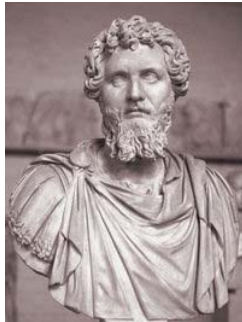


THE ALLITERATIVE ARGENTUS

2005: Issue 5
\$3.00 or the usual



Steve Sawicki
Stan Schmidt
Steven Silver
Susan Sizemore
Sherwood Smith
Steve Stiles
S.M. Stirling
Steven Stoliar

Julie Czerneda
Mike Resnick
David Silver
Greg Williams
Gene Wolfe

From the Mine

For this issue of *Argentus*, I thought I would try something a little different. I've noticed over the years that several members of the science fiction community share my first and last initials. I've invited several of them to contribute to this, the Alliterative *Argentus*. While this means I had to reject or postpone the publication of some articles I've been requesting for some time (they'll appear in issue 6), it also means that I was able to get a variety of authors for this issue I normally wouldn't have approached.

The cover of this issue has a dozen images and you'll find other pictures scattered throughout the issue. *Please feel free to try to identify all of the people pictured and send your list to me. Whoever gets the most correct will win a copy of a book (what book? I don't know. We'll see what I have to offer at the time I declare the contest over). As you might have guessed from the theme of the issue, all of the images are of people with the initials SS. Most of the people pictures do not have a link with science fiction.*

So, what's on tap?

Analog editor Stanley Schmidt reflects on the things that are most important in life.

S.M. Stirling, author of *Island in the Sea of Time*, offers his thoughts on his first year as a citizen of the United States.

Now that Peter Jackson has finished his version of *The Lord of the Rings*, Sherwood Smith discusses her discovery of the trilogy in the 1960s, just before "Frodo Lives!" became a buzz phrase throughout America.

Steve Stoliar, whose name is probably not familiar, has graciously permitted the use of an excerpt, with new material, from his book about working as a secretary from 1974 through 1977. However, the man he was a secretary for...

Steve Sawicki looks at re-visioning works of art, specifically films, and why he doesn't believe it is in the best interest of the artist or the consumer.

And in a first for *Argentus*, Susan Sizemore contributes a piece of fiction running in the main section instead of in the mock section.

The mock section includes reviews of books by authors in a style they generally are not known for. Reviews include Julie E. Czerneda's horror novel, Anne & Todd McCaffrey's Cyberpunk Pern novel, and Gene Wolfe's space opera movie novelization, Robert Heinlein's memoirs of a female astronaut, and a look at Mike Resnick's very real "Lucifer Jones" series.

Although this is issue five of *Argentus*, it is the sixth issue of this name. In January 2005, I posted a web-only issue of *Argentus* to Bill Burns's excellent efanazines site. The *Argentus Guide to Game Shows*, included several articles by fans who have appeared on game shows. I'm still hoping to expand the edition with other fannish tales of being on game shows, so that electronic only issue is not necessarily complete.

An addition to the *Argentus* realm, of sorts, is a livejournal I maintain. There are few notably fannish entries, although there are some. I try to include a today in history entry every day and I comment on politics there. If you want to read it, you can find it at <http://www.livejournal.com/users/shsilver>.

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ARGENTUS is published once a year by Steven H Silver. All submissions, letters or other correspondence should be directed to him at 707 Sapling Lane., Deerfield, IL 60015-3969 or e-mailed to shsilver@sfsite.com. Issues of *ARGENTUS* are available for \$3.00 or "the usual." The *Argentus* website can be found at <http://www.sfsite.com/~silverag/argentus.html>. Steven's blog can be found at <http://www.livejournal.com/users/shsilver>.

Treasure

Stanley Schmidt

When I was very young I read a short story that stuck in my mind for a long time afterward—or at least, two elements of it did. The protagonist was a movie projectionist who dabbled in philosophy, and one of his observations could be stated as, “Security is in the past.” Most people spend a lot of their lives seeking security—things they can value and hold on to—but the future is the wrong place to look for that, because the future is full of uncertainties. Even if you gain fortunes (whatever you conceive them to be), they can slip away in an instant; or you can die, or become too sick to enjoy them. Your past, on the other hand, is yours and it is secure, because you have already survived whatever trials it presented, and nothing can now change that fact.



Many years later, trying to remember what that story was and what it actually said and wondering what I would think of it now, I made passing reference to it in an *Analog* editorial. A couple of readers recognized it and came to my aid: it was “What Dead Men Tell,” by Theodore Sturgeon (*Astounding*, November 1949).

And it held up even better on rereading. What it actually said was, “The only thing a man has is behind him—his memories. What he has means nothing. What he *has had* is the only thing he can hold on to—the only thing no power on Earth can touch.” But... “You can do this much with your present—you can shape the nature of things to form the best possible memory for yourself.”

That struck me as an uncommonly insightful and practical principle to live by: strive to make good memories. But how do you know whether you’re doing that? The inherent irony is that you can’t, at least directly. The only way to know how good a memory an incident will make is to see how you feel about it much later. Some things may impress you mightily at the time and then fade quickly into insignificance. Others you may hardly notice when they happen, only to discover years later that they’ve burrowed quietly but deeply into your mind and won’t go away. But if you know what kinds of things have made good memories for you in the past, that may give you some inkling of what is worthwhile, for you, to strive for in the future.

A few years ago I tried to list some of mine, to see what, if anything, they had in common. I imposed no *a priori* criteria; I simply tried to think of things that popped out of memory as still being very special to me years after they happened. In that first session, I think, I came up a few shy of a hundred. Last time I counted I had 112, and in a good year I’ll add one or two, maybe three, more. But never right away. If you’re looking for the ones that don’t fade, you have to allow some time to see if they do.

Here are a few samples, in no particular order:

Watching the launch of Apollo 17 from the press site three miles away, its exhaust lighting up half the sky in a visual spectacle so intense I literally forgot there would be sound, too—until it started arriving 17 seconds later, much of it through the soles of my feet.

Viewing a total solar eclipse under nearly perfect conditions in North Carolina, *realizing* for the first time at the instant of onset that a total is not just quantitatively, but qualitatively different from even a 99% partial.

Spending Christmas morning snorkeling with wild and playful sea lions in the Sea of Cortez.

Sitting down late one night, after seeing my wife off to work a midnight shift in her hospital lab, with a pile of paper, a Bic pen, the determination to match my schedule to hers for a week of those shifts, and the vague idea that some more stuff happened after a short story I’d published a few years earlier. Starting to doodle, trying to figure out what might happen next, watching answers flow faster and faster onto paper, taking more and more definite shape, till at 4 AM I discovered I had a complete outline of the novel *Tweedlioop*.

Getting home at the end of a grueling work week halfway through reading a manuscript by an unknown author¹, so absorbed in it that I rushed through dinner to get back to it and finish it.

The simple delight of discovering while camped beside a backcountry lake in the Adirondacks that I could play a recorder duet with myself: if I played an arpeggio up, my echo would play it up in perfect harmony while I played it back down.

A Verdi *Requiem* that I played while in graduate school—and kept mentally rehearsing while I was supposed to be doing other things through the following week. Before the concert, the “Tuba mirum” section didn’t look like much in my part, and we skipped over it in all the early rehearsals. Only at the last rehearsal did we finally read it, at full tilt with eight antiphonal trumpets and chorus, and it kept building climax upon climax, far beyond anything I’d anticipated, becoming one of the most electrifying things I’d ever heard.

Marveling at the multilayered talent of a young Spanish teacher I’d never seen before as she told a long, elaborate joke in Spanish to an audience consisting mostly of non-Spanish speakers—and making them all laugh in the right places and for the right reasons.

A lengthy spell of having my close proximity calmly tolerated by a deer who’d only recently been frightened off by a horde of obnoxious tourists.

Riding across the Serengeti standing up through the sunroof of a fast-moving Land Rover with the wind whipping past me, watching thousands of wildebeest and zebras bound out of the way as we passed—for 45 minutes.

Picking my way up the active volcano Pacaya in Guatemala, over jagged rock so hot that people with thin-soled shoes had to turn back, steam venting through fissures all

¹ “Emergence,” by David R. Palmer.

around me and forming clouds swirling almost blindingly in the sun.

Looking over these and the others I find that they range from big, spectacular, and dramatic to small, quiet, and intimate. Some involve interaction with at least one other being—sometimes human, sometimes not; others are completely private and personal. Some are active (snorkeling, playing music, writing, climbing), some passive (simply watching, reading, or listening and appreciating). For me, many involve music, or something like it; and many involve nature (though some are entirely manmade). Many involve creating, experiencing, or discovering something new to me.

None of them involves long hours of sitting in an office, making lots of money *per se*, climbing a corporate ladder, or having a house, car, or lawn that my neighbors envy. I can, with difficulty, conceive of these things being as important and rewarding to some as climbing a mountain or watching a meteor shower while camped under the stars is to me. We don't and shouldn't all have the same tastes or priorities. But I would caution anyone spending much of their time and energy chasing conventional symbols of status or success to ask periodically: is this going to be a memory that I'll treasure in 20 or 30 years?

For me, at least, an important corollary is: diversify. One conspicuous characteristic of my list of Special Memories is a great variety of *kinds* of experience. This reflects what I see as the great variety of fascinating things that exist in this universe we inhabit. For me, it would feel terribly confining to limit my dabblings to any small subset of them.

I realize this view may not apply to all. The phrase "His work is his life" is often heard as praise, and for some such a lifestyle may be profoundly satisfying. To have work that inspires such passionate devotion is no doubt enviable and admirable, but it also carries a built-in vulnerability. If something happens that makes you unable to pursue the one thing you've dedicated your life to, what do you have left?

For some, a single intensely focused passion may be worth that risk. Many of the experiences on my list involved an element of risk, but that particular one is not for me. I'd feel that I was missing way too much.

There's no reason anyone else should live by my preferences. We all need to find our own. But however different those may be, I suspect most of us can agree, on reflection, that Sturgeon's idea is a good overarching guideline. Make good memories, starting now, and keep doing it as long as you can.

Stainless Steel was invented by Harry Brearley in 1913. Brearley was trying to make an erosion-resistant alloy for guns when he discovered a martensitic steel alloy. In fact, similar alloys had been invented in the previous century as early as 1821 by Pierre Berthier, but they were too brittle to be of much commercial use.

Sterling Silver dates back to thirteenth century Scotland and is an alloy made up of 92.5% silver and the remaining 7.5% copper or other metals. By alloying the silver, which is too soft, with a stronger metal, Sterling silver is stronger than regular silver while retaining its ductibility.

Secret Service is the organization in the US that guards the President, Vice President and other high ranking officials. It was created on April 14, 1865 by Abraham Lincoln as part of the Treasury Department (where it remained until 2002). Initially, it was created to stop counterfeit currency and only moved into the protection racket with the assassination of William McKinley in 1901.

Social Security is a system introduced to the United States during the Roosevelt administration as a means of ensuring retired workers have an income. At the time of its creation, the poverty rate among senior citizens was in excess of 50%.

ß is a German letter, Eszett, which can also be represented by ss. ß only occurs as a lower-case letter, as it never appears at the beginning of a word.

Social Studies is a term used to describe the application of the scientific method to the study of human aspects of the world, such as political science, linguistics, and anthropology. These fields and similar ones are also referred to as **Soft Sciences**.

Shortstop is an infield position in the game baseball. The shortstop stands between second and third base. In addition to fielding balls which come his way so they don't make it into the outfield, the shortstop often covers second base when the ball is hit towards right field.

Schutzstaffel was the name of a Nazi paramilitary organization which formed the elite units under the control of Heinrich Himmler. The SS has several units and was responsible for concentration camps and the secret police, among other areas.

Naturalization and the Alien

S.M. Stirling

S F crosses a lot of boundaries. So do writers; it's a nomadic profession. These days, anywhere with a phone jack and a power source is equally close to New York, though I suspect editors sometimes long for the days of snail-mail's monopoly to protect them from e-mailing authors! The above realization struck me at around the same time the more advanced publishers started taking manuscripts over the Web.

Not that I have anything against Toronto. It's a very nice city, cosmopolitan and with excellent facilities; I never owned a car while living there, because the subway and trolley-cars were so convenient. Someone once described it as "New York, but run by the Swiss".

However, the Seasonal Affective Disorder began to get to me after a while; you can go four months there without seeing the sun. My parents swung through Santa Fe, New Mexico, and told me it was much like Nairobi as far as climate went, except during the (mild) winters. This convinced me to take a look, and I was enchanted by what I saw. The quality of the light here has to be seen to be believed. The native name for the area translates as "dancing-ground of the sun". You've seen those absurd, garish paintings of Southwestern sunsets? It actually looks like that.

The actual mechanics of moving to the US were *relatively* easy, since I was already married to Janet, who's an American born and bred—from a small mill-town in Massachusetts, in fact.

I say *relatively* since anyone who's dealt with the IRS would weep tears of bitter laughter at the word "easy". Getting in contact with them required a 50-mile journey, 100 miles round-trip, and usually for something that could have been settled with a 2-minute phone call. But they don't do phones. I'm sometimes surprised I wasn't required to travel by covered wagon...

But what, you might say, of the cultural shock of moving to the US from the Great White North?

Minimal. In fact, Jan swears that the shock of moving to Santa Fe was greater for her than relocating to Toronto. English-speaking Canada is actually not all that different from the US, particularly the northern tier of US States. As a country, Canada (Quebec aside) was founded by Americans, not British—loyalist refugees from the American revolution, and many since. Moving back and forth across the border has been routine for centuries.

In my particular case, I was a cultural nomad in any event. I was born in France; my father was born in Newfoundland before it became part of Canada; my English-born mother spent her childhood and adolescence in Peru, and dreamed in Spanish until the end of her life.

And thereby hangs a tale; not many men can claim to be born because of mustard gas, but I can. My mother's father enlisted in the British army in WWI, was commissioned as a subaltern—2nd lieutenant—and survived the statistically probable four weeks before being gassed. He met my mother's mother in a wartime convalescent home, where she was a VAD (temporary nurse) and they eloped, later leaving the country because their families disapproved of the

marriage. The family settled in Peru because his damaged lungs did better in a dry climate, though he had the advantage of it only rarely, since he was a ship's engineer by trade.

My father and mother met as a result of the second German War, in Halifax in 1942. My mother was another man's date at that party, but my father walked up to her while the unfortunate swain was in the washroom and said: "Charlie felt ill and had to leave. But he asked me to walk you home." They were married two months later...

I myself was a nomad for my whole childhood; a chunk of it was spent in Nairobi, Kenya. Another move was nothing; it was far more traumatic for my wife, who grew up and spent most of her early adulthood not only in the same country, but in the same town and the same house, the one where her foster-mother was born in 1899.

Naturalization followed rather naturally. While I enjoyed being an officially registered alien—it was so appropriate!—the proverbial green card proved to be a pain in the posterior. I'm compulsively absent-minded and have always lost small objects at the first opportunity; my collection of single gloves is bigger than Michael Jackson's. I lost my green card once, and had it stolen once, and put a replacement in a pocket of my wallet so obscure that I *thought* I had lost it.

See above remarks about dealing with the IRS. Having been here for more than the statutory five years, I decided to go the whole hog. The details of the process were loathsomely bureaucratic, but the ceremony was interesting—there were people from all over the world being sworn in, including a Tibetan and an intriguingly large number of Australians.

I'm not the first Stirling to be an American citizen, either—one relative pulled a handcart along the Mormon Trail to Utah in the 1850's.

Another settled in New Orleans in the same period, and was a victim of a ride-by shooting; someone rode a horse up to his plantation house, shot him on the verandah, and then galloped away—the classic "clop-clop-clop-BANG-clop-clop-clop" of the joke. Life is stranger than fiction!

My fellow writers here in New Mexico—of whom there are an astonishing number for so small a state—gave me a Naturalization Party, complete with Uncle Sam top hat and a stuffed eagle; pictures appeared in *Locus*. I look better than that, really I do. At least they didn't include the one where I'm pretending the eagle is eating my face...did I mention the punch?

And in the grandest of American traditions, the mayor of our beautiful town was present at the naturalization ceremony, threw a free lunch for us all afterwards, and had members of his political party signing people up at the door. The spirit of Tammany Hall and Boss Tweed live!

After a long, nomadic existence I seem to have settled down here; I own a house (with a very pleasant sunny office) and a car, both firsts for me. New Mexico has more than its share of writers; Santa Fe has more than its share of urban amenities (over 200 art galleries, for example) despite being only a medium-small city. Long live America!

An Award Well Deserved

Steven H Silver

There are no lifetime achievement Hugos, which is a pity, because it means that often fans will vote for an inferior work to recognize an author's work over a period of years instead of a superior work by a newer author who shows signs of receiving future nominations. In one of the cases when the fans seem to have awarded a Hugo for lifetime achievement, it was given posthumously, and the recipient's husband declined the honor.

However, there is a means by which an award can be given by the fans to recognize the lifetime achievement of a person who has had an enormous influence on science fiction over the course of her lifetime. Each year, the committee responsible for hosting the World Science Fiction Convention may elect to present a special award to a deserving person.

In 2004, the committee responsible for Noreascon IV elected to present an award to Erwin "Filthy Pierre" Strauss. Judging from the applause which exploded throughout the hall, nobody could find any reason to fault the committee for its decision, and Filthy Pierre has certainly done more than enough for fandom to merit the award he was honored with, and as much additional recognition as can be meted out to him.

What other types of achievement are worthy of such recognition. One achievement which merits such recognition is introducing a new form of book to the masses. In the modern age, this would be various forms of e-books, but two generations ago, in the aftermath of World War II, it meant introducing the mass market paperback to the United States at a time when paper was being rationed.

Another achievement might be the foundation of not one, but two major publishing houses that have been responsible for much of the science fiction published over the years. Moreso because in many ways those houses pioneered modern science fiction publishing.

Would publishing a blockbuster, genre bending novel merit such a award. A work so integral to the history of the field that it is inconceivable to imagine what fantasy would be like today without it, if fantasy even existed?

Betty Ballantine (b.1919) introduced paperbacks to the United States and founded, along with her husband, Bantam Books in 1945. Seven years later, they founded Ballantine Books

which eventually launched the Ballantine Adult Fantasy line and later started Del Rey for science fiction and fantasy in 1977. In the 1960s, she bought the rights to publish an authorized edition of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* in the US, helping to introduce Tolkien's writings to the masses and pay Professor Tolkien for his work.

For all that she has done, Betty Ballantine's name does not necessarily come to mind when one thinks of the pioneers of science fiction. Nevertheless, she has done as much for the field as John W. Campbell, Jr., Hugo Gernsback, or Robert A. Heinlein. While Judith Merrill's name comes to mind among pioneering women in science fiction, it was Betty Ballantine who published Merrill's 1950 anthology *Shot in the Dark*.

No rocket ship or plaque could begin to pay Betty Ballantine back for everything she has done for science fiction, or publishing in general. However, we can show her some appreciation for the lifetime of work she has put in to make science fiction what it is today.

Science fiction and fantasy fans, whether media fans, readers, or just convention fans, owe a tremendous debt to Betty Ballantine. This is a debt which can never be repaid, although, in the admonitions of Robert A. Heinlein, should be paid forward by each and every one of us. Nevertheless, while we may not be able to repay the debt, we can, we should, we must, insist that a Worldcon committee, perhaps LACon IV in 2006 or Nippon 2007, recognize Betty Ballantine on behalf of all of fandom and give her the award she has earned.



Fellowship of the Ring—*fifty year anniversary*

Sherwood Smith

So there I was, ninth grade, spring of 1966, and I was hot on an arc of stories when a friend who lived closer to the big library came to me and said, “There’s a grownup doing what we’re doing!” That is, writing about other worlds.

My feelings were mixed—I was stunned, and also kind of anxious, feeling somehow this adult, whoever he was, would manage to take away what I was already struggling to keep, despite disapproval at home. (This writing of mine was deemed just plain *weird* and in 1966 conservative parents really, really, disliked weird.) I returned a noncommittal answer, and on Saturday, mid-May this would be, I walked the three miles to her house, as usual, and we climbed up into her attic (she, unlike me, had her own room but we liked even *more* privacy where adults couldn’t hear us) and lay in the hot stuffiness on a bare wooden platform, she on one side of the forty watt bulb reading, and I on the other side stretched out, writing on my ninth notebook for one storyline, which was about to launch the first really big arc. The only sounds as the afternoon passed were the scratching away of my trusty Bic (in those days 25 page sessions were common, if I could get the time) and her turning pages and occasionally making little exclamations: hissing, laughing, gasping. Once she slipped downstairs to use the restroom. I peeked at the book upside down, and groaned in betrayal when I saw what I thought was *Eleven*, which was an important concept in my thing. What a relief when I scrambled around and saw the word was only *Elven*! I had no interest in Elves whatsoever.

She gave a cry of dismay just before it was time for me to trundle back home—“Somebody good got it,” she said, and the betrayal in her voice made me more determined than ever not to read it. I didn’t speak with her until Monday, as neither of our parents liked us tying up the phone—and of course our phone was right in the middle of the den, competing with the TV, with all the family ears around.

Monday comes, and she appears with yet another volume by the same author. At lunch we retreat to our lunchtime hiding place to keep out of sight of the roaming gangs of bullies of either sex. She didn’t want to talk, so there we were, me writing away, she reading—and she gives a gasp of delight, and says, “He wasn’t dead!” And crouches over the book, reading faster than ever. I shrug, thinking, “Elves. Yecch.” My friend and I had very similar tastes, except she had what I considered a lamentable tolerance for whimsy and silly stories.

She kept insisting all week that I read it. When I made a scoffing remark about elves, she promised these were not the cutesy or vain-and-stupid thimble fairies of other tales, but something quite different. And so when I visited her that next Saturday, we walked to the library. She said, “You have to have all three. You won’t want to be missing one.” All three were on the shelves, as this was just before the Ace-propelled popularity shockwave hit our little portion of Los Angeles.



(The books were stolen by Christmas, and for about five years the library couldn’t keep copies on the shelves.)

So I walked home with three heavy hardcovers, so different a feel from the kidzbooks of the time. They felt like the history books I was just beginning to peruse on my own, when the picked over shelves on the kids’ side at my little library annex had nothing inviting.

After dinner that night I retreated to my room, lay on my bed, opened the book. I remember distinctly the rush of pleasure, anticipation, wonder, and *otherness* that suffused me with that pinky-gold inward glitter of anticipation when I saw the lettering around the title page. Here was evidence that there really was an adult who had another world—that he took it seriously, when in my experience adults never took important things seriously, just dreary things. I looked at the map, and again got that champagne rush to the soul when I saw the elegant script, the red and black print. At that time I was just struggling with the whole concept of big maps—knew I needed them, but had no idea how to go about making them—and I pored over that thing.

Then I began to read. The leisurely pacing and extended prologue did not bother me. The classics I’d been reading usually had slow, painterly beginnings. In this book I felt at once that I was looking through a world gate, with the invisible narrator, speaking with an English accent, giving me the background.. By the time of the Birthday Party, I knew I wasn’t going to stop reading, and indeed, I read by the light of the streetlamp across the street and two houses down (something I suspect contributed to my rotten eyesight) instead of writing as usual. My big story arc was forgotten. I had fallen into Middle Earth, and was going to stay there until the end. My friend was right when she said I needed all three. I don’t like to think what would have happened when I finished *Two Towers* at midnight or so one night, and I hadn’t had the next right at hand. When school started again, I read in my lap during classes until the end hit me with the force of his Numenorean tidal wave. Oh, the poignancy! That bittersweet sense of peace tempered by irrecoverable loss! What a hammer for my callow teenage mind!

I reluctantly gave the books back to my friend to return to the library, but I knew that somehow I was going to get copies for myself—and I began saving my babysitting money. That summer the Tolkien Society began, and I subscribed, sending my fifty cents, and poring over the badly mimeo’d first newsletters over and over. By the end of the year the local tiny bookstore did carry the Ballantine copies, and I bought all three (95c apiece—a big deal when I made 50c an hour babysitting large families of lively kids) and commenced a reread over vacation. The Mythopoeic Society contacted me as a local that January, and I took an extremely dangerous bus ride (my changeover was on Skid Row) involving several miles of walking at either end, to attend the meetings. What intense joy to actually find others who loved the books! Especially for one used to the isolation of my tastes from the general interests of the enormous student body. In other words, I was a geek, a nerd, an outsider, and it took me by

surprise over the next couple of years to find Tolkien references working their way into the general culture—posters saying *Welcome to Middle Earth!* Oblique mentions of story-elements in rock songs. ‘Galadriel’ dresses. My senior class in high school nearly a thousand and a half kids, elected to call themselves the Estarii. Did they all read the books? I doubt it very much, but by then the class leaders had, and the rest followed along at least in lip service if something became cool. Many regarded the notebooks I toted around as Tolkien-related, and I enjoyed a very brief almost popularity, actually being invited to two real high school parties—both of them Tolkien oriented—under the mistaken impression I was a Tolkien expert! I never dared mention that the notebooks contained my own stuff, and I had not, in fact, memorized Elvish, Dwarvish, or the appendices—the other-alphabet scribbles all over my notebooks were my own languages. My upbringing had convinced me that what Tolkien had done was hot, what I did was not.

What readers now cannot experience is that newness, that is, the sense that there's never been anything like it. Everyone comes to books as ‘new’ though I think now it would be difficult not to have some kind of expectation of the storyline, and certainly the fantasy form has evolved over the past forty years, using *Lord of the Rings* as a standard pattern. In addition to the overwhelming delight of that newness of form, for me, was the conviction that JRRT believed in that other world, that it was a metaphor for something too large and vast and strange to put into other kinds of words so one uses story-metaphor, a concept that had been dogging me ever since I was eight, in my poor, puny little way. In fact, the experience of reading Tolkien threw me out of my own world for about two weeks. He evoked, the way few reading experiences had, that sense of wonder that, to me, made me feel finite in a universe of infinite possibility.

After the glory wore off, the endless rereads, the ever-widening readership was left so hungry for more that publishers jumped on the fantasy bandwagon and genre book publication zoomed from a dozen or two to over a hundred a year—and then higher into the next decade. We all know that history, and I don't intend to launch into sneerings about ‘Tolclones’ and so forth. I did notice, as who did not, how Tolkien influenced various writers coming after. You could really tell who had gotten their inspiration from him—all those maps with the heaven off to the west, and the bad guys in the east. Trilogies. What was more interesting was identifying what parts had obviously gripped that writer's imagination. Some books concentrated on pretty Elves. Others on dwarves. Celtoid spinoffs proliferated, laced with poetry. Most of the inspired books were centered on wandering quests, though always, as has been pointed out, to *get* some magical thing that would save the world, not to destroy one.

There were also the writers who apparently were inspired by Tolkien, whose initial efforts showed traces of that inspiration, but who subsequently spun away to tell their own stories—Ursula K. Le Guin. Alan Garner. Guy Gavriel Kay.

Finding Tolkien influence in writers has become fish-rifle-barrel, particularly in the past 25 years. What I find more fascinating, as I look back, in the influence of Tolkien in the

lives of people I know. I don't mean those wonderful days of yore when we were all young and came to picnics dressed as our favorite characters (mine was Eowyn—along with 45,637 other beanpole towheads), I mean the life-changing influences. One older friend had read the books when they first came out, waiting anxiously between the volumes. He was an academic, and as Tolkien's work was mostly frowned on by the few who were aware of it, he was quiet about it—but resolved that he'd give copies to any young ladies he dated. He figured his chance of finding a like-minded mate would be greater if she also liked the books. (He followed his plan, and he and his lady are coming up on their fiftieth anniversary before too long.) Several friends went into linguistic studies. One into medieval astronomy. Several studied music; there was a young man I was acquainted with penning an opera based on LOTR. We'd hear a bit more every year at the conventions. A number of my friends went on to study English literature, a few finding ways to get Tolkien's work into their curricula, though for a time the Existentialist Drear was still heavily present on any modern literature reading list. And of course they are the ones who helped change that.

Friends named their children after characters in the books, read them LOTR over and over as they were growing up. Now, those children are adults. A couple of them rejected fantasy and all its works and ways utterly, others' educations were shaped round the Inklings' works. They remember, with delight, those fireside reading sessions, and grew up with LOTR being their standard for good fantasy.

What these children, of course, could not have despite their parents' enduring love for the books, was that initial rush of discovery.

I think Harry Potter captured that sense of newness for the small fry of five years ago. Potter's elements are not



particularly new for us oldsters—fantasy for children has a long and venerable history—but what Rowling did so cleverly was mix magic story with the old trope of the outsider orphan . . . and add in the school story. In America, at least, the boarding school story had fallen out of fashion at least thirty years ago. When I was young—fifties and sixties—you could



find some of the old Enid Blytons in some libraries, though when those wore out, they were not replaced. A few of us stumbled onto *Tom Brown* or *Stalky and Co.* but those were rare finds. Rowling reinvented the form for this young generation, and what a grip Hogwarts and its school life has taken! Fantasy once again surges up into the mainstream, though not just through Rowling: the ripples have widened out and kids today explore fantasy worlds and magic through anime and manga, through video games, graphic novels, and television. Fantasy, obviously, satisfies in a way that other types of storytelling don't quite.

The purpose fantasy serves in today's culture is so large a question it probably requires the length of a book to really explore. I glance across the room at my now-battered, age-yellowed Ballantine paperbacks, and muse on fantasy's persistence, despite scorn and ridicule, despite frightened preachments, despite teachers determined to help students face life by pointing them to earnest books covering Real Life problems. We live in a determinedly unmagical society—yet one changing so rapidly that small children talk about what life was like before cell phones had cameras, before they discovered Myspace. The green, settled world of the hobbits, with their quiet, safe lives and long traditions, seem impossibly alien today. Yet it still attracts, as does the hopeless quest that might, just might, bring order back to the disintegrating world. For many fantasy appears to be the only legitimate way to satisfy that innate hunger to look through the invisible window into the ineffable.



Charles Camille Saint-Saëns was born on October 9, 1835 in Paris. His father died in January of the following year, leaving Saint-Saëns to be raised by his mother, Clémence, and her sister, Charlotte Masson. In 1837, Charlotte, who was a pianist, began giving Charles piano lessons and the youngster wrote his first composition in 1839. When he was five, he gave his first recital, as accompaniment to a Beethoven violin sonata. When he was ten, he gave a recital in which he first performed pieces by Handel, Kalkbrenner, Hummel, and Bach. He then offered to play any of Beethoven's piano sonatas from memory.

Saint-Saëns composed his most famous piece of music, "Le Carnival des Animaux" in 1886. This piece consists of fourteen movements, only one of which, the penultimate "Le Cygne" was published during his lifetime. Saint-Saëns saw the work as being frivolous and the only performance he gave of it was for a small group of friends, including Franz Liszt, who died a few months later. While many composers arranged to have their "frivolous" or "minor" works destroyed upon their deaths, Saint-Saëns arranged to have "Le Carnival des Animaux" published after he died. Along with Sergei Prokofiev's "Peter and the Wolf" and Benjamin Britten's "The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra," it is now one of the most performed pieces to give children an introduction to classical music. Of course, anyone who saw Disney's "Fantasia 2000" will now think of yo-yo playing flamingos when they hear the finale.

The popularity of "Le Carnival des Animaux" tends to eclipse the brilliance of his more than 170 other major works of composition. Fortunately, in this world of CDs and MP3s, it is easy to track down many of Saint-Saëns's lesser-known works (as well as those of other composers).

Steve Stoliar worked as the personal secretary to Groucho Marx from 1974 until the comedian's death in 1977. Since that time, he has written for several television shows, including the alternate history series "Sliders" and steampunk "Legend." Steve, who also shares a middle initial with the editor, has graciously permitted the use of the following, comprising excerpts from his 1996 memoir *Raised Eyebrows: My Years Inside Groucho's House* (General Publishing Group).

Life with Groucho

Steve Stoliar



After a while a silver Mercedes pulled into the driveway with Erin

[Fleming] at the wheel and, sitting beside her, a familiar figure in a dark blazer and black beret. I handed Erin a small stack of *Bruins* and then I shook his hand.

Me: "Groucho, I am *very* happy to be meeting you after all this time."

Groucho: "Well, you *should* be."

Erin explained that I was the young man he'd spoken with who was trying to get *Animal Crackers* re-released.

Groucho: "Did you do it?"

Me: "No, but we hope to."

Groucho: "You'd better, or I'll *fire* you!"

Me: "I didn't realize I was working for you. How much are you paying me?"

Groucho: "A little less than nothing."

And off they went to Irwin Allen's birthday party.

I'd finally met Groucho Marx.

I came to appreciate Groucho on three distinct levels. The first and most obvious was that he was "Groucho Marx," the man in the "Why a Duck?" poster. The man who danced a tango with Thelma Todd in *Monkey Business*. The man who sat behind his desk and embarrassed George Fenneman every week on "You Bet Your Life." It was he, himself, *that* man.

The second level was appreciating that he was someone who personally knew so many of the people I admired: George Gershwin, Robert Benchley, W.C. Fields, George S. Kaufman, James Thurber, to pick but a handful of snowflakes from a blizzard of legendary personalities. There were times when I'd sit there at the lunch table listening to Groucho telling an anecdote about Irving Thalberg or Ring Lardner and I'd think to myself, *I've read about these people; he knew them.*

The third level was realizing that Groucho was a man from another century. My dad was born in 1916, during World War I, and that had always seemed like a very long time ago. Indeed, when I got him one of those historic birth-year newspapers, I was startled to find that the headline concerned Pancho Villa! But Groucho predated my father by more than a quarter of a century. I'd never really gotten to know anyone who went back to 1890.

Working for Groucho was unquestionably a dream-come-true—literally, in my case, since I'd actually dreamed about meeting him for years before the actual connection was made. My three-year stint inside Groucho's house was a real best of time/worst of times experience for me, because on the one hand, I was spending time with my hero and getting paid to have lunch with such luminaries as Bob Hope, Mae West, George Burns, Jack Lemmon, and Steve Allen, just to name a very few. But the downside was getting close to my idol as he

was fading out, and having to put up with his difficult and mercurial manager, Erin Fleming.

Groucho was already in a frail state when we met at UCLA in early 1974, and his health only deteriorated as the months and years went by, until mid-1977, when it really took a steep plunge.

Groucho continued his downward spiral. By now, most of his conversation, if he said anything, was restricted to "Yes" and "No." The rest of the time he drifted in and out of lucidity. In mid-August, however, when a nurse wanted to see if he had a fever, she approached his bedside with a thermometer. According to Andy [Marx, Groucho's grandson], Groucho opened his eyes and said, "What do you want?" The nurse smiled and said, "We have to see if you have a temperature." In a voice barely above a whisper, Groucho muttered, "Don't be silly. *Everybody* has a temperature." Then he drifted off to sleep again.

While his other senses may have been failing rapidly, his sense of humor was remarkably tenacious. As with all the other Grouchoisms he'd uttered during my tenure, this one had been worded just as the younger Groucho would've worded it, only more slowly and softly. It would turn out to be his last reported witticism.

I sensed the end approaching and I had accepted the inevitable. After all, it was Groucho himself who had said, "This is no way to live." I began to envision the lengthy tributes in the newspapers and magazines and on television that were certain to follow his death. He'd attained the status of living legend toward the end of his life, and now he was about to become immortal. I hoped the journalists would get the names and dates right as they prepared their big stories on "The Death of Groucho Marx." I wondered if any regular programming would be preempted in order to do full justice to the passing of a giant who had conquered the worlds of vaudeville, Broadway, Hollywood, radio and television.

Then, on August 16, at 3:30 in the afternoon, death came to Elvis Presley.

The shocking news that at the tender age of forty-two, Elvis had suddenly "left the building" caused such a massive, nonstop media frenzy that people hardly seemed to take notice when, three days later, Groucho Marx died of natural causes at the age of eighty-six.

I heard about Groucho's death on the car radio while I was driving home from Universal in my Pinto—the "crummy old car" he'd originally bought for Erin. I didn't feel like crying. There was actually some vague sense of relief that the long hard struggle was finally over. I had talked to Andy that afternoon and he'd said that the doctors were amazed that Groucho was still hanging on.

He had reconciled with Arthur [his son] and Melinda [his younger daughter], and although Miriam [his older daughter]

didn't get to the hospital in time to say goodbye to her father, she had made her peace with him and was on the road to a healthier life than she'd ever known.

Erin had been at Groucho's bedside until Arthur and Lois [Arthur's wife] had shown up, at which point she glared at them and then went out into the hospital corridor. Arthur, Lois and Andy watched over Groucho until he slowly slipped away at 7:25 P.M. According to Arthur, it was a peaceful exit.

Shortly before Groucho died, Andy had been besieged at the hospital by phone calls from reporters. He refused to talk to them, so Erin decided to give them a statement: "Groucho's just having a nice little dream now. He's just going to have a nap and rest his eyes for the next several centuries. But he's never going to die. He told me."

Word Search

Steven H Silver



C R S A T E C H I C S T E V E S A L A B A A G O
 A N H H D S F O E U R S S C E O R E T S T E V E
 B A E R A R E L H T I M S D O O W R E H S Q I V
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 G M A S D T N A S E L I T S E V E T S M S I E O
 N T M P E L N H I T U F R Z S N I D S I N B H R
 S A G M S T E V E S A F F E L A T N E H P A T S

- Steve Saffel
- Steve Salaba
- Steve Sawicki
- Sharon Sbarsky
- Stuart Schiff
- Stanley Schmidt
- Shelly Shapiro
- Stephanie Sharer
- Sachiko Shibano
- Stu Shiffman
- Sharon Shinn
- Susan Shwartz
- Steven Silver
- Susan Simko
- Susan Sizemore
- Sherwood Smith
- Sean Stewart
- Steve Stiles
- Susan Stinson
- S.M. Stirling
- Steve Stone
- Somtow Sucharitkul

The Creation of Recreation

Steve Sawicki

We are witness to the beginnings of creation gone bad, of re-visioning as a means to an end, ad infinitum. It all began when the first filmmaker had the idea that he (yes, he and not she because there were no shes then) could do the idea better. So he remade it. I have no idea which film first fell prey to this, although I am sure the information exists somewhere so if you are so inclined feel free to dig. Most likely it was the transition from silent to talkies that drove this process. And this makes some sense since you're talking about what could be argued were two distinct genres. You can make the same split between color and black and white films. However, we have gone well beyond that state now. Check out recent DVD's and you're offered a number of choices for the same movie. You can get the theatrical release (essentially what was seen in the theater), you can get the edited for television version (either panned and scanned or cropped), and with many films you can get the director's version (typically added scenes that the director wanted included but was not allowed (by the studio or the producers or someone else to remain nameless we're not quite sure). In the future we can expect to see the directors revised version (we've already seen this with Lucas re-visioning of the Star Wars trilogy albeit he just tinkered with the special effects a bit) where the director decides years later what he should have done. What will follow? The producer's version? The executive producer's version? The version the script girl would have shot had she been allowed to direct like she had been promised?

But, wait, there's more. With the advent of digital technology, both through DVD and through computer applications, you, in the comfort of your own home can do your own editing. This, in fact, is how the Phantom Edit, the reworking of Star Wars Episode I came about. This was followed by the Phantom Reedit which was followed by the fans favorite version which was followed by, well you get the idea. To date there are about 15 different versions, some just a little bit different, some a great deal different.

So, what's the big deal with this? Well, imagine if a writer could tinker with the text of a novel for each edition, or, for that matter, if we're talking about print on demand, tinker with it almost constantly through the life of the work. It begs the question of which version is the real thing. Which version of Star Wars is the real one? The first one that Lucas put in front of audiences so long ago or the new version he put out on DVD? What's the real version of Dune? The original theatrical release? The directors cut and re-edit? Or the edited



for television version? (This would be the first Dune and not the remake, which, to my knowledge, only has one version so far.)

Or perhaps writing and film making now fall into the realm of pottery and painting where there is no such thing as an exact copy and it's just a question of whether or not you have the first piece put out for sale or the tenth. They're all original works and while there is probably some prestige in having the first there's also some satisfaction in knowing that if you've got the twenty fifth perhaps you have the better value. Or maybe not.

I fall distinctly on the side of 'do it once' and there it lies. Sure it might be ugly but it is what it is. After the first cut all you're trying to do is make the corpse look pretty. And what about the time involved in all of this? To my mind I would rather have a creative person creating and not editing, which is essentially what all of this reworking and re-visioning is. Get the idea, execute it, check to make sure it's done well and then live or die by the work and move on. What if Michelangelo had gotten stuck on making just one statue perfect? We'd be poorer for it. What if Edison decided he was not going to move on until that light bulb had all the bugs and imperfections knocked out of it, figuratively speaking of course. Why we'd probably still be yelling at each other on the streets.

We need to stop this need to remake everything over and over and over again. I don't want to see 9 different versions of Star Wars, Episode One. Okay, the Phantom Edit was a much better film than the original. But, it was not Lucas' film. For all the errors that I thought existed in the work I'd rather it be the sole version and not simply the stepping off point for multiple variants.

I suppose that as people who embrace the genres of science fiction and fantasy we should also embrace these alternatives. I suppose you could imagine that these different versions were simply copies from alternative universes or dropped off by those guys who were sliding from place to place. But, they're not. They're the product of insecurity and one-upmanship. So, look. If you're insecure then make the next thing you do better. If you want to one up someone then do it with your own original work rather than trying to make the version you're convinced needs to be better your version of better.

Of course none of you will listen and within five years you'll all be sitting in your dark rooms, computer screen flickering as you edit and re-edit something that was put together in the 1970's and salivating at how the 5 people who watch it on the web will think you're a genius instead of the insulated slug you really are. Me? I've already moved on thinking about what I'll write next.

Blonde Ambition

Susan Sizemore

Not another procedure, the old crank said. If you keep this up, young woman, bits of you are going to start falling off soon. I won't be held responsible for that. Not that he put it like that. Everything he told me was put in carefully couched professional terms, but I knew what he meant. He wasn't the first one to tell me to give it up, either. They pretended to be caring, but the truth was they were frightened. Frightened to create perfection.



All I want to be is perfect. When I become the perfect woman, then the most powerful man in the world will love me. I know it in my bones, in my blood, in my soul. None of which I've tried to change or replace. It's the outer packaging that remains the problem.

The problem is, I'm not anywhere near perfect yet. It's not that I'm not beautiful. Thanks to hair extensions and a great dye job, my hair is full, lustrous, long and honey gold. Collagen has made my lips full and luscious. The boobs and butt and calves are the best implants money can buy. The nose is a work of art. So are the eyes. Liposuction keeps the thighs in check. The jaw has been shortened, the teeth capped. Botox becomes me, and bulimia and the gym have their uses.

There's a lot more that's been done, but so much more that needs to be done.

But everyone is conspiring to keep me from being the best I can be. It's a conspiracy to keep me from the man I'm destined to be with. They don't want me to have the chance to bask in the warmth of his approval. To share his power as is my right.

"I am not crazy," I told my friend Arianna who met me at the coffee shop after my last appointment with this plastic surgeon. "I am a work in progress."

"You're beautiful."

Arianna always wears black, and tells me her thinness comes naturally. She actually applies eyeliner when it would be so much easier to have it tattooed on her lids. Her nose could definitely use some work. She knows nothing about beauty, but she does lend a sympathetic ear. Of course, her earlobes are too long.

"Not enough for—him," I answered. "Whoever he is."

"The most powerful man in the world? Honey, Donald Trump and Bill Gates are already taken."

"Not powerful enough," I waved the very suggestion away with distaste.

"The Pope's not your type. The President—"

"I'll know him when I meet him," I said. "He'll know me."

I've been told that I have unreasonable expectations. Perfection, power, these concepts have nothing to do with being reasonable.

"One must strive," I said. "One must succeed."

She looked up from the tarot cards she was placing in a careful pattern on the small table. "One must talk like the Queen of England?"

"I thought you understood," I said, looking at her sadly. "I really did."

She reached across her cards and patted my hand. It wasn't quite healed yet from some work I'd had on my fingers, but I didn't wince. I've learned to deal with pain.

"I shouldn't tease." She sat back in her chair, and looked me over carefully. After a thoughtful silence, she said, "If it's real power you're after, I think it's a sorcerer you should go after."

She claimed her family had always been witches. I humored her—because she was the only person I knew who would talk to me anymore. Even my parents—Well, they never loved me anyway, or they would have let me start my quest for perfection when I asked for rhinoplasty for my tenth birthday.

"A sorcerer?" I asked now, trying to take the subject as seriously as she did.

"You'd probably prefer a dark sorcerer," she said. "As they tend to keep the power for themselves. And they don't fear using it. A light sorcerer..." She waved a hand dismissively. "Wimps."

"All right," I said, going along with her. "Maybe a dark sorcerer is the man I'm looking for. How do I find one?"

Once again she was thoughtful for a while. She bit her narrow little bottom lip.

"What?" I demanded.

"You'd probably need some more work done," she said. "To attract a truly powerful dark mage."

"I know that," I asserted. I ran my hands up and down my imperfect form. "The right man—or mage—isn't going to want me the way I am now."

"You're going to need a magician physician," she told me. "Not just a new plastic surgeon. You need the right spells, the right incantations."

I could tell by the undertone of reluctance in her voice that she knew exactly who I should see. "Don't hold out on me," I told her.

She sighed. "I shouldn't have said anything."

"But you did. Deep down you really want to help me."

"I—Listen, fooling around with magic is dangerous."

"More dangerous than some of the surgeries I've had? I died on the table for a couple of minutes once. I came back. And sued the ass off the quack."

"But you can't sue a sorcerer. And your life...do you want to put your life, maybe your soul, in someone else's hands?"

"It is my life."

She sighed. And made me memorize a name and address.

Because apparently, sorcerers like to stay under the radar. For tax purposes, I guess. I began to suspect a scam, or maybe a practical joke. But what choice did I have? The pursuit of perfection takes one where it will.

The address turned out to be a large private residence in a very upscale old neighborhood. The sorcerer was named Alan. Just Alan. He showed me to an upstairs room where the walls were covered in black satin hangings and there was a white pentagram inlaid in the black floor. He lit a lot of candles.

Then he made me stand inside the pentagram. He went to stand behind a tall bookstand and put his hands on the leather cover of a huge old book.

"Tell me your wish," he said.

This wasn't the sort of pre-op interview I was used to.

"This is all very strange," I said.

"You wish to be perfect," he supplied.

While this was the truth, I still looked at him suspiciously.

"Did Arianna call you?"

"You have spent your life in the quest to mold yourself into the perfect form to attract a man of great power."

"Yes. But *you* asked me—"

"You have endured great pain and hardship."

I sniffed at the memory of all I'd been through. "It's been worth it."

He nodded. "You have the strength to go on."

Not a question. I was beginning to like him.

"I will do whatever is necessary."

He nodded again. "It is within my power to give you the perfect form to achieve who and what you seek."

He gave me a look that pierced my soul, that dared me to be afraid, that told me the price would be high. I believed him implicitly.

All I could say was, "Thank you. Help me."

He nodded for the third time. "Close your eyes. Do not move. Do not make a sound."

Finally! At last I would have what I'd been searching for all my life. I did as he said. After what seemed like hours, he began to chant. There was so much power in that voice!

And pain.

I wanted to scream as a great wind came up and scoured my flesh off my bones. But I did as he'd ordered. I accepted the cost of pain. The smell of my own blood mixed with the scent of candle wax, but I didn't let the stench make me retch. I was carved up, burned, broken and beaten. I *knew* this was the payment he took for giving me perfection. I accepted it all. As I'd accepted it before. One cannot become new without suffering. This time I suffered it all at once, without anesthetic, without respite.

The chanting went on forever, the voice gradually coming from farther and farther away. Until at last the voice was only a faint whisper on the breeze.

Open your eyes.

At first I wasn't even sure I'd heard. But there was a cool wind on my face, the air fresher than I'd ever felt before. It was scented with pine instead of candle wax. It was curiosity more than any sorcerer's command that made me open my eyes.

The first thing I saw were forested mountains in the distance. The view was spectacular! It was summer, and the sun was shining down from a bright, clear sky. I was standing next to a low stone wall. The hands resting the top of the wall were not ones I recognized, but they were mine. I held them up in front of my face. At first I was disappointed. Nice enough hands, but hardly perfect.

I ran my fingers across my cheeks. Fresh, firm skin greeted my touch. The lips I touched next were plump and wide enough. I touched my hair, found that it was medium in length, but wavy. Looking at my body I saw that I was shorter than I'd been, and the dress I was wearing was too old fashioned to even be considered retro. But my figure was shapely.

This was about the time it hit me that not only was I somewhere I'd never been before, but that I was wearing a body that I hadn't been born in.

Of course, I hadn't owned my original condition body for some time. It seemed that I'd actually turned it in for a completely new model.

Before panic could set in someone said, "Fraulein?"

I turned around to look at a short man with a silly mustache and thick round glasses. He was wearing a Nazi uniform. He looked familiar.

"And you are?" I asked him.

He looked surprised, but answered. "You jest, I see. Heinrich Himmler, of course."

"Of course." And he was, too. I recognized him now from



a show on the History Channel. "And we're at...?"

"Berchtesgaden," he answered. "Come," he added, standing up straight with pride. "The Fuhrer has asked me to fetch you."

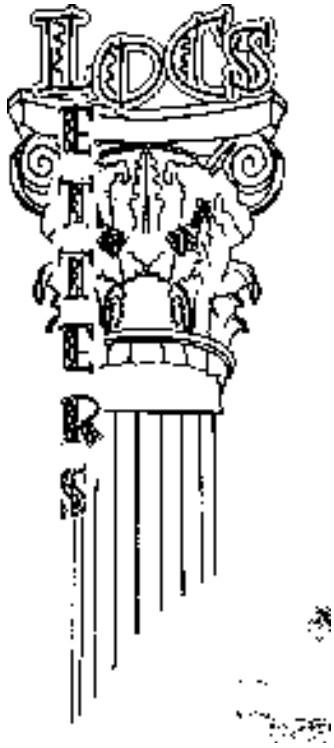
I looked across the width of a wide terrace to where a group of men and women were standing. They were all smiling at the shining star in their center. He was hardly handsome, certainly not young. But the energy he put off was so dark and compelling that I could feel it from here.

He was the darkest sorcerer of all. And Adolph Hitler wanted *me* to join him. To him I was perfect! I didn't wait for Himmler to escort me to the man of my dreams.

I'd gotten my wish at last.

Even if I'd had to become Eva Braun to do so.

Letter Column



SS:

Good, diverse *Argentus*!

Jason Burnett evokes well the reading of sf early & often. My faves were Heinlein & Clarke (muchly influential in my own writing) and westerns.

Rich Horton's tour of the nearby stars is good, and I might direct him to the 3D map in my *Across the Sea of Suns*, book #2 in the eventual Galactic Center series, that I tried to do using the astronomy we knew about those stars. A main point for non-FTL starships is that stellar velocities are around 100 km/sec, and must be considered in navigating to them. I've worked on making sails go to the stars, using near-Sol fly-bys, and whew! is it hard to do in less than 1000 years...

John Carr's tribute to Piper is eloquent. Piper was one of the fine, eccentric sf authors who shaped the genre. A tragedy, his loss.

A treat to see Langford on worldcons! I read this just before the Boston Hugos. I'd been asked to give one away, but the Retro Hugos so contrasted with the pedestrian ballot that I gave way to my declining interest in the award. When I started writing sf the likes of Delany & LeGuin contended. The 1953 Retro ballot is studded with great works still in print. Want to estimate how many on this year's

ballot will be in print in half a century? That, and the predictability of so many others—the fmz, fanwriter, editor Hugos etc—led me to instead have dinner with Marvin Minsky...a right decision, I think. I admit I'd kinda like to win one, someday, but it's sad to see it and the Nebula decline so far...

[Well, I was a bit surprised that *Emerald City* beat out the final year of *Mimosa* for fmz. Any other Hugo surprises I had were at the Retro-Hugos. I thought "*Duck Dodgers in the 24½ Century*" and *Mission of Gravity* would both win.]

Was called away...

Rich Lynch's lunches are fun. Having spent time trying to get the attention of DC folk, it's fun to see the frantic efforts of others. But few talks in DC seem about the search for truth, i.e., they're propaganda. Though not of the benign sort you describe so well at the Kennedy Space Center. With all the monuments we thrust up, I wonder—as I remarked in *Deep Time*, which is about the leaving of long term messages—if this country will be clogged with them in a few centuries...

Like the interviews

Gregory Benford

[*Congratulations on your recent marriage.*]

Greetings Steven ~

Hey, a nice surprise to get the new issue of *Argentus* this past week. With the annual schedule, it's always just long enough between issues to come as a surprise each time. The cover turned out nicely, never sure how these more detail-heavy pieces will reproduce, and the clean text column of contributors filled in a nice balance.

Oh, and while speaking of art, I'm curious why you used the same piece from Taral twice in the same issue. I am going to assume, until told otherwise, that this was actually a clever design scheme that I am simply not picking up on. Run with that, if you like!

[*Sure. It was a clever design scheme. Sort of like the da Silva Code. Yeah, that's it.*]

Jason Burnett's article was a fun idea, though I have to admit I'm always

amazed by fannish articles where people look back at things in their past in such detail. I can barely recall what books I read a year ago, let alone which books that have all blended in my sieve-like memory were read which years. I'm sure glad someone out there can do that without having to go into personal research! I loved his new title for the "Thomas Covenant" series ("...the Whiner") as that is pretty much my own reaction when I read those. Like, get a grip, for crying out loud, Tommy boy! I was surprised that he wasn't fragged by the folks around him halfway through the first volume.

[*The only way I can remember what I read last week is by checking out what reviews I've posted.*]

Hate to do such a short loc after you've spent a year putting this fine issue together, and I have read and enjoyed everything here, just kind of short on time right now, and figured if I don't send out some sort of note at least letting you know I received the issue, it might vanish into that much-too big pile of "things to get to."

stay happy~

Brad Foster

Dear Mr. Silver,

A LOC, of sorts

Congratulations on getting out *Argentus* #4. This now makes you eligible to be nominated for the Mimosa Award, pardon me, the "Best Fanzine" Hugo. With *Mimosa* definitely, and *File 770* presumably, dropping off the ballot next year, there will be at least two spots opened up. In reviewing likely candidates, *Argentus* seems to have as good a chance as anyone.

Alas, not even WAHFed-again. This seems to be a persistent problem with (a) British fanzines, and (b) annuals. It can be a little disappointing, opening up a fanzine you're sure you LOCced, curious to see what you wrote months ago, and find nothing. Presumably it would be glurkish of me to note that the Steve Stiles art [p. 8] was previously used in my late fanzine [which—p. 32—I assume fandom understands, is discontinued].

[Repeated art, pre-printed art. Gotta watch that art.]

“Thirty Looks Back” : One is well aware of the problem of one’s SF reading being dictated by the local library. Still, I would argue that *Friday* is far from being the best of Heinlein, nor would it be my recommendation for a 13-year-old. (I’d suggest either *Tunnel in the Sky* or *Time for the Stars* [I’ll second those.] for that age group). Terry Brooks appeared on the scene after my taste was developed, so his work never appealed to me. And I have never heard of Gene Lancour. I can’t seriously argue with the rest of Mr. Burnett’s favorites, though I could suggest others if he or his hypothetical 13-year-old wanted to expand their SF reading. [Recently, I took my thirteen-year-old nephew to a bookstore and bought him some reading material: *Card’s Ender’s Game*, *Moorcock’s Hawkmoon*, and *Pratchett’s Guards! Guards!*.]

“See The Neighborhood” : I don’t wish to seem fixated on *Time for the Stars*, [Why not, it’s a good book.] but it describes a systematic attempt to explore our Immediate stellar neighborhood within about 50 light-years, including several of those Mr. Horton mentions. Alan Nourse’s *Rocket to Limbo* is the strange tale of a NAFAL starship intended for the Alpha Centauri system, never found there after FTL is invented, and what happens after. Horton aptly mentions C.J. Cherryh’s novels of Union/Alliance space; the *Chanur* Saga takes place in roughly the opposite galactic direction

“H. Beam Piper” : More than I knew about the enigmatic writer . Piper was a writer whom I did not encounter until fairly late in my reading career, and his output in book form was limited, so I never greatly connected with him. On reading this article, I feel a certain sympathy; yet Piper’s determination to regard the world as he felt it ought to be, rather than as it is, is so creepily reminiscent of my father, that I backed away.

“Convention Diary” : I don’t read Langford.

“Thus We Refute”: Mr. Lynch notes that Russian cosmonauts on the Space Station have a handgun in their survival gear. This does not seem unreasonable to me. The Soyuz has far less lateral control than the shuttles, and there have been

cases of capsules coming down more than 100 miles from the intended landing area. In central Siberia. You never know what (or who) might be lurking, prepared to treat something dropping from the sky as demonic—or as lunch. A weapon does not seem an unreasonable option under those conditions. “Malevolent” seems a judgment by someone who does not know much about handguns.

Lloyd Penney says Jesuits are “tolerant”. We should just keep in mind that Jesuits answer to the same guy who said that all Protestant bodies are by definition “gravely deficient” (even those, as Anglicans and many Lutherans, within the Apostolic Succession). One of the many deficiencies of *The Sparrow* was that it seemed to view the Society of Jesus as completely autonomous, which is just not the case. As Brother Guy would tell you.

Maybe Pat Sayre McCoy should consult with Sheryl Birkhead on the question of how to get ink off a cat. Or perhaps the dry-cleaner. Alternately, Lady Vorhagen could just throw the cat away and get a new one.

E.B. Frohvet

Steven,

Thanks for AG4. Glad to contribute—must be Larry Niven’s first fanzine appearance in a while. What happened to poor Hanville Svetz’s first name?

John Hertz

Hi Steven,

I jumped the gun and read *Argentus* electronically. As ever, I’m thrilled to be in such great company.

I enjoyed Jason Burnett’s article about 13 year old reading. I can’t argue with his choices—they worked for him! If I had been 13 instead of 26 in 1986, I may well have loved Piers Anthony too! (That’s the point of being 13, eh? And I did like *Chthon*, which I read at about age 15 I think.) I do think, however, that Jason has misattributed the “Golden Age of Science Fiction is 13” quote. I have long heard, from very authoritative sounding people, that the quote was actually originated by Peter Graham (possibly setting the age at 12 instead of 13, but still ...). Now mind

you I didn’t hear Mr. Graham say it myself.

Did you know that Charlie Walker worked for the same company I work for, when he was an astronaut? (McDonnell Douglas as was.) I never met Charlie, but I’ve known Robert Woods, who was slated to be our second astronaut, for the past 15 years or so, and we worked closely together for a couple of those years. (Robert was scheduled to fly the summer of 1986, but the Challenger disaster put paid to those plans!)

Rich Horton

Hi Steven!

Glad to see you’ve enjoyed my hand drawn art. I’ve been playing around with using some of my photos as source material; the results you’ll see enclosed. Some I’ve printed large for the detail but you can resize them however you like.

Jason: I haven’t been able to make much progress on either *The Silmarillion* or *Lost Tales* either. I tore through *The Lord of the Rings* as a grade schooler...I just may not have the ‘magic’ of the age I was when I encountered LOTR. I didn’t discover Elric till I was in college...and now the albino ferret in my household is “Elric” (aka “Sir Elric Poing”) or “Elric of Milwaukee” :) I was reading SF & fantasy at 13-but didn’t find the ones of your list till I was much older. Though I did read some of Asimov and Clarke (though these all would intrigue the 13 year old with fannish tendencies :)).

Nicholas: Wow-this didn’t seem to get the coverage the Spanish Royal Wedding had. Maybe due to the recent deaths in the family.

Dave: Fun con-report.

Rich: Sounds like you are enjoying more than the “free lunch.” How do people find out about those kinds of events? C-SPAN runs “Book TV,” there isn’t any kind of reliable guide to what’s on when, but often it’s the sort of event they caught you at. I’ve sometimes enjoyed watching such author lectures on that station. I would have enjoyed the Buzz Aldrin one-but of course, there’s no guide. (Neither the online guide (via cable T.V.) not the cable book give me any idea what the author or book du jour will be till I turn it on). Salmon in a “free food” event? Wow! I’d go to that! Even if I didn’t care about the topic.

Steven: Wow cool trip. recent dress code at memorial—well—I think people aren't as concerned about what they wear in general any more. In summer people tend to wear "beach clothes" everywhere...including church and this is probably more evident in place like California and/or Florida, etc. The lass put her shirt on in the mock up of the shuttle because of the AC, she felt cold.

[Actually, there was no AC in the shuttle mockup, but it was "inside" so she probably thought it was cooler. It was probably warmer since the mockup would act as a heat trap, but then again, it would also block out the sun so she couldn't work on her tan inside.]

"Real astronaut"?! Geeze! As if any of us are "keeping score."

Joe: Pre-derby events: "Run for the Rose" is also an event at Milwaukee's Bastille Day events. We visited Kentucky and Louisville when I was a kid. We had fun, but I don't think I can recall many specifics of what we did: Mammoth Cave was one of the big ones, though.

Pat: Great fun-poor cat!

The fibromyalgia is a real pain and puts a serious crimp in my life...I've applied for both SSD & transit pass. (I have days when the medication makes me too woozy to drive. And days I'm too tired to drive safely & still need to get places.)

Take care,

Trinlay Khadro

Dear Steven,

I enjoyed Jason Burnett's look back at his favorite SF books. I too loved the first books of the Pern series.

Concerning the Derby and Funny Cide, interested readers should look up the 1918 and 1924 Derbies. And in 1987 Arthur Hancock couldn't even sell a yearling colt named Sunday Silence. The very first Derby winner was only supposed to be there to soften up the opposition for his more highly regarded stablemate. In 1976, Bold Forbes turned all of Puerto Rico into one big party.

I would also like to mention restaurants Lynn's Paradise Café and the Imperial Palace Mongolian Buffet. And those in town to actually see the horses would want to consider a sidetrip to

nearby Lexington where they can see such eminent Thoroughbreds as John Henry, Cigar and Da Hoss. One warning—Nobody has told John Henry he's too old to be kicking out. Do not get within reach of either his hooves or his teeth. The Good Humor horse he isn't.

[And Lexington is also a wonderful place to visit, with the Lexington Horse Park and one of the greatest independent bookstores around (Joseph-Beth). Of course, my in-laws are also there, which gives me a good reason to visit.]

Again, thanks much for *Argentus*.

Sincerely,
Lisa Major

Dear Steven

Jason Burnett made Eagle when he was thirteen!? Talk about fast-track.

Why was Dennis L. McKiernan's *Iron Tower* trilogy published? You see, he wrote a sequel to *The Lord of the Rings*. The publishers made some comment about copyright and other such pettifogging things, and so he had to revise it to make it more generic.

I liked the I.C.E. Middle Earth Role-Playing Game, even though they did tend to invent too much. For example, I have seen people citing the Nazgul names and biographies they invented as canonical.

Older SF used to situate planets around stars that people knew about. But the stars people knew about were the brighter ones, the ones with their own names. Brighter stars are not always habitable ones. Thus, for example, the heroic protagonist of *Dorsai* was Protector of Procyon (Alpha Canis Minoris A) is an F5 giant star with a white dwarf companion star (Alpha Canis Minoris B) at 11.4 light-years distance from Sol, and so unlikely to have been around long enough to have planets habitable without substantial investment.

The Fallen Astronauts memorial—does that include the Soviet/Russian ones? Or did they not want to have to fight the Judica-Cordeliga brothers? (Two Italian radio hams who seem to have been the only people who heard a number of Soviet cosmonauts die in space, on flights that don't correspond with any Soviet rocket launches.)

[Just the Americans. The complete list on the memorial includes (in alphabetical order: Michael Adams, Michael Anderson, Charlie Bassett,

David Brown, Manly Carter, Roger Chaffee, Kalpana Chawla, Laurel Clark, Theodore Freeman, Gus Grissom, Rick Husband, Gregory Jarvis, Robert Lawrence, Christa McAuliffe, Willie McCool, Ronald McNair, Ellison Onizuka, Ilan Ramon, Judy Resnik, Dick Scobee, Elliott See, Michael Smith, Ed White, Clifton Williams]

Joseph T. Major

Steven

Thank you for issue 4 of *Argentus*. It's a little late at night, so I will see what I can do about getting this loc out in a timely fashion. Either that, or I'll fudge the date above. You can guess what will happen...on with the loc!

What was I reading when I was 13? I loved the novels I could find, but I was mostly reading as many anthologies as I could, especially Donald Wollheim's *Best Of 19XX* series that DAW books published, and the Gold anthologies from the *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*. The short stories were my favorites, and I loved these quick trips to the outer planets and other realities, with robots, brave spacemen, aliens galore and One Plucky Girl. They also gave me an insight into the fun you could have in this mysterious inner sanctum called fandom...these anthologies would mention Worldcon, Hugos, Terry Carr, the best of the authors, H.L. Gold, John W. Campbell, the great editors and publishers. These books told me there was a community behind all these wonderful stories, and gave me the impetus to seek it out and see what it was all about. Just for the record, Jason, when I was 13, it was 1972. I was at the height of my own sensawunda, and stories taking me to elsewhere and otherwhen matched my fascination with the community that kept SF&F going, supported and in many ways, advertised and marketed. Now that I am a jaded 45, I must wonder if there are any 13-year-olds out there yearning to find their own sensawunda...Ghod, I hope so.

Very interesting article on the life of H. Beam Piper. I did not know that he had committed suicide, and he did so, even knowing he had an appreciative audience. Perhaps his frustrations came from aspiring to a high career, but not being able to rise to it. As the article goes, the

H. stands for Henry, and later, Herbert. Which one is correct?

I have read some of Mike Glycer's Torcon diary, which has an uncharacteristic gloss to it. It must be because Mike was a GoH at Torcon, and no one likes to be ungracious to one's host. Even with the added burden of rockets, that's never stopped Dave Langford. The L.A. parties wanted to keep their parties alcohol-free, hoping that the lack of same would be overlooked by the imagination of their bidding themes and wondrous room of interesting activities, largely furnished by IKEA, by the way... Yes, Dave, the local hockey team is indeed called the Maple Leafs, no matter what your language teacher may have taught you. Those pyramids you spotted were right beside the national headquarters building for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, or the CBC, not affectionately known at the Ceeb. The sitting statue is a tribute to internationally known concert pianist Glenn Gould. Lots of people often sit beside Gould on the bench.

Yvonne was in Washington recently, for the NASA Centennial Challenges Conference, where she was a representative for the X Prize Foundation and her employer, Optech. She will be spending the early part of October in Vancouver at the International Astronautics Congress. Her treatment at the hands of the Torcon committee has sent her back to her original true loves, astronomy and space. She'd like nothing better than to explore the astronomical areas of Florida.

The Sawyer book you're working on...is that *Iterations*? Joseph Major asks about the NeoFan's Manifesto...I can't remember if that was published in an earlier edition of *Argentus*, or another fanzine, but it is something that should be reprinted from time to time as a gentle reminder. My own loc...I stopped volunteering with VoicePrint to devote more time to the job hunt (I start a fresh job on Monday with Stronco, a large convention services company. Right up my alley.)

[The Sawyer book isn't Iterations, it is a new collection called Relativity. It contains 8 stories, 4 speeches, all twelve "On Writing" essays, several articles, a crossword puzzle and a critical essay about Rob. It has now been nominated for an Aurora Award for Best Work in

English (Other). I didn't publish the NeoFan's Manifesto, perhaps I'll do a reprint of it in the future.]

I wish I could get out to a Windycon some time. Always good times, I keep hearing, but I'd like to know about it first-hand! (Just to let you know...because of my extended unemployment, Yvonne and I sold our memberships to Boston. Also, because of rising costs, we've decided to swear off Worldcons, and even running conventions. The Torcon senior committee took a large toll on us, and we are not eager to come even close to living through that again.)

[We'd love to see you at a Windycon.]

Well, I got the whole loc done in one evening. Wonders in my own lifetime. Will a new *MidFanZine* see the light of day soon? Sure hope so. Take care, and see you again sometime.

[Anne Murphy, the editor of MidFanZine is putting the finishing touches on a new issue even as I type.]

Lloyd Penney

Steven:

I see that now James Gunn is being given credit for saying, "The Golden Age of science fiction is 13." Wrong. And whoever thinks I claimed credit for it is wrong, too, because I know who did first say it, which was a fan from the Bay Area named Peter Graham, circa 1952. Terry Carr picked it up from him and made the phrase popular.

Robert Silverberg

[[Thanks for the feedback on my article, and please forward Robert Silverberg my thanks for the correction.

Jason Burnett]]

Dear Steven,

Argentus #4 is another fine issue. You seem to be having very good success at getting written material. I know how difficult that can be given the general inertia of most fan writers. Why write today what you can put off until tomorrow? There's sure to be something mind numbing on television, and your sock drawer really needs sorting. Given all the good excuses in the universe, it's

remarkable that any fanzines get published at all.

Jason K. Burnett's article on science fiction at thirteen brought back many memories of my misspent youth. I turned thirteen in November 1955. I was in eighth grade at the time. I had already been reading SF for several years, so I was already well on my way to being a pitiful wreck of a once healthy eight year old. However, something significant happened in November 1955. I experienced an eldritch new desire I had never experienced before. (No, it wasn't sex. I already knew about that eldritch desire.) Previously, I had been satisfied buying some SF magazines and paperbacks. I now wanted to buy them all. I had become a **teenage completist!** That phase lasted for about two years. After that, I started wanting to spend my money on dating girls rather than acquiring all the science fiction in the known universe. It would be a few years before I got back to trying to acquire all the science fiction in the known universe.

I enjoyed Rich Horton's article "See the Neighborhood." I fear my knowledge of astronomy is woefully out of date and getting further out of date by the month. In college, I took Astronomy 1 back in 1960. Most of what is known about astronomy today wasn't even dreamed of in 1960. I've read articles here and there over the intervening years but not enough to acquire any comprehensive knowledge. The Hubble telescope has discovered all sorts of goshwow stuff out there, and I'm sure learning about it would really tweak my sensawunda. One of these days, I really must get around to learning more about the subject.

Dave Langford attended a worldcon, and he doesn't even mention all of those fans gasping at the sight of him. After all, he is a living legend even aside from being the Hugo grabber who walks. However, from his Olympian perspective, he does notice how North American fans have fallen from the traditional ways. They've taken up healthy living. Bheer is seldom seen at fan parties and even a bowl of pretzels would reduce some fans to gibbering horror. There isn't much running around naked either.

In "Thus We Refute Heinlein," shows he has what it takes to be an outstanding journalist. He is able to slip at least two or three new assumptions in each question. This gives the speaker the opportunity to

step in something in several different directions. From the journalist's point of view, who cares what a speaker steps in as long he steps in something. From a denunciation of Coca-Cola and McDonald's as promoting cultural homogenization, Rich [Lynch] introduces the assumption that the internet promotes cultural homogenization. Does it? The internet is useful for so many things that we all can use it for our own purposes whatever those purposes may be.

Milt Steven

Steven

Thanks for the latest *Argentus*. Not a whole lot to comment on except a general comment on retrospective pieces touched off by Jason Burnett's example. How does anyone possibly remember what they've read from 17 years earlier? I could probably recall a subset of what I'd read at 16 or 17 years of age, but certainly not 13 years of age. Perhaps it is just my lazy mind which refuses to recall most trivial details of my day-to-day life and thus saves my higher brain function for the big things, who can say

[I have no idea how he remembers.]

[[JB responds: The reason I can remember what I was reading that long ago is because I have been, for as long as I can remember, a voracious reader and re-reader of books. For some people, movies, TV shows, or songs are the touchstones of their memory. For me, it's books. I can look back at any phase in my life, and even if I can't remember all the books I read at that time, I can remember the ones that were most a part of my life at that time. Likewise, thinking of a book that I've read will bring back memories of a certain phase of my life. Some of the books in my article I'm quite certain that I read at thirteen exactly, and all the rest were (at worst) read within a year or two on either side of that date. At any rate, I'm absolutely positive that I had read them all by the time I went away to boarding school at age 15.]]

Henry L. Welch

Dear Mr. Silver:

The copy of *Argentus* #4 that you sent to me arrived in fine shape. Thank you very much for sending this to me—I

enjoyed it thoroughly. My interest was, initially, the John Carr article on Piper (John is "The Man" on all things Piper), but I found the entire issue a damned good read.

I appreciate your sending this to me, and offer my sincere and abject apologies for not getting back to you sooner.

Thanks again for the copy, and for all your kindnesses.

Best Regards,
Tom Rogers

And responses to the *Argentus* Special Edition

Greetings Steven~

Well, this is a minor, personal historical moment, the first publication of my artwork in an on-line only zine. Am I in the future yet?

That was an impressive list of fans and authors to be on the games shows, and looks like "Jeopardy!" is something of a favorite... or possibly it's just been around so long, it's had more people taking shots at getting on. And it was interesting to find, let's see... five people are on this list twice. Kind of feel like I want to be a school teacher assigning a paper to someone like Janice Gelb, asking her to "compare and contrast" your experiences in the two shows.

[At the time of the deadline for the issue, Janice was facing several of her own (non-fannish) issues and was not able to participate. If she finds the time to write up an article, I'd be more than happy to include it.]

In your own article, in the q&a list at the end, is this one: "Do you have to pay taxes on the prizes? Yes. Taxes are deducted from the cash prizes before the check is mailed. Before a prize is sent out, the recipient receives a bill for the tax on the prize. The bill must be paid before the prize is delivered." So, okay, if they deduct the tax from the prize before mailing, what is the bill you have to pay before you get that reduced money? That is, if you win \$100, and they take out 20% for your tax, so the check will be \$80, what money do you have to pay to get your money? I think I must be reading that wrong, since I was told one of the

first signs of a scam is you have to pay money to get your money....

[If you only win a non-cash prize (say a television set) rather than cash, you have to pay the taxes up front. If you win a cash prize or a mixture of a cash prize and a non-cash prize, they deduct the tax from the cash portion, assuming it is enough.]

Enjoyed Perrienne's article on "Wait, Wait, Don't Tell Me..." one of my fave radio shows. I like the laid back fun of their quick quiz for the prize of a voice recording. Much more fun than the often cut-throat aspects of more recent game shows. (My sister once commented that she thought I'd do great on "Survivor", and my first response was "Do you even know me?" I hate the idea of that show so much, it seems to have set up the whole new wave of shows where you have to plot against others, lie, scheme etc in order to be a "winner". If the fabric of space & time should be rent in such a way I actually ended up on that, I'd probably be on the helicopter with the crew back to the hotel at the end of the first day, with a hearty "so long, suckers" to the rest of the contestants.

Hey, another first: the first full fanzine I've read on line! My eyes are kinda buggy and bleary now from staring at that screen so long, so probably won't do that again for a while, but I understand that the kids these days are real big on this "on-line" stuff, so guess I'll just have to get used to the slow death of paper. sigh.

[Sorry about the buggy and bleary eyes. I just knew I wouldn't be able to put this issue out on paper due to the cost. I've only been considering it for about two years or so.]

Brad W. Foster

Hey Steven

The issue looks cool, very cool—read through your article on being on "Jeopardy!" Very informative. Many questions I've had answered. Thanks.

[So read more, and loc more.]

Frank Wu

Dear Steven:

I've downloaded the *Argentus Guide to Gameshows*, and many thanks for that. I know we've discussed game shows

before in earlier issues of *Argentus*, so I'm not sure what else I can say, but I will give it a shot.

Before she passed away, I remember seeing Peggy Kennedy on "Jeopardy!," and I remember how well she did...IIRC, she would rattle off questions to the answers in fairly rapid succession, and I think she was a multiple-day champion.

There are no game shows produced by Canadian television stations, at least none I know of, which is just fine...TV here doesn't have the scads of money to dole out as prizes, anyway. I've said this in previous locs, but...I did try out for Jeopardy! some years ago when their contestant search group came to Toronto. Of course, Alex Trebek is from Ontario, Sudbury, I think, and he got his start in broadcasting at the CBC here. He hosted a college knowledge competition game called "Reach For The Top" (much like the "GE College Bowl," and he also did the play-by-play and colour commentary for curling bonspiels. After he left, he was mostly forgotten until he showed up, to our surprise, on American television, hosting game shows like Wizard of Odds.

At the contestant tryout, a few complained that so many of the questions asked of the Canadian contestant-wannabees were so America-centric. Trebek, by then quite Californicated, expressed some surprise, saying that what did we expect, this is an American game show. I don't think there were any contestants taken from that search, and I don't think the contestant search has been back here since. Besides, whatever you win, by the time the IRS and Revenue Canada get through with you, you'd be lucky to have enough money for bus fare. That's why "Jeopardy!" is a show people want to get onto...it's always better to

win money than prizes, taxwise. Money's easier to spend than prizes.

Tom Galloway's article does remind me that while they are not game shows, I have been in the audience for a couple of television shows when I was a student. I grew up in Orillia, Ontario, about 100 km north of Toronto, and one of our field trips was to go to Toronto and see how television shows are produced. We were in the audience for two shows, one was a talk show called "90 Minutes With Peter Gzowski" (bit of a yawner), and the other was a performance of the popular-at-the-time comedy "King of Kensington" with a very young-looking Al Waxman. This was fun, because they got the studio audience in the act with sound effects on cue, like crowd noise from the side, or someone calling for a character from a distance. Since, we've gone to a couple of taping of the popular CBC show "Royal Canadian Air Farce."

Here's a question for 100 points...which game shows hosts were brothers? I think it was Tom Kennedy and Jack Narz.

Well, not bad for what was supposed to be a short loc. Special editions are interesting, but nothing beats the regular publication. I hope to see one of those next time.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

Dear Steven

As far as I know, there are only a couple of others in the SF world who have done games shows. Hilary Ayer was on "Win Ben Stein's Money." In the old days, There were several folks, most notably Isaac Asimov and Robert Bloch, who appeared on "What's My Line" or "To Tell the Truth." I've also heard that

Forrest J. Ackerman was on one of those brands of shows, but I don't know for sure. One guy I know for sure was on one of those shows was Doc Smith. He stumped the panel because they couldn't guess that he invented the technique to get sugar to stick to donuts.

I've done local games shows (a kids version of "Liar's Club" in the early 1980s was the first) and have worked for game shows to help verify answers. It's a tough world. I've bombed out of several try-outs, including "Jeopardy!"

One of the great sites that I've come across is Steve Beverly's <http://www.tvgameshows.net/>. I first heard of him because he used to run a wrestling newsletter. His is the only site I go to for any Game Show info.

Keep up the good work.

Thanks

Christopher J. Garcia
Assistant Curator: The Computer History Museum.

Steven-

Alas, I never have been on any. My cousin Mae noted how many answers I was getting on "Jeopardy!" and said I ought to be (we were staying at her house) but if I ever tried all the questions would be on sports that week. Besides they want photogenic people with personality.

No one was ever on "Shenansgains!?"

Joseph Major

WAHF

Moshe Feder, Randalt



Fanzine File

Alexiad

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Banana Wings

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The Bear Went Over the Mountain

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Mock Section

Well, the mock section got a reprieve. This issue features, for the most part, reviews of books written by authors in a style which is not their normal style. For instance, I pitched the idea with the concept of a Gene Wolfe written space opera movie novelization. As it happens, I was lucky enough to have several authors review their “own” works. Gene Wolfe, Julie Czerneda, and Mike Resnick all take stabs at themselves. The remaining works were written by Greg “Guido” Williams and David M. Silver (no relation). For the next issue, I’d like to see ideas for collaborations between two different SF/F authors.

When Authors Go Bad

Reviewed by Julie E. Czerneda

It’s not a pretty sight, folks. But science fiction author Julie E. Czerneda’s turn to the dark side in her first full-length horror novel *Basement Screams*, from Howcouldwe Press Inc, is a perfect example of what happens when fluffy bunny meets mold. A lot of stink, some ooze, and very little left worth eating.

You’d think someone of Czerneda’s experience would have realized she was out of her depth, but no. You’d hope someone in the publishing industry would have stopped this train wreck before it left the station, but no! The ruin begins with the opening line: “Don’t go down there!” in which her heroine, a middle-aged Buffy-wannabe, is exhorted by her sidekick, a wisecracking dog—yes, readers, a dog—to beware of the first basement. And yes, readers, I said the first basement. While there isn’t plot or suspense to be had, there are, I grant you, basements galore. There are industrial basements full of rats and leaking pipes. There are bookstore basements, full of rats and leaking pipes. Household basements, rats, leaking pipes. School basements, library basements, the basement of a hospital, a firehall, a masonic temple, fifteen church basements—all full of rats and leaking pipes.

Into each of which Czerneda sends her reluctant heroine and sidemutt, dragging readers kicking and screaming into yet another cliché.

If humor had been the intent, the author was writing with a blindfold over her eyes. There’s nothing funny about *Basement Screams*, unless it’s the irony of it coming out in a limited edition leather binding with acidfree paper so your copy should outlast your home. The wit of the dog—yes, readers, a dog—falls short. This might have something to do with her choice of breeds. When was the last time anyone swallowed a joke told by a Rottweiler? A Rottweiler with a toenail fetish and a pathological fear of rats who overcomes this fear by chewing gum! Okay, I retract my earlier statement. I did find the gum scenes mildly amusing.

If suspense had been the intent, the author needs to look up the definition of the word and write it on a blackboard ten million times. Although “I promise to never inflict a sequel on the world” would be a far better use of chalk and time. Every action and its consequence in *Basement Screams* might as well be in ALL CAPS. Subtle she isn’t. Take the church basements. After the first three harbored priests with pointy objects about to sacrifice a Siamese cat to the rat god, it was hardly a shock to find the same festivities underway in the fourth. Okay, it was a Persian cat in the 12th basement, but by this point my brain was so desperate to find a logical point to any of this

drivel it worried at the significance of the Persian for hours after I finished. I still have nightmares. I’m seeing a shrink.

As for that ultimate test of horror, the shock-filled ending? Oh, far be it from Czerneda to follow genre tradition. Oh, no. She had a better idea. The last three chapters are set up as a “choose your own ending,” so readers can follow a sequence of pages that will take them to one of three finales, each more banal than the last. The shotgun wedding between the mutt and the Buffy wannabe—held in Church Basement # 15???

Please, make it stop!!!

My advice to Czerneda? Stay with blue blobs and leave the scary stuff to experts.

CyberPern

by Anne and Todd McCaffrey

Del Rey

0-345-12345-6

442pp/\$28.00/January 2009

(cover art not yet available)

Reviewed by Greg “Guido” Williams

Anne and Todd McCaffrey’s surprising new novel *CyberPern* takes us to the world of Pern 10,000 years ahead of the last *Dragonriders* story. Freed of the omnipresent threat of the Red Star, Pern settled in for thousands of years of prosperous harmony. But after the rise of an anti-dragon megalomaniac tyrant Named I’rock, Dragonkind flee the planet with their riders leaving only a small group of rebels to tackle this deadly foe. With no Queen to breed new companions, the rebels develop CyberDragons—flight-capable battle machines with which to wage the war against tyranny. The story picks up in the first generation following the Exodus.

In their first foray into a true SF/military arena, Anne and Todd introduce a captivating protagonist in the young angry T’sunami, who has never known the companionship of a flesh-and-blood Dragon, but forms a close bond with his AI CyberDragon named Pdaradon. The relationship between Tsu, and PDA develops well throughout the story, providing a strong focus point to anchor the panorama of battle which surrounds them. F’reedom, Tsu’s father, and one of the last remaining dragonriders on Pern, provides the only link to better days, and faces his own anguishing choice—stay and help his son fight, or allow his Dragon companion to join the rest of the “fleshers” in their new society? What if Tsu and his band of rebel CybeRiders *should* win the day? Will the Pernese societies rejoin after two generations of separation, or each forge a new path on their respective worlds? All of these issues are addressed in a complex but easily followed storyline which keeps an excellent pace to allow the richness

of the tale, while briskly moving along towards the riveting last chapters

The most surprising element of this new volume was the rich detail of military tactics used in the story. The McCaffreys provide a sound examination of both the mechanics and ethics of Guerrilla warfare against traditional military forces, which is a subject area completely outside of their previous works. They provide brilliant descriptions of the “fog of war” as well as the desperate loneliness felt by combatants, even those surrounded by their brethren.

Poignant personal drama surrounded by a tapestry of well-woven battle scenes make this departure from the McCaffrey style a joy to read. It is highly recommended for both traditional Pern fans, and any reader of hard-hitting military SF.

Dumpster World

by Gene Wolf

Unfinanced Press, New York IA, 2004, \$28.95 (signed and limited, \$22.50)

Reviewed by Frances Angelique Keebler-Egge

Never a master of plot, Wolff here escapes the Vise Squad [or whomever deals with plots—editor, please fix] by producing an unauthorized novelization of the recent film-noir film. Unfortunately for his readers, he confuses plot with turbidity. What has been produced is a turbine without bearings. That is to say, an unbearable book (e.g. *Earth of the New Son*).

If the reader did not fail to return to their seat after visiting the popcorn stand, they will recall that the film revolved (very much the correct word) about Martin Sheen’s struggle to prevent the human race and some nice animals from being compacted. This led to a cataclysmic struggle between special effects, hardly a promising *venisóhn* for a writer of Wulf’s *frisson*. In this book, the thunderous booms and bangs, the snarls and terrifying growls of monsters flapping through outer space, are replaced by talk.

And so is everything else. This film-goer will not soon forget the robot B6, so lubricously portrayed by Brad Pitt (in a performance made doubly admirably by costume and make-up which rendered him completely unrecognizable), but which is here deployed—not as a vitamin, your long-suffering critic might forgive that—but as a master conversationalist too much given to the—dare we say mechanical—repetition of certain pet words, phrases, and indeed speeches instead. At the fifth reiteration of the broken metaphor likening clover-leaf intersections to discarded cotton briefs, your trepid reviewer came to grasp as never before the quite horrific damage accorded *belles lettres* by publisher’s one cent per word rates. [Editor—Please do not take this personally. I certainly didn’t mean you.]

In this book the rabbits (as portrayed in the film by Deborah Voigt and Mariah Carey) simply take the place of the camels or whatever they were in the author’s earlier *Soldier of the Missed*. For their duet the introduction promises a musical score. When the moment arrives (page 197) it is revealed as

seven to six in the tenth. Your tepid reviewer admits to an *être dans la panda* weakness for musical jests, and even she (I) felt a tendacious wave of *mal de mozärt* at that one.

Nor was the arduous social commentary of the film *Dumpster World* advanced by it. The message of the film was that we would all be crushed by the weight of our Kismet (the Buddhist name for Fate) if it were not for the merely fortuitous interference of well-meaning aliens. That of this novel is the same as that of all Wolff’s others: viz, that the author needs money. [Editor—So do I. Are you absolutely certain my check for Dave Gorman’s *The Walls in the Wolves* has been mailed?]

And yet...

And yet in every book there remains some saving grace, a legacy of the pure original sinlessness of a carb-free human mind; [Editor—That’s a good semi-colon. Please do not change] the elderly alien space-ship commander (Mickey Rooney) never proposes that the characters put on a show in Wulfe’s denatured adaptation.

[Editor—Is this enough? I can easily fill more column inches with juicy (but not actionable) details of Wolef’s personal life. Half-cent-per-word as always. He is an algolagniphobe, for example.]

[After reading his book, I would enjoy doing this.]

Men Are Exasperating:

The 105-Pound Woman With the “Right Stuff”, being the memoirs of a slightly irregular officer, Astronaut Maureen “Puddin” Russell, RADM, USN, retired
a review by Dieter “Teeter” Pillman
Tor, 319 pages

In two years since Virginia Heinlein’s death, there have been two surprising “new” works by Robert Heinlein published: the first was his cadet work, the long-lost first “novel,” if it can be called that, an out-moded Wellsian utopia, *For Us, the Living* (Scribners, 2003). Passing on the disappointment it engendered among those who relied on dim memories of greatness spread by those few of the old master’s fans who remain, it was at least a semi-useful curiosity for those aged fanatics who study this by-now relic of a supposed golden age—twelve-year-olds forever.

The second issued last month. We had all thought that following the appalling reception to Heinlein’s address in 1979 to joint Congressional committees, published in “Spinoff,”—when Congress nevertheless cut the space budget into the bone, the old master had retired in disgust, his dreams of commercial space flight shattered by the clearly more necessary financial needs of the eighties. His already written farewells, published within the next year were disappointing, Expanded Universe, a bloated and overly didactic version of the 1960s Worlds of Robert A. Heinlein, and the baffling, incoherent *The Number of the Beast*, each proved unpopular for the readers of the go-go 1980s, and brought few if any new readers into the fold. It now seems we were all wrong to believe that when he retired to his circular, custom-built house

in Santa Cruz, venturing out for occasional world jaunts to Antarctica and the Northwest Passage, it was not to merely live out his days in peace and quiet. Heinlein, it appears, continued writing the next eight years, but submitted nothing for publication, his manuscripts languishing this past quarter-century in the UC Santa Cruz library vaults.

Heinlein's young adult novels were always among my favorites when I was twelve-years-old so, despite my disappointment with *For Us*, the Living two years ago, I cheerfully volunteered to review this new discovery. Well, there's always a risk in revisiting youthful favorites, especially for a critical reading ...

The old man's prose, despite the well-known impact of the brain eater on his thinking abilities, is still clear as crystal, as much a joy to read as when I was twelve. Still kewl. Wow. WTG, old man. So there's a lot to like here.

What I didn't like were the out-molded Victorian values, so much a distraction today, after the incisive reexamination of a mature society's mores we've made since the 1980s—I found the old reactionary's views a half century behind the times. Imagine someone still preaching one should “pay it forward,” after what we've learned during these last two generations.

I was disappointed to find that, although *Men Are Exasperating* has been on store shelves for more than thirty days, our most profound academic and honored critics of Heinlein such as Alexei Panshin and Erle Korshak have yet to hold forth on it—perhaps the old man's work is so beneath their standards for review these days they've given up; but, luckily, I found a recent entry on a blog maintained at Benedict Arnold Middle School's website by thirteen-year-old Merilee White-Wong to guide my thoughts [spoiler warning].

“Lame. It reeks! Bogus! It's Wrong! And retirement in the middle of her career in the astronaut program to have a baby simply SUKS!

Anyway, I'm sorry I signed up to do this review. Another hazy memory of my immaturity proved fallible, and slain by my incisive and superior adult reviewer's mind.

Imagine the waste of time I felt to read the tale of a metabolically challenged, insecure young woman who overcomes her caloric intake difficulties and the handicap of her family disintegrating because of a father's jealousy of her mother's skating instructor, and the faithlessness of a boyfriend, to achieve a scholarship to study graduate aerospace engineering at Cal Tech under the greatest minds of our century, Professor Clifford Russell and his significant other, Professor Patricia Reisfeld, who drops out of the astronaut program because she allows herself to become pregnant and who, following by the largest plot hole I've ever seen in a SF novel, a series of unlikely disasters that strike down space shuttle after shuttle—including one far-fetched destruction caused by flaking of insulating foam during liftoff, decimating the program of trained pilots, is recalled to active duty in her late thirties and then, after extensive training in which she clearly surpasses her competition, gives up her seat on the first Mars mission to, gasp, a man! And for what reason? She concludes at the end of training that her closest rival, a man in his early thirties, physically surpasses her in ability to survive the long voyage.

What sort of message is this to teach today's YA females? When you've broken through the glass ceiling, to give it all up

in a burst of misplaced sense of duty or altruism? How quaint! How Victorian! Thankfully, we've all come a long way, baby. What a disappointment from the old chauvinistic conservative after more than fifty years. It's no wonder he never submitted the story. Peggy Fleming, who Heinlein lauded in 1969 during the CBS Apollo 11 interview as an example of the kind of woman worthy and deserving to be in the program to the astonishment of Cronkite, would be so disappointed by him, to say nothing of Andrea Dworkin; and it's no surprise that Mrs. Heinlein never encouraged him to publish it. Still, in another plot hole of massive proportion, last minute illness provides a vacant co-pilot's seat and she makes the voyage, leading to a triteness of ending I'm not even going to try to spoil. Shades of Colonel Briteyes!

But Heinlein can still stir up controversy. I posted an early draft of this (mildly negative, in my opinion) review to an online Heinlein newsgroup and was to my great surprise furiously attacked to the point that the President of the Heinlein Society emailed my editor at SF Site demanding that he not publish this review!

Banned by the Heinlein Society! My fortune is surely made. I think I'll give up following the south end of north bound mules up and down hills in the blazing Arizona sun and change my career to writing incisive reviews of all the Heinlein works. Of course, I will miss occasionally hearing God's voice in the wilderness. Perhaps I'll even write a scholarly tome.

On my famous teeter-totter scale of one to ten, I rate this a one point five. Better never written.

Copyright Dieter “Teeter” Pillman.

Pillman has been reading (without moving his lips!) SF for better than 40 years now. He reviews SF—and other books—for Amazon and others. He's a mineral exploration geologist based in Arizona. One of Pillman's more impressive recent reviews may be found at The SF Site Featured Review: *Glory Road*.



Review of Adventures, Exploits and Encounters, the first three volumes in The Chronicles of Lucifer Jones

Reviewed by Mike Resnick

Mike Resnick must lead a hopeless, unhappy life. Nothing else explains *The Chronicles of Lucifer Jones*.

Here is a protagonist, a man of deep religious convictions who communes with God on a daily basis, who wants nothing more than to build a tabernacle, and yet Resnick arranges for events to conspire against him time after time. Every time he is on the brink of achieving his life's ambition (and a modest ambition it is, creating a place where the poor and the downtrodden can come to seek spiritual comfort), his moment of triumph is snatched away from him.

Lucifer's travails and tribulations extend to every facet of his life. He falls in love with an Oriental businesswoman, only to be cast aside at the last minute. He achieves some degree of political power in a small municipality, only to watch it slip away. He is quick to make friends, but is eventually betrayed by every last one of them. Clearly a man without a prejudiced bone in his body, he enters into partnerships with men and women of all races and all walks of life, but just as we find ourselves hoping that the poor man has finally found some small measure of happiness in his blameless life, Resnick pulls the rug out from under him again.

This modern-day Job has done nothing to deserve his Fate. A simple man, he is unable to use the language without mangling it almost beyond recognition. A lonely man, he is unable to establish a lasting relationship with a woman, despite his willingness to try again and again. A man who wants nothing but stability in his life, he seems doomed to wander the world, expelled by one otherwise charitable country after another.

Why would Resnick write such a book? What personal demons is he trying to exorcise? How can he visit any character with so many unrealized hopes and dreams? What kind of twisted nihilist would create a man of God, a man who constantly believes the Lord will come to his aid, that tomorrow will be a new beginning, and then do to him what Resnick continually does to Lucifer Jones?

Recommended only for those twisted minds that think they will find fulfillment in the throes of terminal depression.

Review of The Demon of the Mountain

By Gregory Benford

Reviewed by Steven H Silver

Best known for writing sweeping galactic-wide science-based space opera, Gregory Benford has now turned his attention in a completely different direction, with the epic good-versus-evil fantasy *The Demon of the Mountain*. While many science fiction authors move effortlessly into the realm

of the fantastic, Benford's background in science fiction shows throughout the novel.

The novel tells the story of Malavan, a farm boy whose life is turned upside down when the titular demon Resuknab lays waste to his family's holdings. With nowhere else to go, Malavan sets out to seek his vengeance against the demon, en route picking up a motley assortment of companions.

Perhaps the most interesting companions are the mage Evernex and the bookish scribe Tarpan. Tarpan's presence is a little problematic and demonstrates why scribes generally are not involved in epic quests, but his relationship with Evernex is an interesting one. At the same time, it shows why Benford should perhaps have not strayed from science fiction. Every time Evernex invokes magic, Tarpan attempts to explain the magic in a natural manner. Benford has clearly not given this world the level of science for Tarpan to succeed, and the magic system doesn't appear to lend itself to the type of explanations Tarpan is attempting. A more successful approach to this is, for instance, Gene Wolfe's "Book of the New Sun" series.

Benford's representation of the demon Resuknab is interesting and, although described from the viewpoint of Malavan, the reader is permitted to feel a little sympathy for the being. Although clearly a creature of evil, it is equally clear that Resuknab has its own back story which might have been an intriguing area for Benford to explore. There are hints, although they are probably red herrings, that Resuknab is in some manner related to the mechs who appear in Benford's *Sailing Bright Eternity* and earlier novels.

In fact, many of the human versus mechanical intelligence ideas of Benford's earlier works are revisited in *The Demon of the Mountain* with supernatural beings and non-humans generally taking the roles of the mechs. Benford's adventurers run into a wide range of traditional fantasy creatures from Elves, more reminiscent of the evil fairy of Terry Pratchett's novels than the benevolent creatures of J.R.R. Tolkien's, to ogres to the less commonly depicted imps. It is problematic, but harkens back to John W. Campbell, Jr., that with a few individual exceptions, these non-humans are all represented as lesser beings.

Benford does demonstrate a heretofore undemonstrated flair for descriptive talent. His portrayal of the vast expanses of the world his characters move through borders on the poetic and seems to be influenced more by the works of Longfellow, Tennyson and Crabtree than by any prose author, let alone genre author. If Benford continues to tap into this newly explored vein, he may find himself ranked among the finest of science fiction and fantasy's poets, as well as in the first rank of science fiction authors.

Unfortunately, *The Demon of the Mountain* doesn't fully stand on its own. While in many ways it is derivative, Benford clearly has new ideas to add to the burgeoning field of epic fantasy. It may be a matter of finding his voice. While there is no indication that *The Demon of the Mountain* is part of a series, Benford does leave significant space for further examinations of Malavan's world, whether it is further adventures of his heroes or an alternative telling of the same story from Resuknab's point of view. If the latter, Benford would clearly have an opportunity to address the Campbellian issue of his non-humans.