

PGLANGE -- 1970

by

Jay Kay Klein

Pittsburgh is less than 400 road miles from Syracuse, but the journey required nearly eight hours to drive. The last ten miles to the convention hotel took more than 25 miles and over an hour to traverse. I had a map and knew what routes to look for, but the Pittsburgh highway department went out of its way to lead me astray.

Guest-of-honor Harlan Ellison had the same experience, which he recounted at the banquet. Each of us was zipping down a truck-clogged highway, touted as THE way to enter Pittsburgh, at an average speed of 15 m.p.h., when suddenly the highway disappeared, leaving us on a narrow, slum-surrounded city street. I discovered later that the highway wandered off in a strange direction, leaving motorists on their own.

Harlan and his group from Clarion College then got trapped on a belt highway heading away at high speed from Pittsburgh, until Harlan demanded that the car get off at any exit whatsoever--and the car wound up inside Horne's Department Store. Pittsburgh streets are a baffling maze based on old goat tracks, and it was easy to mistake the department store entrance for a main downtown thoroughfare.

I had a little better luck, and wound up in the vicinity of the con hotel, a Howard-Johnson motor inn imbedded in a skyscraper which also housed a public parking garage, office building, and movie theatre. Closer than just the vicinity I could not get--it was like a story out of UNKNOWN WORLDS in which you are trapped in a paradox and can never reach your destination. After circling the mile-long block several times, without seeing any "how-to-enter" signs, I made a U-turn across a pedestrian walk. At the last minute I spotted a hidden driveway and so was spared the necessity of driving across the motel lawn--which I was fully prepared to do.

Facilities certainly do dictate the atmosphere of a con. The first Pglange, last year, was at a motel bordering the Pittsburgh airport. The rooms were clustered around a large central court, obviously as a shield against the enormous noise of nearby jet engines. The rooms were small, but the parties spread out into the courtyard, turning the convention area into a giant party. The swimming pool, too, was extraordinarily good--housed indoors in a spacious natatorium. Only the meeting room was defective, since it was far too small even for the 125 persons that attended the 1969 con.

This year the airport motel was not available, since it was booked up by airlines personnel. And so the con went downtown. Or more exactly, to its edge. The concom placed a warning in the program book that it was dangerous to walk outside since the hotel marked the beginning of the worst slum district in the city.

The rooms were excellent--all very large and ideal for parties. The concom had secured the excellent con rate of \$15, too. The program book was a printed 8-pager, plus cover, and contained not only complete details on the con, but also extremely useful tips on restaurants, transportation, stores, and entertainment, along with a local map. I must say that the concom had also previously shown the utmost in commonsense and thoughtfulness by providing full details in their con advertising--except, of course, on how to find the entrance to the hotel. (Entirely forgivable, since, as I found out later, they didn't know, either.)

At any rate, I entered Howard-Johnson's at 4:45 p.m., Friday, July 17. The elevators proved to be adequate, though not outstanding, and fifteen minutes later I was ready for conac. Stepping outside my room, I just about bumped into Dennis DiNacci and his guitar. Soon, I saw many other fans--and found the con suite was just down the hall. Unlike any other hotel, this one did the sensible thing and booked all fans on three adjacent floors!

Twelve stories down was the spacious registration room, huckster area, and meeting room. This could accommodate the full 225 persons that were to register. I found I was preregistered and was given a concom nametag, beautifully lettered with my name. To my surprise, I even was listed in the program book as a concom member. (Ahem, I must say that we Pittsburgh concom people do outstanding work.)

P. Schuyler Miller was already on hand. Strangely enough, his place of work was directly across the street from the hotel. Dirce Archer, 1960 Pittcon chairman, was on hand, too. A contingent was down from Canada, including Mike Glicksohn and his nametag. Last year's guest-of-honor, Bob Silverberg, soon arrived, as did Harlan Ellison--who was surrounded by his students from the writing course at Clarion.

Co-chairman Ginjer Buchanan dragged me off to look at a science fiction illustration hanging in the office of the hotel convention manager. She had bought it at the 1960 Pittcon and was hoping to get it identified. (Sorry, but I never saw it before in my life.)

Joe Haldeman was talking up the tremendous deal on beer, clams, and shrimp you could get at the bar downstairs, and a group of us went to get some. As you'd expect, this included Gay Haldeman. Croyden Arcond, Mike Glicksohn and Croydon's Rosemary completed the party. Several pitchers of beer and an assortment of shellfish later, we went back to the registration room for more confab.

About 8:30 eight of us piled into Ginjer Buchanan's car for what would have been a short walk to a restaurant--but what Pittsburgh streets turned into a long drive. I won't detail who sat on whose lap, but besides Ginjer and me, there were Harlan Ellison, Lester del Rey, Greg Moore, Bob and Barbara Silverberg, and Sandra Miesel. After a reasonably lengthy wait in the foyer of (really!) Klein's Seafood Restaurant, we milled around a big circular table trying to decide who would sit where. Harlan wanted to get a particular seat which would permit him freer use of his left hand (after all, you wouldn't expect Harlan to be right-handed like everyone else, would you?). But he had to settle for a seat next to me.

I managed to keep out of the way of his knife and fork, fortunately. Harlan had ordered a whole lobster stuffed with a whole crab, as several other persons also did. (You never saw such a tangle of legs and eyestalks!) A truly finicky eater, Harlan ate everything he could find on his plate except the shells, then complained because there wasn't more. Having eaten at restaurants with Harlan before, Lester, the Silverbergs and I thought this most remarkable. At one point, he was so engrossed with the food that when the waitress tried to tie a bib around his neck, he jumped some six inches off his seat in surprise.

And mercifully, the waitress service was quite good, too. For the first time at any science fiction con dinner, the waitress kept separate checks! That's how good the service was. Michelin, or Duncan Hines, or whoever, should award the place at least three stars. (That enough for you, Uncle Max?)

Six of us drove back, with Harlan and Greg electing to escape the crowd and walk. We reached the hotel about 11 p.m., and joined the parties. The main one was in the con suite. There were bodies draped on the beds, on chairs, on the floor, and on other places too strange to mention. Susan Tompkins was the refreshment girl, and stood behind the bar handing out free booze and soda. There was an ample supply of these--the Pittsburgh girls know how to make fans happy.

One of the Langsam twin cousins was there--I think it was Devra. Andy Porter and fellow New Yorker Elliot Shorter were there, as was Gale Burnick. Russ Seitz and a very blond Charlotte had come all the way from Boston. Connecticut Yankee (these days) Joanne Wood was sampling the party, too, not to mention Pittsburgh expatriate Dena Benatan.

Films were being shown in a meeting room on the convention floor. I generally stay away from these, but they are quite popular with many fans. Harlan stopped by to see something in which he was interested, but was driven out by a mouthy fan who tried to act as an unsolicited sound track to a silent movie. Harlan said he had hoped to see the famous heaving bosom scene in King Kong--the one where Fay Wray's nipples are on view.

The partying was very pleasant, though not riotous. Still, every now and then Ginjer or Susan would go around making loud "shushing" sounds. You'd think we were back in Boston, where police would come up to shut things down. Actually, the hotel management seemed very cordial.

The height of hilarity was reached with Bob Silverberg's wearing of Mike Glicksohn's ridiculous hat. It was strictly anti-climax when it wound up on me. Wisely deciding not to stay up all night, I left at 4:30 a.m. for some sleep.

Sometime around noon I staggered into the typical Howard-Johnson's restaurant downstairs in company with a group of fans too tired and hungry to care where they ate. I found my breakfast hamburger very refreshing. My only complaint is to wonder how a Howard-Johnson's could be out of HoJo cola.

Upstairs, the hucksters were in full bloom, along with the registration personnel. I came across Ted Pauls, who is normally a very good fiction critic--except when it comes to Isaac Asimov. Ted goes around looking like Jack Haldeman--who also showed up that Saturday afternoon with Alice and the baby. And I couldn't help but see Joni Rapkin and Flo Newrock--I just looked down and there they were.

A mustachioed young man came over and introduced himself as Dean Koontz. I was amazed--somehow I had thought from his trenchant letters in fanzines that he must be 62 years old to get that sharp. He turned up on the first panel, too.

At 1:45 p.m. Ginjer held an Introduction of Notables. I've always considered this event extremely desirable, since it's helpful and inspirational to fans (and pros, too) new to conventions. Those introduced get an ego boost, no matter how often it may have happened previously. Ginjer did a good job. (I.e., she introduced me--unlike some con chairmen who will no longer get their pictures taken.)

Fred Lerner moderated the panel that followed: "The Pros at the Cons--an Existential Query". This translated to "Why Do You Come to Science Fiction Conventions". Joe Haldeman, Dean Koontz, Schuyler Miller, and Lester del Rey answered. Joe said his first con was the Discon in 1963. He continued going because he likes to see old friends. (This may sound like circular reasoning, but it's probably true of perhaps 90% of regular congoers.)

Dean had an equally universal reason why he hadn't gone to cons earlier--POVERTY. And Sky had a familiar excuse common to gafflates: he has other hobbies with conventions that pull him away from science fiction. His specialty is archaeology.

Les began, "I was fortunate in a way." He went on in a manner that left no doubt that he would never leave science fiction. Les attended the first Worldcon, in 1939, but wasn't able to make the next three--in Chicago and Denver prior to World War II, and the first one after the war, in Los Angeles. He attended the Philcon in 1947, and has been going ever since.

He went on to make a typically del Reynian analogy. He said his wives had been from outside science fiction. He has no family of his own, and looks upon the family of his last wife as all he has. Though not Jewish, he still goes to the family seder. Similarly, he looks upon fandom as a family affair--complete with arguments! Among other comments, Les said, "Blood is thicker than water--even green!" This evoked laughter. "Monsters stick together!" More laughter.

He then moved on to talk about science fiction magazines and editors' viewpoints, finally touching on distribution problems--which he said were very bad. On the subject of beginning writers, Les pointed out that short stories provide training grounds. Persons with some inherent critical judgment will begin with short stories. Others will attempt very long, very bad "novels".

During the panel, the room was about two-thirds full, with a few persons in the adjoining huckster/registration area. All in all, the facilities were quite adequate.

The panel drifted into a discussion of editing techniques and peculiarities of particular editors. This was turning into a shoptalk session, and Fred got the participants back on the track by asking what the panelists like and dislike about cons. Dean: "I dislike panels like this." Laughter. He also commented that he found it interesting to watch the reactions at the front desks of hotels (especially the Warwick in Philadelphia last year at the Phillycon) when the "freaks" come in. Laughter.

Sky said that as a member of the concom for the 1960 Pittcon, he had to keep the books balanced while everyone else had a good time.

Les said that whether large or small, a con should seem small. Also, persons putting on a con should extend themselves to make congoers feel like wanted guests--not just so many extra bodies. The St. Louiscon was particularly good about handling people.

The panel ended at 2:40 p.m., followed by a brief intermission. At 3:00 p.m. Ginjer introduced the "Women's Lib" panel, officially titled "Up Against the Wall--Woman's Place in Science Fiction". Ginjer introduced the panelists, using her best public school official introduction gestures. While I may kid her about these--and I haven't seen their like before at any con--I must say that the introductions themselves were quite good, and far better than the average run of panel introductions. (Now if she would just stop saying, "Members of the faculty, fellow students, and my learned opponents. . .". . .)

Having recently given up the exploitation of women, Harlan was moderator. His charges were Connie Reich, Gay Haldeman, Vonda McIntyre, and Sandra Miesel. While Connie stuck to her knitting (anyway, I think she was knitting), the others carried on a lively discussion. Vonda began the panel, saying that the Clarion Workshop people thought she ought to stop using just initials, and openly admit she is female. I must say, though, that she fits her initials just fine, being dressed in a short haircut, pants, and man's shirt hung out Sloppy Joe style. She reminded me very strongly of a fellow with whom I used to go to school.

As you might expect if you know Gay, this Haldeman-by-marriage said she prefers having doors opened for her, and the other perks of femininity. Gay obviously represented the reactionary element on the panel.

Harlan spoke of PLAYBOY's chauvinistic attitude toward women, and cited the case of Ursula K. LeGuin. The magazine used just her initials on a story, and contrary to custom, omitted her photo, although she had submitted one.

Vonda stated, "Fandom's one place where women are accepted." She went on to tell about how she had collaborated with "a hard-core porno writer" (male) on a story about a "super brothel on Mars".

Following up the theme of men/women authors writing about opposite sexes, Gay said, "Heinlein's women are cardboard." She considered them "men disguised as woman without the equipment". Continuing this Heinlein critique, she stated that Alex Panshin's girl characters in Rite of Passage didn't ring true, either. (Naturally--Alex is the world's leading expert on Heinlein.)

Oh, it really got to be a lively panel. So much so that every now and then Connie would look up from her knitting. I presume that where Vonda represented the "pro" and Gay the "con", Connie stood for the silent majority of women. Sandy seemed to strike a happy medium between the extremes, though she and Gay were out-talked by Vonda, whose parting thoughts were: men and women should share responsibilities. (This gave rise to speculation on necessary anatomical revisions.)

The auditorium was again two-thirds full--perhaps a couple of hundred people. At 3:55 a moderating Harlan opened the floor for questions. One female fan rose to state that the male characters of the Brontë sisters were very attractive to women but that men disliked them.

Vonda and Harlan got into some amusing anecdotes of life at Clarion. Because the washing machines were located in an area of the dormitory forbidden to men, the Clarion Workshop girls did the laundry of the fellows. Vonda and another girl were doing mixed loads of boys' and girls' underwear--which absolutely shocked a number of the ordinary, non-SF females. As Vonda put it, "Did they think we'd discovered a new way to get pregnant?" Laughter.

Harlan concluded with the ringing, if somewhat non-sequitur, statement, "The really memorable science fiction remains to be written." Applause.

The panel ended at 4:10, followed by an auction. Those of us not interested stood around in the registration area, talking and waiting for the 6:30 buffet dinner. Last year, guest-of-honor Bob Silverberg had given his talk in front of a large photo of Harlan Ellison. This year, a giant blowup of Bob Silverberg was hung behind Harlan. (This was my photo of Bob holding his recently-acquired Nebula.)

Linda Bushyeager was the official hostess, sending each table up to the buffet in turn. There was a wide assortment of cold cuts, salads, etc.. Unfortunately, my table turned out to be the very last one to reach the trough. Mike Lalor, sitting opposite me, was visibly apprehensive that after Elliot Shorter got done, there wouldn't be anything left. I was seated next to Gay Haldeman, and so didn't really care whether I got anything to eat or not.

Finally, long around Elliot's fourth helping, and Mike's third, the program started at 7:50. This consisted of a typical scathing introduction by Bob Silverberg of Harlan Ellison. Obviously enjoying every insult, Harlan sat there and took it quietly. Bob told how they had lived together in 1955 on 114th St. in New York--struggling to become professional writers.

According to Bob, Harlan just couldn't sell anything. One day he returned from a trip downtown and jubilantly told Bob he had "hit" John Campbell. Bob had visions of John lying across his desk while Harlan was jumping up and down, hitting him at the top of each leap. It turned out that Harlan meant "sold" a story to Campbell. And it turned out that actually Campbell had merely agreed to look at a story, which he promptly sent back. In fact, Harlan didn't "hit" Campbell for 15 years, not until 1970, with "Brillo". (Story about a robot cop--metal fuzz. Even then it took the help of Ben Bova.)

Next, Bob moved on to a really humiliating story. As a writer for ROGUE, Harlan often went to fancy restaurants and said he was sampling food for a gourmet column. As a "professional courtesy", he expected to receive a free meal. He often brought Bob along as "winetaster"--especially appropriate since Harlan doesn't drink.

At the 1960 Pitcon, Harlan not only brought Bob, but a whole party. The first hint of disaster came when the waiter brought over a bottle of wine which he said was compliments of the management. (Just the wine? Uh, oh....) At the end of the meal, Harlan waved off the check with a "professional courtesy". The group started moving

rapidly down the long road from the restaurant. The bill and irate management followed. Harlan had a chat with the management, while Bob and the rest made their escape.

Anyway, Bob alleged that Harlan couldn't set foot into Pittsburgh until after the statute of limitations ran out on the charge of defrauding an innkeeper. (Oh, Bob was in excellent form. Obviously he was all set for guest-of-honoring at Heicon, and was honing his banquet technique on Harlan.)

An unabashed Harlan (the only extant kind) eventually seized control of the microphone. He began, "This is a farewell address. Harlan's farewell to the troops." He announced that he would never again attend a science fiction convention. (Later on, he told me that he might very well drop by a convention for a little while to see old friends, but would not participate in official proceedings.)

His reason was that science fiction fans have been treating him meanly. He is constantly on the receiving end of return coupons fraudulently filled in--magazine subscriptions and especially writers' correspondence courses. He even related how fake, insulting telegrams have been sent in his name to magazines, such as TV GUIDE. These "jokes" have resulted in loss of writing assignments.

At the question period I asked if perhaps it weren't science fiction people doing this, but persons who are familiar with his writing for the underground press. (After all, being fairly linear, I presumed these type of people bomb college buildings and would stop at nothing, even sending fake telegrams.) Harlan said "no"--these type of people are very nice and wouldn't do things like that.

During the following con in Toronto, Fanfair II, I asked Isaac Asimov if he had any trouble of the type enumerated by Harlan. Ike said none at all. Since Isaac is at least as prominent as Harlan, and Harlan feels the underground press readers aren't to blame, I can only presume that there is something about Harlan that attracts mischief.

I did see a case of this at the Lunacon this year. Harlan had dropped in unexpectedly and engaged in an insult contest on the platform with Isaac. Afterwards, Harlan was approached by a young lady for an autograph. Fumbling over some difficulty, such as a pen that wasn't handy or wouldn't write or some such, Harlan sought to make light of the situation in his usual Harlanesque way. The girl took offense at this and said, "Piss on you, sir. I only wanted to wipe some germs off my pen." Harlan ignored this, since after all, he could hardly hit a girl in the mouth.

And at the Pghlange itself that evening, Harlan and a local Pittsburgh girl (whom we shall anonymously call Little Nelly Kelly) were preparing to leave the concon party when an overgrown 15-year-old said drunkenly, "Keep it clean!" Harlan advanced on the towering teenager and told him off. The kid wound up with his back to a window, and for a minute I thought he would back completely out the fifteenth floor. Later he told me he was sure Harlan was going to deck him. But Harlan never hits women and children. (I hope he also exempts con reporters.)

Continuing his wide-ranging farewell address, Harlan told how he had spent two years getting a particular copy of Dangerous Visions autographed by every author in it, only to have the volume stolen. He said he would like to have it back, and requested the fan who did it to return the item, no questions asked. (And I think he promised a reward, too.)

He told about bringing Max Katz, a TV director, to the Lunacon. Max thought we were a strange bunch of people. Harlan stayed overnight at a room in the hotel, then moved into Max's apartment. Harlan told a very long tale about Max's taking him to an expensive tailor, and how he fell in love with the jacket he was now wearing--

buying it even though the writing business has not been so good lately. I must say it was a very quietly-flamboyant brown check and went well with his mod pants that had exposed crimson fly buttons.

After telling us about the coat, he proceeded to take it off, claiming it was so closely-tailored that the banquet made it tight. More comfortable, he introduced the Clarion Workshop students. Among them was Russell Bates, an hereditary shaman of the Kiowa Indians. Jokingly, Harlan claimed he never got too rough on Russell since he didn't want a little black cloud to follow him around the rest of his life. Everyone laughed, including (fortunately) Russell.

The guest-of-honor then detailed at great length his trip from Clarion, including both the parts where they were running out of gas and couldn't locate any in the backwoods area north of Pittsburgh, and where the car wound up inside a downtown department store.

He repeated that this was his farewell address, and proceeded to rake verbal ashes over a young fan in the audience who had written a derogatory article in GRAN-FALLOON, a Pittsburgh fan gazette. Harlan complained bitterly about such treatment, saying it's the type of thing that made him decide to leave fandom. He read excerpts from the article, by Jeff Smith, and pointed out that the author could not possibly know the things he alleges. Harlan said this was one of the rare times when a maligned person could strike back, since the fanzine critics hide behind the futility of anyone's striking back in print.

Then Harlan took a few good-natured pokes at Bob Silverberg, saying that he got professional courtesy in every city in the country, and that Bob went along lapping up the food and drink. At a choice moment, Bob remarked on Harlan's farewell: "You mean, fans won't have Harlan Ellison to kick around anymore?" Laughter.

The conclusion of Harlan's address was a ten-minute reading of his latest unpublished story "Eratophobia". This was about a man who was so attractive to women that he was in danger of being loved to death. The story had one memorable line, "Now that had gone bananas, and he was thoroughly peeled." Groans from the audience, so Harlan took a pencil and deleted the item. (At last, Harlan bows to criticism.)

After the banquet, at Harlan's request, I took a shot of the assembled Clarion group, including Harlan. All 18 persons lined up and I took the second group shot of my life. I prefer spontaneous photos. Afterwards, Harlan was surrounded by young people, including a high proportion of girls. I suppose there's something in the remark earlier, that the Brontë male characters appeal to women but not to men, since I showed a photo of Harlan to a local Syracuse dyed-blond teenager, and she spontaneously said (without knowing who he was), "Oh, what a handsome guy!" (I feel obliged to repeat a famous statement by Ed Dong: "Girls don't think straight.")

The convention was now all over except for the Saturday night parties. Fortunately these ran until the early hours of Sunday morning. The concom suite had plenty of booze and ice, although it ran a bit short on space. Several other parties helped spread the bodies. At one point I was invited to a Baskin-Robbins ice cream sampling party in Elliot Shorter's room, with Mike Glicksohn, Russ Seitz, and Croydon Arcond attending.

The usual fanac went on, including a Washington-in-74 party. Dena Benatan and Bob Silverberg exchanged see-through shirts behind closed doors in Gale Burnick's room, and re-exchanged in the concom party suite. During a conversation with Bob, I pointed out that prior to his last year's guest-of-honorship at Pghlange, he had gone around talking about droit-du-seigneur, jus primus nocte, and the like as applicable to the concom, who consisted largely of young females. Some months after the

con, most of the Pittsburgh girls got married, or left town, suddenly. On top of this, Up the Line appeared, obviously having taken considerable research, of sorts. (Doubtless this was all a coincidence, but it made for amusing small talk.)

I eventually collapsed for a brief nap, and got up Sunday morning around noon. A one-o'clock breakfast at Howard-Johnson's with Harlan, Carleen Kelly, the Silverbergs, Russ Seitz and Charlotte put me in a good frame of mind--though the food did nothing good for my stomach. Harlan tried to snap up the waitress service to an approximation of what he considered adequate, and succeeded at least in getting the hostess to lend a hand so that the service was raised to a below-adequate level. Even Harlan knew better than to try to raise the quality of Howard-Johnson's food: this is shipped pre-ruined from central headquarters.

Harlan and Bob did most of the talking at first, with the rest of us getting a word in from time to time. When two travelling salesmen get together, they talk about their merchandise, customers, and how to sell. When two professional writers get together, they talk about their merchandise, customers, and how to sell. The rest of us eventually sidetracked them to other topics. I managed to break the ice by casually asking Harlan, "When's your next convention?" Snarled reply: "When you wear a hearing-aid, Jay Kay!" And Russ drew praise from Harlan for his one-liner bellylaughs. At an appropriate moment, I repeated my Bob Silverberg/droit du signeur observation for Harlan's benefit--who looked properly regretful at having come too late for any jus primus nocte.

The rest of the day was spent saying goodbye to departing fans, with very little action of any kind taking place. At 6:30 we got together a dinner party consisting of Harlan, Ginjer Buchanan, Ron and Linda Bushyager, Rick Pohlman, and Susan Tompkins. We headed to the Omar Khayam Lebanese restaurant. I'd eaten there at last year's Pghlange, and knew the food was both plentiful and good. Harlan liked it, too, and so I had the rare opportunity of seeing Harlan attend a con where not only did he like at least one dinner, but actually liked two. Expansively, Harlan entertained us with true stories from his fascinating life.

Ginjer drove us back to the hotel, and after failing to find the entrance a couple of times, left us off on the street to walk across the lawn. In the hotel at 9:45, the last sight of the guest-of-honor available to the public was Harlan sprawling over the cigar counter, talking animatedly to the young female attendant.

The second Pghlange was well-run, with good facilities, and very pleasant. But it did lack the "party party" atmosphere of last year, which was encouraged by the motel courtyard, Midwestcon-style. I am looking forward to next year's event, which I am sure will be ably put on by any concom left after two consecutive years of Bob Silverberg and Harlan Ellison guest-of-honorships.

MINIREVIEW.

While it is not usual practice to review a review without looking at the book, it is of interest to note that SATURDAY REVIEW gave a long and generally favorable review to Robert Silverberg's Lest I Forget Thee, Oh Jerusalem, a 600-page, \$12.95 book dealing with the history of modern Israel. ##### The reviewer expresses amazement that Mr. Silverberg could assimilate and organize so much material in so short a time. While the price is steep, the topic is inherently interesting; possibly you could bug your local library about getting a copy.

-- Alexis Gilliland

IT'S D.C. FOR SURE IN '74!!

ANARCHY AND AGRICULTURE
by Alexis Gilliland

Anarchy is very probably the best form of government or non-government that is possible for man.

Unfortunately, the anarchists who claim that peace will descend upon the world like a gentle rain from heaven after the last bureaucrat has been hanged in the bowels of the last capitalist (or was that the other way around?) are a bit wide of the mark.

One of the difficulties with true anarchy is that it is incompatible with agriculture. Perhaps I am coming on out of left field, but for a farmer to be able to operate, he needs to know what land he can farm, what levies (or taxes) he can expect to be laid against his crops, and he needs civil order.

It should be self-evident that anarchy is incompatible with the courts which validate the farmer's claim to the land, the police which enforce the diktat of the courts, and the army which stands by in case the police are insufficient.

In short, that anarchy joyously demolishes the iniquitous and evil concept of property, whether the farmer likes it or not.

Note that in Russia, which allegedly has abolished private property, the farmer is in very little doubt about what land he is supposed to farm. Half the farm produce is grown on 10% of the land...the "private" 10%.

Note also, that Mao Tse Tung, the hero of the New Left, is experiencing the most excruciating difficulties imaginable in rooting the demon of Capitalism out of the Chinese.

This leads to the suspicion that the capitalist is at least as pernicious as the bureaucrat.

Nevertheless, we hoist the black flag of anarchy and assume that the farmers will continue farming within the pre-anarchy property lines and not give us any trouble.

Comes the second problem...what sort of taxes will they pay? The anarchist says, "No taxes. You get no services, so you pay nothing." The farmer needs roads to get his crop to market, and he needs a market to get his crop to. What about roving bands of hungry men who steal his livestock or plunder his warehouses?

These expenses are not calculable, nor are the effort and risk involved in defending the crop which he has planted on the common land. Perhaps this year you chase away a single hobo. Next year a gang of bindlestiffs may kill you dead. The farmer wants law and order and is ready to pay for it.

So we modify anarchy to let the farmers keep on growing food? Forget it, Charley! If you are going to try to exist half slave and half free, you know that eventually the farmers are going to want to be paid for the food they produce. And that means going to work.

And work means order, and Monday mornings, and bosses and all the crap that anarchy was supposed to eliminate.

We nail the black flag to the mast!

Anarchy forever! we shout, Agriculture has got to go!

A great slogan, that, "Agriculture has got to go!" Catchy.

Of course, one of the immutable laws of the universe is that the meal I ate this morning isn't doing much for me at suppertime.

As Anarchists, we are not immune to hunger, of course, but theoretical considerations override the drab mundaneness of calories.

We will, by damn, eat by an honest-to-God anarchial method.

Herdning sheep or punching cattle are almost as bad as farming. Property, as Proud-houn is incessantly quoted as remarking, is theft, and even if you knew those sheep weren't your property, how would you convey the subtle semantic difference to your sheep dog?

No. Scratch agriculture, and scratch animal husbandry.

We Anarchists will go right back to hunting and fishing, with maybe a patch of potatoes* to fall back on, during hard times. It is, after all, the only Anarchial way of feeding oneself.

There is the fact that this shift in the mode of food production will reduce the number of people that can be fed somewhat. Like, perhaps, by 99.9%.

This is one of those technically awkward details that is best passed over lightly.

Of course, a lot of that 99.9% are bureaucrats and capitalists. Besides--what on earth do we need three billion people for?

No, the real problem is not eliminating most of the population, the real problem is maintaining the essential services like dentistry, restaurants and brewerys, not to mention desirable luxuries like the theatre and tailors.

After all, that was what drove man to agriculture in the first place--his wife wanted the services.

And if we can't provide them, it doesn't matter that we get the population down. Some fool will reinvent agriculture and the cycle starts all over again.

The long-range outlook is very hopeful, however. Once cybernation makes the working class obsolete, we can provide the services without people.

And once that happens, it's Anarchy forever, baby!

*which will, of course, be raised by female anarchists.

BOOK REVIEW-- The Parasaurians, by Robert Wells (Berkley Medallion X1779; 60¢).

This is a novel so secure in its essential mediocrity as to not deserve more than a single paragraph of review. The Parasaurians are almost-living replicas of dinosaurs roaming an exclusive hunting preserve on an island somewhere off South America. The novel concerns a safari on which the hero, wealthy Prof. Ross Fletcher, sets out with a beautiful photographer named Kit Namoya, an older man, Dr. Nils Bodee, and a sinister guide named Sternius. One is a villain. Guess which. One is a secret government agent in a clever plastic disguise. Guess which. Two end up dead, and the other two end up holding hands. Guess who's who. The principal plot element involves a bit of biological engineering on the part of the villain which has pushed a couple of the nasty lizards across the line from the almost-living to the actually living. Said villain is a mad (oh, at least semi-looney) scientist, embittered at the world and out for revenge. There are some pretty good scenes in the novel, describing some of the actual hunting, but unfortunately they by that very fact invite--and suffer from--comparison with Sprague de Camp's classic "A Gun for Dinosaur". There's not much else in The Parasaurians worth considering. The writing is no more than adequate, characterization is wooden, and there is no theme to speak of, just a plot that might have been a Buck Rogers episode some thirty years ago.

-- Ted Pauls

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