

KNOWABLE

#1

Jamaica, New York, USA

November 1962

"The world and its laws are fully knowable; our knowledge of the laws of nature, tested by experiment and practice, is authentic knowledge having the validity of objective truth; there are no things in the world which are unknowable, but only things which are as yet not known, but which will be disclosed and made known by the efforts of science and practice."

- Joseph Stalin

WELL, HERE IT IS

Several months ago, I sent copies of my personal newsletter the POINTING VECTOR to friends with whom my shared interests included science and science-fiction. I was rather surprised to find the POINTING VECTOR being reviewed as a science-fiction fanzine, since only a few pages of each issue dealt with science-fiction. But, upon attaining a wider knowledge of fan publications, I found that many other fanzines concern themselves overwhelmingly with jazz-fandom, comic-book-fandom, politics-fandom, sex-fandom, and religion-fandom.

It seems to me that, while much worthwhile material has been appearing in fanzines, little of it is related to the literature of science-fiction and fantasy, and to science. I have therefore removed matters properly germane to science-fiction and fantasy from the POINTING VECTOR, and will henceforth run that newsletter as a bulletin of personal news and comment on mundane subjects. KNOWABLE, which takes its name from the quote on the masthead, will deal with science in fact and fiction, and with fantasy.

This is not to say that mundane politics will be completely banned from KNOWABLE. Such subjects as the ethics of military scientific research, the effects of radioactive fallout and the disposal of industrial radioactive wastes, public policy with regard to science education, and the various political systems which claim to embody scientific approaches to the problems of mankind, will come under the purview of KNOWABLE. So will many scientific discoveries or extrapolations which have been made parts of s-f stories - and whether the handling of science in s-f contributes to a better understanding among laymen of scientific method and the impact of ~~scifi~~ and society upon each other.

And here are a few of the things that KNOWABLE will not do:

(1) KNOWABLE will not review every other fanzine that appears. If articles of particular interest appear in other fanzines, they will be recommended to the attention of the readers of KNOWABLE.

(2) KNOWABLE will not review every prozine. As with fanzines, stories and articles of particular interest will be reviewed and commented upon.

(3) KNOWABLE will not be an apazine. I regard with horror the prospect of having to read from 20 to 65 fanzines with each mailing of the apa. The Cult, with one 'zine every three weeks plus ancillary publications, is quite enough.

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(4) KNOWABLE will not automatically print every letter that arrives. Nor will interminable arguments on topics appropriate to other fandoms be perpetuated in the letter column.

(5) KNOWABLE will not commit itself to any definite publication schedule. It will appear whenever I can get a tolerably well balanced issue together. Anyone who wishes to exchange his own fanzine for KNOWABLE does so at his own risk of getting KNOWABLE often enough to make it worthwhile.

(6) Will KNOWABLE be sercon? Con yes; ser no. The limitation of KNOWABLE to science, s-f, and fantasy, does not mean that every feature will be a grim article. KNOWABLE solicits fiction and non-fiction. I'm not going to ask for artwork until I decide whether future issues will be dittoed or mimeoed.

KNOWABLE will be available for trade, comment, subscription (5 issues for \$1) or for the hell of it. KNOWABLE #1 is duplicated by Steve Stiles.

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KNOWABLE #2 will contain an article which was originally scheduled for #1 but postponed by time pressure. The title will be "The Great Secret of Fandom", and the subject matter was suggested by my impressions of Chicon III and the people I met there.

* * *

Also scheduled for a future KNOWABLE is a review of E. E. Smith's Skylark of Space and of Ivan Yefremov's Andromeda, to be titled "Our Skylark and Theirs". If I am able to develop some presently highly tenuous contacts with Soviet and East German fans, the readers of KNOWABLE will have a channel of information from those unknown territories.

* * *

The recipe for crottled greeps has at last been released to the world - and by a non-fan, too. John Wilcock's column in the Village Voice of 23 August 1962 reveals this recipe:

3 cups utterly crumbled Nabisco vanilla wafers
1 cup finely chopped shelled pecans
1 cup sifted confectioner's sugar
3 tablespoons cocoa
3 tablespoons corn syrup
2/3 cup bourbon

Thoroughly mix the dry ingredients except the sugar, then add corn syrup and bourbon, again mixing thoroughly. If the mix seems dry, add more bourbon. Now form balls about 1 inch in diameter, coat them with the sugar, and store in an airtight can for 18-24 hours. The surface moisture may dissolve the sugar during the curing period, in which case sprinkle on some more. Don't eat on an empty stomach, and don't serve to minors. A blender works fine for crumbling the cookies. Rum or brandy may be substituted for bourbon.

Now if, instead of bourbon, you use blog...

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I am trying to buy a good used duplicator, either ditto or mimeo. If you have one for sale, please write information about condition and price.

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RANDOM IMPRESSIONS OF CHICON III

The N3F Hospitality Center, a welcome source of coffee and cosmic conversation - though, early in the morning it more resembled a Hospitalization Center as unconscious fans were stacked in the corners like cordwood...The Robert Heinlein doll: Wind it up and it hands you a glass of water...The Art Show, seen by the light of Ejo Trimble's shining freckles...I'm not attending another Con held at a Pick hotel...The PAPA doll: Wind it up and it gaffates... Lee Hoffman would be sexier in nun's robes than Dian Girard stark naked...Conservative fans will be glad to know that George Price, dressed as a member of the Society of Assassins, zapped me at the ball when I showed up wearing a "Russian Spy" card...The Society of Assassins is in the best tradition of the free enterprise system...The Cult doll: Wind it up and it insults you...On Labor Day morning, the hotel elevator descended from the 3rd to the 1st floor at 9.8 meters/sec². I was on the 9th floor when I learned this...The Walt Willis doll: Wind it up and it crosses the Atlantic... "64 Frisco and Fog"...What kind of personality test is it that puts me only in the 33rd percentile on the "aggressiveness" category?...And how are you going to test Fannish Cosmic Minds with an IQ test that cuts off at the low level of 137? ...The Doc Smith doll: Wind it up and it goes Northwest... "Interplanetary" being perpetually played in the Hospitality Room, with one game actually completed after 14 hours. Prediction: "It'll never replace chess." - J20...George Nims Raybin holding forth on law and reform politics before a fascinated audience in the Hospitality Room... Jerry Pournelle applying Games Theory to the Third World War is like the solemn deliberations of German chemical and transportation engineers over the most efficient and least costly method of Finally Solving the Jewish Problem - a structure of exquisite reasoning erected on a foundation of madness...The Sam Moskowitz doll: Wind it up and it sings a solo in the key of I...The Coulsons look exactly like their sketches at the heads of Ramblings and Rumblings; and that, chilluns, is why KNOWABLE isn't illustrated...I had not realized before this Con how many gracious and gentle people there are high in the microcosm: Ted Sturgeon, Avram Davidson, ktp. Their natures inspire respect, but I'm afraid I'm incapable of imitating them...Whoinell votes in the Hugo polls anyhow? Outside of the art awards (which is a field I can't discuss with knowledge) I felt that all but the fanzine award were gross miscarriages. If a more poorly plotted and turgid series of stories than the Hothouse yarns has appeared since the '30's, I was mercifully gaffated at the time. Ditto Stranger in a Strange Land with knobs on. If Gillian Boardman turns out to be my granddaughter, I'll disinherit her...The N3F Doll: Wind it up and it says, "Goshwowboyoboy!"...There are going to be some awfully odd slogans floating around when it comes time to consider the location of the 1969 convention...The APA X doll: Wind it up and it denies it exists...Paul Krassner showed up to cover the convention. Next year, Frederick Wertham...One fellow-traveler on the return trip was Sensitive Fannish Feline Brewster Davidson. Look for an increase in Reginald Bretnor stories in F&SF...The Juanita Coulson doll: Wind it up and it sings through its nose...Excellent slivovitz at the Washington fans' party. It's a drink you should lay off as soon as you can't pronounce it any more...I wonder whether Avram's and Grania's Neo will win a mimeo at the next Con...Is there any truth to the rumor that Elliot Shorter is really a hoax perpetrated by Carl Joshua Brandon?...Most interesting feature of the Con: Fritz Leiber's talk "Fafhrd and Me"...Least interesting: Panel on "The Sense of Wonder".

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At one point during the Washingtonians' party I vaguely remember encountering a femme with long blonde hair and a starry costume, who was identified as something out of The Lord of the Rings. Drawing upon the inspiration of Bacchus, I recited:

O Elbereth Gilthoniel,
I look at you and what the hell!
There's bourbon whiskey on thy breath,
Gilthoniel O Elbereth!

...The Cult had a table to itself at the banquet, but did not appear in their favored monkish hoods...I went to the Con in Dick Eney's car with Dick, Ethel Lindsay (TAFF), and Lee Hoffman; returned minus Ethel but with two and eight ninths Davidsons (plus Brewster). Ethel has gone on to spread her Scottish burr over the west coast...Some people shocked to see Breen still bearded, contrary to rumor...Would there be any real reason why the tallies of the Hugo votes can't be made public?...I think that conferences would be preferable to Cons for any serious discussion. Cons, if Chicon III is any example, are too large and hectic. There is really no chance to renew old friendships and form new ones.

THE NEXT ONES

The forthcoming s-f conventions have been announced. All data now available on them is listed.

3 November 1962 - Philcon, Hall of Flags West, Sheraton Hotel, 16th Street and Pennsylvania Blvd., Philadelphia. The conference begins at 1 PM, and will be followed by a party. The entrance fee is \$1.00.

10 March 1963 - Eastern Science-Fiction Association (ESFA), Annual Open Meeting, YM-YMCA Building, 500 Main Street, Newark. Time is tentatively set for 2 PM.

21 April 1963 - Lunacon, Room 10D, Adelphi Hall, 7 1/2 Fifth Avenue (just south of Union Square), New York. Begins 1 PM.

29-30 June 1963 - Midwestcon, North Plaza Motel, 7911 Reading Road, Cincinnati.

4-7 July 1963 - Somewhere in the San Francisco area. Details later.

Labor Day weekend 1963 - 21st World Science-Fiction Convention, Statler-Hilton Hotel, 16th and K, Washington. Membership \$2.00; registration of attendees, \$1.00.

Silvercon, silver anniversary of 1st World Science-Fiction Convention, New York. Hal Clement, H. Beam Piper, and Theodore Sturgeon have promised to take part. For further information write Franklin M. Dietz Jr., 1750 Walton Avenue, Bronx 53, New York. The Silvercon is scheduled for July 4th weekend, 1964.

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It was announced in POINTING VECTOR #10 that the results of the poll on pp. 3-4 of that newsletter would be published in both POINTING VECTOR #11 and KNOWABLE #1. The poll elicited only 23 responses out of about 130 people, and 2 of these replies were post-deadline. In view of this poor showing, the poll results will not be tabulated in KNOWABLE. Those interested in the results should write for a copy of POINTING VECTOR #10.

First of all I think we have to begin by putting the phrase "age of the universe" in quotation marks, since I see at present no evidence against the assumption that the material universe has always existed. For me all that such a phrase could mean is the estimated time back to some important large scale event for which we think we have evidence, e. g., the occurrence of exceedingly high densities and temperatures or the beginning of nebular recession. This carries for me no implication that the universe was created without previous past history at the time of any such event. For example, if at some time in the past there was an occurrence of high densities and temperatures followed by recessional expansion for the matter within the range of our present telescopes, it would seem reasonable to consider this as the probable outcome of a preceding stage of contraction, for that matter.

- Richard Chase Tolman
Reviews of Modern Physics,
21, 374 (1949)

ON FIRST LOOKING INTO TOLMAN'S UNIVERSE

Sweeping the chill vault of the night
 My eyes were dazzled by the sight
 Of a myriad stars and systems;
 So wonder grew.

Is this great cosmos but finite?
 Or are we captives of the light
 Which curves two billion years across
 The vasty reaches?

Will we see no farther into space?
 Nothing beyond for the human race
 To live, and strive, and hope for?
 Nothing --- but emptiness?

Is space just one great swelling bubble?
 And should it burst, will men still trouble
 The Milky Way, our Island Universe
 With prying eyes?

Or will space reach a size so grand
 That it no longer can expand;
 Then -- bit by bit -- drift back again
 Into one massive ball?

And will this molten ball explode?
 Its stars reborn to yet unload
 On space ten million planets
 Like our earth?

A pulsing, uncreated universe?
 Is it a blessing or a curse
 That such evolving, endless cycles
 Should make God, odd?

- William J. Hall

SCIENCE MADE TOO EASY

I. Physics

Physics is the study of matter and energy. In recent years this has been complicated by the conversion of the former into the latter.

A physical change differs from a chemical change by not involving the disruption of molecules. Chemists seem to take this personally, and always devote the first two weeks of elementary chemistry courses in making this point clear.

Force

Elementary physics courses stress the formula $F = ma$. This is all that most students remember of physics. In later years they even forget that $F = ma$ is connected with physics, and think it was a fraternity.

A few years ago some radicals tried to change this to $F = kma$. This was promptly banned by the Atomic Energy Commission.

Newton's Laws

Newton's laws of motion have been the basis of physics for almost 300 years, so modern physicists are continually questioning them. Some doubt that the second and third laws are talking about the same thing. Newton's laws are concerned with force, which is defined in terms of mass, which is defined in terms of force.

Newton developed his ideas of gravity when an apple fell on his head. He was clever enough to perceive that his head was actually falling on the apple.

Newton's laws of motion are still useful if you happen to be restricted to a range of a few billion miles. Using them for greater distances is impractical.

Mass

Mass is not the same as weight. Physics instructors stress this without telling what it is the same as. It is important to remember that one gram of mass is not the same as one gram weight, except at such unusual places as the surface of the Earth.

Centrifugal Force

This does not exist.

Centripetal Force

This does not exist either, but it's easier to measure.

Time

Beginning physics students don't worry much about time. In connection with physics, that is.

Intermediate students are told that time is imaginary.

Advanced students are told that time is not imaginary after all. This is a great comfort to them, and enables many to go on to their Ph. D.'s.

Hydrodynamics

Instructors always plan to include a lecture on hydrodynamics if they can find the time between the mechanics and heat sections of the course. This never happens.

Heat

See Thermodynamics

Thermodynamics

See Heat. Also Electricity, Mechanics, Chemistry, and anything else within reason.

Absolute Zero

This is even colder than an upstate winter. As temperature approaches absolute zero, molecules move slower and slower. When it reaches absolute zero, they stop. Below absolute zero, they go backwards.

The First Law of Thermodynamics

This law states that heat is equivalent to energy. This is only true of some people.

The Second Law of Thermodynamics

This law is more popular with philosophers than with physicists. (See "The Uncertainty Principle".) It claims that the universe is running downhill, and that time goes from the past to the future. Some modern physicists regard this as a personal insult.

There is also a third law of thermodynamics. It states that absolute zero cannot be attained before the research grant runs out.

Electricity

Electricity consists of electrons, which go the wrong way. It is commonly found in batteries, dynamos, wall sockets, and the fingers of careless lab students.

Voltage

Voltage differences cause electric charge to flow in a closed circuit. This is explained to elementary students by analogy with hydrodynamics, which none of them have had. (See "Hydrodynamics".)

Resistance

Resistance is measured in ohms. The opposite of resistance is conductance. Conductance is measured in mhos. Physicists think that this shows a sense of humor.

Magnetism

Beginning students learn magnetism by analogy with electricity. They then learn that this analogy is false.

(Continued in the next issue)

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AGITATION

KNOWABLE #1 is
OPERATION # 13.

KNOWABLE is available for trade, contribution, letter of
comment, subscription (\$1 for 5 issues, of which this is
or because the editor feels like it.)

JAN 16 1962
MAY 16 1962
79 62

KNOWABLE
#1, November 1962
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Jamaica 32, New York
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