



**Comments 12**



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## **The Southerner #221**

I have to admit I'm getting used to checking the web for the contents as soon as the deadline passes. You and I need to get together, maybe even actual voice contact ☺, and discuss setting up a more permanent SFPA site.

## **Tyndallite #95**

**Norm Metcalf**

All the recent discussion of John W. Campbell, Jr. recently in the APA brings back to mind all the stories of mine that got rejected by *Analog*. I did get one manuscript returned with comments on how to fix the story. Unfortunately, at the age of 14, I didn't know how to apply the suggestions nor did I see them as a show of interest in the story.

The 'Dean Drive' made a pretty good paint shaker, which is what I believe it was patented as. I suppose it got so much unwarranted attention because all of us wanted a space drive so badly. I liked Campbell's editorials but always took them with a big grain of salt. Those of us who truly lust for the future to be now are easily fooled by our own dreams. I think that happened to Campbell on more than one occasion.

## **Confessions of a Consistent Liar 74**

**Arthur D. Hlavaty**

Joe Celko is a "Name" in the data base world. He's written some very good books on SQL. I own a couple of them.

Pity you had to get married just for job benefits. I suspect it won't be much longer before most insurance plans start treating 'life partners' the same as married couples.

## **The New Port News 197**

**Ned Brooks**

I noticed that my spell checker had gotten out of control and changed the title of your zine to *The Newport News* in the last issue of *Comments*. I some times wonder if the spell check doesn't cause more problems than it fixes.

All those "Mxxxxx" files are things like images downloaded from the web. The browser keeps them in case you want them in the future. I don't know about Netscape but Explorer has a place to delete them and to set how much of your disk is used to store them. On some PCs I've worked on there were thousands of files in the browser cache! You do want to leave them in place because they significantly speed up visiting sites you've been to before. Oh, they also leave a clear trail of where you've been and what you looked at.

The issue with the *Gone With the Wind* parody is whether or not it's a parody. I got to read a little bit of it that was posted on the web for a short time and it didn't read like a parody to me.



I guess that's a value judgment since I know of no legal standard that actually defines what a parody consists of. Of course I suspect you could argue that if you have to study the work to decide if it's a parody, then it's not.

Metered postage is immune from the 1-lb limit because it's traceable. At least that's the logic that was used to exempt it from the rule. Pretty silly since there is nothing to stop a would be mail bomber from getting a postage machine or stealing postage from some company. The whole thing is pretty stupid. Especially since most post office workers don't ever glance at the person handing them a package.

## Variations on a Theme #6

Rich Lynch

On the subject of comfortable cars, pick the Jag. The '57 Chevy convertible is great for cruising for chicks but murder for long trips. I once rode / drove one to Chicago and my back hurt for weeks. The cars in the Fifties were mostly designed for style with no compromises for comfort or reliability. That said, I really want a 1959 Studebaker Silver Hawk. The windows stick, the seats are a nightmare, parts are unobtainable and safety features are nonexistent but the car has style.

I think you missed my point about the market. It's not that I actually think anyone could have stopped the loses taken there; it's just that I get tired of hearing people talk about how good the economy was under Clinton. If your going to give him credit for the biggest stock bubble since the radio era, you need to also give him the blame for the bubble bursting. In reality he had nothing to do with either. Oh, the 30% figure was the overall value of the stock market not any of the averages. We some times forget that there are a lot of stocks that are not in the Nasdaq or the Dow.

I do disagree with your apparent feeling that the economy of the country is not coupled to the stock market. It is. Holdings in equities represent a significant percentage of the total wealth of this country. Income from those holdings pays something like, I used to have the real numbers, 50% of the income tax collected by the IRS. That means that if the market trends down income in the sector of the population that pays a lot of the public bills also goes down. "Trickle down" economics became a joke in the Reagan years but the effect is very real. If corporate income falls, the entire country suffers.

It takes awhile for the effect to hit the average wage earner but it does. All those companies with multi billion dollar valuations didn't just make money for investors; they spent money. Money that is no longer in the economy. We're seeing the effect right now as companies lay off workers because all those Net companies aren't buying hardware, office supplies, software, janitorial services and leasing buildings. This means the companies that produces all those things aren't spending on capital improvements but laying off workers to kept their margins up.

It would be nice if the people who lost all that money on the market were all rich Republicans but they weren't. They were the guy next door who has a 401k that has lost value.

I firmly believe that what we have seen so far is just smoke that precedes the fire.

On the subject of layovers on long fights, we always try to do it. Our last trip was to French Polynesia and we spent the night in LA to break up the flight. Flying nonstop is tempting but on flights over 8 or 10 hours I just get too tired and the next day is wasted anyway.

## Offline Reader 22

Irv Koch

I really understand the problem with bond funds slowly withering away. It's even worse if you bought in to something like Treasuries when the yield was 9 or 10 percent then have to try and replace them when yields are in the 4 to 5 percent range. I'm not really sure what I want to do with my investments. At the moment I have way too much cash in my portfolio. Part of me thinks that rates will go up as energy costs kick in but another part says real GDP will go negative and drive rates down. Oh, well who ever said living off your investments was easy either had way too much money or no idea what he was talking about.

I just sold the last of my Nova stock. They got themselves bought in a 60% stock 40% cash deal. The bank's stock proceeded to go up to the point that Nova's shares were worth about \$32, at the exchange ratio, and I decided to just sell mine. Funny to see the company go.

## Derogatory Reference 97

Arthur D. Hlavaty

I think you're over generalizing from the failure of advertising as a revenue source on the Net and advertising in general. There's no question that advertising works. Just ask any company that stops. If, of course, you can get to them before they go out of business. The model does change though.

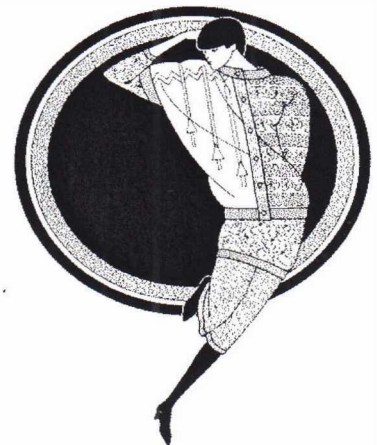
Back in the Sixties the main goal of a TV commercial was to be annoying. I'm not kidding here. People discovered that it really didn't matter that much why you remembered a product just as long as you did. When you were standing in front of a store display for shoe polish, remember that stuff?, you bought the one who's name you remembered. So really annoying TV adds became the order of the day. That approach to advertising was killed by the remote control and the VCR. People switched away from the annoying adds and sometimes didn't switch back to the program so networks started getting a little picky about the ads they ran.

VCRs really put a scare in the Ad industry. Now the consumer could simply fast forward past the ad. The first solution was to make ads that got their message across in fast forward mode. The second, and far subtler, was to incorporate the ad into the program. The hero just happens to be sitting at a computer with the makers name in 6-inch letters clearly displayed. Or the beautiful girl is drinking a Coke in multiple scenes. The message comes through pretty well.

The Net initially scared the ad industry then they got over that and fell in love with it. Here was a chance to tailor advertising to the person viewing the ad. Since you could know what page a person was looking at, you could show him an ad that was relevant to the subject. Advertising heaven! Unfortunately it didn't work out. People tune out Net ads pretty easily. I almost never look at one myself. So the ad bubble burst.

The thing I did find funny about the Internet ad craze was how much of it was for other Web companies. Talk about making money by trading hats!

Oh, one last thought, the Web is in no trouble at all. Internet companies, meaning those that operate solely on the Web, are having a very rough time but traditional companies operating on the Web are doing great.





## Twygdrasil And Treehouse Gazette #70

Richard Dengrove

Glad to hear your new PC is starting to behave it's self. I'm afraid you will have to put up with the odd reboot as long as you're running a Microsoft product. It's all part of the package.

You asked if any politician could control the economy? No, they can't. They can make things better or worse by their control of the Federal Bureaucracy. I don't think Clinton caused the stock market problems nor do I think he had anything to do with the good economy we had during his term in office. I just got, get, tired of people talking about how much he did for the economy. They always get real silent when you ask, "Just what did he do?"

One thing you said is flatly wrong: you referred to the fighting in Kosovo as genocide. Look up the term, it means something far worse then clashes between police and rebels where a few dozen people get killed. Yes, I said a few dozen. Prior to Nato's bombing campaign the death toll in Kosovo wouldn't have made the news if it had happened in Palestine.

If you're going to describe the actions of the government in Kosovo to put down their rebels as genocide, what do you think about Israel's actions to suppress attacks on their people? Is it genocide?

I think nations have a right to defend themselves from out side attacks and attempts to destabilize their governments by force. Even governments that I don't like or whose system of government I find repulsive. Countries like Israel will use whatever means they think is necessary to protect themselves because it is their right and their duty to their citizens. We like to divide the world into good guys and bad guys; condemning the same actions in "bad guys" that we allow the "good guys." It's a pretty childish view of the world.

Oh, have you noticed that those same nice people who started the Kosovo mess are now trying to take over Macedonia? Well it worked once why not try it again.

Talking about the relative risks of checks and credit cards, it's not that stolen checks are easier to use then stolen credit cards, it's that the burden of proof that a check is fraudulent rests on the account holder while the burden of proof on a stolen credit card is on the card issuer. Checks are harder to cash but the new move to "electronic checks" a fancy way of saying direct funds transfer may change all that.

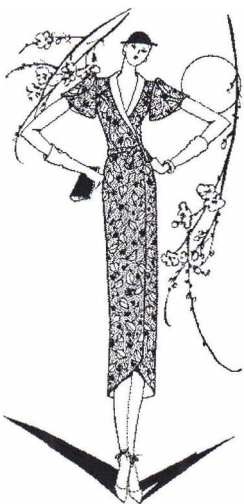
I don't know if you've run across any of the mail order or Net people who will take an "electronic check?" You just give them your checking account number, it's printed on every one of your checks, and they directly transfer the money from your account to theirs. Guess what, a crook who gets one of your checks can do the same thing.

Oh, color lasers are still too expensive for APA stuff. Costs run upwards of 10 cents a page. If I were getting one, it would be an HP.

### Spiritus Mundi 183

Guy H. Lillian III

I still vividly remember when Sputnik went up. I was watching TV at my aunt's house, we didn't own one, and they interrupted the show, it was *Sea Chase*, to make the announcement. I was thrilled and horrified. Thrilled because someone had finally made it into space; horrified because it hadn't



been us. Even at that age, I knew that an orbital rocket was an inter-continental missile if you put a warhead on it. I also remember that my aunt was all upset but not about the Russians, she was pissed that they had cut into her favorite show!

The guy whose amateur porn pics you got probably didn't get your shots. The people who process photos at places like Walgreen's are pretty bad about making extra sets of "good" stuff. You probably got some prints hurriedly shoved into the first packet they could find when the boss came in. Your shots probably went into the wastebasket. Still you have the negatives so you can always get them reprinted. I think the moral to your story is, if you're going to shoot amateur porn, go digital.

I had a similar experience to your hunting for an apartment with Rosie when Suzanne helped me find a house. I started out appalled at what houses cost then set a totally unrealistically low price cap on the search. Fortunately, she pretty much ignored me and I ended up with a nice place. I'm sure it will work out for you.



## Trivial Pursuits #95

### Janice Gelb

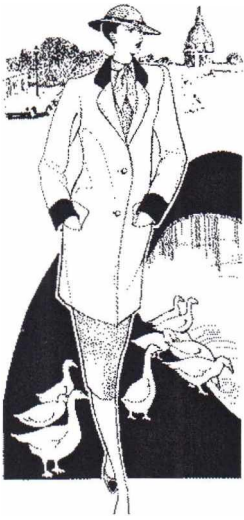
Your experience at the "single source" session is far from unique. One of the first technical conferences I went to was on the subject of electronic credit card authorization at the point of sale. I was really looking forward to it since the pilot project I was running for a bank wasn't going as well as I'd liked. Then I get there and not only does the presenter not know anything about the subject but used *my project* as his class study. I still remember the look on her face when I gave my name and company before asking a question. It turned out she was a consultant for the bank's IT department and had put the session together based on my project reports. We had a good laugh over dinner after the session and stayed friends for years.

Suzanne and I had a go at the single source model when we were doing documentation for our customer service system. We used the same source for online help, the printed users manual and the program documentation. It worked well and saved a lot of time but its real advantage for us was that the program actually did what the users manual said it did.

I hope Sun does manage to get through the current mess without any major layoffs. Their current revenue growth forecast is a little grim but nothing the company shouldn't be able to handle.

Sun's new employee evaluation system is fast becoming a corporate fad. I've heard of several companies adopting something very similar. I used to have a major fight with HR every year over employee reviews when I worked at NDC. I had one small group of about 6 people who all got the top rating. They were a hand picked, carefully cultivated group of real time transaction, communications oriented programmers, this was in the early 1980s by the way, and every one of them was really good and virtually irreplaceable.

HR insisted that any group was made of good people and not so good people and had to be rated accordingly. I ended up going to the exec VP of operations, who I did not get along with, and explaining to him just how mobile these people were and how much damage losing anyone of them would do. He may not have cared for me but he loved the work my Advanced Systems group did and "had a little talk" with the VP of HR. HR didn't like me much after that but all my guys got the evaluation they deserved.



## Frequent Flyer

Tom Feller

I almost attended the panel about Zealot.com but I've seen so many discussions of failed Internet startups that it has become a sore subject with me. Most of them, the ones that had something to sell in the first place, spent money like it was water and you could get more by just opening the faucet. When I first started hearing about the excesses, things like climbing walls in break rooms and using luxury cars for company vehicles, being committed by these companies it really made me angry. Over the years I've seen the staff at so many startup companies make incredible sacrifices to get their company going and keep it viable. Then these people come along and make it all look pointless. Of course in the end the original reason for building a solid business and showing great fiscal restraint, staying in business, came back to haunt them.

Did you know there's a move afoot to stop referring to the "speed of light in a vacuum" and instead talk about the Einstein Constant? Since the speed of light changes under many circumstances, always downward, it makes more sense to rename what we now have to refer to as "the speed of light in a vacuum" to a single term.

Over the years there have been several cases where we seem to see information propagation at trans light speeds. So far all have been explained away in one fashion or another. My own suspicion is that we cling to the ideal of an absolute velocity limit because so many equations would stop working if the limit does not exist.

The experiment the article clip in your zine refers to is very misleading!

## Peter Pan and Merry #37

David Schlosser

I've gone swimming with sharks in the near vicinity but I've never tried to touch one. The aquarium sounds like fun. Suzanne and I frequently go down to Chattanooga to see 3D movies at the aquarium Imax but for some reason we've never gone to the aquarium itself.

I didn't even know that 'magic fingers' were still in use anywhere. They were a standard feature of motel rooms in the Fifties and Sixties but I haven't seen a bed equipped with them since.

A lot of people think the Market and the Economy are two separate things and at one point that might even have been true. I don't think so, but I'm open to the possibility. Today so much of the country's total income is generated by capital gains, mostly from stock transactions, that any substantial, prolonged drop in the Market will be reflected in the general economy fairly quickly. Right now, smaller companies are hiring all the people getting laid off from large companies, at lower salaries mind you, which greatly cushions the impact of the layoffs. But the effect in places like Atlanta, which has a large percentage of corporate employment, is already being seen. For example, housing sales are still doing well but not nearly as well as they were a year ago.

Corporate earnings are, on the whole, down from last year. The brokers like to talk about companies 'hitting their targets' but often don't mention that those targets have been revised way down to make them easier to meet. The effect of Market drops in the general economy takes about a year to fully develop. I hope I'm wrong but I think there are some rough times ahead.

## **Revenant #6**

### **Sheila Strickland**

Yes, we did meet at DSC. I sometimes have a tough time remembering whom I've seen and whom I haven't at conventions. That's one of the reasons I take so many pictures.

My book, in process at the moment, is an SF novel. I've set a goal for myself of having the first draft done by the end of the year. It's not looking good! It's not that I don't enjoy writing; it's just that there are so many other things going on and I can only seem to write when I'm not too busy.

So you're another "get to the airport way ahead of time" person. I've always been that way and it used drive some of my co-workers crazy. A lot of sales people have the habit of arriving at the gate just at the final boarding call. Of course I'm also the person who drives by places where I have appointments the day before just to make sure I know where they are.

## **Tennessee Trash #41**

### **Gary R. Robe**

Great photos! One of these days I'm going to have to run some photos from my tests and let everyone have a good laugh. I only did tournaments when I first started taking karate here in Atlanta back around 1968. In those days the rules prohibited any actual contact in the matches and that was very hard on me. I kept getting disqualified for being "too aggressive."

By the way, I think you're wrong about Taiwan. The US has made a major commitment to defend Taiwan and I think, when push comes to shove, we would do it. Most people don't understand how large our financial investments in Taiwan are and how much our technology driven economy depends on Taiwan manufacturing. Whether this will still be the case in 20 years I don't know. It probably depends on how well behaved China is and how fast they develop their own military technology.

You know, a lot of people miss, because it's not often talked about, that one major reason for developing a ballistic missile defense system is the amount of money it would force China to spend to counter it.

You actually said, "ground war" in your comment and I don't think that's a good description of a China / Taiwan conflict. If the Chinese troops ever got ashore, the war would already be over. We're probably talking about US carriers fighting Chinese aircraft and navy vessels. High tech, very expensive, ordinance intensive fighting where the winner is the one with the most planes at the end. With a little luck, we won't live to see it.

## **You've Got Mars**

### **Jeffrey Copeland**

Spending your time working on work! That's a scandalous misuse of time. Mind you I've been putting a lot of effort into getting ready to sell our Atlanta house and move to Ellijay but at least I still have my amateur status on home repair.

I suppose it would be a pain to be identified with someone like Alice. I used to have a small, about 20 pages, volume of Carroll's photographs of children. The subjects were all young, mostly just pre pubescent, girls and most of them were nude. Yeah, doesn't quite fit the image you have of Carroll. In fact, if I







still had the book I'd probably have to get rid of it since it would definitely qualify as child porn by today's standards. I've never seen any evidence that Carroll's interest in children went beyond photographing them.

How do you like Microsoft's generous offer to let manufactures leave IE off the start menu? That's in the same class as their agreeing to let manufactures install other people's versions of DOS, 5 years after DOS was dead as an OS. Well the fights not over yet.

## Oblio No. 134

### Gary Brown

I think your thoughts on the Nathaniel Brazill case are very germane.

I think you've hit on the real problem: **A lot of kids don't seem to understand that there are real, unavoidable consequences to their**

**actions.** More to the point, they don't really understand that other people are real and have feelings. I guess this should not be all that surprising. They are exposed to a constant barrage of movies, TV shows and rap music that advocates violence and seldom shows any consequences to the person doing the shooting.

Back when *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* first came out, I was appalled at the casual way the show killed off people. It was as though people dying, that you didn't know, was meaningless. Only when one of the main characters was threatened did it matter. Watching the show, which I liked a lot violence or no violence, got me to looking at the way violence was portrayed in movies. The main rule seems to be: you can kill as many **unimportant** people as you like.

Just watch a martial arts flick and note the way the good guys wipe out the bad guys in droves. Or the way the bad guys casually kill security guards or uniformed cops. It's like a shooting gallery. Just paper targets that fall over, usually with no gore or sign of pain, and with no consequences to the shooter.

When I was a kid, the bad guys in movies and TV shows always came to a bad end. They had to or the show wouldn't have been shown, the Hays Code required it. At the time I thought it was pretty stupid and unrealistic. Now I'm wondering if it wasn't such a bad thing.

Maybe it's the antiseptic nature of film violence that does the damage. I have vivid memories of the first thing I ever killed. It was a bird I shot with a .22 rifle. I still remember standing over it with my grandfather and his explaining to me that it was in pain and I'd have to finish killing it. I didn't want to, I wanted to make it all well. Putting that second shot into what had stopped being a target and become a hurt bird was very, very hard. I did it of course and went right on hunting until I was a teenager. But from then on I understood the consequences of pulling the trigger.

I suspect that a lot of teenagers, who have never seen anything die in pain, don't understand that after they pull the trigger the person they shot may have friends and love ones who will miss them dreadfully, that the person won't just fall down and be quiet but will suffer incredible pain instead and that afterward there won't be credits rolling on a screen but consequences to deal with that will destroy the rest of their lives.

By the way, we were not "caught spying" because spying implies that you're doing something in secret. The US observation flights, which have been going on since WWII, are no more spying than the Russian trawlers that used to patrol the East coast were spying. In both cases the country being observed was perfectly aware of the observers. All large nations try to keep each other under

observation all the time. Some of the means are open some are not. Most of the time both sides understand the rules and no one gets hurt. Occasionally, as appears to have happened this time, one side or the other gets a little pushy and accidents happen.

## **New Tools, Old Me**

**Mike Weber**

You know the thing I find funniest about the average Liberal's response to the Bush administration is the outrage you guys seem to feel at any conservative policy being implemented. Conservative's have been in effective power for so long you guys have forgotten that there are other opinions out there. A lot of people are in favor of a sensible energy policy, strong national defense and religious values. It may surprise you that they have a right to their opinions, that they are valid opinions and that yours are not automatically the correct ones.

There are many things about current Republican policy that I don't like: Their stance on abortion, stem cell research and public funding of religious groups are a few. But they are legitimate approaches to public problems and lots of Americans agree with them.

Oh by the way, if Gore had become President, his "mandate" would have been a pretty slim one! It's not like 90% of the population voted for him or 80% or 70% or 60% or 55%. Hell, most of the people in this country didn't care enough about the out come of the election to even vote in it.

Your comments on the abortion of a tax cut that "43% of which will go to the richest 1% in America...". Is simply wrong. I've seen some wild figures like that thrown around in the Liberal nut press but they never seem to have any numbers to back it up with. The only 'analysis' I saw had to assume that most of that 1% died in the 10<sup>th</sup> year of the tax cut to make their numbers work. Remember the famous, "you get a muffler, they get a Lexus ad?" I set down and figured out just how much the tax cut would save me in it's 10 year life and it want even buy the muffler from a Lexus! How about some data to back up your statement?

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## **An Unexpected End to Mailing Comments**

At this point I must apologize to all the people whose zines I didn't get to comment. We put our house on the market a week ago and now have an offer! That is, of course, good, what's bad is the offer is based on our being out of the house in about 3 weeks. There's a great distance between an offer and closing but we've got to pretend like it's going to happen and get ready to move. I'm doing this zine as fast as I can in spare moments and just hope I can get it to Jeff in time.

Anyway, I'll see all you guy's next mailing and maybe even have a different address!

