balking" at any delays...at least no more than expected. I've dealt with some true "media bitches" over the years...I didn't find Pertwee to be one.

J.R.'s last comments are especially true...and painful. While it is the fans who scream the loudest about some program's tape problems or being played out of order...while it is they who call and complain about not having a show like DR. WHO or BLAKES 7 on the air...while it is the fans who constantly ask me why LPB doesn't get this or that...it's still NOT the fans who really contribute to the network during those SF shows! Strange as it may seem, the main contributors are just everyday individuals who just happen to like SF shows. (I know this because I run through the calls and pledges received...trying to find the names of people I recognize.
 Interesting, isn't it! -CLAY FOURRIER



SUNDRY SCRUTINIZINGS: A LOOK AT BOOKS WITH ANTHONY WARD

Before starting my reviews, I'd like to make a few comments (Thanks Clay). I'd like to thank the people who have written comments about this column to the BRSFL News. I try not to give major plot points away in my reviews, but some times it happens. I'll try to watch it more carefully in the future. You all may have wondered why most of the books I review are ones I've liked. Haven't you wondered why I never totally savage some piece of schlock? I've found that lately I don't finish a lot of books. Most of the ones I don't finish are the "bad" ones. I figure that if I can't finish a book I can't honestly review it. So, most of the books I will cover are books I can normally recommend. Mostly they are the ones that register above a 5 on my personal scale of 0 to 10.

First up this time is a real good one. ORPHANS OF CREATION, by Roger MacBride Allen. Baen Books. \$3.50. is a real change for Mr. Allen. This seems to be his third book. His first two were a couple of very good space operas that I liked. But this time he has gone off in a completely new direction. ORPHANS is set in the modern day world, the day after tomorrow. A paleoanthropologist, who works for the Smithsonian, goes home for Thanksgiving to the old family plantation in Louisiana. While there, she opens an old trunk of her great grandfather's and finds his personal diary. He mentions in passing that while he was a young slave on the plantation in the 1850s, his master tried to import and use non-human "creatures" for slaves. After they died of various diseases, the master tried to bury them in the slave's cemetery. The slaves almost revolted and eventually the "beasts" were buried near a crossroad near the cemetery.

Our heroine thinks this sounds like somebody tried to import gorillas or chimps from Africa for use as slaves after slave trading was outlawed by the Federal Government. And she wants to see if she can find these "creature's" remains. She only has the weekend after Thanksgiving before she has to be back to her job in Washington to do a search. And it looks like she will have to do it alone as the rest of her family think she's a little nuts. She eventually gets a cousin who is working on his Masters Degree in biochemistry to help her "dig". I put quotations marks around "dig" because she goes about it just like she would do in the field on a "real" excavation.

But the remains they find are not those of either gorillas or chimps. They are the bones of five australopithecus boisei, an early "cousin" of primitive Homo Sapiens, that were obviously alive in the 1850s, a million years after all experts were sure that they had become extinct. The rest of the book is about how

this discovery effects and changes the people involved in the discovery and eventually the entire world. To give you an idea of the issues discussed in the book, here are some examples. Just what is a human being? A person? Only a member of homo sapiens? But does this mean that a. boisei are just animals and have no rights? Is it slavery to use them as workers? How about in medical research?

While I liked the characters and their story in the book, I also enjoyed the issues brought up in the story. With both the medical and biotechnical sciences and our ability to perform genetic engineering advancing as fast as they presently are, while there may not really be any a. boisei out in our woods, what about genengineered super intelligent apes in the future? Something like THE PLANET OF THE APES or David Brin's future has a good chance of actually being our future. How will we react if such a situation comes to pass? As DRFHANS points out, slavery not only destroys the culture of the slave, but eventually also that of the master. I give this book an 8.5.

THE PRICE OF GLORY, by William H. Keith, Jr., FASA, \$4.95 is the third in a series of adventure and future combat novels set in the BATTLETECH role-playing game universe. I enjoyed the first two series books by Keith, who has previously developed quite a reputation as a creator of scenarios for various wargames and role-playing games, and was looking forward to this book as the climax of his exciting series.

First, a little about the series', and the RFG's, background. After centuries of war and after the Star League, Humanity's central government, disintegrated, interstellar civilization is in ruins in the 31st century. Most people look upon science and technology like we look upon magic. While there is still a lot of high technology machinery still around, and while there are a few techs trying to keep the remaining machines repaired and operating, very little new machinery is being built.

Armies are carried from system to system in the few remaining starships, which are totally off limits to attack. Most fighting is done either by aerospace fighter craft or on the ground by warriors mounted in huge, man-piloted, robotic, fighting machines (just like in all the Japanese cartoons). Most of these machines are held together by spit and bailing wire, and the tireless efforts of a few priceless technicians. Many of the machines are owned and operated by mercenary units that fight for any individual ruler willing, and able, to pay the most.

After so much destruction spread over so many years, there has developed a few rules of battle to protect the remaining spoils so that the various fighting forces can be kept in the field. With so much technology lost, cities and factories are off limits, as are the technicians and workers who build new equipment.

Our heroes are members of a mercenary unit called the Gray Death Legion. It was created and is lead by 26 years old COL Grayson Death Carlyle. At the start of the story, the Legion has just won control of a disputed planet for their employer, by the brilliant leadership of COL Carlyle. After being told to report back to the capital world as soon as possible, they leave.

After they leave the captured system, the Duke, their ex-employer, nukes the cities of his new world. On their way back to the capital, the Legion's starship stops in the system holding the world that had been given to them for payment for winning many previous battles. There they find their home base destroyed and many of their dependents and support techs killed or captured. The Legion has to invade their own world to save their surviving people. But once on the planet they find the entire Legion has been outlawed for "their" destruction of the surrendered planet.

They spend the remainder of the book trying to survive, win various battles, find out what is really going on, and finally attempting to clear their names. I enjoyed this book, as I did the rest of the series. Keith can write good, exciting, battle scenes, and can make his characters, both good and bad, come alive. But as the climax of the series, it didn't work. Maybe FASA found out they had a winning series on their hands and told Keith to keep it open ended so he could write

more. After all, this book is a buck more than the first two so he must be doing something right. Anyway, I do give the book a 6, as an individual book, and I'll give the series a 6, also. But both would have been higher if the series had been truly resolved.

A little digression here before continuing on to the next book. Lately I've noticed a minitrend of pessimism about the long term future of Humanity in a lot of the best SF novels. It may be just a reaction to earlier more optimistic SF works or it may just be a parallel reaction to a lot of modern scientific thought, but a lot more pessimistic, "hard SF" books seem to be being written lately. Dr. Benford and the cyberpunk gang seem to be practitioners of this new style. However, Greg Bear has a new book that can almost be a companion to Benford's GREAT SKY RIVER. Both say that the Universe is a cold and cruel place, that the future belongs to the nonorganic intelligences, and Humanity doesn't count for spit. Not an idea I can really get all warm and fuzzy about.

THE FORGE OF GOD, Greg Bear, SF Book Club, is an good, in both senses of the word, example of this pessimistic type of book. It starts out in about 1996 with the disappearance of Europa, one of the moons of Jupiter. Soon after this event, two artificial rock formations are found. One is in Australia and one is in Death Valley. Out of the Australian rock comes three robots that say they have arrived on Earth to bring wonders of technology to Humanity. Out of the American rock comes the Guest. He is an organic being who says he and his race are stowaways on the machines that destroyed their planet and that Earth is next for demolition. For the rest of the book, collective Humanity first discovers how these machines are going to do the job and then must decide how it is going to spend its collective final days when everyone comes to realize that there is absolutely nothing anyone can do to influence the final destruction of the Earth.

Not a very jolly book. The situation is fascinating, the scientific detective work done by the Good Guys is interesting, and the way Humanity ends its days is the way I'd hope we would react if this was to actually happen. I can highly recommend this book without really liking it. I just don't like the background postulates of this book. But then the characters in the book don't either. Maybe the future of the Universe will belong to vast, cold, machine intelligences that go around stamping out organic intelligence like we go after cockroaches. But I don't have to like it. I still give this book a 7.5 because Bear can certainly write a good read. The final destruction of the Earth made me want to weep.

For a change of pace, next is NONINTERFERENCE, by Harry Turtledove, DelRev, \$3.95. Ever wonder why the guys in Star Fleet have the Prime Directive? Harry Turtledove not only gives the reason, but also gives us how Star Fleet would probably really react to Kirk's many transgressions. They'd probably try to cover it up.

In Turtledove's future, the Federacy rules the local volume of the Galaxy and Humanity rules the bureaucracy that rules the Federacy. Every 1500 years the Federacy Scouts try to visit all pretechnical civilizations to see how they are progressing. But there is supposed to be no interference with any culture's natural progression. However, on one little nothing of a world, a crew finds a small city-state with a Queen who is trying her best to help her people. It helps that they are humanoid to a very high degree and the Queen is beautiful, intelligent, and "good", in the best sense of the word. She is also dying of stomach cancer. One of the Scouts convinces the rest of the crew to cure her after they met her face to face and he realizes how extraordinary she is. They do cure her and, when they return, they are all court-martialed for the interference.

1500 years later another Scout ship lands and finds a much more advanced civilization than they should have that covers most of the world. And all the inhabitants worship an "Immortal Goddess". You guessed it. The Queen is still alive. After all, she was not a Terran human, and the cancer cure has somehow made her immortal. But she is still "good". She has matured into almost a real goddess and everything has turned out for the best.

However, when the Scouts return to civilization,

all Hell breaks loose. The head of the Scout Service tries to cover the scandal up to keep her budget from being cut by the anti-technology and anti-Scout members of the Federacy Parliament. Unfortunately, the cover up that starts by erasing a few computer records soon leads to murder, mass murder, and attempted delacide. And to a final climax that is very ironic.

I enjoyed this book a lot. It is a strange mixture of SF, spy novel, and political thriller. Turtledove has a lot of fun with it, and his enjoyment carried me over a few rough spots in the story. His vision of a future bureaucracy that is so powerful it stops all human progress is a little dark, but I still give it a 6.



I thought ARROW'S FALL, by Mercedes Lackey, DAW, \$3.50 was to be the third and final book in a nice fantasy trilogy. But Lackey seems to have been bitten by the "don't-really-end-the-series, we-can-still-make-money-with-this-sucker (I mean series)" bug. The series does reach a major climax and many of the characters' problems are resolved. However, there is still a lot of room for a sequel, or possibly twelve. This is not entirely bad in that the major characters are still interesting and Lackey's world still has a lot of mysteries left to be explained.

For a fast recap of the series, in the first book we met our heroine, one Talia. She was born into a repressive religious sect that, among other things, did not believe in female liberation ("Let girls learn to read, and who knows what kind of trouble they'll be getting into next!"). However, as she grew up, she was always a misfit and actually learned to read, a little. When she couldn't take the repression any more, she left her home when she was about 14. As soon as she had left her home, she was found by a "Companion" and became a "Herald", went to the capital city, became the Queen's Own Herald, and was educated at the local university. She also became entangled with a lot of political infighting and plotting among the Nobles at the Queen's Court. She also turned the Queen's daughter, nicknamed "the Brat", into the Crown Princess Elspeth.

In the second book, Talia was sent out with another, older Herald to ride her first circuit. In Talia's land, Heralds are partners with intelligent, telepathic, horse-like, magical Companions. Heralds and their Companions act as messengers, information gatherers, judges, and, sometimes, even cops for their King or Queen (who also must be "chosen" by a Companion to be considered fit to be Ruler). Talia also had to learn how to control her psionic power as a super empath. She not only can read other being's emotions, but also impress her own emotions on others.

In ARROW'S FALL, almost every major character and every major plot strand from the first two books comes together. Talia and the rest of the Heralds must combat both an internal conspiracy to overthrow the Queen and the external threat of a resurgence of an evil cabal using the Old, Real Magic in a neighboring Kingdom. The atmosphere of this novel is a lot darker than that of the first two books. While the first two books had a little more sex and violence than the average young Adult novel, they read like YA books. This one is an adult novel, in the best meaning of the word.

However, while ARROW'S FALL is more adult in tone, its characters and plot still display a nice sense of

reality. Lackey's people laugh, sing, get mad, do stupid things, and generally carry on like real people. I liked the series, so I'll give this book a 7. And I'll even give the overall series a 7. But I wish she'd tied up the series as a trilogy and not started another infinite series.

In case you didn't know, Lackey is also a good folk song writer and has the words to many songs from the story printed in the back of the book. A filktape of words and music, nicely sung, is also available from Off Centaur Press.

BETWEEN THE STARS, by Eric Kotani and John Maddox Roberts, Baen Books, \$3.50, is another third book of a trilogy that may have additional books still to come. ACT OF GOD and THE ISLAND WORLDS were the first two books in the series. I've generally liked all three books and can recommend the whole series.

The series tells the story of Humanity's conquest and exploitation of the rest of the Solar System over the next two hundred years. Most of the series' main characters in the three books are members of three interrelated families. There are the Kurodas, descendants of a Japanese industrial clan that provided much of the seed money to open Space to free enterprise, the Taggerts, descendants of an American military/astronaut family, and finally the crazy Cianos, descendants of one of the most brilliant, but eccentric, scientists of the early 21st Century.

In the first book, these three families were instrumental in first saving the West from destruction and a Soviet takeover by stopping the Soviets from using a comet to destroy the American heartland. Second, they were also instrumental in opening the Solar system to development by the power of the free enterprise system.

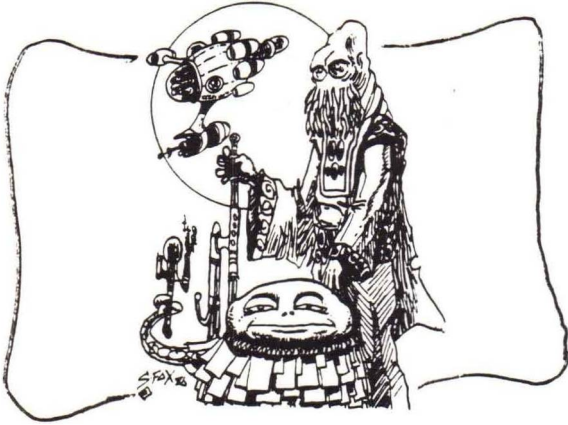
The second book was set 75 years later. It was the story of how the Earth First Party first took over the Earth's democratic nations, then the entire UN, and finally created a real world government, by attacking the Spacers' colonies. The three families were instrumental in first unifying the various Spacer groups and then leading them against the forces of the Earth. The First Space War ended in the defeat of the Earth Forces and the independence of the Lunar, Martian, and Asteroid Confederacy nations.

BETWEEN THE STARS is set 30-40 years after the end of the First Space War. Population, economic, and ecological conditions on Earth have continued to deteriorate. The Earth First Party has set up a corrupt one party state and rules the Earth with an iron hand. The Spacers have not yet been able to create a ftl drive, but several asteroidal colonies have set off using their standard matter-antimatter engines on slower-than-light trips to the nearer stars.

Derek Kuroda was scouting on the surface of one of the minor moons of Saturn when he tripped. He had stumbled over two alien artifacts just lying on the moon's surface. They looked like glass eggs but massed several tonnes. After turning one "egg" over to his employers, he took the other to his Aunt, one of the greatest, but weirdest, physicists of their time. This started a race to discover what the alien devices were and how this knowledge could benefit all Mankind. Or various individuals.

Back on Earth, a political storm had been brewing ever since the Earth lost the First Space War. With the discovery of the artifacts, the most fascistic leaders of the Earth First Party stage a coup and begin a military build-up to conquer the entire System. This only adds impetus to the race to discover what the eggs are and how to use them to save the Spacer's civilization from the degenerate Earthers.

This is a good book. LOTS of tension and a good plot, with good guys who are Good and bad guys who are Bad. But even the most evil character is a recognizable human being. I've liked the whole series and I really liked BETWEEN THE STARS because of the basic premise of the series. Mankind must move off the Earth because eventually we are going to foul our nest so badly that the continued existence of Mankind will depend on our expanding into new ecological niches. Besides, it would be so neat to have a star drive and be able to see the Wonders of the Universe. I give it a 7.5.



COLLECTED CORRESPONDENCES

4/26/88

SwampCon, Inc.
Box 14238
Baton Rouge, LA 70898

Dear Marine, Carol, Diane, and the whole gang:

Well, I just want to thank you for another great convention. I dearly love coming to SwampCon. Y'all do so much to make your guests comfortable.

Both Debbie and I had a terrific time, and I hope the con went as smoothly for y'all as it did for me. The panels were good and my reading was well-attended. I spent the whole weekend basking in attention and eating shrimp. What more could any pro ask for?

I've already got next year's dates circled on the wall in my office. I don't have an '89 calendar yet, so I just have the numbers scribbled on the peach paint. I'm already looking forward to it.

Your pal,
George
George Alec Effinger

Dear everybody,

27 April 1988

Just a note to thank all of you for your kindness and hospitality at SwampCon. Karen and I enjoyed ourselves very much. We will certainly be recommending your event to others.

We hope we'll see you again sometime. All best wishes.

Cordially,

Paul
Paul Anderson

May 31

Dear Bruzzfuzzers—

You publish an abundance of Steven Fox art, but his detailed work deserves better than reduction to postage-stamp size. You would greatly increase their impact if you cut in half the number you use without reducing the amount of space devoted to them. Why not for one issue bump the rantings, ravings, rumblings and reviews in favor of 1/2-page cover art by Mr. Fox?

The science fiction fan "observers", as J.R. "Mad Dog" Madden calls them, are not as parasitic as he makes them out to be. Fandom needs them as much as it needs the active fans. They far outnumber the active fans. It is the buying power of these masses that has allowed science fiction to change from a mere genre into an accepted artform. Money not only attracts the best talent from without, it allows it to develop from within.

Robert Adams' letter reporting his experience with the obnoxious party guest reads like a chapter out of a cyperpunk novel. Although I enjoy reading fictional accounts of such behavior, I abhor such behavior in person. In fiction, you can lock the offending party away between the pages. I look forward to partaking of Mr. Adams' hospitality at the next convention we both attend and giving him a little gentle, verbal ribbing about the kind of individuals free treats attracts.

Beast wishes,

David Thayer

Dear Clay:

The two most recent Bruzzfuzzels were entertaining and edifying alternately and sometimes simultaneously. Also, there were a few square inches that went unread, simply because I couldn't come with the microest type reduction you used here and there.

J. R.'s co-report provided a more balanced account of the Brighton worldcon than most that I've seen (and to this day, there have been remarkably few long fanzine descriptions of that event, leading me to wonder if the split between convention fandom and fanzine fandom is growing even wider). I shouldn't complain, since I don't go to worldcons, but I can't for the life of me understand why their planners try to take certain aspects imitative of the Oscar awards ceremonies and the Olympics opening ceremonies and certain other show biz spectacles. Even though worldcons have become big, they still don't have budgets of many millions of dollars and the best technicians in existence to make sure these sensational events go off properly and aren't affected enough to justify the time and trouble they involve.

The new Star Trek series seems to threaten to generate as much fanzine wordage as the original three years of the series did. I suspect that the large cast of regular characters which John Ardus' mention is Hollywood's way of preventing television series from falling victim to the misbehavior of one important cast member. Remember the commotion when ~~somebody~~ one major character on Bonanza had to be dropped because the actor didn't want to play him any more, and here recently how a series had to be revamped because Valerie Harper became obstinate? If you have ten or twelve continuing members of the cast who have more or less equal prominence, defection by one of them won't cause nearly as much trouble for the producers as when there are only three or four in starring roles.

I was glad to see the advertisement in this same February-March issue. If I can live a couple more years, I should reach the top of the SFPA waitlist and I'll need some way to get my publications into the mailings. If the Lynchils are still doing business at the time of that future date, I might avail myself of their services since their rates seem very reasonable.

In the April-May issue, Anthony had criticized war books a bit too much to mesh with my pacifistic inclinations. However, I thought he did a good job reviewing these books and he did interest me in Team Yankee. But the way things are going, it looks as if the United States might fight World War Three side by side with the USSR against China and her allies, instead of the Yank-Russ conflict that all the doom-sayers have been warning against. First Citizen sounds as if it might almost be read as an allegorical retelling of the original Civil War, since the Confederate government had thoughts about expanding into Mexico and disliked strong Federal powers, just like events in the Thomas T.(homas?) Thomas book.

Mr. J. R. shares my beliefs about the problems with all these "fans" who don't do anything but look and listen. In the old days, we normally didn't consider the individual who just boughtazines and read them and did nothing else to be fans, so I think it's right to use the term "observer" instead of fan for those who don't do anything when they attend local fan gatherings. Of course, this is the era when more and more is done for the average person so I suppose the trend in science fiction fandom is understandable. When I got my first good camera, I had to adjust shutter and aperture for each picture, turn a dial to advance the film, and focus on the subject. Most came as today do all that automatically and I wouldn't be surprised if before long there will be cameras programmed with all the customary snapshot subjects and capable of exposing a frame of film automatically whenever something picturesque happens in front of them. When I started to buy records, even if an automatic changer was in use it took time and effort to load a stack of 78 rpm discs and then remove them one by one, turn them all over, reload them and play the other side. Now you just slip a tiny compact disc into a player to achieve the same effect. It's harder and harder to find a spot in the nation where you won't hear records playing from passing autos, sound systems in stores, boom boxes and other sources so maybe it will soon be unnecessary even to put a CD into a player.

The illustrations are splendid and the lists of forthcoming cons and current fanzines should prove very useful to some of your readers. I believe about half of all general circulation fanzines published in the United States are now connected in some way with local or regional fan groups and I suspect this may be the first time in the history of this nation's fanzines that this has been the case.

Yrs., &c.,

Harry Warner, Jr.
Harry Warner, Jr.

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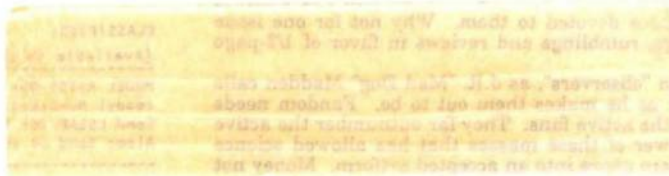
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