



Infaninity's Notebook

January, 1994

lym '93

DEC larations

Thanks to those of you who sent in comments and contributions. Every one is much appreciated.

Perhaps I should introduce myself to you; there wasn't enough room and time to do so in the first issue. I've been reading SF since the fourth grade when I checked Heinlein's *Rocket Ship Galileo* out of the school library. But I didn't know anything about fandom till I joined the SF club at college. My first worldcon was NYCON 3 in 1967, where I spent most of my time watching movies, in the huckster room, and attending programs. I published five issues of a small genzine at irregular intervals between 1968 and 1975; sent 22 issues of *Apparition* to APA-NESFA; attended Saint Louiscon I (1969), Noreascon (1971), (continued on page 14)

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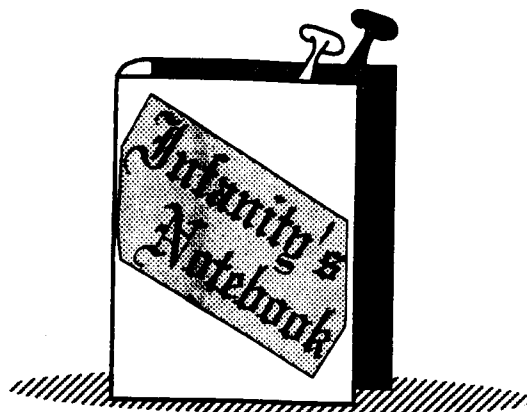


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Art

Linda Michaels - cover
Sheryl Birkhead - 1,13
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Remember When 1984 Was the Future?

by Lee Gold

My first exposure to filk was writing the stuff for a fanzine, the first issue of *The Third Foundation*. (It was numbered issue #77, with answers to last issue's quiz and letters of comment on last issue, including one expressing amazement on how we'd gotten a story from Heinlein.) I sold copies the first time I attended LASFS (August 17, 1967). One of those first songs was "Oh, What a Beautiful Martian" (which I republished in *Filker Up #1*). Some people sang it that night, one of them a fan named Barry Gold. Two years and a day later, Barry and I got married.

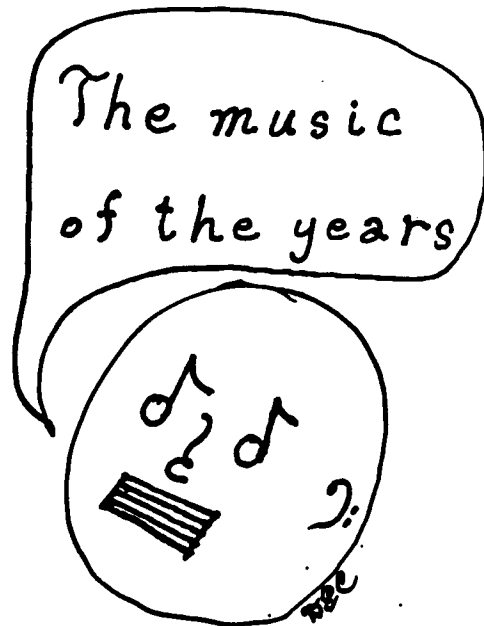
By the next summer, I was somewhat better acquainted with filk, largely thanks to Ted Johnson, who'd been writing filks since the early 60s, including "High Fly the Nazul" and parts of "Young Man Mulligan." He wrote filks under his fan name of Ted Johnson and "Man from U.N.C.L.E." books under his real name of David McDaniel. He and Bruce Pelz got together to lead filking at LASFS or con events. Pelz had also published some collections of filksongs. (These were available in reprint last I heard.)

I kept on writing filksongs, some by myself, some in collaboration with Ted Johnstone. (We both wrote additional verses for Poul Anderson's "Transporteers.") Then a bit after the first LA Worldcon in 1972, Ted's wife got a job in the Philadelphia area and he had to leave the LArea. I told Barry that he'd have to start

playing guitar and sing my songs for me. (Barry's got lots of talents but loquacity isn't one of them. This was when I learned that he not only played the piano and accordian but had also once played the guitar - and had studied music theory at Cal Tech..)

Worldcon of 1973 was Torcon, and we ran into a woman (Tamar?) from NESFA who was interested in filking. We ended up giving her copies of all of our filk stuff (including the key to "Young Man Mulligan" which George Scithers had published in *Amra*) in exchange for what the NESFAns were singing, all 16 pages of it, including "Woad" and "The Ballad of John Campbell."

The *NESFA Hymnals* started coming out somewhat later: first the pink first *Hymnal*, then the considerably bigger grey one (somewhat misleadingly numbered #1) and recently the medium-size blue one. For awhile, there were also Boskone songbooks, made up of songs entered for the Boskone Filk Contest which had gotten either first prize or honorable mention in some category. There's still a Boskone Filk Contest but the last few ones we went to didn't have a songbook any more.

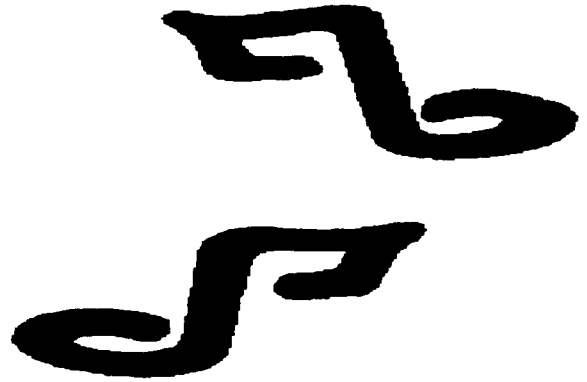


Ted Johnstone died the night of Halloween, 1977, due to an accidental fall. I found a filk among his papers ("John Henry Brought Up to Date"), rewrote it a bit, and submitted it to the Boskone Filk Contest. It won an honorable mention for us. (It's in *NESFA Hymnal #2* and also in *Filker Up #1* under the title of "Macpherson.")

A few years later, Off Centaur published the *Westerfilks* and a bunch of filk tapes. Filk suddenly began to be popular again in West Coast fandom. Eric Gerds brought out *Fantastic #1* (Chris Weber songs) and *#2* (Karen Willson songs); then asked me if I were interested in having him publish a *Fantastic* with my songs. I put together a set of 45 songs, mostly mine but a few from fellow roleplaying gamers that had published in RPG apas. The most popular one was "You Bash the Balrog," which I'd originally pubbed in my roleplaying APA, *Alarums and Excursions*, back in 1976 to go along with an essay "Balrogs as PCs", giving their magic resistance and other abilities for each level.

But Eric said he couldn't publish my songs until he'd done *Fantastic #3*, which he'd promised would go to Jones and Fontana. After a year or two, I paid back Eric for the work he'd done on *Fantastic Four* and told him I'd publish it myself, mimeographed, instead of waiting for him to do it offset. That was *Filker Up #1*. *Filker Ups #2, #3*, and *#4* followed over the years, as I wrote more songs. (*Fantastic #3* is still a Some Year Now project.)

All that was back when *Philk-Fee-Nom-Ee-Non* was still appearing regularly from Paul Willett. One year it even got a Hugo nomination. Gradually, however, Willett's hectic work schedule and growing family got in the way of his publishing career and, to make matters worse, he lost location of his backlog of filksongs (some were in a van that got stolen). *Philk-Fee-Nom-Ee-non* shrunk; sometimes it had only a



page or two of filksongs, with five or six pages of Paul's con memories.

When it was over a year since the last issue of *Philk-Fee-Nom-Ee-Non* had come out, I started my own filkzine, *Xenofilkia*. I said it would sell for 5 cents per song-page (\$1 mazimum) plus postage, with no charge for pages containing other stuff, to make sure its emphasis stayed on publishing filksongs. It's been coming out bimonthly ever since, and after the first year has never had any problem getting 20+ pages of songs. We have contributors from across the US, Canada and even a few from the UK.

Oh yes, for those who haven't run into my flyers at cons. *Xeno* is free to those with a song in that issue; ohterwise, it's \$1 plus postage (currently 3 ounces is 75 cents). All issues are still in print. A full run of 32 issues (as of December, 1993) is \$31 plus \$3.20 postage. *Filkers Ups* are \$3 each plus postage (\$1.05) or all four for \$10 (plus \$1.48 postage).

The following filk is bout what's considered the quintessential piece of bad fan writing. If you're (un)lucky, you may attend a con where it's read at midnight. All misspellings and odd phrasing in the song are copied from the original. (Typing "Eye of Argon" into my computer -carefully preserving every misspelling, while making sure not to introduce any new ones - was one of the hardest pieces of typing I've ever done. Afterwards, it baroqued the spellchecker.)

Eye of Argon: the Filksong

by Lee Gold

to "Banned from Argo"

The nobles of Simaria all wanted Grignr dead;
He'd unleashed throngs of havoc until they were
seeing red.

A squad of soldiers tounced on him, but Grignr still
survived.

Escaped across a barren land where rats led dismal
lives.

CHORUS:

Oh, the Eye of Argon's quite a sight.

The Eye of Argon - with its many faucets bright.

It's a giant scarlet emerald, that's a mighty idol's eye.

The story makes fen laugh until they cry.

When he arrived in Gorzom, Grignr found a tavern
door,

A slender female he soon eyed, his choice of all the
whores.

Stringy orchid twines of hair and firm protruding busts

And a nose both lithe and opaque - she really was hot
stuff! (CHORUS)

The female eyed his stalwart form, and she was much
allured.

He only wore a loincloth brandishing a long broad
sword.

They soon embraced each other, but some drunken
soldiers came.

Their challenge lit up Grignr's eyes to a searing feral
flame. (CHORUS)

Grignr killed a solkier but was captured at long last
And marched through slinking alleyways to where their
ruler sat.

"You're a fool with a fat belly!" That's what Our Brave
Hero said.

The noble's face flushed white, then paled to a
lustrous cherry red. (CHORUS)

They threw Grignr in a dungeon cell where it was
stygian black.

Beady grey eyes glazed at him: he faced a giant rat!
He tore it head from torso, then he honed a bone in
haste

And concealed it in the G-string that was wrapped
around his waist. (CHORUS)

Meanwhile the girl Carthenia was feeling very faint.
She was ringed by learing shamen, shaved heads
spread with bright orange paint.

All robed in purple satin, they were quite a sight to
fear,

Bare feet in plush red slippers tipped with golden
pointed spheres. (CHORUS)

A shaman kissed Carthenia with decrepid dull red lips.
She regurgitated on him, then she leashed a
desperate kick,

Right between his testicles. He howled in misery;
"How could you dare such blasphemy before our
diety?" (CHORUS)

So much for chapters one through five, and here I'll
end my song.

To tell the final chapters would just take me much too
long,

I won't reveal the story's end. So if you really care,
Go find a copy at a con, and read it if you dare.
(CHORUS)

SMOFCON 11 Report

by Judy Bemis

Smofcon 11, which was known as "Lexsmof" was held December 3-5, 1993 in Lexington, KY. Smofcon is a specialty SF convention concentrating on how to run general SF conventions of any size. This convention was run by Scott and Jane Dennis, with several assistants (I saw Sue Francis, Roger and Pat Sims, and Gary and Corlis Robe working in the hospitality room at different times, and Alex Dennis was on the computer a lot. I'm sure there were others.)

There was a largish membership for a convention of this type (80- 90 people attended) from all over. (England, Canada, Boston, New York, New Jersey, Baltimore, Washington DC, Orlando, South Florida, Atlanta, New Orleans, Austin TX, Los Angeles, the San Francisco bay area, Portland OR, Seattle WA, Colorado Springs CO, Chicago, Pittsburgh PA, and too many points in the midwest to list them all.) It made for a very interesting group of people.

I'm told there was a pre-con party on Thursday night, but we did not get in for it, and there was introductory program on Friday afternoon on the history of Smofcons, and enjoying your nth Smofcon, but the real kick-off was the Friday night ice-breaker game. These games (a different one at each Smofcon) have become a tradition, and have been a lot of fun, sometimes. The now famous "If I ran the zœ con" was one such game to start with. This game divided the players (most of the people) into 4 "committees" and asked each committee to plan a small regional convention (pick dates, convention style/topic, GOHs, and hotel rates, with tradeoffs for others

having picked them first) and then to solicit memberships from the non-players who were supplied with play money by throwing a party using soda and a grab-bag of decorations (all of which had to be used). I must admit that the committee I was on got penalized for using food from Hospitality as well as the allowed soda (I didn't know it wasn't allowed).

Saturday and Sunday had programs on the subject of "tradeoffs". They were set up in an interesting fashion, starting with a panel discussion of the broad issues relating the topics (The Convention's Core in AM, and Money in PM). These issues were each then broken down into four topics, and a workshop was run on each topic with a section leader. The AM topics were Hotel/Facilities, Special Interests and Services, Trading off Time and Money on the committee, and "How much Program?". The PM topics were Pricing your convention, Costing your guests, Budgeting, and The Costs of Technology. Each workshop's section leader led a discussion trying to answer prepared questions or any that came up related to the area, and tried to come up with ideas/solutions. Then there was a wrap-up session for each group of topics where each section leader summarized their group's ideas. Most of the convention program and topics and workshops were taped by the SF Oral History Association (Larry and Nancy Tucker et al), and Scott and Jane plan to do a proceedings.

As has been true in the past, I found that while the program was interesting, the informal discussions in the hospitality room, especially late at night, were even more interesting, and sometimes productive (I certainly volunteered for another job from it, anyway.)

There was a lot of interest expressed by various groups of people in holding future Smofcons. Smofcon 12 will be the weekend after Thanksgiving next year in Los Angeles, following Loscon, the annual convention they run on Thanksgiving weekend). The membership rate is

\$30.00, and should be mailed to SCIFI, P.O. Box 8442, Van Nuys, CA 91409. Brief presentations were made by other people wanting to run future Smofcons, some for specific years, some not:

Balt-Wash MD area by Covert Beach for Theresa Renner and others, who wanted 1994, but may consider another year

Colorado Springs, CO (Kent Bloom & Mary Morman) (they preferred 1995, according to Mark Olson)

Austin, TX (Fred Duarte, Karen Meschke, and FACT) (strongly preferred 1995)

San Jose, CA (Crickett Fox, Kevin Standlee and others)

Seattle, WA (I don't remember who presented this or exactly who would be sponsoring it)

Boston, MA (MCFI)

There was also a rather strange proposal to hold a Smofcon sometime in the summer of 1995 somewhere in the mid-Atlantic states run by a consortium of 1998 bidders. There was a strong reaction **against** permitting two Smofcons in one year, and a lot of comments afterward that the summer is too crowded. The method of choosing future Smofcons is a presentation to express interest, followed by consensus between groups wanting to hold it in the same year. An exception was made last year to allow 1 the week after Eastercon in Jersey (the island off the coast of France) and Lexsmof.

A significant part of this Smofcon's success was due to the way the meeting space was laid out. It was two bedroom suites all connected in one long chain so that it ran bedroom-parlor-bedroom-bedroom-parlor-bedroom. The beds had been removed from the middle bedrooms, creating a resource room for computers, all previous Smofcon proceedings and manuals, professional meeting planners manuals and resource books, etc.

and an overflow program room. One parlor was the hospitality suite, and the other the main program room. Because it kept everything together it made for a very connected convention and really encouraged people to talk.

The hospitality suite had the theme "Derby Day in December" with lots of local homemade goodies, and was very comfortable. (Midwest/DSC people know how to do hospitality.)

The weather was horrible, but it didn't matter much to us since the hotel restaurants were good quality. We flew into Lexington and got the hotel shuttle to and from the airport, and didn't have to go out until we left to go home (although I did think about getting a Transylvania University t-shirt or something - a local school whose name appealed to me).

(Significant parts of this article were written by Mark Olson, previously published.)

A certain maker of ancient stringed musical instruments became most frustrated with the limited number of notes available. After many weeks of experimentation, he fitted a metal rod which shifted all the strings up a half step when pressed. Happily he made several and put them in his shop window for sale. Days and weeks went by and not a single one was bought. Finally he decided that the only thing to do was go see his retired master and ask him about the problem. The old man thought about it and, after a few minutes, said, "I am sorry to tell you that you have wasted your time. You should have remembered from the start that no one will have anything to do with a bar-faced lyre."

Noteworthy

Friends of Filk

Lief Sorbye's *Across the Borders* is out on tape or CD.

Heather Alexander is doing the recording for *Shadowstalker* and *Wanderlust*.

Cecilia Eng will be the Filk Guest at Boskone #31 (February 18-20 in Framingham, MA).

Heather Alexander will be filk GoH at OmniCon (May 27-29 in Portland, OR). Anne Crispin will also be a guest.

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Wail Songs

Margaret Davis writes of two new releases:

The Programmer and the Elves

(East coast filkers & cons)

- Mary Ellen Carter by Stan Rogers (Bill & Brenda Sutton)
- Take a Step by Aileen Vance (Catherine Mac donald)
- Domino Dragon by Jack Carroll (Carroll)
- Everybody Needs a Hammer by Willie Nile (Marc S. Glasser)
- One Woman's Hand by Sue Knapp/Eric Bogle (Knapp)
- One Bright Starship by Roberta Rogow/Lambert & Potter (Rogow)
- Darkness by Jordin Kare (Helva Peters)
- Cosmonaut Who Never Returned by Roberta Rogow & Lunacon Parody Workshop/Henry Clay Work (Rogow)
- The Programmer and the Elves by Michael Rubin (Rubin)
- Write in C by Unknown & Rubin/Lannon & McCartney (Helva Peters)
- We're Only in It for the Money by Bill & Brenda Sutton (Suttons)
- Gilda and the Dragon by Jack Carroll/Cynthia McQuillin
- The Saxon Men Song by Fiona Messer (Catherin Mac donald)
- Star of the County Down by Duane Elms/traditional
- Chocolate Eclair by Ronnie Levine/traditional (Levine)
- Goldfish by Jane Sibley/traditional (Sibley)
- Chocolate by Virginia Taylor/Tom Paxton (Taylor/Gary McGath)
- Doris and Edwin, the Movie by Christine Lavin (Mitchell & T. J. Burnside Clapp)

Make Believe

(FIKONtario 1)

- Make Believe by Bill Sutton (Sutton)
- Country Life by Lee Van Deest (Brenda Sutton)
- Not Just a Train by Kelly/Mann (Paul Mac donald)
- Some Dumb Duke by Nate Bucklin (Cliff Flynt, Steve Simmons)
- Silly Song by Jim Post (Dave Clement)
- Summer Is A Cumen In/ Silly Medley - traditional (Steve Simmons, Ruth Simmons, Mary Ellen Wessels, Cliff Flynt)
- Filker of the Night by Glenn Simser/A. L. Webber (Simser)
- Who'll Come a-Filking? by Heather Borean/traditional (Borean)
- Misplaced Magic by Cliff Flynt (Flynt)
- Out of Control by Tom Jackson (Dave Clement)
- The Wizard by Paul Espinoza (Duane Elms)
- Stars in Their Eyes by Heather Borean (Borean)
- Last Night by Paul Mac donald (Mac donald)
- Dust on My Feet by Bill Sutton (Sutton)
- Arise, My Love by Cynthia McQuillin (Catherine Mac donald)
- Second Child Blues by Steve Simmons (Simmons)
- Name Me Jonathon by Brenda Sutton (Sutton)
- The Horseman and the Lady by Duane Elms (Elms)
- The Bleeding Sun by Stephanie Bedwell-Grime (The Vampire's Kitchen)
- Bird of Gold by Heather Rose Jones (Ruth Simmons, Steve Simmons, Mary Ellen Wessels, Cliff Flynt)

Note: performers in parentheses

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Tropiccon

Tom Smith was the filk guest at Tropiccon 12 (January 7-9 in West Palm Beach, FL).

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Please send me notes of filk past, filk present, or filk to come - filk cons and guests, books and tapes, and address changes. The next issue is scheduled for April and any item that reaches me by the first will certainly meet the deadline, but I'll try to include news that arrives after that.

Night Fears

by Donald Cochran

When once the shielding light is gone
 And Night encircles common sphere,
 Then all who brave the dark alone
 And seek to pierce the veil of fear
 Must dare the demon-guarded gloom
 That snares the unprotected soul
 With unseen webs of arcane doom
 Beyond our knowledge and control.

The shade of Night that covers all
 And grips the still world in a pall
 Of black confusion and despair
 Has eldritch secrets that it keeps
 From he who stays abed and sleeps.
 Explore the Dark Realm, if you dare!

Song Trek: the Note Generation

by Donald Cochran

About every other month the South Florida Secret Filking Society emerges from Obscurity (a one-note town somewhere between Key Less and Discord) and serenades itself. Last September the occasion was a cookout after a club meeting, and a gracious good time was had by all.

Deanna Lyman sang *My Old Man's (a Trufan)* by Lee and Barry Gold from the *NESFA Hymnal*. On the way home, the line "My old man's a filker" came to me and, before I went to bed, I jotted down a first cut with the first two lines of the first verse and the last two lines of the second verse. These sat around for a couple of days while my background program fiddled with how many verses and how to progress from one verse to the next. A try at filker generations didn't seem to lead anywhere. Then the first two verses split into filker and filk writer. The natural extension seemed to be filker taper and the details sorted themselves out.

I took the completed song along to the November filk infestation at Joe and Edie's house. Several people asked for copies, which didn't hurt my feelings at all. While Edie was busy at their copier, the fun started. Chuck Phillips came up with the "My old man drinks Tully" line and that was all the encouragement everybody needed. The last two verses sprouted over the next ten or fifteen minutes, with most everyone there contributing. Edie Stern, Fran Mullen, Judy Bemis, Tony Parker, Chuck Phillips, and Elaine Ashby are the filkers I remember being there. My apologies to those whose presence I disremember.

Hereinafter are the results.

MY OLD MAN'S A FILKER

words by Donald Cochran

and diverse hands

to My Old Man's a Dustman
(traditional?)

C G7 C
My old man's a filker. Now, whatdaya think about that?

C G7 C
He picks a filker's guitar, he sings his filk songs flat;

F G7
He wears his filker's buttons; hums his filking croons;

C G7 C
And every Friday evening, he plays his filking tunes.

F C
And someday, if I can,

I'm gonna be a filker -

G7 C
Just like my old man.

My old man writes filk songs. Now, whatdaya think about that?

He keeps a filker's notebook; he jots his songs down pat.

He writes his filker's music; his lyrics all have rhymes;

And every Saturday evening, he reads "The Filking Times".

And someday, if I can,

I'm gonna write a filk song -

Just like my old man.

My old man makes filk tapes. Now, whatdaya think about that?

He sings in Bardic circles; he brought his Bardic cat.

He plays at ConChord concerts; His sthick makes neos gape;

And every evening at the con he sells his filking tape.

And someday, if I can,

I'm gonna sell a filk tape -

Just like my old man.

My old man drinks Tully. Now, whatdaya think about that?

He hides it in his filk bag beneath his filking hat.

He picks and drinks and picks and drinks until he falls down flat.

And everyone by Sunday night says must you sing like that?

And someday, if I can

I'm gonna drink my Tully

Just like my old man.

My old man sells Tully. Now, whatdaya think about that?

He hangs around at filk sings while they pass the hat.

He holds up one last bottle as the bidding waxes hot -

~~And all the singers monday night leave the last line for Den.~~

And every Monday morning the filkers rue their lot..

And someday, if I can,

I'm gonna auction Tully

Just like my old man!

Puzzle Piece

by Don Cochran

A. Go in with award

___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
45 91 33 55 19 102 76 72 8 85

B. Sky shaper

___ ___ ___ ___ ___
16 43 83 52 28

C. Large green man

___ ___ ___ ___
2 34 74 13

D. Initially fandom is not a way of life

___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
87 105 88 11 63 54 49

E. Revel around the heavens

___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
22 71 60 7 109 30 70

F. Planetary fraud

___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
51 69 35 27 66 108 38 97

G. Drop behind stove

___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
86 9 44 99 21 81 37 31

H. Eagle's Tranquility

___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
10 68 96 24 46 78 17 36

I. World master

___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
95 23 15 4 82 100 12

J. Arthur arrived often

___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
29 62 92 77 73 101 57

K. Blowing in the wind

___ ___ ___ ___ ___
98 75 25 5 94

L. Half of a mistake

___ ___ ___
67 64 3

M. Futile end

___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
89 48 14 80 61 50 106 18 41 6

N. Zip

___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
56 1 65 59 40 90

O. Filth

___ ___ ___ ___ ___
104 58 93 42 20

P. Leud

___ ___ ___ ___
26 103 47 39

Q. Florida non-pro

___ ___ ___ ___ ___
53 32 84 107 79

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
N	C	L	I	K	M	E	A	G	H	D	I
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
C	M	I	B	H	M	A	O	G	E	I	H
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
K	P	F	B	J	E	G	Q	A	C	F	H
37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45			
G	F	P	N	M	O	B	G	A			
46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	
H	P	M	D	M	F	B	Q	D	A	N	
57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66		
J	O	N	E	M	J	D	L	N	F		
67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78
L	H	F	E	E	A	J	C	K	A	J	H
79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87			
Q	M	G	I	B	Q	A	G	D			
88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97		
D	M	N	A	J	O	K	I	H	F		
98	99	100	101	102	103	104	105	106	107	108	109
K	G	I	J	A	P	O	D	M	Q	F	E

(Answer in next issue.)

Beyond the FAR Horizon

by Donald E. Cochran

Some time ago, I read John Varley's *The Ophiuchi Hotline*. The background universe is one in which humanity has spread throughout the Solar System, but has been wiped out on Earth by interstellar intelligences. Beings, like the invaders, from gas-giant planets are more advanced than humans can ever be. After clearing Earth of all human artifacts to protect whales and dolphins, the invaders and similar beings on Jupiter ignore those left in space. There is a party devoted to returning to Earth, but most of the survivors have been satisfied to live in space for 400 years. After finishing the book, I began wondering how the human race could try to advance itself in the face of seemingly overwhelming superiority.

The theme is one that pops up ever so often. One of the earliest books that I read was *Against the Fall of Night* which includes the following:

Man had never doubted that one day he would conquer the deeps of space. He believed too that if the Universe held his equals, it did not hold his superiors. Now he knew that both beliefs were wrong, and that out among the stars were minds far greater than his own. ... Everywhere he found cultures he could understand but could not match, and here and there he encountered minds which would soon have passed altogether beyond his comprehension.

The shock was tremendous, but it proved the making of the race. Sadder and infinitely wiser, Man had returned to the

Solar System to brood upon the knowledge he had gained. ...

... Now he turned to genetics and the study of the mind. Whatever the cost, he would drive himself to the limits of his evolution.

The great experiment had consumed the entire energies of the race for millions of years. ... It brought Man his greatest victories. He had banished disease: he could live forever if he wished, and in mastering telepathy he had bent the most subtle of all powers to his will.

He was ready to go out again, relying upon his own resources, into the great spaces of the Galaxy. He would meet as an equal the races of the worlds from which he had once turned aside.

Another variation is the Terragens universe of David Brin (see *Sundiver*, *Startide Rising*, and *The Uplift War*). Humans and Uplifted Chimps and Dolphins are new on the interstellar scene, already inhabited by many races who are the inheritors of a galactic technology a billion years old.

The Clark aliens were friendly, or at least perfectly willing to leave mankind alone. Those of Brin are mostly indifferent with a few races potentially or actively hostile. Varley's are ready to sweep human beings aside without any more qualms than we would feel for ants. But each situation presents a challenge for humanity. How might we meet it?

The most obvious reaction is an intensive diversion of resources into research into all scientific disciplines and technological development. Naturally every man and woman would be encouraged to develop their best talents and reach the highest educational level they were capable of. One of the highest priority research projects would be the study of the mind - how it works and how its every potential could be most fully developed. Computer technology would be used to the full to make all human knowledge as readily available as possible, to develop the most

sophisticated artificial intelligences, and to augment human intelligence. Genetic planning would be used to eliminate inherited defects, conserve strengths, and preserve the widest possible gene pool. (Who knows what unnoticed trait might prove beneficial, or possibly necessary, for human survival.)

Space colonization would depend on the type of challenge. Other things being equal, colonies would be established on other planets, the asteroids, and the Ort cloud. There are advantages in wide distribution and diversity. Expeditions, either manned or robotic, would be sent to explore other stellar systems - new knowledge to stimulate new ideas.

The challenge could materialize anytime. All it would take would be the detection of signals from another sentient species.

Even better would be for the human race to challenge itself. The most far-seeing action that some billionaire could perform would be to endow a foundation to advance the long-term interests of humanity.

The single most important project currently being pursued is the mapping of the human genome. Aside from space exploration, it has the best potential for long term benefits to mankind, with applications in genetics, medicine, disease prevention, etc. I hope that prejudices about genetic research, kneejerk reactions that genetic selection is either racist or elitist, or superstitions that there are things man is not meant to know won't lead to a loss of funding. If there is anything we should know about, it is ourselves.

Lack of federal funding doesn't bother me though. There should be enough interest for universities, non-profit foundations, and genetic research firms to generate enough money. The money will probably be spent more effectively if Congress and other bureaucracies keep their fingers out of the pie.

Tropicon 12 Report

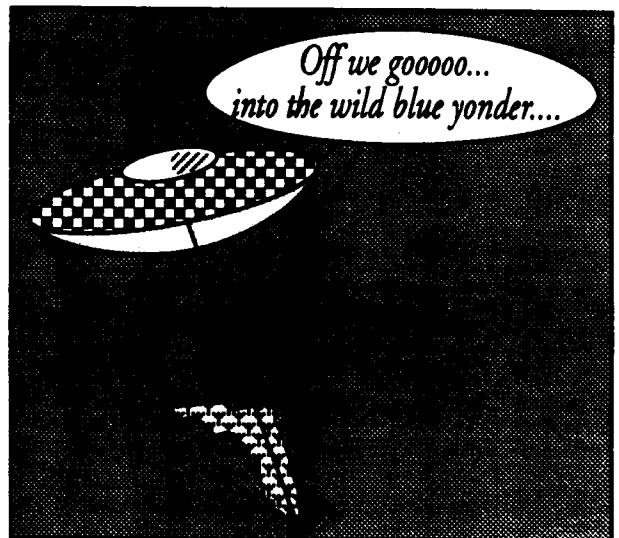
by Don Cochran

The weekend of January 7th to 9th was Tropicon 12, a most pleasant way to start my fannish year. I drove down Friday afternoon, got squared away, and had supper with a couple of other SFSFS members, returning to the hotel in plenty of time for the filk concert. Tom Smith, brought in by the filk fund, entertained and amused us with an hour of his unique filks. Tom says that a proper filk should not consist merely of sf or fantasy set to an old tune but should be based on a pun or a skewed twist on the filkee. Afterwards I wandered into the con suite, got together with Jeff Kasteen who shared expenses on the room for the weekend, and toted my guitar and music to the filk room. We started singing a bit before midnight with five or six in the circle. Eight to ten sat in the circle and fifteen or more looked on at various times. Unfortunately Tom was tired and had to exit early, but four of us broke up about four a.m.

The next afternoon was relaxed. The art show set up was unusual, with the dealers in the front of the room and the art show at the rear. I strolled through both, voted for best of show, and talked a bit with Gail Bennett (Fan GoH) and Becky Peters (indispensible head of art show). The sixteen or eighteen dealer tables held a nice variety of everything from new and used books to car slogan decals by way of comics, tapes, weapons, games, and jewelry. I bought several filk tapes and songbooks. The art displayed was, as usual for Tropicon, above average for a smaller convention, including several artists whose work I had not seen before. One of the afternoon panels was most interesting. Jack Haldeman, David Levine, and others, with Mark Olson as moderator, talked about Internet. Someone mentioned

that the galactic computer network in Vernor Vinge's *A Fire upon the Deep* is modeled on Internet. Afterwards David, Bill Wells, and I adjourned to the Con Suite for a long talk that started out with how to access Internet and traveled all over the place. After supper I meandered about, naturally visiting the Con Suite once or twice, until time for the filk sing at midnight. There was a goodly attendance and it lasted until about 3:30.

The high point of Sunday was Tom Smith's improvisational concert. He asked the audience to suggest a theme and a musical style for him to make up an impromptu filk. Most impressive. Hal Clements gave his slide show, *Images of Titan*. There was a panel with Jack Haldeman, Joe Siclari, and others called *The Ultimate Convention* - given time travel, a transmat, and Dream Park techniques, what guests and events and facilities would you want for a worldcon. I would have enjoyed staying for the dead dog party, but I left after the closing ceremonies.



(continued from page 1) Torcon 2 (1973), Discon II (1974), MidAmeriCon (1976), Seacon '79, Noreascon II (1980), Nolacon II (1988), Noreascon III (1989), and MagiCon (1992), plus assorted regional and local conventions; and been a member of NESFA, WSFS, NASFA, and SFSFS. My favorite fanac is filking, to which I was introduced around a piano and a computer printout song sheet at St. Louis. I got my BSEE and MSEE from Mississippi State in 1970 and 1978 respectively. I was laid off from Bendix/King in Fort Lauderdale in October, 1992 and am keeping myself occupied as best I can while looking for work. I was co-editor of the *SFSFS Shuttle* before I moved to Palm Bay for reasons of economy; so when I had to give that up, I decided to start another fanzine of my own.

Please send in articles, stories, art, or money for the next issue, due out in April. I'll probably be trimming my mailing list, so let me hear from you. Some suggested topics:

Would recycled fanzines or beer be the better fuel for SSTO rockets?

Is there intelligent life on Earth?

The post office is a plot to impede the free flow of information.

It's an ill wind that has no tuning.

Copper cents should be replaced by notes printed on toilet paper.

Fandom is a virtual reality existing only in the inner workings of a buggy computer.

