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        Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society
        Club Notice - 02/24/95 -- Vol. 13, No. 35

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

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

 DATE   TOPIC

03/08/95 Book: CYBERIAD by Stanislaw Lem
03/29/95 Video: Science in STAR TREK

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.

MT Chair: Mark Leeper   MT 3F-434 908-957-5619 m.r.leeper@att.com
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1. A while back I reported some funny but depressing facts about
the state of American education. Favorite case in point is the
assumption that $.25 and .25c mean the same thing. It used to be
that you saw this only on hand-painted signs. These days you see
it in print on grocery stores, the Burger King near me has a big
sign in the window that they have pancakes for .99c, etc. A poll of
Japanese students said the first thing they thought about from
World War II was Hiroshima. A surprising number of American
students when asked what they thought about when they thought of

Japan said Tienanmen Square.

Well, in the on-going march downward come a few more examples. We had to do a currency exchange in which the teller had to figure 10% of a sum of money. She had to do it on a calculator. She got it

wrong. She didn't even recognize that she had gotten it wrong.

People who are supposed to be experts can't even apply what many of us would consider basic knowledge. National Public Radio recently reported that a South Dakota school teacher called a major map publisher trying to get a map of her state. The clerk she got looked quickly at the set of maps and said that they had North Dakota but didn't publish a separate map for South Dakota. "You mean you don't have maps of all of the states," the teacher asked puzzled.   To which the clerk responded "Is South Dakota a state?" Executives eventually got involved and assured the teacher that they knew that South Dakota was a state. But perhaps it was only to follow a policy that the customer is always right.

At James Monroe High School in New York City, fifteen students in detention were told that they would be excused if they could tell who James Monroe was. In spite of having his picture on the wall right there, none of the students could identify the person for whom the school was named.

A student from New Mexico applying to a major college had the processing of his papers held up because there were no foreign student papers.

Back at the University of Massachusetts a book titled INTERSTELLAR DUST, missing from the astronomy library for years, was finally found shelved in the home economics library.

Perhaps the problem is that we are a culture in which selling is all-important. People want things pre-packaged and pre-digested for them. A while back when Billy Joel had a TV special to benefit the environment it was hyped on TV with the line, "The Earth is dying. Can Billy Joel save it?" And currently I am hearing on cable the announcement "Amazing. Sexual tension without any sex at

all. REMAINS OF THE DAY next on Cinemax." [-mrl]

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2. Re last week's comment on Pyramid Books in Red Bank: it's on
Monmouth Street, pretty much across the street from the Dublin
House. [-ecl]

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   An optimist is a man who has never had very much experience.
                    --Don Marquis