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Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society
 Club Notice - 11/10/95 -- Vol. 14, No. 19

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

Unless otherwise stated, all meetings are in Middletown 5T-415
 Wednesdays at noon.

DATE	TOPIC
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- 11/15/95 Book: BEYOND THIS HORIZON by Robert A. Heinlein
- 12/06/95 Book: MIDSHIPMAN'S HOPE by David Feintuch
- 01/03/95 Book: BRICK MOON by Edward Everett Hale ("Steampunk")

Outside events:

The Science Fiction Association of Bergen County meets on the second Saturday of every month in Upper Saddle River; call 201-933-2724 for details. The New Jersey Science Fiction Society meets on the third Saturday of every month in Belleville; call 201-432-5965 for details.

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1. We are trying something slightly different for our first book discussion of 1996. We will be discussing BRICK MOON by Edward Everett Hale. This 1870s story is the first ever written about a man-made earth satellite and its hapless passengers. For people with Web access you can find a link to it from my (Mark's) homepage <http://www-gbcs.mt.att.com/~leeper>. Look for a link toward the end where I have references about science fiction. Or we can uuto the text to you on Unix, or we can provide a diskette. Contact Mark or Evelyn Leeper for details.

Members who would like to suggest other on-line books should scan: <http://www.users.interport.net/~jfreund/sfbooks.html>. [-e&m]

2. (October 24) There was a piece on the news that got me thinking this morning. It was about the coming referendum in Canada about whether Quebec is to become separate. The commentator asked if a country as civilized as Canada has this much trouble over bilingualism, what is going to happen in the United States? It is a good question. Many people were hoping that with the close of the Cold War that there would be a period of peace and harmony. Well, it was an excellent lab experiment and it proves something of what I said when I toured Eastern Europe. As long as there are ethnic differences, there is going to be conflict. I hasten to add that this is not a call for the end to ethnic differences; it is just a lament for the character of human nature. Conflict may be pretty much inevitable. At the time I was traveling through Bosnia-Hercegovina I said that right now there is peace because the people are still united by a common foe, vestiges left over from Soviet domination. But, without I suggested, it would not be too long before the Bosnians decide they don't really like the Hercegovinians. It was a whimsical statement and I admit I got it wrong. It was a different ethnic struggle that broke Bosnia apart. But my analysis was right in that it is the common enemy that keeps people together. Suppose today most of the world were to wink out and everybody were to disappear but for England and France. What would happen? All of a sudden you would start hearing about an argument that goes back to the Middle Ages. It would turn out the French are still angry over the battle of Agincourt or some such. The Medieval conflict to some extent is still going on and is waiting to break out again. And the British are still smarting from the losses due to Joan of Arc. They may not send over men in armor with longbows, but the conflict is really still going on. If a year later France were to disappear, it would be the Normans against the Saxons. These conflicts never really die, they just are tabled as unfinished business due to more pressing problems. And thank goodness for business that doesn't finish. No war, no

battle is ever over as long as there are still people who identify themselves with one side, and other people who associate themselves with the other. You can get two groups to cooperate and temporarily be friends by introducing a third party for both to conflict with. That will work for a while, usually. The conflict with the Soviet Union was put on hold while we both had Nazi Germany to worry about. Take away Nazi Germany and the Cold War started again. (Well ... maybe it wasn't called the Cold War prior to World War II, but it was there effectively.) There are always people who will turn a perceived ethnic difference (or religious difference or any other kind of difference) into the perception of aggression that justifies retaliation. This would be a much duller world without a mixture of cultures and if everybody assimilated in every way to the dominant culture as far as possible. But I think it is clear at this stage of our evolution, humanity is not really good at handling diversity. I think we are fooling ourselves when we tell ourselves we are a long way out of tribalism. [-mrl]

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