

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club
Club Notice - 4/24/87 -- Vol. 5, No. 41

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

Unless otherwise stated, all meetings are on Wednesdays at noon.

LZ meetings are in LZ 3A-206; MT meetings are in MT 4A-235.

_D_A_T_E

_T_O_P_I_C

05/06 MT: THE HANDMAID'S TALE by Mainstream SF
Margaret Atwood

05/13 LZ: TO YOUR SCATTERED BODIES GO by Reincarnation
Phillip Jose Farmer

HO Chair: John Jetzt HO 1E-525 834-1563
LZ Chair: Rob Mitchell LZ 1B-306 576-6106
MT Chair: Mark Leeper MT 3E-433 957-5619
HO Librarian: Tim Schroeder HO 3M-420 949-5866
LZ Librarian: Lance Larsen LZ 3L-312 576-2068
MT Librarian: Bruce Szablak MT 4C-418 957-5868
Jill-of-all-trades: Evelyn Leeper MT 1F-329 957-2070
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1. Well, it's spring. I won't give you a whole lot of new information this issue because there isn't a whole lot new to tell you. Things are sort of slowing down (except at work) and people are spending more time out playing softball, square dancing, etc. I think anyone who goes out and does things like hitting a softball around deserves what he or she gets. Aside from the archetypical meanings of softball, I don't see a whole lot of sense in the game. Of course the game itself has its origins in Greek drama. Like Jason, the softball player starts at home, he has to prove himself to leave home, he leaves home, he faces dangers, and his one goal is to return home, where he started in the first place. It is an interesting drama, but how often can you see it played out? It's boring. Not that I am the person to judge by. There are really only two sports I claim any interest in: curling and boomerang throwing. Curling is interesting for the first hour because it looks really weird. I mean you throw this thing that looks like a giant metal M&M with a handle and some other guy runs in front of it with a broom sweeping its path. I am not sure if it is testing the mettle of the thrower or the sweeper, or perhaps it's a team sport, but it is fun to watch. The other sport I like is throwing a boomerang. It is sort of "wooden paper airplanes for adults."

It is actually a pretty amazing sport. Besides when you hold a solid wood boomerang in your hand it just feels a lot more real than an plastic frisbee. An the boomerang does a lot for the thrower. If you throw a boomerang half-way incompetently it will fly away from you, curve around, and start back toward you, landing

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maybe 20 feet from you. Passersby will stare wide eyed and wonder how you managed to make it curve around. If you throw a frisbee at about the same level of competence, people will say to each other "Aww! Look at the poor cripple."

2. Anyone who is interested in entering the "L. Ron Hubbard Writers of the Future" can get information by sending an elf-addressed, stamped envelope to Writers of the Future Contest, P. O. Box 1630, Los Angeles, CA 90078. [-ecl]

Mark Leeper
MT 3E-433 957-5619
...mtgzz!leeper

DARK VALLEY DESTINY: THE LIFE OF ROBERT E. HOWARD

by L. Sprague de Camp, Catherine Crook de Camp,
and Jane Whittington Griffin
Bluejay Books, 1983, \$9.95.

A book review by Mark R. Leeper

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L. Sprague de Camp is one of those people who have found how to make a living out of their hobbies, like Jacques Cousteau and a handful of other people I know of. He is a first-class story-teller, probably because he loves telling stories to himself and he writes them down for others. When he gets interested in a subject, he studies it and then writes a book about it. Doing that, he has gotten a string of respected non-fiction books, including D_a_y_o_f_t_h_e_D_i_n_o_s_a_u_r (co-authored with Catherine Crook de Camp, his wife), L_o_s_t_C_o_n_t_i_n_e_n_t_s, T_h_e_S_c_i_e_n_c_e_F_i_c_t_i_o_n_H_a_n_d_b_o_o_k (also co-authored with his wife), A_n_c_i_e_n_t_E_n_g_i_n_e_e_r_s, and many others. In 1974 de Camp published the definitive biography of one of his favorite writers, H. P. Lovecraft. Apparently earlier and about the same time de Camp did similar research on Robert E. Howard and working with his wife and Jane Whittington Griffin, published D_a_r_k_V_a_l_l_e_y

D_e_s_t_i_n_y: T_h_e L_i_f_e_o_f_R_o_b_e_r_t_E. H_o_w_a_r_d. The book was copyrighted in 1983 and published by the recently defunct Bluejay Books.

Howard was a popular writer for pulp magazines in the 1930s, particularly W_e_i_r_d T_a_l_e_s. He wrote a range of adventure stories of the blood-and-thunder variety, but by far his best known creation was Conan (as probably most readers of this review are well aware). D_a_r_k V_a_l_l_e_y D_e_s_t_i_n_y is 367 long pages of biography about Howard himself and the evolution of his works after his death. The length is impressive considering that Howard committed suicide at age 30 in a fit of depression about his comatose mother's impending death.

De Camp's prose is crisp and usually to the point (with occasional lapses such as "[Howard's comatose mother] did not hear the local shower that afternoon as, pattering, across the roof, it beat a brief tattoo to mourn young Robert's passing."). Of particular value is a very complete index--a feature sorely missed in the paperback edition of de Camp's Lovecraft bibliography.

Negative aspects of the biography? Well, the bibliography is written for fans of Howard's writing. It is certainly not de Camp's fault that Howard himself was imply not as interesting as his characters. Chapters I read--and I fully admit to some skimming and even outright skipping--the most interesting thing about Howard was what he was writing. If I was not interested in fantasy and pulp-writing the book would have had little interest for me. The story is in black and white and the segments about Conan are Technicolor.

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Also, I can find no reference to Frank Frazetta. As good as the Conan stories are, they very likely would have been forgotten if the covers or their re-publications were as unimaginative and unimpressive as the covers of earlier editions. I firmly believe that the modern popularity of Conan is due in large part to the power of Frank Frazetta's illustration. I can find no reference to Frazetta in the index, though i_c_a_n find references to the film C_o_n_a_n_t_h_e_B_a_r_b_a_r_i_a_n that even the director admits was heavily indebted to Frazetta for its visualization.

But fans of the writing of Howard owe the de Camps and Ms. Griffin a debt of thanks for this fine piece of research.

SUPER-TANKS

edited by Joe Haldeman, Charles G. Waugh, and Martin H. Greenburg
Ace, 1987, #3.50.

A book review by Mark R. Leeper
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Back when evangelism was merely lucrative I would occasionally listen to a program called "The World Tomorrow" with Garner Ted Armstrong (who more recently was excommunicated from his particular sect by his father Herbert W. Armstrong, who founded the sect). Garner Ted pontificated--if that's not a mixed metaphor--on the state of the world. One day G.T. was talking about what a war-like people mankind was. Then he made what I thought was a very odd comment, which was in fact very in character for old G.T. He said that's why so many people read science fiction: what they are reading about is the wars of the future. At the time I knew that he was selling science fiction very much short; there is a lot more to science fiction than future war stories, but, in fact, there is a lot of future war science fiction written.

Ace Books has published S_u_p_e_r-T_a_n_k_s, an anthology edited by Joe Haldeman, Charles G. Waugh, and, of course, Martin H. Greenburg. I say "of course" since few science fiction anthologies seem to come out these days without being at least in part edited by Greenburg, who must be the genre's most prolific anthologizer since Groff Conklin. The cover shows a Godzilla-class tank, nearly as big as a city block, rolling through billowing flames, firing its cannon, and violently destroying a small transport that got in its way and which was apparently beneath its attention. The blurb says, "W_e_l_c_o_m_e_t_o_T_o_m_o_r_r_o_w's_B_a_t_t_l_e_f_i_e_l_d_s,_W_h_e_r_e_O_n_l_y_t_h_e_S_t_r_o_n_g_S_u_r_v_i_v_e." The blurb sure fits the cover illustration. It sure looks like only the strong are surviving. David Drake has a Hammer's Slammers story, "Hangman," which in spite of the future setting has a very World War II feel to it. Keith Laumer contributes a story of the field test of one of his Bolo-class tanks. The most interesting part of the story is his history of Bolo tanks. Surprise contributors include Walter Miller, Jr., and Gene Wolfe, neither of whom do you usually think of as war-SF writers. The book concludes with Zelazny's "Damnation Alley" (the shorter magazine version that was published in 1967). Francis Izzo has a story more about videogame simulations of tanks than about tanks themselves. Arsen Darnay has a story reminiscent of Anne Caffrey's S_h_i_p_W_h_o_S_a_n_g. My personal favorite is George R. R. Martin's "The Computer Cried 'Charge'." It is a sort of futuristic retelling of "The Charge of Light Brigade" that makes an interesting point about mechanized warfare. Martin's short stories are always worth reading.

I cannot say I am a big fan of military science fiction, but if I do get the mood, S_u_p_e_r-T_a_n_k_s should have enough action stories to fill the bill.

FOR SPECIAL SERVICES by John Gardner
Berkeley, 1983(1982c), \$3.50.
A book review by Mark R. Leeper
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You can't keep a good man down, particularly when there is money to be made. With that in mind John Gardner, like Kingsley Amis before him, was licensed to write novels about Ian Fleming's creation, James Bond. Ian Fleming was a lucky man--he certainly wasn't much of a writer. But due to some small feel fro style, his choice of years to write, and the luck of having his books adapted into a high-gloss film series, his creation became probably the most famous character of popular fiction since Tarzan. When Fleming died, leaving behind two or three decent spy stories and millions of fans, it was only a matter of time before the people who inherited the rights to the character started letting other authors use the character. First Kingsley Amis wrote C_o_l_o_n_e_l_S_u_n, then John Gardner, who had previously written spy stories like T_h_e_L_i_q_u_i_d_a_t_o_r, wrote a series of James Bond novels. Before his death he wrote at least four: L_i_c_e_n_s_e_R_e_n_e_w_e_d, F_o_r_S_p_e_c_i_a_l_S_e_r_v_i_c_e_s, I_c_e_b_r_e_a_k_e_r, and R_o_l_e_o_f_H_o_n_o_r.

I have previously reviewed L_i_c_e_n_s_e_R_e_n_e_w_e_d and R_o_l_e_o_f_H_o_n_o_r. This time I read F_o_r_S_p_e_c_i_a_l_S_e_r_v_i_c_e_s. Reading a Gardner James Bond novel is more like watching a Bond film than like reading a James Bond novel. The books are fast-paced and go very quickly. They don't particularly tax the intellect of their audience.

F_o_r_S_p_e_c_i_a_l_S_e_r_v_i_c_e_s finds Bond in Texas with sidekick Cedar Leiter, daughter of Felix. He is going after an extremely wealthy character named Bismarquer, who is somehow connected to the rebirth of S.P.E.C.T.R.E. There is a minor mystery involved also, though the solution of the mystery is extremely predictable. There is also the obligatory scene in which Bond bests the forces of evil at some sport, in this case auto racing.

If you want a quick, non-taxing spy story and cannot live without James Bond, sure. Go for it. For anyone else, read it only if you

haven't read any of Gardner's others.

THE SHORTER ITS LEGS, THE HIGHER IT FLIES

This message has been sent to you because you are a bozo and need the luck it brings. Do not keep this letter. Make 43 copies and send them to 43 people who are also bozos. Eventually this letter will find its way to every bozo in the world. Won't that be something! This is the only true chain letter and it has brought luck to millions. Unlike most chain letters, this one will list real case histories of recipients whose names you will recognize and can verify if you want. When they received the letter it was just as you see it now and they were no doubt astounded to see their names already on it. Mickey Mouse receive the letter and decided not to pass it on. That afternoon he went to a picnic and it rained! When he got home he sent out his 43 copies and the next day Morty came home with a B+ in spelling. Batman received the letter and lost it somewhere in the bowels of the Batcave. Two days later the Riddler was released from prison and started a crime wave in Gotham City. Wiley Coyote ignored the letter and the Road Runner tricked him into running off the edge of a 400 foot cliff. Coyote was in plaster casts for the next SIX scenes! Beaver Cleaver got the letter but lost it spying on Wally, Eddie Haskell, and Lumpy Rutheford. On the way home Beaver fell in newly laid cement and ruined his new pants. Donald Duck got the letter and sent out 43 copies. That afternoon he got some voice improvement pills that made him sound like Ronald Coleman. But the next day Mr. Mailman brought all 43 letters back and said Donald had forgotten to put stamps on them. Donald used his new-

found voice to chew out Mr. Mailman, but just then the pills gave out and in a frenzy of duck yelling he ripped up the letters. Two days later Uncle Scrooge gave all his money to Oral Roberts. The FBI is still investigating a torn-up copy of this letter found by a waiter cleaning up Jimmy Hoffa's table setting that last day. Don't risk it. Surely you run into more than 43 bozos EVERY DAY! I know I do. How about the one who took up two parking spaces so nobody would park near his fancy new car? I am sure he can use this letter. Why not leave it under his wiper for him? And to be sure it doesn't blow away why not epoxy it to his windshield? You must know hundreds of bozos you could give it to, but limit yourself to 43. Otherwise there could be a serious shortage of bozos who haven't gotten it.

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