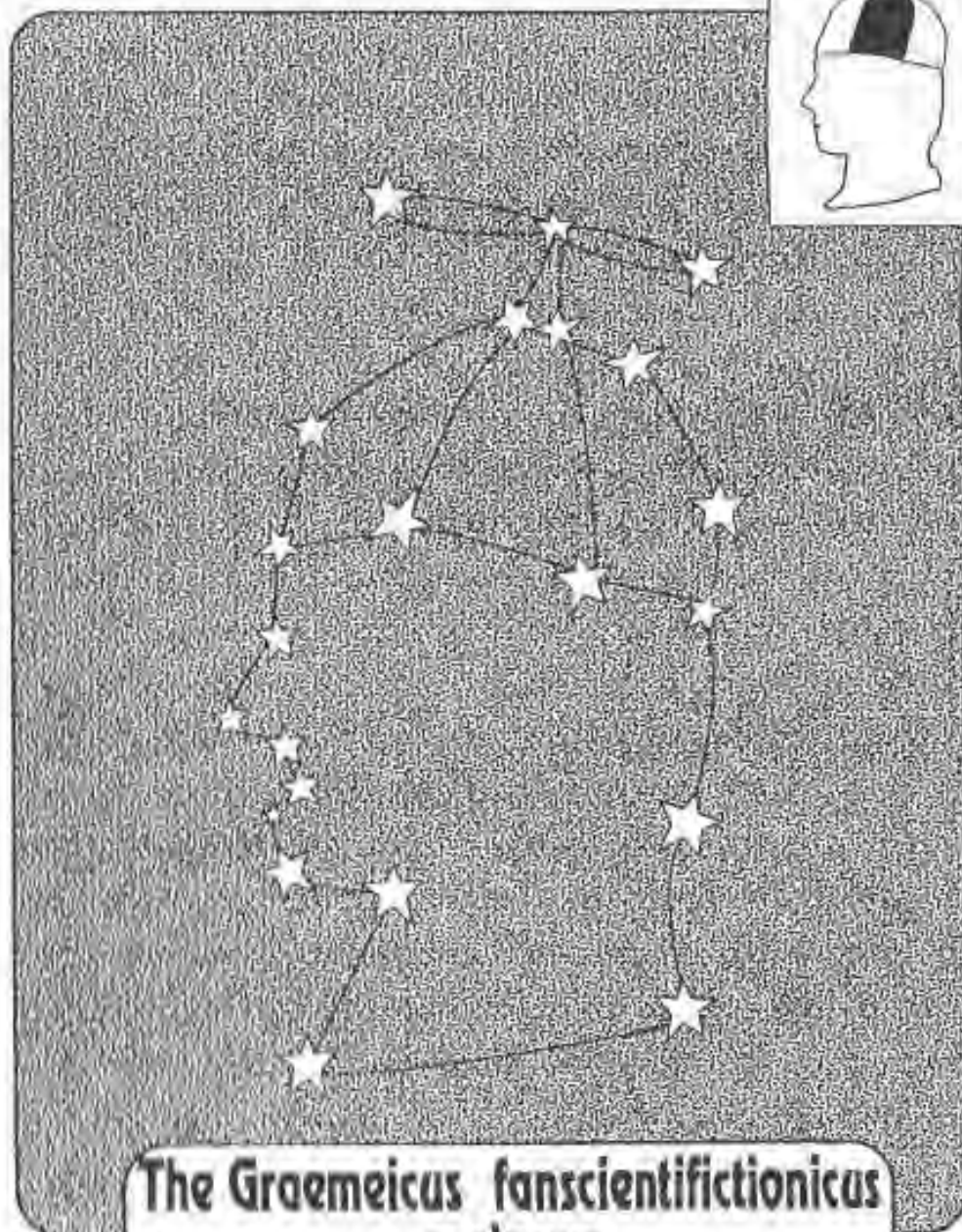


The

#6

Space Cadet Gazette

The Aging Old Fart Nostalgic
Time Waster Gazette



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BY N.

THE SPACE CADET GAZETTE #6 – MARCH 1996

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Published quarterly (or whenever I feel like it)

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SCG is also available for the usual: trade with your zine or regular letters of comment.

Note: Currently SC is only available free via download from Bill Burns's Excellent web site:
< <http://efanzines.com> >

All past issues are available in PDF format from the web site above.

SCG is open to submissions, especially (short) articles reminiscing about your personal experience within the SF genre, be it fandom or your favourite books, movies, conventions or whatever. But in truth I will consider anything that evokes the 'sense of wonder'. No payment, but lots of egoboo.

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EDITORIAL



For the second time in a row, I am three months late with an issue of Space Cadet. Do I have any excuses?

Several, as I hinted last editorial, certain mundane matters have been dragging me down all year long, so that even when I have time to write, I'm generally too depressed to get much accomplished.

In brief, on February 22nd the latest of a series of strokes landed my mother in hospital. During the course of her treatment she suffered yet another mental breakdown, which came near yet again to destroying her as an individual, were it not for bouts of electric shock therapy (her fourth in a series of such treatments). I guess by now you're beginning to clue in my mother has had serious problems for a number of years. She has now somewhat recovered from the effects of the stroke, but has dementia, a state of mind which includes an all-pervasive, crippling fear or anxiety. My inability to make her feel better no matter how hard I try is very draining on my outlook and energy. It's hard to be confronted with an ongoing, irresolvable problem, but it happens.

The authorities decided that my mother is no longer capable of functioning on her own and must go into an extended care facility. As a result, I spent what was meant to be a two week vacation prior to V-Con 21 shutting down her apartment and putting her goods into storage. A depressing experience.

Thank God she agreed, in a short period of lucidity, to have a lawyer draw up Power of Attorney Papers which grant me the legal power to handle her financial affairs. Otherwise her fate would be totally in the hands of Provincial Government bureaucrats.

I have been urged to write an essay on this experience so that other fans can perhaps draw useful lessons, but I admit that I am not quite ready to do this as yet.

Meanwhile, I have wound up twice in the emergency ward with Atrial Fibrillation, ie: my heart beating more than 200 times a minute in a non-rhythmic fashion. This may be due to stress, or to genetics (my mother, her brother and my brother all have heart problems).

Plus, after two years of sporadic attempts, I still haven't found a new girl friend.

So, spent this year lonely, stressed, tired and worried. Which brings me to my point. Some say that fandom is mere escapism. Well, sometimes escapism is a very necessary thing. Ignore this editorial. Enjoy the articles. I did, writing them...

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CONFESSIONS OF AN SF ADDICT

OR HOW I FOUND DITTO 8 THE SECOND DAY I LOOKED FOR IT

by R. Graeme Cameron

Last issue I wrote about arriving at the Mayflower Park Hotel in Seattle on November 3rd 1995 and not being able to discover Ditto 8, the fanzine fandom convention. Pretty darn frustrating.....

MORNING, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 4TH, 1995:

Awoke. First train of thought in head: This is the convention hotel. Somewhere in this hotel is the convention. How do I find it? Ask at the desk? Nah, too obvious. It's Saturday. What happens at conventions on Saturday mornings? Nothing. Everyone is lying in a drunken stupor.... except for the few smug early risers. Where are they liable to be? Breakfast? Nah, not if there's free food to be scarfed in the...HOSPITALITY SUITE! Aha!

I went down to the lobby by elevator, then marched up the stairwell to the second floor to begin my exploration of the hotel. (Why not simply take the elevator to the second floor to begin with? It's more fun to come down the elevator, tromp through the lobby and disappear up the stairwell.... That way the hotel desk clerk gets to think: "Hmmm, something going on here, but what?")

No matter! I found the hospitality suite! There was a convention after all! As I entered the room I asked: "Is this indeed the hospitality suite for Ditto 8?" (To state the obvious is to state the obvious). Before anyone could reply, I zoomed over to the salmon and bagels and began stuffing my face -- thus reassuring one and all I was in fact a fan and not a mundane slumming.

Observing the amount of food I was shoving toward my gullet, Doug Faunt quickly introduced himself and suggested we have breakfast together in the hotel restaurant (I think with an eye to preserving Hospitality's budget). Grateful to finally have someone to talk to, I eagerly went along. In the course of our subsequent conversation I quickly discovered that -- like many a travelling fan -- Doug had in his luggage two tins of canned Haggis (!) which he was bringing back from England. Talk about coincidence! (Go ahead. You have my permission.) I'd been corresponding with Harry Andruschak about this very subject! Seems Haggis is illegal in California, and Harry wanted to know if canned Haggis existed, and was it available in Canada? Well, here was Doug telling me anyone could mail-order it from Harrods (sp?) of London. Naturally, once I got home I emailed Harry with this urgent information. Here is part of his reply:

"Thank you for your messages. Both THE HIGHLANDER and THE SCOTTISH BANNER magazines carried announcements that the Federal Government had banned the import of canned haggis from Scotland. The problem seems to be the use of sheeps' lungs as part of the product. As for California, the law says sheeps' lungs cannot be sold for use by humans. (Yet notice how many Americans, including fans, have no qualms about eating Spam, Big Macs, and Hot Dogs. Go figure.) As such, at least here in southern California, most of the Scottish gatherings I go to serve a sort-of-haggis without the sheeps' lungs, and maybe also without the liver, heart, and kidneys. Just ground shoulder or ground leg of lamb with the usual oatmeal and seasonings....."

The above may seem like a digression. I suppose because it is. But a vital one.

We also talked about zine fandom. Doug denied that there was anything cliquish or elitist about the old guard, commenting that they were just a small group of people who had been around for many years and gotten

to know each other very well. Ah, sounds very friendly. Precisely the kind of 'organization' I'm looking for. All it takes is time... and some ability to say hello.

Doug informed me that the FANZINE ROOM was open and worth checking out. I hot-footed to said room in the mezzanine and paused in the doorway, mouth agape and eyes bulging. "Look at all the freebies!" There were thousands of them. Hot damn! But when the first one I perused turned out to be issue #1 of LOCUS my mind finally clicked into gear. Display zines. These were display zines. Touch. Read. Do not take. Oh well. I gazed upon the assembled multitude, a mighty library in itself, and sighed. How could the fanzine room I was planning for V-Con 21 possibly compare? (To find out, read the article following this one.) Still, there were a number of excellent freebies, "THE INCOMPLEAT TERRY CARR" for instance, and I quickly, not to say voraciously, gathered them up, and left a few SPACE CADET 4s strewn about in return. SC's cover was attractive and appropriate I thought, as it was by Ditto 8's GoH Taral Wayne, so I had high hopes people would pick it up if only for that reason.

Next I checked out the HOSPITALITY SUITE again. This, of course, was the traditional post-con name dropping prep-event arranged for my benefit. Except that I'm very shy in the presence of people I've never met, and a room full of such was quite daunting. Still, armed with handfuls of SPACE CADETS, I made Herculean efforts (from my perspective) to introduce myself. I pressed my zine on the likes of Roger Wells (whom I'd seen at V-Cons), Andy Hooper, Marci Malinowycz, George Flynn, Alan Rosenthal, Don Fitch, Art Widner (whom I'd met at Westercon 44), etc, only to discover this had been done by everyone on Friday night, and no one had any copies of their latest zine left to hand out. Still, I found my zine to be a good icebreaker.

I was particularly impressed with veteran fan Art Widner's zine receiving technique. He simply turned away to expose several large empty pockets on the back of his vest, into one of which I plunged my zine. A clever, practical fannish invention. No need to put down food or drink, the zine-devouring vest does your collecting for you.

Let's see, I know I talked for some time with Joyce Scrivner about Vancouver fandom in the old days, and I discussed the upcoming first issue of FHAPA with it's OEs Lindsay Crawford and Faye Manning. Then people started to break for lunch and I ran off to keep a 32-year-old date....

When I was twelve years old, I spent a lazy summer-of-63 afternoon rocking slowly in a couch hung from the rafters of a shady veranda facing the calm, silvery waters of Lake Simcoe near Barrie, Ontario (my birthplace), sipping lemonade, and browsing through a pile of recent National Geographics. One of them was the September 1962 issue. Articles included: "I Fly the X-15, Half Plane, Half Missile" (Neato!), "Strange Little World of the Hoatzin" (Weirdo!), "Early America as Seen by Her Native Artists" (Dullsville!), and "Seattle Fair Looks to the 21st Century" (Cool!) I didn't know this was one of the smaller World Fairs, it looked pretty futuristic to me. After all, the next century was way far off. I knew, for instance, that by... say... the year 1996, I'd be spending my summer vacations, not in a cabin by Simcoe's shore, but in a cozy little dome on Mars..... Sigh.....

Anyway, the Monorail built for the fair looked supremely nifty to me. *"Silently riding a concrete beam on rubber tires, the electric train makes a bid toward solving city traffic problems..."* Ahh, that Geographic info-packed prose style! Then and there, swinging on the couch, sipping my lemonade, I vowed to someday ride the Seattle Monorail! (Whenever I drink Lemonade I think of the Seattle Monorail... always a positively Proustian experience...)

Conveniently enough, the downtown terminus was in the Westlake center attached to the Hotel. Eagerly I boarded and found myself a good seat. Hmm, wider than the Vancouver Skytrain, with more window space. Good so far. Then we started off.... and arrived. Dang! Forgot about the line in the '62 article which read: *"Monorail zips 1.2 miles in 96 seconds..."* Although time seems to have slowed the thing, as the driver stated

our trip lasted two whole minutes. Still, I felt curiously pleased with myself as I got off. A childhood dream fulfilled.

Wandered around the Seattle Center (former fair grounds) for a bit. Leaned over the railing at the Science Centre, conversing with a suspicious crow and staring at the life-size bronze (?) sculptures of a Triceratops and a Stegosaurus.

Then I headed for the Space Needle, which looks like a flying saucer on stilts, though Nat Geo preferred *"the 606-foot Space Needle rose like a gigantic sheaf of wheat"*... an image aided at the time by the fact that the two story saucer bit, now white, was originally painted a rusty-red... I don't think the flaming beacon of natural gas on top contributed to the bundle of wheat image, myself..... Flame seems to have gone out of late....



The Space Needle certainly looks top-heavy, but its centre of gravity is actually quite low to the ground, what with being anchored by a 5,850 ton block of concrete. The 43 second ride on the elevator isn't all that much shorter than the Monorail trip. But the view! From the observation level at 525 feet I stared down at the toy-like freighters in Elliot Bay, past downtown Seattle to Mount Rainier, studied Lake Washington, etc. etc. I noted that the older section of Seattle round Pioneer Square seemed rather dark and grungy, foreboding. This is where the train station is located. I had been warned not to take the train, that the bus depot was in a much better (read 'safer') area of town. Years of watching American

network news has made me susceptible to such advice. But to be fair, there are sections of Vancouver I routinely avoid...

The last place I expected to experience violence was the Space Needle itself. But on riding the elevator down, just as the door opened and before I began to move, a powerful blow to my back pushed me forward and down, dropping me to my knees on the pavement. I looked up to see an impassive elderly Japanese man in a business suit stalk past with arms folded. I was so angry I nearly shouted "This isn't the goddamn Tokyo Subway!" and "Who won the war anyway?!", but there didn't seem to be any point. Nothing personal. He'd just cleared the way is all. Talk about cultural shock!

Riding out of the ex-fair on the monorail, I noted that what had been the 'Home Interiors, Fashion, and Commerce Pavilion' was now the antennae festooned headquarters of KOMO TV (I think it was Komo...memory fades...), which struck me as an intelligent utilization of a 'temporary' structure.

Back in the Hotel by 2:00 pm. Let the programming begin!

WALL AND WINDOW: FANDOM AND THE "REAL WORLD" with Jerry Kaufman, David Levine & Debbie Notkin.

A panel on relating to fandom, on fans relating to the real world. One woman (I forget who) commented, "I'm not ugly, but I don't turn heads either. Yet when I walked into a room at my first con twelve guys shouted

'It's a girl!', and I walked right out." This led to a general discussion on the number of females in early fandom, with a consensus being reached that the rise of Trekdom brought in the first flood of women.... David Levine commented that one of the questions you should never have to ask at a convention is, "Where are my pants?"..... I brought up how irritating it always is to mention to a mundane that one is a science fiction fan and hear them say, "Oh, so you believe in UFO's too? Great!" Debbie Notkin quoted Greg Bear as saying "Before you can publish you need to write a million words. Zine fandom is an excellent place to do that.".... And somehow, the subject of a certain Westcoast delicacy came up, namely the Gweduc, pronounced "Goodyduck." As David Levine put it: "What we're basically talking about here is giant ambulatory penises in shells." (The April, 1960 Nat Geo has a photo of a 'Dungeness Bay Digger' holding a Gweduc nearly as long as his arm! Even Madonna would be impressed!)...Which lead to my infamous 'Goodyduck' story:

One day, back when I was a Store Manager for Williams & Mackie Stationery, it was near closing time and I was getting ready to call it quits. Suddenly I hear a strange rustling. Odd. Can't see anyone. I follow the sound to its source. Down one of the aisles is an unkempt man resting on his knees. Beside him, an open plastic container of 'Goodyducks'. In front of him, a row of boxes of elastic bands, one for each size we sell. Carefully, meticulously, he was opening each box in turn, taking out a sample elastic band, and slipping it around a dead 'Goodyduck'. Then, with a heartfelt sigh, discarding the band. It was sometime before I could bring myself to ask, "Can I help you?"

He shook his head. "I don't think so. I don't seem to be having any luck. I'm looking for a one-size-fits-all-Gweduc rubber band."

I pondered this for a bit. "But rubber bands come in different sizes. And so do 'Goodyducks'."

"I need a rubber band that'll fit any Gweduc."

Carefully, cautiously, I inquired, "Why?"

"Well, I own a Gweduc farm," he explained, "and I need to ship 10,000 Gweducs by air. Need something to keep their shells closed."

"How about shipping wires? Twist them tight, fits all 'Goodyducks'."

"No!" he said, beginning to get angry. "I don't want to hurt their precious shells!"

"Ah, I see," I said soothingly, thinking quickly. "I'm afraid we can't help you. Our stock is so limited, you see. But our competition, Grand & Toy, is just two blocks East on Manitoba street. They have an enormous stock of rubber bands. I bet they carry a one-size-fits-all-'Goodyduck' rubber band."

"Oh, thank you, thank you," he said, a delighted expression on his face. He gathered up his Gweducs and went running out the door. I ran to the door and locked it. Then I discarded all the rubber bands smelling of dead Gweducs. Hope the Grand & Toy people were able to help the guy....And by the way, I now work for Grand & Toy.....

What does a Gweduc farm look like, anyway? Acres and acres of mud flats?.... Anywho, this story got a lot of laughs, and I began to relax, began to feel a part of the convention, as opposed to a mere observer....

THE PRESERVATION OF FANDOM'S HISTORY AND MYTHOLOGY with Dick & Leah Smith, and Faye Manning.

This was essential a Timebinders/FHAPA panel. Timebinders being a group of Fhistrors (myself included) devoted to preserving fanzines, and FHAPA the group's Fanhistory APA. (I have since become the archivist for BCSFA/WCSFA, inheriting over 5,000 zines, so it's an area I have strong interest in.)

Some points of interest: There are very few large collections, and when fans die, their relatives tend to toss the zines into the nearest dumpster, so Rule #1, never throw anything away! If you tire of your collection, give it to someone else.... Photocopying and distributing enhances survivability. Recent US copyright law now grants copyright with the very act of writing, but the consensus was this should not intimidate people into copying for archives purposes.... Placing into an institution is no guarantee, as policies change, shelves get crowded, collections can be dumped.... F.M. Busby brought up the hoary problem of the marching Chinese, if you march them past you ten abreast, the column never ends, because they reproduce at a rate faster than you can count them. Attempts to preserve zines and make them widely available are doomed for the same reason....

ELECTRONIC FANDOM: BOON OR BARRIER with GoH Taral Wayne (Canada's best known fan artist and zine-pubber, & one of the founders of Ditto), and I think Eric Lindsay (of 'GEGENSCHN' fame), and either Debbie Notkin or Leah Smith (Dang! Wish my notes were more complete!).

A lot of discussion, some of it highly technical and way over my head. The consensus seemed to be that electronic media was useless, at least from the preservation viewpoint, since technology has a short generational span. I mentioned an example: the C.B.C TV network has tens of thousands of hours of rare programming on an early form of videotape, and only one machine that can run them. No spare parts. No backup. When it breaks down, their archive might as well be thrown away..... Noticed Stu Shiffman, legendary fan artist, asleep in a corner. Ahhh, fannish traditions.... Taral Wayne pointed out that one of the limiting factors in electronic media is that not everyone can afford a computer. I got my obsolete Macintosh SE/30 for \$50. Can't complain....

The most memorable part of the panel was the ten minute conversation I had with GoH Taral Wayne after the panel concluded. I introduced myself with some trepidation. You see, earlier I had mailed him samples of SPACE CADET. He wrote back, *"I also remember YOU! You're that fellow in that other fanzine who thinks Furry Fandom oughta be squashed!"* On this occasion I tried to explain that when I wrote in a LoC to Scott Patri, Editor of 'THE ZERO-G LAVATORY': *"In fact, you might have to shift your wrath towards a new threat to general SF-Fandom: the growing power of "Furry" fandom, devoted exclusively to.... anthropomorphic characters, especially if insufferably cute.... Furry fandom is the coming thing, complete with conventions, electronic BBS and zines. Maybe I'm paranoid, but I think this particular egg should be flattened before it hatches..."* that I was only kidding, ha ha! I was merely tweaking Scott a bit about his constant anti-Trekdom stance, ha, ha!...ha...

"Hmmm, well, I posted it on the net and tore it to pieces," said Taral.

Oh, God.

Still, Taral graciously helped remove both my feet from my mouth and we got along fine after that. After all, he had sent a wonderful cover piece (depicting futuristic biplanes) with the above mentioned letter. Obviously not a chap to hold grudges.

Anxious to regain face, I tried the old fannish ploy of threatening to send him future issues of SPACE CADET. Ah, but he was far too experienced and agile a fan to fall for such an obvious trap.

"Well, okay," he said, "but I promise NOT to Loc. May NOT even have time to read them. But I DO have one of the larger collections, with an emphasis on Canadian zines. If YOU think your zine is worth preserving, you can send it to me. I can archive it, I suppose..."

Never, NEVER attempt to duel with a Master. You can't win.

THE FAN FUND AUCTION with auctioneers Andy Hooper and Dick Smith (I think).

I remember drooling as they laid out the zines. They apologized for the poor selection, but I was quivering with anticipation. Eric Lindsay had brought a set of Don Thompson's 'DON-O-SAUR' all the way from Australia! The club archive had a fine selection we'd received in the late '80s in trade for BCSFAzine, but here was a chance to get the one's he'd produced in the '70s! And then there were several fine 'SIMULACRUM's by Victoria Vayne, circa 1976, masterpieces of printing. And in general, what is technically known as "a whole bunch of neat stuff."

I bid on nearly everything. I became known as "that man in the corner". At least 75% of the money raised came from my pockets. I had about \$200 US funds left and was determined to spend it. Besides, it was for a good cause. TAFF, I think... Anyway, I had money to burn. The pile of zines mounted on my lap. They were sold in lots. I wound up with about a hundred.

One in particular I had my eye on. So did Jerry Kaufman. "HUITLOXOPETL" by Meade and Penny Frierson (circa late '70s). (Interesting title, sounds like the name of an Aztec deity, though nothing I can find in my sources.) This particular issue details at length the origins and development of characters like 'Simple J. Malarkey', 'Snavely', 'Sis Boombah' and 'Sarcophagus Macabre' in the POGO Comic Strip written and drawn by Walt Kelly of beloved memory. As a lifelong Pogo fan, this was a 'Must buy!' Unfortunately, this was Jerry Kaufman's view as well. We pawed through it together before the auction started, our drool turning the pages prematurely brown. Nervously, I wondered if I had enough money to outbid Jerry.

During the auction Andy Hooper's hand often strayed to the lot containing 'HUITLOXOPETL', Jerry and I would lean forward, half-rising out of our seats, and Andy's hand would pass on to another lot. Every time this happened the air grew electric with tension. Soon I noticed Jerry seemed quite agitated. Was he going to storm the stage? He stood up... sat down again... stood up, bobbed about, agony written on his face... then suddenly rushed from the room.

Hah! Victim of his bladder! This was my chance! Would the Fannish Gods smile on me? YES!!! Andy's hand rested on the lot in question. "And for this pile of crudzines..."

"TEN BUCKS!" I screamed.

Momentary silence. Somewhat taken aback, Andy said, "Uhh, sure, okay. Any other bidders?"

"FIFTEEN BUCKS!" I yelled.

"Fine, whatever," Andy said, warily handing me the lot.

Jerry Kaufman came racing back into the room. He plunged back into his chair, turned his gaze eagerly to the spot where HUITLOXOPETL had rested... His face darkened. "Damn, damn, damn damn!" He mouthed. He turned to glare at me suspiciously. I tried to keep a straight face. One shouldn't gloat in public....

Magnanimously, I let him hold HUITLOXOPETL for a few seconds after the auction....

But just so I don't appear a complete bastard, I do intend to photocopy it for him one of these days. Especially after I send him this issue....

HOSPITALITY SUITE

This time it was quite crowded, especially when the Vanguard people (Seattle Club?) showed up. Felt a bit claustrophobic. Made myself feel secure by talking only to the people I had previously met. Eric Lindsay did come up and snap my picture, but then he snapped every one's picture. I wondered, was this just his way of introducing himself? Did he even have film in his camera? Just a random thought.... Speaking of Australian fans, Jean Weber, long famous for "WEBER WOMAN'S WREVENGE", was pointed out to me sitting on a couch. I wanted to introduce myself, but there was a solid wall of people in front of her and I thought, 'Oh well, maybe later.' Never do that at a con. Often, as in this case, there is no "later".

Then came time (9:00 PM) for:

TEN FANZINES THAT SHOOK THE WORLD a play written and directed by Andy Hooper, loosely based on "Ten Days That Shook The World" by John Reed (? -- if memory serves...), an account of the Russian Revolution, or more accurately, the 'Bolshevist' coup. This of course is the Fannish version, involving time travellers and Fandom's first attempt to take over the world and establish a Gernsbackian universe with a helicopter in every garage. At least, I think that's what it was about. There were maybe 60 people in the audience, at least 20 'performers' reading their parts, and maybe 4,000 variations of Russian accents projected with great gusto and energetic enthusiasm. Thoroughly entertaining stuff.

This was the third time Andy's play has been performed, the first two occasions being Silvercon and ReinCONation. It's classic fan writing, easily on a par with the play version of 'THE ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR'. I don't know if Andy has it available in print, but if not, he should. I'd love a copy for the BCSFA/WCSFA archive. (I wish I'd thought to ask for one of the scripts at the time, but I was exploring the limits of fatigue and wasn't thinking clearly...) Then back to:

THE HOSPITALITY SUITE where, if anything, the con population had been cloned in an attempt to fill up every cubic inch of waste space. A couple of times I fought my way out to go down the hall to the Smoking suite where Art Widner and F.M. Busby were holding court, but the grey haze of smoke drove me out.

10:00 PM. Dead tired. Time to call it a night. I paused one last time at the fringe of the multi-human blob pulsating in the hospitality suite. Vaguely I considered attempting to seduce one of the many interesting women present. But I detected no come-hither looks. Everyone was either excitedly exchanging fannish gossip or crumpled in a corner looking as exhausted as I felt.

Besides, it had been struggle enough to overcome my basic shyness in order to speak to fellow editors I'd not met before. Flirting was right out. Besides, I've noticed that "Hi! I'm the editor of SPACE CADET!" is a singularly useless come-on line, for some reason....

Yet, I thought wistfully, what about all the fannish mythology re sex at conventions? Was it all mere myth? I've been to 25 conventions and only been laid at two of them. And this hardly due to my own skill as a seducer. At one of the two cons in question, a friend came up to me and said, "You look bored. Anything I can do for you?" I flippantly replied, "Sure, introduce me to a nymphomaniac." And twenty minutes later, she did! But that was then....

This is now. I took one last look around. I was too tired to relate to any of the women as a fellow fan, much less fixate on them in an entirely reprehensible manner as a sex object. This fanboy needed sleep.

As I rode the elevator up to my room, I remembered the Stewardess who had gushed all over me when we shared the elevator earlier in the day, asking who I was and what Con I was attending. Like a fool, I told her in elaborate detail. Her eyes had glazed over by the time I reached my floor. Sigh. I'm just not very good at interpreting subtle hints.... always blowing my chances...

As I got off the elevator and trundled up the hall to my room, I thought, "Gee, maybe if I'm really lucky I can catch a rerun of that PBS special on Dung Beetles.".... And so to bed.

MORNING, SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 5TH, 1995:

Woke up quite late in the morning. Just enough time to grab a breakfast before checking out and hotfooting it to the Greyhound bus depot for my return trip to Vancouver. By breakfast I mean yet another attempt to raid THE HOSPITALITY SUITE. There I spent a happy hour gobbling down free food while debating the Quebec Referendum with Joyce Scrivner, Doug Faunt and Alan Rosenthal.

For those of you who have forgotten, the ruling party of Quebec (which is called the "Quebec Separatist Party" -- a name containing a subtle reminder of their number one priority) put the following question to the people of Quebec on October 30th, 1995 (Just a few days before Ditto 8):

"Do you agree that Quebec should become sovereign, after having made a formal offer to Canada for a new economic and political partnership, within the scope of the bill respecting the future of Quebec and of the agreement signed on June 12, 1995?"

In other words, let's vote to go our own way, offer a new deal to Canada on our own terms, and when they refuse, kiss them goodbye and form our own country.

The voting result, while technically adequate from a Federalist point of view, was horrifying. Only 50.6% voted to stay in Canada. 49.4% voted to leave. A total of 4,669,554 votes were cast, yet the Federalist margin of victory was only 53,498 votes! A bitter Quebec Premier Parizeau blamed the defeat on *"money and the ethnic vote,"* ie: big business and non-white immigrants. He went on to say:

"Don't forget that three-fifths of us voted Yes. It wasn't quite enough, but soon it will be enough. Our country is within our grasp. We are going to demonstrate that we are able, even if we don't have a country as yet, that we will raise a French society that has its heart in the right place, and in the long run, finally, we will have our revenge and we will have our own country."

'Revenge' is always an interesting word to hear from the mouth of a politician.... And when he said "us", he was referring to Francophones. Apparently the other citizens of Quebec don't count....

As someone who still applauds Prime Minister Trudeau for evoking the War Measures Act back in the late '60s to bring in the army during the FLQ crisis (thus making it clear Canada would not tolerate armed rebellion on the part of Separatists), this narrow victory over the Separatist movement is worrisome. Frustrated extremists may decide to take up terrorism again.

On the other hand, if at some future time Quebec does vote to secede, active opposition and bitter, punitive economic action will only make matters worse for everyone. Quebec isn't going to disappear from the face of the continent, after all; it will still sit astride the St. Lawrence Seaway and command huge mineral and hydroelectric resources. If Quebec chooses to become independent, we might as well accept and support our 'new' neighbour and negotiate a relationship that will be to our MUTUAL advantage. Anything less would be a catastrophe.

In short, my opinion is that the Federalists should do everything possible to prevent Quebec from seceding, but should Quebec choose to leave anyway, than we should do everything we can to support the people of Quebec and smooth the transition process. This is the gist of what I said in the course of the discussion.

Alan Rosenthal (whom, I believe, is originally from Canada, tho again, this may be a delusion on the part of my faulty memory) astonished one and all with his account of the longstanding tradition of Canadian Premiers who function as virtual dictators, the outstanding example being Maurice Duplessis whose Union Nationale party ran Quebec from 1944 to 1960. Alan mentioned Duplessis' notorious Padlock Laws which empowered the police to change the locks on the homes and business's of people the Premier didn't like, thus denying them access to their own property.

"Why, that's Communist!" declared an outraged Doug Faunt.

And I threw in the story of the American political expert who'd been studying the government of William 'Whacky' Bennett here in B.C circa late '60s, who fled the province after a hasty news conference in which he'd denounced Premier Bennett as "the worst dictator in North America since Huey Long of Louisiana." Bennett had been visibly pleased by this flattering remark....

But enough of politics. Time to return home.

Crossing the border back into Canada was more interesting than I had anticipated. A drunken chap in a rumpled suit whom I had noticed becoming more and more agitated as we approached the Customs building suddenly leaped from his seat and demanded that the bus drive right through Canada customs without stopping. On being told this was impossible he insisted the bus stop immediately and let him out. To avoid a fight, the driver obliged. The twit of a drunk then removed several bottles of presumably expensive booze from his luggage and dropped them in a garbage bin in full view of the Customs officers. Needless to say, we spent a very long time in customs while the inspectors went through this idiot's luggage searching for the slightest possible excuse to slap him with a fine, or maybe even detain him. He got back on the bus with a smug smile on his face.

"If I had my way, I'd leave you behind," muttered the bus driver.

"Oh yeah? You wouldn't dare," declared the moron. "I'm a lawyer!"

This revelation surprised no one.

As I was seated in the front right-hand seat with a superb view out the windscreen, I decided to study the approaching Canadian scenery from the perspective on someone who has never seen it before, as if I were a first time visitor from the United States.

Initially one passes through a series of 'hobby' farms culminating in the small farming community of Cloverdale (with a couple of artillery piece monuments in its fair grounds) and then joins the Trans Canada Highway to pass over the Port Mann bridge high above the Fraser River & assorted train yards, then swings left past Fraser Mills (where Nils Helmer Frome produced Canada's first SF fanzine SUPRAMUNDANE STORIES back in the late 1930s) and penetrates the closely packed houses of Burnaby. Up to this point there's nothing particularly interesting. But when the bus emerges from the tangle of housing to travel along the Grandview viaduct, racing over train tracks and wrecking yards, with the huge cluster of downtown Vancouver office towers rising in the distance and looking very impressive against the North Shore Mountains (which being much closer to the city than the mountains surrounding Seattle are to that city, loom rather well), one has a sense of arriving -- not exactly at the Emerald City, or at the end of the rainbow, mind you -- but somewhere different and unique. That the bus depot is located in the Via Rail - Amtrak train station, one of the old 'imperial' style basilicas of commerce built decades ago, beats the dinky Seattle bus depot all to heck (though the surrounding area, on the edge of China Town, is a bit seedy). Still, all in all, not a bad intro to Canada. (However, I should note that tourists travelling by automobile usually cross at the more Westerly Blaine border post and arrive in Vancouver via a totally different route.)

I took my one piece of luggage, boarded the Vancouver Skytrain at the nearby Main St. station, got off on Granville Street, caught a bus that dropped me off two blocks from my Apt. in Kitsilano and immediately proceeded to not write up my report of the convention. A mere nine months later, I finally get this written. Huzzah! Hope you enjoyed it.

FIRST TIME FOOM RUNNER

by R. Graeme Cameron

During May 17-19, 1996, I was the Toastmaster For V-Con 21 held in Richmond, British Columbia. In addition to introducing Kim Stanley Robinson and William Gibson, appearing on several panels and handing out the infamous ELRON awards, I volunteered to run a fanzine room. Hence the title: "FIRST TIME FOOMRUNNER", or 'First Time Fanzine Room Runner'. Did I succeed? Did I fail? Here is my account. You can be the judge.

(I may or may not run excerpts of my BCSFAzine account of V-Con 21 in future issues of SC. This article is entirely about the Foom.)

According to the program book I was supposed to man the Foom from Noon to 4:00 PM on the Friday opening the convention. Absolutely no problem. I didn't even arrive till after the Foom was due to close! I find this is the most relaxed and stress-free way not to fulfill one's obligations. I highly recommend this tactic to every volunteer. Bit of a pain for those who had actually wanted to visit the Foom I admit....

Saturday morning I slept in, then leaped into action to get my room prepared as much as possible before I had to appear on several panels. Well, I leaped out of bed, at least. That was a start. Then I went off to a leisurely breakfast/lunch with Mel Gilden where we talked about the old 'SPACE PATROL' TV series, among other topics of common interest. Then I sat around digesting my food and reading assorted source books on the subject of the upcoming panels. Then came the three panels. Finally, circa 5:00 pm, I had the leisure to... PANIC!!! Only 3 hours to go! At 8:00 pm I was supposed to open the door to room 116 and let in the hordes of fanzine fans for "PUBETEERS ONE", a party devoted to zines. Only 3 hours to prepare!

First things first. I frantically scurried about the hotel taping up signs which explained what P1 was, and where and when to find it. Then Clint Budd and I drove around Richmond searching for a supermarket and a Government Liquor store. I spent \$100 of my own money on booze (mostly Cider, to entice American fans) and another \$100 on munchies. Back at the hotel I converted my bathroom into a freebie munchroom, filling the bathtub with ice to keep the cider cold, and laying out the munchies and paper plates on the counter next to the sink. So far so good.

But... on the front of my door I had taped a leftover copy of the V-Con program book cover which Ron Norton had done up for V-Con 3 in 1974. It's a wonderful B&W drawing of crab-like aliens emerging from a flying saucer next to the saucer-shaped Vancouver Planetarium and its famous crab sculpture rising from a fountain. To this I had added info about P1, including highlighted lines like: "Pathetic excuse for a fanzine room display" and "If the door is open, come on in." As I came back from my last trip to the ice machine at the end of the hall I suddenly realized that someone had removed my sign! I couldn't believe it. I then made a quick tour of the other signs I had taped up throughout the hotel and discovered that every single one of them had been torn down. Sabotage!

Angry in the extreme, I went to Ops to complain. It took considerable effort on the part of the good people in Ops to calm me down and explain that I was not the sole target, EVERY sign referring to room parties and/or events had been torn down, by decree of the hotel management. Parties were to be advertised only INSIDE the parties, not in the halls, not on doors, and especially not on bulletin boards. All I could say was..... ARRGH!

Returning to my room, I quickly drew up a series of very simple signs, one of which I then I taped to my door. Whenever hotel security wandered by, they'd casually rip off my sign as they passed. I'd wait till they left the area, then tape up a replacement.... Which would get ripped off.... And replaced.... And so on throughout the evening.

Meanwhile, I had one hour to prepare the actual display. When people arrived at 8:00 pm, this is what greeted them when they entered my room. Along the right wall, several tables extending to the french windows. On the left, the washroom, then a bed, a large table, and another bed. Hope that sets the scene in your mind.

On the tables along the right wall were several displays under separate signs. This included "CURRENT ZINES" - a selection of about 50 contemporary clubzines and perzines; "PAST V-CON PHOTO ALBUMS AND PROGRAM BOOKS" - self-explanatory, and "RARE AND FRAGILE ZINES, TREAT WITH CARE" - a group of items such as: a beautiful 'Hecto Album' by Mae Strelkov of Argentina, 'The Best of Susan Wood', a 1961 issue of 'Discord' by Redd Boggs, #2 of 'Spockanalia' which came out in 1968, the 39th Annish of 'Cry', 'The Incomplete Terry Carr', 'Fanthology 64', the 1979 'Mirrors of Mind and Flesh', (a Slash zine devoted to stories and art of Homoerotica depicting Kirk and Spock making love -- which I marked "Adults Only" and kept a wary eye on whenever minors were present), a 1946 issue of 'The Grotesque', a 1953 issue of 'Andromeda', etc., etc.

The first bed on the left was mostly for sitting on, though I did have a box there labelled 'FREEBIES' containing past issues of 'BCSFazine' and 'Space Cadet'.

The table between the beds had a sign stating "OLD ZINES, FOR DISPLAY ONLY" - with about 100 zines I'd selected on the basis of their covers. If they depicted aliens, spaceships, robots or weird landscapes, they were on display. Sample issues of such classic zines as 'Warhoon', 'Deranged Tales of Super-Science', 'Erb-dom', 'Laughing Osiris', 'Quark', 'Karass', 'Harlot', 'The Periodical Lungfish', 'Undulant Fever', 'Giant Wombo', 'Maya', 'Spang Blah', 'Kratophany', 'The Epsilon Eridani Express', 'The Invisible Fan', 'Anvil', 'Yandro', 'Don-o-saur', 'File 770', 'Holier Than Thou', 'Scientifricion', 'Rune', 'Lan's Lantern', 'Mimosa' and 'Mainstream' lay in temporarily neat piles. (I mention so many titles just to give the flavour of the display.)

On the second bed, next to the french windows, was the sign: "ZINES FOR SALE! PRICES AS MARKED. SEE GUY IN CHAIR BY WINDOW, YOUR HOST." - mostly very old BCSFazines (ones with William Gibson art, for instance), and extra copies of zines in the archives, such as 'Genre Plat'.)

From the "chair by window" I was able to monitor activity throughout the room and keep my hand on the cash box, plus -- most vitally important of all -- guarantee myself a comfy seat no matter how crowded the room became.

I should mention that most signs also stated: "FOR DISPLAY ONLY. ON LOAN FROM THE ARCHIVES OF THE WEST COAST SF ASSOCIATION."

Additional minor displays included:

- several Fan Histories, such as Jack Bowie-Reed's history of the Canadian SF Association, Jack Speer's 'Up To Now' describing fandom in the '30s, & John Robert Columbo's book about Leslie A. Croutch, Canada's premier fan in the '40s.

- plus a Lindberg model kit of a flying saucer which was not only the first plastic SF kit but the basis of the saucers Ed Wood used in 'Plan Nine', as detailed by me in "The Truth About Ed Wood's Flying Saucers" article printed in SC #1 and reprinted in the V-Con 21 program book.

- and finally, four issues of the magnificent Hectozine 'Groggy' by Eric Mayer and Kathy Malone, circa late '70s, which, encased in plastic, I taped to the walls. Groggy's beautiful multi-coloured covers are among the most incredible hectographed art ever produced, rivaling even the work of Mae Strelkov. I am particularly fond of #3, which depicts a green octopus rising from a lake amid a birchwood forest. (These issues of Groggy came to the archive from the estate of Susan Wood.)

So there you have it, a display of fanzine fandom in all its variety, at least to the extent of the contents of the WCSFA archive.

I have since been given to understand, as per, for instance, a letter to BCSFAzine from R'ykander Korra'ti, in charge of the Fanzine Lending Library at Norwescon 19, that Fooms normally consist of current zines offered for reading and for sale, a Foom's primary function thus being a means by which contemporary editors can make their zines known to a larger public. The kind of scatter-shot retrospective approach I took negated any focus, and probably struck the casual observer as pointlessly confusing, even overwhelming.

Still, at times as many as a dozen people were seated on the edge of the beds, hunched over the table, with no sound to be heard but the turning of pages as they perused the zines. Scott Patri, of 'Zero-G Lavatory' fame, at one point complained that this orgy of reading hardly complied with his definition of a 'party', and I had to admit I hadn't thought things through. The 'Pubeteers One' party for fanzine fans should have been separate from the fanzine display. Together, they don't work, as the one dulls the other.

And then there was the already inebriated chap who wandered in to drink six glasses of cider in a row while pawing through the 'For Sale' zines without actually reading any of them. An example of a non-fanzine fan attracted by the free booze. I vowed then and there that any future Fooms I ran would be booze-free.

Yet, for all that, I have to admit I had a good time, and so did most of the sixty odd people who passed through in the course of the evening. Not exactly a rip-roaring party, but much good conversation. Standout events would include Scott Patri's arrival in his absolutely splendid Wizard Costume, Catherine Donahue interviewing me for a later broadcast on Co-Op Radio's 'THE ETHER PATROL', and Debbie Cross and Mike Wrigley selling me a copy of 'DOWN THE BADGER HOLE', Debbie's book on Lionel Fanthorpe (the worst and therefore most entertaining SF writer ever), signed by Fanthorpe himself! I was so pleased to get this I subsequently awarded Debbie an ELRON the next day for "inflicting Lionel Fanthorpe on a new generation of SF readers."

And to my utter amazement, I took in \$117 Canadian from fans who willingly purchased back issues of 'BCSFAzine', 'Genre Plat' and other zines, plus the occasional copy of 'True Fan's Advisor' by Arnie Katz, a wonderful guide to the history of zinedom (in which Arnie gives permission to copy for such purposes). Of this sum, \$84 was spent by a single fan, a woman from Seattle (whose names escapes me, I'm sorry to say), whose life's dream it evidently was to own as complete a set of BCSFAzines as possible. The stated intention of this fundraising was and is to donate 50% to TAFF and 50% to CUFF. Now If I can just find out who's currently in charge of these Fan Funds I can send this money to them.

Things ran out of steam circa Midnight and I resolved to shut the Foom down. I discovered, however, that most of the cider and munchies remained intact. Seems I overestimated how much was liable to be consumed by the aging fan population. Twenty years ago, not even crumbs would have been left! So I bagged everything and hauled it all up to the Hospitality suite where my donation was gratefully accepted. Too tired to participate

in the uproarious activity threatening to burst the very walls of Hospitality, I returned to my quiet room and fell asleep.

One problem occurred to me after V-Con 21 was over. As Toastmaster for the convention, I should have maintained a high profile throughout the Con, particularly on Saturday night, by rotating through the various room parties and doing my best to play the part of a genial host. But to those who knew nothing about 'Pubeteers One', it must as seemed as if the Toastmaster had left the convention. In other words, perhaps volunteering to run a Foom conflicted with my role as Toastmaster?

Still, for a 'First Time Foomrunner' I may be too hard on myself. I started off the convention tired and exhausted from shutting down my mother's apartment (see my editorial), yet I know I did the best I could under the circumstances to meet my obligations at V-Con. Did I succeed with 'Pubeteers One'? Rather than trust my own judgement, I'll happily close with a quote from Andrew Murdoch's Vol.2 #1 of "'Zine Experimental" (Aug 1996):

"Saturday evening, not surprisingly, was given over to a long-standing V-Con tradition, room parties! Suzanne and I hit every one.... Vikingcon, the Furry party held in the Orion Consulate's room, the V-Con Dance, hospitality, the USS S'Harien, and the Graeme's 'Pubeteers One', which was a fantastic opportunity to hoist a glass and look at some wonderful fanzines from days gone by...."

VISIT TO X-FILES WORKSHOP

by Stan G. Hyde

Graeme! Most exciting news, I was in to the X-FILES special effects shop to visit Charlie Grant last night (Sunday, March 10th, 1996) and took my son Owen along. They are working on a "Ray Harryhausen" stop-motion cyclops. It's actually a guy in a suit with the film skip-printed to make it look like stop-motion. Charlie had sculpted a maquette. Body was being sculpted of clay over fibreglassed body. Head sculpted already. Neat rig being welded out of metal so that the actor can walk with backward jointed legs.

All this has to be molded, cast, painted, and ready for this Friday. It was 9:30 Sunday night and there were seven people at work.

Charlie was at work on radio controlled eyes for alien heads, and building an eye for the cyclops. He put an alien head on Owen and took some video tape (his camera is the only one allowed in the shop - they are doing some documentary footage so that he and a friend can speak in Japan. They plan a trip to Toho.)

Anyhow, the shop looked like a concentration camp for aliens - a bunch of aliens from past shows lying in heaps with blue jeans and t-shirts. Also around the room were burnt up bodies (spontaneous combustion), cat savaged bodies (much grosser in real life than on the show).

At one point, Owen said, "What's in that box?"

Charlie starts digging through it and says, "Lets see. Loopy intestines."

Throws intestines on the floor.

"A guy's head."

"A woman's head."

Owen turns around and won't look back.

"That one bug you? I'll put it back in the box."

Owen turns back around. (I tell myself this is a GOOD learning experience.)

We got to play with cable-controlled cat paws with hollow claws for a blood bulb. Owen and I were clawing at each other. We started digging through a pile of heads and faces, Charlie says, "Look at this. Severed head."

Actually, it was a severed neck without the head, covered with blood. I touched it and came away coated with blood.

"Oops," I said.

"You can lick it off," Charlie says. "It's just syrup."

I wiped it back on the severed neck.

Charlie pulled out the pig body and pig leg with the pulsating boils and worked them for us. Also hooked up some radio controlled alien heads and played with them (Owen and I had brought in the styrene kit of the GREY just out from Testors, and Charlie showed it to the other guys on the show. We'd built the kit together, so it was kind of fun -- for Owen especially -- to have the FX guys going on about the kit.)

Anyhow, lots of fun. Charlie is going to invite me back sometime. If possible, I'll try to set it up at a time when you might be able to come along - okay.

Best, Stan.



ASK MR. SCIENCE!

The immortal wisdom of Mr. Science first appeared in the July 1987 issue of BCSFazine (#170). Today, in addition to BCSFazine, Mr. Science can be found in the pages of the OTTAWA SF SOCIETY STATEMENT and ON SPEC MAGAZINE. I am happy to announce that Mr. Al Betz (Mr. Science's Social Secretary) has forwarded Mr. Science's gracious permission to reprint the entire corpus of Mr. Science literature in serial form within the pages of SPACE CADET.

Mr. DG, of Burnaby, B.C., asks:

WHY DOES SOUND NOT TRAVEL THROUGH A VACUUM?

MR. SCIENCE -- "This is actually just another old wife's tale. Sound does indeed travel through a vacuum, but cannot pass through the boundary between the vacuum and the air. The very large difference in Index of Acoustical Refraction of vacuum and air causes the sound to be totally reflected at the interface, and hence it appears, falsely, that sound will not traverse a vacuum. Indeed, to those creatures which live in vacuum, it appears, for the same reason, that sound cannot travel through air."

Ms. FS, of Burnaby, B.C., asks:

WHAT IS ELECTRICITY?

MR. SCIENCE -- "Beginning students of electricity are taught an analogy between the flow of electricity through a wire and the flow of water through a pipe. This is closer to the truth than most scientists believe. There is a great deal of empty space between the atoms of a metal, and it is through this empty space that the electric fluid flows. A non-conductor does not conduct the electric fluid because there is far less empty space between its atoms or molecules. The function of the rubber or plastic insulation on a wire, incidentally, is simply to keep the electric fluid from leaking out of the sides of the wire, thereby making slippery puddles on the floor."

Ms. DM, of North Vancouver, B.C., asks:

WHY ARE ROCKS SO HARD?

MR. SCIENCE -- "Although they may appear to be inanimate objects, rocks are in reality very slow moving, rather unintelligent animals with very thick skins. Because they move so slowly they have developed some interesting defense mechanisms. First, rocks do not taste good and most creatures that try eating one do not repeat the experiment. Second, rocks do not like to be sat upon. If you sit on one it will become tense, its skin getting harder and harder until you finally have to move. By the way, when rocks are in a hurry they simply crawl into streams where the water acts as a lubricant, allowing them to slide along the ground more quickly."

FIRST ISSUES

by Terry Jeeves



Galaxy #1 appeared in October 1950. Digest-sized and costing 25c, it was edited by H.L. Gold and published by World Editions Inc. For a market-hunting first issue, the artwork in the magazine was skimpy, undistinguished and very much 'soot and whitewash'. The pedestrian cover by David Stone illustrated Part 1. of Clifford Simak's three-part serial, 'TIME QUARRY' -- and looked like a view of a stone quarry rather than a hunted person. There were two novelettes, 'THE STARS ARE THE STYX' by Theodore Sturgeon and 'CONTAGION' by Katherine MacLean. Four short stories followed: -- 'THIRD FROM THE SUN' by Richard Matheson, 'LATER THAN YOU THINK' by Fritz Leiber, 'THE LAST MARTIAN' by Fredric Brown and Isaac Asimov's 'DARWINIAN POOL ROOM.'

Gold's Editorial praised the cover, printing stock and printing process -- Ghru knows why. Groff Conklin had book reviews under the title, 'GALAXY'S FIVE STAR SHELF'. Amusingly, Conklin heavily panned Jay Franklin's book, 'THE RAT RACE'. Amusing? Well, sometime later it was issued as No. 10 in the Galaxy Novels series of top SF novels.

Then came the 'Contest Article' 'FLYING SAUCERS -- FRIEND OR FOE?' After an introductory piece by Willy Ley, came the rules. You had to write a 200 word article on UFOs. The spectacular prizes included a 3-day trip to an atomic research establishment, a trip in a U.S. submarine, a flight in an airship, another in a sky-writing airplane and a guest appearance on a TV show. Strangely, I can find no further mention of contest or winners in subsequent issues.

1950 also saw the publication of the first Galaxy Novel, digest-sized and priced at 25c. Eric Frank Russell's excellent 'SINISTER BARRIER' was an excellent choice with which to begin. But once again, David Stone turned in a drab cover illustration which resembled a bunch of dead-beats in a soup-kitchen queue.



ON MARTIAN MICROBES

by R. Graeme Cameron

Came home Tuesday night (June 6th) from the afternoon shift at the Grand & Toy warehouse feeling worn out and exhausted. Sat numbly in front of my TV set, watching CTV national news. A few items, then, as is their wont when breaking away for commercials, several quick 'teaser' clips re upcoming items, ending with a photo of Mars and the statement:

"Scientists to announce evidence for life on Mars."

I sat bolt upright. I was absolutely stunned. A chill shot up my spine. I nearly burst into tears from shock. I've waited all my life for this moment. What had they discovered? I sat through the commercials with my heart racing.

The story turned out to be not quite so concrete. Evidently scientists had discovered what MIGHT be fossil Martian Microbes 3.6 billion years old in a meteorite that had been blasted off the Martian surface by some colossal impact event and had only recently come to rest in Antarctica.

I quickly flipped channels lusting for more info, and came across a mention that this evening's 'Nightline' hosted by Ted Koppel would be devoted exclusively to this revelation. Naturally I tuned in.

Unfortunately, the scientist being interviewed, Richard Zare, was obviously not used to dealing with the media and came across as a bit of an idiot. For one thing, he never directly answered any of Koppel's questions and poor Koppel was reduced to rephrasing his questions in order to imply the answers he was seeking. That Zare was shaking like a leaf didn't help matters any, as far as establishing credibility. True, he was bubbling over with enthusiasm and excitement, but the professional necessity of not giving away any pertinent information prior to the official news conference scheduled for Wednesday made him seem coy and evasive. It was a very disappointing half hour. But he did admit his research had detected polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) in the meteorite, and though PAHs can be caused by non-organic processes, they are also produced by the decomposition of living organisms. Very encouraging, to say the least.

At work the next day I excitedly discussed the matter with many of my co-workers. Almost without exception, they refused to believe it. I don't mean merely that they refused to accept that the scientists were correct in their findings, I mean they nearly all refused to believe that the scientists could POSSIBLY be correct. Their dismissal of the announcement was automatic, no matter what the evidence presented.

In the days following I found this to be true of most people I met as well. It would seem that the idea that people would 'panic' at the discovery of life elsewhere, or at the very least be 'profoundly moved and transformed' by such news is simply ludicrous. In fact most people don't give a damn.

I determined there were at least three reasons for this lack of reaction:

1) -- Cynicism. Many people are so sick and tired of being bombarded by contradictory scientific pronouncements ("Coffee causes cancer", "Coffee is perfectly safe", "Peanut Butter will kill you", etc. etc.) plus assorted technological failures and disasters, that scientists just don't have the infallible air of invincibility they once possessed. To these people, scientists are no better than politicians, habitual liars in other words. Why do scientists lie? To get more funding. Many people assume this 'discovery' is just a desperate attempt by NASA to get more funding.

2) -- Religion. God made the universe about 14,000 years ago as a backdrop to his plan for us to prove ourselves worthy of his love, and will blow it up real good any day now. Since this is the one and only function of the universe, the idea that he would waste time creating life elsewhere peripheral to the core of his purpose, humanity on Earth, is a Satanic delusion.

3) -- Hoax. Everything you hear about space is a hoax. The space program is a fake (as the head of public relations for the Hare Krishna in North America once explained to me in elaborate detail twenty odd years ago). The real Martians (Venusians, Sirians, etc) are well known to the governments of the Earth and this information is being suppressed to avoid a panic. The people who claim this are well content to be insiders who know the 'real' truth. (Which reminds me, the self-proclaimed 'Grand Moog of Mars' hit the TV interview circuit in Vancouver about 25 years ago. Whatever happened to him?)

Oh well. Wednesday night I managed to catch a rerun of the NASA news conference on CNN. It was kind of pathetic. Every time they pointed out something they had found, such as certain mineral crystals typical of bacteria droppings, they came up with a non-organic explanation as an alternative possibility. On the one hand they attempted to point out that multiple strands of evidence surely pointed to an inescapable conclusion, but on the other hand they backtracked like crazy. To pick just one example: magnificent electron microscope pictures of tubular forms similar to Earth microfossils, tubules looking like wormy things with multiple segments, might, however, turn out to be nothing but "dried flakes of mud."



'Microbe' centre to lower right

And then you had Ricard Zare wiggling out in all directions: "Maybe life on Mars originally came from Earth, or maybe life on Earth originally came from Mars. Maybe we're all Martians!" Or words to that effect. He may be right, but I'm sure it sounded pretty damned silly to most viewers.

Most pathetic of all, NASA Administrator Daniel Goldin stressed over and over again that NASA was NOT seeking to send a manned mission to Mars, or even asking for more money to advance their current unmanned program. Martian missions "must be science driven" he insisted. Doing his best, in other words, to stave off the critics who regarded the whole exercise as a funding ploy.

What the scientists need to do now is figure out a way to dissect these incredibly small "microfossils" and look for evidence of cell structure, cell machinery, etc. This is what they are working on. Someday there may be a more exciting news conference. Or not. Certainly, they've covered their asses either way in THIS news conference.

On Thursday, 8th of August, at 8:40 A.M. I was interviewed on the C.B.C. (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, government owned like the British B.B.C.) Morning Show. This is the seventh time (I think) I've been on C.B.C. radio. The subject: Martians.

I spent two hours the night before doing research. I was ready to talk about books as diverse as James Blish's "WELCOME TO MARS" and Philip Jose Farmer's "JESUS ON MARS", to reveal the teachings of the British "Aetherius Society" which is in constant contact with Jesus, who lives on Mars (and was originally from Venus. He recently saved the Earth from an invasion of Fish people from the other side of the Galaxy. Seems he hurled a thunderbolt at their invasion fleet. Must be related to Zeus...), and, of course, to natter on endlessly about assorted probes sent to Mars.

I needn't have bothered. Sandwiched in between a case of Welfare fraud and a report on corruption in Pakistan, I had all of four or five minutes to respond to questions. (Tho it may have been longer. Time races by when you're in front of a microphone live over the airwaves...). Still, as always, I enjoyed myself. Being on radio is a lot of fun.

I did manage to talk about the seminal influence of Percival Lowell's 1896 book "MARS" in which he laid out his observations of an intricate network of canals over the Martian surface, and his belief that they were artificial, created by a race of intelligent beings trying to husband the water resources of a dying planet. Then went on to show how this inspired H.G. Wells to write his classic "WAR OF THE WORLDS" in 1898 (primarily a grim political satire, however), and how both men influenced writers and film makers for over sixty years, till Mariner 4 in July of 1965 appeared to indicate that Mars looks just like the Moon, i.e. covered in craters, a result which disappointed every one. Not till Mariner 9 in 1971 were the fantastic volcanos and canyons revealed, not to mention the dried riverbeds.

Then I pointed out that all three life-search experiments on both Viking Landers in 1976 tested POSITIVE for life in the soil! Only a fourth experiment, one designed to look for organics in the soil, not finding any, negated the results of the first three. TIME magazine got it wrong -- I suppose for the sake of brevity -- saying in their August 19th, 1996, article that "the landers found no signs of life, past or present." Not true. It's simply that the positive results were interpreted to be negative. Some scientists have been saying all along that the fourth experiment wasn't sensitive enough, that the life-search experiments had INDEED found life, and that we need a soil return sample mission soonest to confirm this.

If microbes had existed 3.6 billion years ago when Mars had a thicker atmosphere and running water on the surface (possibly even oceans), might not these same microbes have evolved to meet the changing environment of Mars and still exist despite today's harsh conditions? After all, there's still water on Mars, albeit in the form of surface ice and subsurface permafrost. Conditions aren't much worse than Antarctica, and Earth bacteria thrives in rocks there, so.....?

At any rate, I certainly WANT to believe there was life on Mars. But I admit there is no conclusive proof as yet. Just enough "provocative evidence, as Carl Sagan put it, to justify some "guarded optimism."

In a way, I hope Mars is currently dead. If live microbes were found, manned exploration would be put way back, for fear of contaminating the Earth. We have enough 'new' diseases as it is, thank you. In theory, alien bacteria would be so alien as to not interact with us, but we don't know that for sure, and if Zare's comments about occasional interchange of microbes between the planets be true and we are all part of the same package, then humanity could be at risk if life is ever found on the red planet.

For me, the ideal result would be the discovery that life had once existed on Mars, had evolved beyond the microbe stage, say to interesting plants and animals, but is now extinct. We would then have interesting fossils to study in an environment that is quite safe (at least in terms of no nasty microbes).

Time will tell. I hope I live long enough to find out. I've always wanted to be around when a manned expedition visits Mars. Maybe, despite NASA's superduper protestations, this recent revelation of our Martian microbe buddies will fast forward such an event.

To date the highlights of my sfnal life have been: Sputnik, Yuri Gagarin in Space, Apollo 11, and the Viking Landers. One more to go.... a manned mission confirming the presence of life (past or present) on Mars, my favourite planet.

WAR! WHAT OF IT?

by Charles S. Cameron

PART SIX of the World War One memoirs of my Grandfather, Charles S. Cameron, who served in the 16th Battalion (Canadian Scottish).

CHAPTER XV

MOUNT SORRELL -- JUNE 1916

The weather had now turned very warm and we enjoyed the freedom of the kilt and out of the line we indulged in field sports and football games against other battalions. We were one day (June 2nd) in the midst of a very exciting game against the Cycle Corps; one moment there was yelling and shouting and the next during a quiet lull in the game the order could be heard "The 16th battalion will return to billets and stand to." We cocked our ears and only then became aware of the intensity of the gun fire up around the front line -- something was amiss and we were wanted. Nothing much was said as we tramped back to our quarters. No further orders were necessary. Rifle bolts clicked ominously, ammunition was over-hauled and unnecessary kit was discarded. The troops made ready for war. We were some twelve miles behind the line and some lively stepping was necessary.

For some reason or another we did not move off until dusk. meanwhile the news drifted through that our third division had taken a terrific lacing; their trenches had been flattened and the defending forces decimated with terrific fire. Several lines of trenches had been lost over approximately a mile front. We prided ourselves that headquarters were not taking any chances and were sending the old First Division into the breach. Canada's standard must be upheld. The Highland brigade (15th) would attack at dawn.

Two battalions of our brigade lying much nearer the line were well on their way before we moved off. It then became a race against the dawn. Fritz had us in the open and we must move in the dark. We stopped only once to throw our packs by the wayside; some discarded their overcoats, but these were retained by older troops. Away we raced. Long-legged men took longer steps and shorter men were almost running. Marching time was discarded on that night except for one brief occasion.

The Highland battalion which had sent approximately half their number to us as reinforcements almost a year previously had later come to France as a unit of our 3rd Division. They were lying well up the salient and when they heard of our movements they rushed their pipe-band to the roadside to salute their old friends on their way to victory? To death?

When I first caught the skirl of the pipes I thought the angels were calling me. Shades of Lucknow! But looking ahead in the dusk I could see the mob straighten up, close ranks and we swung past in perfect unison heads erect. Chin in, chest out. The salute before death!

Soon the marching step was again broken and we tore along. The night was short and the dawn was very near. As day broke (June 3rd) we were practically alongside the old Railway dugouts which served as Brigade Headquarters for that sector. Shrapnel whistled through the trees and men began to fall. They were left to the stretcher bearers. On we went -- no one seemed to know just where. Crossing a road we entered the first part of the old communication trench system where we were halted. Rifle and machine gun fire ahead informed us that the other two battalions of our brigade were attacking. After a while all was still; they had failed. We would resume the counter-attack at night.

Talking to our Brigade staff officer who had formerly been with our Battalion I found out that some of those brave fellows had penetrated even to the final objective, but the counter-attack had generally failed and the survivors had been swallowed up. But they had served to rob Fritz of the initiative.

The trenches where we had waited for the nightfall were merely glorified ditches and to add to our discomfort rain and sleet began to fall. Rain and sleet in June! It was a tough break. We were wet through and through and those of us who had retained our overcoats in the mad rush were not much better off. We spent the day huddled together sleeping fitfully; there were some funk holes and overhead shelters but not enough to go round. As dusk approached we roused ourselves from our inactivity and looked to our accoutrements. A hot meal was brought to us from Railway dugouts and we were all set to move forward when the news was passed around that the counter-attack had been postponed until the next night. One day's grace. No doubt there was some good reason for it, but individually we would have preferred to go and get it over. We never thought of failure and one more day meant another day's waiting and the tension of waiting was never very nice.

Next day (June 4th) broke clearer and for a brief period we enjoyed the warm rays of the sun. Fritz meanwhile was continually searching the countryside with shrapnel fire seeking to embarrass the troops whom he knew must be assembling somewhere.

Two paces from where I sat one of our men was sleeping in a half-sitting position, his face upturned to catch the heat of the sun, when a piece of shrapnel hit him above the heart. For five seconds he lived and emitted the weirdest scream I have ever heard; the cry of a soul passing on. I knew he was dead before I moved towards him. Had he been hit when fully awake I would have bet my shirt he would have passed on without a murmur; he was that kind, but the surprise of awakening to know he was dead had upset him.

While roving around the trench to arrange for his burial I almost stumbled across the fallen form of our officer and very dear friend Barney. The same burst of shrapnel had got him and also a number of others; our position was very open.

Night eventually arrived and once again as we were preparing to move forward the counter-attack was postponed for twenty-four hours, but we went forward on a work party instead. The defence system of trenches had been badly disorganized by the Bosch's penetration of our lines with the result that behind what had now become our front line there was practically nothing but the ditches we occupied. Half the Battalion seemed to be on our work party that we were strung out in one long line and proceeded to dig a line in support of our front line.

We had now served from fourteen to sixteen months in and around the front line trenches and had cultivated an animal's sense of danger; some keener than others. We felt it in the air that night and passed the word around to dig and dig fast. They dug like hell! Fritz was evidently in a jumpy and nervous mood and incessantly kept shooting up Very lights to prevent any surprise attack. The officer in charge of our part and myself kept close

watch on those lights, somehow. We knew it was coming and our lads had scarcely dug down three feet when Fritz's S.O.S. went up: he was using a succession of red lights as a signal for artillery support. We ran up and down ordering everybody into the newly dug trenches and just hurled ourselves in when all the demons of hell broke loose. In anticipation of a counter-attack Fritz seemed to have trained all his guns around the Ypres salient on our small front. Our position in the centre of the horseshoe of the salient made it very easy for him to concentrate more than the usual number of guns on the same target. The ground above us rocked and heaved but as our position was only newly made direct hits were really just accidental, but he shot at every part of our area and some fast scene shifting took place.

During the inferno an officer of some other Battalion leapt into the trench beside me and bellowing in my ear he inquired the position of his Battalion. I pointed ahead and tried to explain there was no need for him to further just yet and that Fritz was not attacking but rather scared of being attacked. So terrible was the din that I doubt if he ever heard me; duty called and he plunged forward. I can only think that he had just returned from leave and on learning that his Battalion was in a rumpus he was making his way there as fast as possible. Not being able to recognize him in the dark I don't know how he fared; the odds were very much against him.

Gradually the noise and the straffing died away and while we had suffered a few direct hits our casualties were light.

Later it transpired that Fritz had caught sight of our bombing officer and one of his N.C.O.s who had been making a reconnaissance of No-Man's-Land. Thinking the counter-attack was on they threw up the S.O.S. The above reconnaissance proved invaluable to us in that a jumping off position from a ditch was established which was close enough to Fritz's line to escape part of the artillery fire. We now had a concrete idea of what we would have to wade through.

The following night (June 5th) attacking orders were again cancelled and so the uncertainty and tension went on. Wandering around the trenches I located some old friends in the Yukon Motor Machine Gun Unit. Their machine gun position was one of the posts of the old line of defence and their quarters were accordingly fairly well established. Each day thereafter I returned to them through the mud and slime; some parts were a foot deep in water. Tea and toast always awaited me and sometimes a tot of rum. They were merely holding the position and not going over with us.

On the sixth night (June 7th) we were assured that this was the night and specific instructions for the attack were issued. We bustled around and were all ready to move forward, but instead we were pulled out of the line for a two day rest (at Corps reserve, Camp "J").

As I remember the story now, Army Headquarters were impatient at the delay, fearing very probably that Fritz would become too strongly entrenched, but our Divisional General (Currie) considered that stronger artillery support was necessary and stood his ground. As this took some days to arrange he decided that we were now too tired to do our best and yanked us out of the line for a couple of days.

CHAPTER XVI -- OVER THE TOP

No sooner did we get out of the line than the sun came forth in all its glory and for two days we did little else but lie around, eat, sleep and rest. There was no secret of the counter-attack, everybody knew of it and discussed it. Only a hedge separated us from the camp of the 13th Battalion of our Brigade who were going over with us. Mingling together in each others canteens the morale was of the very highest. Each had implicit faith in the other and the only bone of contention was which Battalion would be first to reach the final objective.

Our Battalion was slated for the centre position and, owing to the fact that half our Brigade had suffered badly in the first counter-attack a Battalion of another Brigade was brought in on our right. While we waited we

were visited by General Currie. No parade was held, he just simply gathered the men around him and explained the situation and the reasons for the delay. We were advised of the concentrated artillery preparation.

"Now boys," he said, "I have done all I can. I can do no more, the matter is entirely in your hands, and I wish you good luck and God-speed."

The following night we moved back to our position in the ditches. On the final roll-call I was referred to as Sergeant and on the next night we went forward in the dark to our jumping off position. The night was very dark and a miserable rain was falling. As some wit remarked, "a beautiful night for a murder." The zero hour was set at 1:30 A.M. June 13, thus allowing us time to get through our dirtywork before daybreak.

Our guns belched forth in one tremendous peal of thunder and the messengers of death seemed to form a solid roof of steel as they screamed over our heads to burst with terrific explosions on the enemy lines. We were off! In an instant up went the Fritz's S.O.S., his artillery came down with an answering roar and his machine guns spat viciously in front, soon to be silenced by our Bombers who were close up, and by that unhalting wave of pent-up vengeance.

USE FOR PACIFISTS ON WESTERN FRONT

**Put Them in Cages and Let
Them Sniff for New Deadly
German Gas.**

HAS "ODOR LIKE GARLIC"

**Letter From Canadian Officer
Describing Enemy
War Weapon.**

The first line ('Halifax') to fall was a terrible melee. So terrifying had been our artillery fire and so swift our attack that we caught many of the enemy coming out of their funk holes to see what it was all about; the bayonet and butt end of rifles were used to good purpose that night. We had further work to do and we hadn't heard of any provisions made for prisoners. We couldn't run the risk of being shot in the back, so we didn't see any prisoners.

According to plan we waited for ten minutes while our artillery belted the next objectives. Cigarettes and pipes were lit and as we plunged forward again some even kept their cigarettes lit. We were now so far ahead that we had for the time being nothing to fear from the enemy artillery. It was now only a matter of men against men and we were quite cocky. Our artillery had done their work well and we reached our final objective ('Vancouver') with but little further resistance. Some prisoners were taken. Our sister Battalion on the left was held up in part temporarily by an enemy machine gun which was

spitting forth defiance in the last line. However, this was soon silenced and an answering flare told that all was well. Another day had dawned.

Looking around I found that we were all mud from head to foot; the going had been very heavy, for the most part through shell holes filled with water.

As always happened in a night attack the troops who reached the final objective were pretty well mixed up. I looked anxiously for Red but there were only a few of my Company around. I was glad to see one old friend there, a giant of some six feet five inches; he must have been between fifty and fifty-five years old. He was rather a picturesque figure. Having spent his boyhood and early days in the Scottish schools and colleges he had emigrated to the Australian bush and thence to the wilds of British Columbia. As was his wont he was contentedly sucking his pipe when I hastened to congratulate him only to find that the hand I was shaking was covered in blood. Ripping open his sleeve I found a bad gash which I cleaned and bound up, but it took some almighty cursing to convince him to get the hell out of it back to the medical dressing station.

Our officers had suffered very badly and in their absence a Sergeant-Major of another Company and myself took charge of our immediate neighbourhood and set to work to consolidate our position. Fortunately Fritz left

us a newly made deep dugout which served as a forward dressing station for those who were badly wounded. All walking cases went out under their own steam.

For a few hours we enjoyed immunity until the German staff were satisfied of our success and were aware of our new position. Then they proceeded to give us merry hell and endeavoured to blast us out of it. Some direct hits were made with vicious results. A shell landed in the next bay to us and the entire garrison of five were a complete loss. After the shell fire ceased and we were reasonably satisfied that Fritz did not intend to counter-attack we settled down and some slept for an hour or two whilst others kept watch. I wasn't feeling particularly sleepy and suggested to the Sergeant-Major that he take the first spell off. He was nothing loth but before retiring to the dugout he offered me a drink out of his water-bottle which was half-full of rum. It was a life-giver and I noted with satisfaction that he left his equipment and water-bottle at the head of the dugout stairs.

The morning was cold and as I was very wet and had scarcely any food I naturally returned for another swig once in a while. Wandering further afield along the line I found an officer and other members of my own company whom I was very glad to see come though. I spent an hour or so with them before returning to our friend the Sergeant-Major who, I found, had just woke up after a few hours sleep. He emerged from the dugout cold and shivering with blood-shot eyes and his hand reached for the water bottle. I too enjoyed the anticipation and was equally aghast when he found the bottle empty, but I couldn't help smiling at his slowly dawning look of disappointment. Some of the troops had got wise to the water bottle and finished it in my absence; I couldn't blame them. I would have done the same thing.

TO BE CONTINUED.....

FIRE MAIDENS OF OUTER SPACE

by R. Graeme Cameron

This is a controversial film.

Is it inept, unwatchable -- and most unforgivable of all -- DULL? Or a sensitive reworking of the Theseus myth?

More importantly, is it "Fire Maidens of Space" or "Fire Maidens from Space"? The reference books say "from". The opening credits in the screening I witnessed say "of", so let that be an end to this vicious controversy.

The credits also state, "All characters in space are fictitious." Since the film was made in 1956, I should bloody well hope so.

We begin with stock footage of a Trans World Airlines Constellation apparently flying nonstop from Los Alamos, New Mexico to London, England. A bit beyond the capacity of that airplane's fuel tanks methinks, but an encouraging sign. Any movie which opens with stock footage has got to be good!

The 'Connie' is carrying Luther Blair, "America's top nuclear scientist", to England to take charge of Plan 13 (as opposed to 'Plan 9', but that's another movie...). He's picked up at the airport by a Professor Higgins and driven to an observatory. There we find Blair standing awkwardly beneath a giant telescope, one leg crooked to one side like a broken doll, peering into the heavens in broad daylight. (Can't expect to see much!)

"We've known all along the planet Jupiter has 12 moons," comments Higgins, "but evidently terrestrial fog surrounds the 13th moon." (Meaning what, exactly? That the 13th moon has an atmosphere? Or that London fog is worse than I thought, reaching out to the outer planets?)

Blair is also confused, and seeks clarification. Higgins responds that the 13th moon looks like the Earth. Blair wants to know how long it will take to get there. Higgins turns to a huge mechanical calculator, punches a couple of keys, and states, "Three weeks." (Hmm, math was a lot simpler in the '50s.)

Oddly, Higgins adds, "There could be humans on that planet." ('Moon'! Not 'planet'. 'Moon'!)

Sheepishly, Blair grins. "Stop kidding now. You're a scientist. It's probable but highly doubtful." He means 'possible', not 'probable'. Seems like we got a pair of real intellectuals here.

We pause for a couple of minutes while a pointy-breasted secretary walks down from the dome (what was she doing up there?), opens and closes two little gates, sits down to take a brief message, 'Ship must be ready in one week' (addressed to 'Launching Platform, First Interplanetary Unit, Houndspoint, Surrey'. No postal code?), gets up, goes back through the pair of gates, and up the stairs (to send the message by courier pigeon from the top of the dome?).

"I'm never too old," sings Higgins waggishly. Evidently he's a dirty old man. "I wonder if the beings on Jupiter's satellite will look anything like her?" This is called 'subtle foreshadowing'.

Cut to a captured V-2 rocket about to take off from White Sands, New Mexico. But you're not to know that! It's supposed to be the Expedition 13 spaceship at Houndspoint! We find the intrepid crew inside: Mission Commander Blair, Professor Higgins, Ship Commander Larsen (wearing a Naval officer's hat), Biologist Stanhope, and Technician Anderson, all men, and all wearing white jump suits, or possibly auto-mechanic coveralls.

"All of you have your Longines Space watches?" inquires Blair cheerfully. Aha! We've learned the identity of one of the film's corporate backers!

During the final countdown the camera zeros in on the Longines wall clock inside the spaceship, then pans to an identical Longines wall clock inside the command bunker. The Longines people are getting their money's worth! The sign 'Have a Coke' is also prominently displayed in the bunker. Clever people, the film's producers. This advertising ploy probably covered most of the cost of the film, to judge from the Spartan richness of the visual design.

Once above the atmosphere the ship is immediately attacked by the traditional popcorn-like meteors that roar like express trains through the vacuum of space. The situation is tense.

"Turn on the ice machine!" shouts Blair. This averts disaster, somehow.

"Man, that ice machine really cools you off," declares a grateful Higgins.

Mutters Larsen, "reminds me of my wife." All this proves one thing, that the crew has picked up the American habit of plopping ice cubes into their drinks. After their encounter with the meteor swarm, they undoubtedly wanted stiff ones.

After three weeks of travel in which they spend the time shaving, smoking, and wondering why there is no bedding on the bunks, they approach the 13th moon of Jupiter. A voice comes over the radio. "Calling

spaceship. Report name and destination immediately. You are under space control!" We hear the engines die down.

"Hey, we've stopped moving!" declares Higgins. (If that were true they'd be splattered all over the forward bulkhead.)

Blair talks space control into giving permission to land. "Proceed on course. Bearing on your compass will be 18017."

"That's the wrong bearing," shouts Anderson, "that'll take us nowhere!"

"Their gravitational law and magnetic pull are contrary to ours," suggests Higgins. Reassured, they land. As soon as they touch down, the entire crew grin, stretch, and begin languidly puffing on cigarettes, for all the world as if they'd just experienced simultaneous orgasm. Hmmm, maybe they had. You know those method actors!

Once they descend a garden ladder to the surface, Stanhope pulls a Polaroid camera out of a carry-all bag the size of a Volkswagen and snaps a picture of the weird alien landscape which, rather oddly, looks a lot like a tree-lined meadow in England. They spot a blinking light.

"Can anyone read the message?" asks Blair.

"It says", explains Anderson, "'head for tree at signal.' Hey! That's Morse code!"

Maybe it's just me, but I have the impression the scriptwriters are chimpanzees. Anyway, the crew hotfoot it to the tree and discover a small bronze statue. All this effort tires them out, and they decide to call it a day and head back to the ship.

Suddenly they hear a woman screaming. The crew crashes through the bushes and discovers A) a young woman in a skimpy, Grecian-style tunic, and B) a skinny guy in black leotards with a pock-marked visage for all the world like Rondo Hatton in blackface (Rondo was the famous horror movie star who needed no makeup as his features were naturally distorted by the disease acromegalia. This isn't him, but the makeup is possibly inspired by him).

"A woman!" shouts Stanhope gleefully, pulling out his Polaroid. Larsen pulls out his gun.

Blair protests, "We're here to explore, not get involved in something we know nothing about!" An early example of the Prime Directive? Or is it simple cowardice? Larsen fires a shot anyway.

"Ook, ook," says the monster. Blair pumps a bullet into him. "RAUGH! EEERAUGH!" says the monster, and walks off. Not too scared I guess, or hurt, for that matter.

Grinning from ear to ear, our randy crew follows the girl through the bushes to a plain rock wall. She slips through a narrow gate. To their disappointment, Blair orders them to stand watch, allowing only Larsen to accompany him through the wall. They find themselves inside a castle-like maze of corridors (Aha! Like the labyrinth in the Theseus myth!) stocked with vaguely Greek furniture.

"This architecture is late Minoan", declares Blair. (Aha! Minoan! Knossos! The labyrinth! Theseus!)

"Late Atlantean", explains an old man in a plain grey robe. His name is Praxis, and he rules the pitiful remnants of Atlantean culture who'd fled here after their home continent sank. Why not simply move to another continent, instead of all the way to one of Jupiter's moons? A travel agent screw-up would be my guess.

Praxis welcomes Blair and Larsen, then begins frothing at the mouth. "The creature, the man with the head of a beast!" (Aha! The Minotaur! Theseus! The Labyrinth! Minoans! See? It all fits in! The scriptwriters are chimpanzees with classical training!)

"It must be destroyed!" Praxis thunders, then pauses while he thinks it over. A problem occurs to him...."It IS indestructible...here you must remain until you have solved the problem."

By way of compensation he offers his daughter Hestia to Blair.

"Belongs to you from now on, Mr. Blair. It is the law of Atlantis." Hmm, this is one local custom that could cause quite a tourist boom once word gets around. But Larsen is suspicious.

"This guy's batty. I've seen guys like him in the last war." (Probably fellow officers.) "What's he trying to suggest?" He stares at the Grecian decor, drawings of Hoplites, etc. "If that old goat starts anything..."

It would appear that Captain Larsen is afraid Praxis practices a well-known ancient Greek custom and has designs on him. Hmm, what is it about sailors that makes them so sensitive about such things?

Oh well, not to worry. Praxis plies them with wine while they watch the 'Daughters of Atlantis' perform the traditional B-movie tippy-toe dance with much arm waving, butt wriggling and knocking of knees. The lazier (or less talented) girls sit crosslegged on the floor making languid gestures. Bored out of their skulls (like the audience), Blair and Larsen soon fall asleep (like the audience), or maybe it was the Mickey Finns Praxis slipped them?

Meanwhile the rest of the crew is even more bored and decides to go back to the ship. There they do exciting things like smoke cigarettes and look worried.

In the morning Blair awakes and has a long conversation with Hestia, during which they fall in love and decide to elope. Larsen, a happily married man, is perturbed to find four women around him when he wakes up. He tells them to "Beat it! Vamoose! Skedaddle! Hit the Road! Get lost!" and other such futuristic slang, but they persist. Meanwhile Hestia and Blair slip Praxis a Mickey Finn! The plot is booming right along!

The crew return to the wall, but find the entrance sealed. As they search along the wall they are attacked by the Minotaur, or Monster, or 'spotty-faced git'. Bullets have no effect, so they scare it off with a gas grenade. The crew have their own explanation for the beast.

"A definite throwback to the caveman," Stanhope suggests. "Neanderthal, I believe."

Higgins agrees, "it has all the characteristics of the caveman". (Turtleneck tunic, leotards, etc.)

It finally dawns on them to climb a tree and look over the wall. Stanhope volunteers, and sees a dozen 'Fire Maidens' wandering in a garden. The eager crew promptly chops down a tree with their bare hands (one assumes, as they're not carrying any tools) and leans it against the wall. The tree bursts into flames. Second plan. We actually see them digging under the wall with their bare hands. Been in space a long time, these lads. Woman-starved, I'd say.

While all this is going on Blair is releasing Larsen from the room where he'd been held, but Hestia is captured by the 'Fire Maidens' because she has broken the unwritten law, angered the Gods, but mainly, because being blonde, she'd been having more fun. They tie her up and place her on a sacrificial altar. The crew are dragged in, also tied up. Not quite the garden of delights they'd expected. The Fire Maidens rush off giggling to invite Blair and Larsen to enjoy the fun. In one incredible shot we see the barefoot, barelegged maidens swishing toward the camera which is set at knee-height. If you're a connoisseur of knobby knees, this innovative scene is for you!

Well, the girls can't find Blair or Larsen, so they return to the altar and start dancing, in bare feet no less. I mean, was appearing in this picture worth the risk of a stubbed toe? Brave, brave girls. In the mean time the spotty-faced git has crawled under the wall, pulled the newly-awakened and very surprised Praxis behind a hedge to suffer...death? Or a fate worse than death such as Larsen worried about? Whatever, it only takes a few seconds and then he's off in search of fresh prey.

Blair and Larsen, having heard distant strains of music (Borodin's Poletsin Dances to be precise) are attempting to wend their way through the labyrinth, but being unfamiliar with it's layout, don't progress very far. The spotty-faced git (or minotaur) is naturally more knowledgeable about the labyrinth (at least in the allegorical sense) and finds the Fire Maidens very quickly (or perhaps he just has better hearing). They scream frantically as he walks slowly toward the altar, arms held stiffly at his side, uttering comments like "URRAAH!" and "RAUUGH!" Bizarrely, though we've seen his face many times, in this final sequence his features are hidden in shadow. Maybe Cy Roth, the Director (and Producer and Screenwriter), thought this would be more menacing. Or maybe the spot lamp had burned out. In any case, he leaps atop the altar just as Blair and Larsen burst in. They hurl a gas grenade which knocks him into the fire behind the altar. One would also think the gas would have some effect on Hestia who's tied to the altar, but apparently not.

Happiness reigns. Expedition 13 will return to Earth, taking Hestia along, and leaving behind promises of future expeditions to bring husbands for the love-starved Fire Maidens.

I tell you, this low-budget attempt to rework the Theseus myth takes my breath away. The subtle dignity of this production is worthy of the likes of Ed Wood Jr. (the film-God who created "Plan Nine From Outer Space" and other wonderful classics). You owe it to yourself to see this film sometime. Trust me.

MARVIN'S MIGHTY MAYAN MARATHON

by R. Graeme Cameron

In May of 1981 I spent a month touring the ancient cities of Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras under the guidance of Professor Marvin Cohodas of the University of British Columbia. This is part #6 of my account:

SUNDAY -- MAY 3RD, 1981

THE PALACES OF TEOTIHUACAN

It has been 15 years since I visited the palaces with their myriad, wonderful wall paintings. As I have long since forgotten the religious symbolism involved, I will just describe my favourite paintings in the hope that this will give you some idea of what it is like to wander through these ancient frescoed halls.

Just West off the Moon plaza lies a trio of superimposed palaces, the Palace of the Feathered Conches (4th Century AD), the Palace of the Jaguars (5th Century AD), and the Quetzalpapatl or Quetzal-butterfly Palace (7th Century AD).

I find renewed energy and run delightedly along a cinder path between two Moon plaza pyramids, sprint up a flight of steps past a massive stone serpent head with rather 'squashed' features (an ugly piece of sculpture) and find myself in the shade of a square-pillared arcade belonging to the Quetzalpapatl. At last I am going to see where the Teotihuacanos lived! Or at least where the rich and powerful lived...

Like all Teotihuacan palaces, only the floors and varying heights of walls in the Quetzalpapatl survived the great fire (an act of war?) which destroyed the city circa 750 AD. However, sufficient debris remained to allow archaeologists to reconstruct the walls to their original height and re-roof the structure, so that one can pass from sun-drenched courtyards into the cool shade of assorted rooms, arcades, and corridors, and back into open patios burning under the hot Mexican sun. Other palaces have walls but partially restored, with a modern tin roof resting on metal girders, and some palaces remain open to the sky. The best preserved paintings in these buildings are those along the base of the walls, as they did not need to be reconstructed from fallen fragments which is usually the case with paintings which had been located higher on the walls.

The Quetzalpapatl has an interior courtyard lined with square pillars on which, sculpted in low relief, are feathered-butterflies and what are usually described as parrots, though Professor Marvin Cohodas points out are more probably, given their raptor beaks and talons, a form of eagle. Staring at the critters, I am unable to make up my mind. The 'butterflies' look more like the human-headed ant critters in the 'ZANTI MISFITS' episode of OUTER LIMITS than butterflies, and the birdies look feisty, ever ready to snap your fingers off, a trait which might apply equally to parrots and to eagles. It is doubtful they are Quetzals (the name given to the palace refers to the Quetzal feathers on the butterflies) since, for one thing they look nothing like Quetzals and for another, although Mesoamericans appreciated the jade-green colour of its tail feathers, Quetzals are so spectacularly stupid I fancy the Indians were ashamed of them, which may explain why the birds themselves are never depicted in Mesoamerican art, as far as I am aware.

(How stupid are Quetzals? While awake they are shy and elusive, but at night they sleep close to the ground on the lowest branches so that any predator, including man, can sneak up and grab them. This according to the Oct. 1946 National Geographic. If you can't believe them, who can you believe?)

Still, some insist the birds are Quetzals. Other scholars say owls. The original paint scheme might have provided clues, but it's long since faded. All the same, the natural colours of the stone, pale reds and greens, are very pleasing to the eye. One does get the impression, however, that archaeologists don't know their birds...

Whoever commissioned the fresco decoration for the Palace of the Jaguars was obviously nuts about jaguars. "Nothing but jaguars," he must have said to the artists, "I want you to wig out on jaguars. Go for broke. Every conceivable jaguar. Here, have some drugs. It'll help you paint the niftiest jaguars you can think of. Remember now, just jaguars please. I'll pay you by the jaguar..." etc., etc.

Actually, the most astonishing thing about these jaguars, and about Mesoamerican art in general, be it Teotihuacan, Aztec, Mayan or whatever, is how disconcertingly cartoon-like, one might even say 'Disneyish', the art often appears. I even know one idiot who insists archaeologists hired Disney artists to fake the art in the first place, back in the thirties, to bring in the tourist dollars. Since some of this art was discovered long before Disney was even born, and since this same idiot also believes the Aztecs were a pensioned-off Mongol horde (who built numerous pyramids in and around Vancouver when they passed through, including our city hall, he says...) who also happened to possess jet fighter aircraft to intimidate the locals.... I think we can safely cast aside the 'Disney Did It' theory.....

One of my favourite frescoes shows a pair of goofy-looking jaguars outlined in blue lines and red triangles walking on water. I particularly like their red, glaring eyes and round, red noses. But best of all is the sway-backed red jaguar with a feathered headdress blowing into a conch shell (also wearing a feathered headdress). Water and a speech scroll are depicted dripping from the conch shell. The guidebooks usually say something like "blowing a hymn to the Sun God" but your guess is as good as mine. Marvin says this jaguar is a symbol of rebirth, representing both the setting and rising sun.

The Palace of Feathered Conches depicts, as you might suspect, conch shells with Quetzal feathers. Let's see, Quetzal feathers = jade green colour = jade = water symbolism + conch shell = water symbolism which adds up to doubleplus water symbolism which represents the surface of the underworld into which the sun must penetrate in order to die and out of which the sun must emerge in order to be reborn, which = "let's keep the cycle of the seasons going", which = a kind of pious "let's hope the universe doesn't come to an end" good luck symbolism.... I think. But then, you can say that about almost any Mesoamerican religious iconography. They had an obsession with ritual acts of sympathetic magic designed to perpetuate existence itself. But at the same time, the reflection of this in the design scheme of this palace (or any of the others) is meant to enhance the prestige of the occupants by implying THEY have something to do with maintaining the fabric of the universe. In short, political propaganda, as well as wishful thinking. Nifty stuff all the same, though. Looks tres cool.

Now we tromp back outside into the hot sun and dry dust to search for the Tepantitla palace East of the Moon Plaza. Here exist fragments of a number of murals depicting the Rain God Tlaloc wearing an ornate tree-like headdress (according to most scholars) or the Earth Goddess standing in front of a Ceiba tree (according to Marvin). For instance, the figure has yellow hands, which only female deities possess, says Marvin. Be that as it may, I am particularly taken by the "Sowing Priests" panel in the next room. These are busy little guys, swamped in feather corsets and huge, feathered crocodilian masks nearly as big as their bodies, striding manfully along (actually, their bodies are so short and fat one gets the impression they are skittering over the ground as fast as their tiny legs will carry them) and pouring out of their hands a mixture of water, seeds and flowers. They look quite animated and have a "Don't bother me, I'm busy" air about them. Charming and delightful, which I am sure is not the impression originally intended, but that's how it strikes modern eyes.

Speaking of modern, we take a shortcut back to the Avenue of the Dead by cutting through the village of San Juan. Here each lot consists of a compound lined with high adobe walls painted bright blue or yellow, though more often just whitewashed. In several cases, instead of adobe bricks, rows of huge cactus provide an impenetrable barrier to would-be intruders. A nice concept. Trees inside the compounds provide shade, and plenty of wires strewn overhead indicate the locals have electricity. It strikes me this would probably be a reasonably comfortable place to live.

It turns out to be market day in San Juan and we pass by numerous wooden stalls displaying fresh fruits and other goodies. I briefly wonder why the dangling chicken carcasses are bright yellow, then realize it's because of the fat. The chicken soup boiling in a huge earthenware pot looks vaguely tempting, but Marvin hurries us on, as we have much to see before we go.

We visit the 'Viking Group' and search for the famous multiple cross inside a circle glyph which the city's builders apparently used as one of the survey points to lay down the street grid. I'm proud to be first to find one, albeit very faint and worn. Then Marvin finds a clearer one, and lectures us on their use. I ignore this and sit in the shade and rest. My arms feels itchy. Almost like a developing....sun burn! Damn! I wore short sleeves because the sky was overcast throughout much of the day, but it was but a thin haze that got ever thinner as the day wore on. And we are 9,000 feet plus above sea level, and a lot closer to the equator. The sun is much deadlier down here. Blast! Seems I miscalculated.

What is particularly awesome about the Viking group (named after some outfit which funded their excavation) is a section of floor and wall -- shown to us by a custodian who unlocks a huge metal cover and

moves it aside -- tiled with transparent sheets of Mica. What a fantastic concept! Would sparkle magnificently by torch light, I imagine.

Then we explore the "Superimposed group", a set of buried buildings one atop the other. We traipse along a wooden boardwalk provided to prevent hordes of tourist feet from eroding the living rock out of which the lower rooms are carved. At one point we find ourselves staring down a deep, seemingly bottomless well. A prodigious effort to carve it out of solid rock. Impressive.

At last Marvin relents from his relentless sense of pace and allows us to take refuge in the Los Pyramidés restaurant above the main parking lot. I am rather pleased by the "Temple of Quetzalcoatl" swizzle sticks and swipe one to add to my minute collection of obsidian glass fragments and pottery shards I've been picking up here and there on the site. The only kind of souvenirs I can afford. Free ones.

Then we leave the ruin park and tromp along country lanes amid farmer's fields to reach the 6th Century AD Tetitla Palace. Here the walls are only partially reconstructed, the whole complex of 56 rooms and patios gloomy under a vast tin roof. I am first to walk into the room containing the Warrior Cult Eagle murals. Am absolutely delighted to see them in situ, having studied them hitherto only by slides in Marvin's classroom. They consist of full frontal views of Harpies Eagles with wings, legs and tail outstretched against a red background. Pendants of blood dangle from their beaks. Images of sacrifice and implied rebirth. Because their bodies are red (like the red feathers on the breasts of quetzals), most scholars refer to these birds as 'Red Quetzals', but they're obviously birds with red bodies covered with white feathers (which Quetzals don't have) who are rather fierce and raptor-like, the very opposite of Quetzals, whose diet consists of soft fruit. Or to put it another way, scholars often devote their lives to disagreeing with each other, even about the most obvious things....

Again, keeping ahead of the group (and Marvin and his never-ending lectures), I discover several extremely well preserved depictions of the Earth Goddess along the wall of a corridor opening onto a large courtyard. Though, of course, most insist it is the Male Rain God Tlaloc, or a priest impersonating Tlaloc. Once again, take note of the yellow hands, with red fingernails, no less. Marvin claims this is the Female Earth Goddess. At any rate, the individual depicted is wearing an ornate Quetzal feather headdress, has braided hair, huge jade ear plugs, and is making like a cornucopia, spraying all sorts of goodies from outstretched hands.

As Marvin and the others enter the corridor, I walk to its end and turn to my right, walking into a large room. My jaw drops. On the far wall is the magnificent "Net Jaguar Entering a Temple" mural. I squat before it all on my lonesome, drinking in all the details and the vivid colours. It shows a somewhat human-like jaguar (possibly a priest impersonating a Jaguar) covered in a net-like pattern brilliant red and green in colour, crawling along a yellow footpath (complete with red human footprints to show the way) toward the door/mouth of a red, green and yellow temple covered in spots like a jaguar pelt and crested by a green Quetzal feather headdress. (Okay for butterflies and conch shells, so why not temples?) More symbolism re: penetrating into the womb of the Earth Mother (womb = cave = mouth of temple, etc...).



(Not net jaguar, but similar, from same palace)

Gasps and much 'ooohing' and 'aaahing' announce the arrival of the others, so I retire to the large courtyard to give them room to gather close before the mural. I notice a little skink run straight up a wall, pause at the top

to stare at me in miniature dinosaur-like fashion, and then scuttle off. I mention this to Marvin when he appears, and he suggests I have just encountered my shamanistic image counterpart. Hmmm....

More wandering down lanes past farm houses and corn fields searching for outlying palaces. We reach the entrance to the Atetelco Palace and pause to listen to a group of Mexican schoolchildren sing a song in front of their teachers. I stir the compacted soil beneath my shoes and discover yet more pottery shards -- red ones with black and white lines. Neat.

The palace itself, dating to the early 8th Century AD, is undergoing restoration. It may be said to represent the last phase of Teotihuacano Fresco art, consisting almost entirely of figures outlined in white on a red background, figures which are supremely warrior cult in nature, such as cyotes and jaguars (with the ubiquitous Quetzal feather headdresses) munching on human hearts dripping blood, or the procession of priests wearing headdresses of eagle talons and carrying short blades on which human hearts are impaled. So, when I say 'Disneyish' in reference to art style, I am sometimes thinking of the more macabre bits of the 'Night on Bald Mountain' sequence in 'Fantasia', I guess.

(For that matter a recent discovery in Teotihuacan of pottery pieces appearing to show pregnant women in the act of being sliced open while bent backwards over sacrificial stones would seem to account for the number of fetal sacrificial victims found buried under the corners of certain buildings. This would suggest that, as the final crisis approached, life in Teotihuacan was becoming very grim indeed.)

One particularly interesting feature of the Atetelco Palace is the 'Adoratio' or miniature temple in the centre of a sunken plaza. It consists of a three-tiered pyramid topped with a tiny one-room temple, the whole structure probably being only ten feet high and originally serving as an altar. The current black and red stonework makes it look a bit grim. Its original plaster covering was probably painted bright red, which must have made it look quite grim. One hesitates to imagine what went on in this patio in the old days.

At any rate, time to return to our hotel. I've definitely got a sunburn on both forearms, and I'm mindbogglingly tired. I'm barely conscious sitting in the middle of the back seat of the bus as it bumps along the highway back to Mexico city, passing endless clusters of concrete houses with sheet iron or tin roofs. A Mexican father falls asleep on my right shoulder, his young son asleep in his arms. On my left the man's wife sits bolt upright, spending every waking moment making sure no part of her or her possessions comes into contact with me.....I don't care. I'm oblivious, even delirious, with fatigue.

All the same, what a magnificent, magical day.

NEXT ISSUE: Choula, largest pyramid of the Americas.

TO BE CONTINUED.....

OOK OOK, SLOBBER DROOL!

(LETTERS OF COMMENT)

E Version Note: All addresses (both snail mail and E mail) are undoubtedly out of date but I include them as I am attempting to duplicate the original published version of this zine as closely as possible.

I should point out that most of the LoCs have been edited quite ruthlessly; in part for reasons of space, but also because editors are really keen on that sort of thing... great fun.... sense of power...etc.

Also, am trying something different this issue, even though some fannish traditionalists will howl with rage. I like responding to a given subject immediately after the end of the paragraph (as opposed to putting all comments at the bottom of the letter) as this lends an air of conversational immediacy which I much prefer. My excuse is that Benoit Girard gets away with it in 'THE FROZEN FROG', and it's a fine zine. Besides, this is MY zine and I can do what I like with it. So there!

From: SHERYL BIRKHEAD

Nov 29, 1995

23629 Woodfield Road, Gaithersburg, MD, 20882 USA.

SC #4. Really NICE cover by Taral. I haven't seen many zines lately and certainly none with any DITTO reports and I certainly expect to see one in the next Cadet. I also, naturally, hope you have a great time there.

It is amazing how you could easily replace dates in WAR! with more current happenings and the feelings would probably be the same. It reminds me of Pavel Gregoric (a fan in Croatia) and another one who writes for MIMOSA -- about their war experiences and how, no matter how lousy our situation is here, things are many magnitudes worse over there.

From: RODNEY LEIGHTON

Dec 2, 1995

RR#3, Pugwash, Nova Scotia, Canada B0K 1L0

Thanks for the copy of SC#4. I haven't been able to decide whether to be honest and forthright and tell you I skipped everything except the editorial and the loccol or to simply not mention it. What do you think?

Ah...well...hmmm. Personally, I read every zine I get from cover to cover. Even if the subject of an article doesn't interest me, I'm keen on finding out how the writer handles the material..

It was kind of cool to be the #2 ooker, but there are points that need to be clarified. First of all, there never has been any such thing as THE NOVA SCOTIA HERMIT.... THE NOVA SCOTIAN HERMIT (Note the N!) started life as an unnamed letter supplement; got named mainly due to Scott Patri; got put on hiatus... and got killed due to lack of response....

Anyway, whattya mean, gafiated????..... No, I ain't "gafiated". I still loc any zines which come my way and which prompt enough comments to make it worth typing them up and mailing them....

I briefly contemplated trying an article entitled: "SENSAWONDER...A LOAD OF CRAP", which started off with the statement that what most sfans view with a sense of wonder, space exploration and travel; space operas; highly advanced technology, etc., is all crap to me. MY sense of wonder re SFandom started when Leah Smith sent me STET and was based entirely on the letter column. I found it amazing that so many diverse people, from so many parts of the world, would write in and expound on many topics, but never, or rarely, science fiction.... It's wonderful that this wide flung community of vastly different people can come together in letter columns, contributing everything from inane foolishness to supreme silliness to intellectual reasoning. This is why my favourite parts of zines are those with lots of locs...

I'm glad to see that SOMETHING stirs your sense of wonder.

From: HENRY L. WELCH

Editor of THE KNARLEY KNEWS

Mon Dec 4, 1995

WELCH@warp.msoe.edu,

1525 - 16th Ave, Grafton, Wisconsin, 53024-2017 USA.

Thanks for Space Cadet #4. As usual it was interesting to read about the details of bad B grade SF movies, World War I, and your trip to Mexico as a student. I found the flying saucer spoof from "Entropy Blues" to be almost believable. I think that it could be submitted to the Annals of Improbable Research.

Hmmm, there's an idea.

My three year old son Connor has an impressive View Master collection obtained entirely from resale shops, yard sales, and his much older half-brother. He, unfortunately does not fully appreciate their significance yet and finds it much more interesting to fold, spindle, and otherwise mangle them rather than use them for their intended use. They are currently in a safe place for later in his life. I'd have to review them to see the gamut of topics they cover, but I suspect most are comic related with some possible scenery. It not being very interactive (like the computer he enjoys playing with) I'm not certain that he'll ever really appreciate them.

Nowadays the selection is very poor. It's too bad they never reissue 'classic' sets.

From: LLOYD PENNEY

Dec 6, 1995

412-4 Lisa St., Brampton, Ontario, Canada, L6T 4B6

After a sojourn within Canada Post's bowels, SC#4 has arrived...

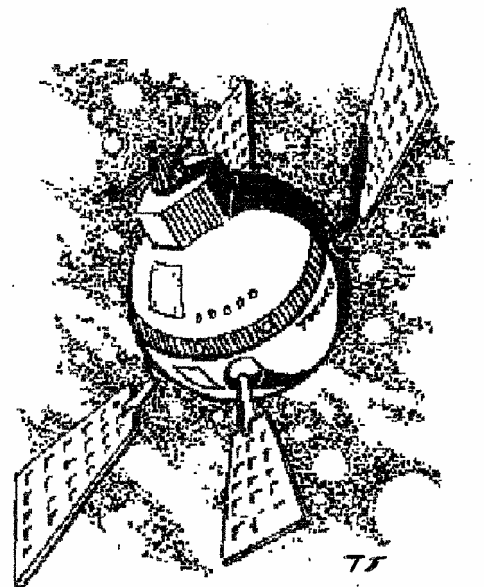
I've seen the cover before, but I'm surprised that Taral sent it to you. I thought that Mike Skeet had commissioned the art from Taral, and was for Mike's use only. I'm probably mistaken.

Yes, Taral did it for Michael Skeet, but he also sent it to me with permission to use it. I would guess that Taral retains the right to utilise his art as he sees fit.

I hope DITTO 8 was a good time. Seing that Alen Rosenthal was a founder of DITTO in Toronto, and he's now running one in Seattle, I wonder where he'll move next to stage another con?

Terry Jeeves reminds us of one of SF's pillars, 'ASTOUNDING'. I'm at least pleased that this magazine is still with us today, in the form of 'ANALOG'. I wish 'AMAZING STORIES' had met with a better fate than being tossed about by careless publishers.

Every so often, a documentary about the A.V. Roe Co. gets on a Cdn. network or cable service, and the short-sightedness of the Diefenbaker government, and the pressure brought to bear by the U.S. government is trotted out for all to see and remember, and then stowed away again, like a skeleton in the closet you've become comfortable with. The scrapping of the Avro Arrow showed that at times, the U.S. didn't even trust its allies.



Does it now?

Me, close to the clutches of the Deros? Ah, no dupe I! They don't know how close they came to perishing in MY clutches! I knew their game, and I would have beaten them at it, if geography hadn't gotten in the way! Curses, foiled again!

I have a paperback copy of 'GALAXY 666' by Lionel Fanthorpe in one of his many pseudonyms, and yes, there's an AMT Enterprise on the front with a bit of the plastic model's moulding struts on top to make it look "different"...

From: BRAD FOSTER

Dec 7, 1995

POB 165246, Irving, Texas, 75016 USA

Here are two more bits of weird portraiture I hope you can find room for. I guess I'm kind of "Doomed to be an artist".....

Yeah, 'ANGRY RED PLANET' is a classic from my youth.... I thought the effects were way-cool, "alien-like" too. Better than most of the B-movies of that era where it looks like the crew is wandering around a field somewhere in Kansas.

The Rat-bat-spider was fun, but I happened to like the blob with the 360' rotating eye -- just way too silly and weird. I loved it!

I also have to give a laugh-snort when watching those movies now, and, no matter what the situation, when the space crew has a female member, she always ends up dishing out the food to the guys on board. I think they needed aprons that read "I got a Ph.d in Astrophysics and all I get to do is serve coffee?" Hey, I've never been able to figure all this stuff about how Hollywood is affecting the country. They don't affect, they reflect.

From: JOHNNY LOWE

Editor of THE CHIMNEYVILLE ALMANAC

Mon Dec 11, 1995

1152 W. 24th St., #1, San Pedro, CA, 90731, USA.

Your current issue is interesting all around, but I mostly enjoyed reading the review of ANGRY RED PLANET.

When I was little, I was privileged to see, late every Saturday night, an old SF or horror movie on one of the local TV channels. Many cities had programs like this, and some had hosts dressed up in pseudo-monster make up.

This particular host was called Sivad (primarily because his name was "Davis," as I later found out), and the show was called Fantastic Features. I saw untold A, B and C SF and horror flicks on this show and it was great. Also, at the end of the show after the movie, they'd show actual trailers of the movie to be shown the following week!

I don't have it close at hand, but I read an interesting piece on ANGRY RED PLANET in FILMFAX magazine some time ago. An interesting tidbit was the name of the actor who played Tom, Gerald Mohr. When I saw the movie as a kid, I knew that I'd heard his voice before. Then I remembered; he was Reed Richards in

the first FANTASTIC FOUR cartoon series! And if I recall correctly, he was also the voice of Green Lantern in the Superman/Aquaman series. He may have also done other voices as well.

Speaking of old SF movies, was TARGET EARTH with Richard Denning ever released on tape? Or the Hammer film, MOON ZERO TWO? I always look for these movies, but have never had any luck.

My sources indicate neither are commercially available, yet. There may be bootleg copies offered though.

From: GEORGE FLYNN

Dec 13, 1995

P.O. Box 1069, Kendall Sq. Stn., Cambridge, MA 02142 USA.

Thanks for SCs#1 & #4 (which you gave me at DITTO). As it turned out, I got to copyedit some rave reviews of several issues (for the current PROPER BOSKONIAN) before I actually read the zines themselves! Interesting material throughout, especially the memoirs (yours and your grandfather's).

'Kugelblitz' would be better translated "ball lightning" (rather than "round lightning"). The current issue of AMERICAN HERITAGE OF INVENTION & TECHNOLOGY has a cover story on "Flying Saucers From Canada!" about the Avrocar and all that; the cover illo is reproduced from a 1953 issue of 'FATE' magazine.

I've seen it, thanks. Henry Welch was kind enough to send me a copy.

Like Brian Earl Brown, I remember little of my childhood -- virtually nothing before age six. How DO you do it? (OK, so in my case it's been longer...)

I don't remember much, just stuff that got stuck in my empty mind.

From: ALEXANDER BOUCHARD

Editor of SCOPUS

Fri Dec 15, 1995

ae019@detroit.freenet.org,

PO Box 573, Hazel Park MI, 48030-0573 USA

Received SC#4 the other week. As with the previous numbers I've seen, I enjoyed it much.

The review of "Angry Red Planet" sounds just like the sort of preposterous twaddle they made in the 50's that engrossed people under the age of, say, sixteen. This is not to say it's bad, except by *today's standards*.

Actually I would argue that it's BETTER than today's standards.

{And, after all, I do have such favorable memories of the Flash Gordon serials with Buster Crabbe . . . }

Taral's wrap-around cover is quite interesting; is the vintage biplane supposed to be a Nieuport or a Sopwith Camel? I can see artistic points that would go either way.

Nieuport 17 I believe. Taral originally did the cover for Michael Skeet years ago, but generously allowed me to make use of it as well.

Your usual cornucopia of provocative letters causes me to drool; I am still trying to get *scopus:3007* #6 out the door before '96 dawns. Maybe this time . . .

Haven't got it yet, but am looking forward to it.

From: SEAN ALAN WALLACE

Thu Jan 11, 1996
R3SAW1@VM1.CC.UAKRON.EDU,
415 Merriman Road, Akron, OH 44303 USA

In a recent visit to Ukraine, I hooked up with several members of Ukrainian fandom, primarily Boris Sidyuk, who quickly cobbled up a party just for me. I have written an account of the party; unfortunately it is only a page or two. However if you are interested, I will e-mail a rough draft when I'm finished.

Yes! Please!

However, while spending the afternoon (and night) with Boris and his friends, I delved through his collection of fanzines, and he gave me a copy of your fanzine, THE SPACE CADET GAZETTE (issue #3) and I was impressed. I was fascinated by nearly all the contents, especially the WWI memoirs, as well as CONFESSIONS OF A SF ADDICT.

Unfortunately the only fault I could find was with the cover (gasp!) - on my first look, it gave me the chills. Strangely it reminded me of THE GODFATHER - imagine finding some horse's head with a propeller in your bed ;-) However the interior illustrations were quite good, especially page 7, 15, and 28. One regret is that TSCG is not bigger! The other is that I don't have issues #1, #2, nor #4 (has it been printed yet?). Would you have any extra's laying about?

A few. Hopefully by the time you read this I will have sent #4, and the others, if I can find them.

From: HARRY WARNER JR.

Hugo Winning Fan Historian,
Feb 17, 1996
423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland, 21740 USA

SC#4. I found on its 4th page something that filled one gap in my fannish life.... I've never seen a copy of the Clayton 'ASTOUNDING'. I didn't begin to read it till after Street & Smith took over....

Once again, I took extreme interest in your Grandfather's memoirs, thus continuing to defy the antipathy I normally feel to material about wars. He wrote so interestingly, and so little of the quoted material deals with battles and other violence, and that's probably why I don't feel I'm violating too seriously my principles...

Hope you can get through this issue's excerpt OK. I would argue that first hand recollections of a man trapped in such circumstances have educational, not to say mindboggling, merit.

There's an odd sequel to your dream about 4E which you described in a previous issue and which got mentioned in the loc section in SC#4. Just a week or two ago, Forry distributed to a few old fannish friends a long summary of a wild dream that he had had. You weren't in it, I'm sorry to advise you.

I was. He just blocked it from his conscious mind to retain his sanity.

It's just as well you rejected that possible employment at the delousing job. You might have exterminated Yngvi and ended one of the oldest fanzine fandom traditions. Toni Weisskopf keeps it alive by using Yngvi in the title of her SFPazine.

Yngvi was a louse?

From: BRAD FOSTER

March 15, 1996

Hey, I'm so used to it taking ages between issues of a fanzine, much as I'd love to see a new SC every single month, I'll take it **WHENEVER** it comes! (Cindy and I are only just now in the wrap-up phase of our co-edited issue of the TEXAS SF INQUIRER. Probably be my first and last issue. I've recently started up THE RANDY REVIEWER, a direct-market zine that reviews adult-only comics, and it is kind of fulfilling the need to publish text!)

Loved your tale of entering the wilds of the U.S. from Canada. Kind of similar to our arriving in Canada for the Worldcon (Conadian), first time I'd ever been out of the country, and I was looking around desperately to find something to make me feel I was in another country. Finally nailed down the feeling at the hotel, when I clicked on the weather channel and it was a map of Canada, not the U.S. Still, I kind of figure someday down the line they should just get Mexico, U.S. and Canada all to join up and just become one country called North America, and leave it at that! I'll be looking forward to the continuation of your adventures!



"One country called North America"? Reminds me of the old "MAGNUS, ROBOT FIGHTER" comics I collected in the early sixties. The entire continent was a multilevel megapolis called "North Am". I remember how that used to bug me. Why not "All Can"?

Missed not having any review of a bad ol SF flick, but all good things come to those who wait, so I'll wait!

"FIRE MAIDENS" is about as "bad ol" as they come.

From: TEDDY HARVIA

Hugo Winning Fan Artist

Mar 17, 1996

701 Regency Drive, Hurst, Texas, 76054-2307, USA

Your report on your trip in the states was funny/sad. Your unease reminded me of my visit to Calgary last year. The town felt like a European city transported to the wild west. The U.S. fast food franchises resembled alien spaceships in the landscape.

Scott Patri's Star Trek cover was horrific (a compliment!)

From: CHESTER D. CUTHBERT

Former President of the Cdn. SF Association (1951-1953)

Mar 17, 1996

1104 Mulvey Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, R3M 1J5

SC#5 arrived and provided the usual entertaining and instructive material. Your generous response to my letter prompts me to offer some advice.

You are little more than half my age, and you say that you have no savings toward retirement. May I suggest that you start viewing your book and magazine collection as your retirement fund? During the "dirty thirties" I determined that I would always have a second job to fallback on if my insurance position was terminated, so I collected books avidly until my accumulation was sufficient to stock a specialty bookshop. Early retirement forced me to do some dealing by mail until I was eligible for the Old Age Security Pension, and inflation increased the value of my collection so that it, alone, provides me with financial independence.... Your collection will probably be as good a hedge against further inflation as mine has been for me, so please think seriously about this.

If you succeed as a commercial writer, even this is not sure financial security. Fred MacIsaac, one of the most popular pulp writers for 'ARGOSY' and other magazines, committed suicide when the magazine editors rejected his material when editorial tastes were changed. Rely on tangibles rather than money. I purchased my present home for \$12,500 in 1954; it is now appraised (much higher).

Please excuse my possibly interfering with plans you may have already made in offering this advice. So many of my friends have failed to follow my example and are barely scraping by if they are still alive. Governments are doing foolish things; we must not depend on them for our welfare.

Like most fans, I've rarely thought further ahead than the next convention. I did have \$300 saved up, but must use \$200 of it to print and mail this zine. I have no tangibles, and I don't think my collection of dog-eared zines and pocket books is worth very much, now or ever. Sigh. One day at a time. Thanks for the advice though, I appreciate it.

From: NED BROOKS

Editor of IT GOES ON THE SHELF

Mar 19, 1996

713 Paul Street, Newport News, VA 23605 USA

Thanks for SC#5. Is it just a coincidence that there is another Cameron (Martin) in fandom and he calls himself BUCKY STARR, SPACE CADET?

Taken from the old Asimov series "LUCKY STARR, SPACE RANGER"?

What a ghastly cover.....Better than I could do, but still....

Another one from Scott Patri in the works down the road.

I have known fans to have trouble carrying literature from the US into Canada, but never the other way. I didn't have any trouble myself when I went to TorCon, but they wanted to charge Eric Lindsay duty on his DUFF flyers! He threw them all away, all but one, and reprinted them in Toronto....

Funny account of your trip to DITTO. I had a similar problem in Knoxville once -- I was sent to the wrong hotel by the clerk at the right hotel, obviously a redneck cretin.

Canadian films occasionally turn up on cable here. Some I enjoy a lot and at least one whose title I have forgotten (it was about a wretched schoolmaster at a small school on the plains) was unbearably tedious, but they are always different. Hard to believe that any of the four films you describe are real!

See 'AFTERWORDS' for the answer.

From: BUCK COULSON

Hugo Winning Former Editor of YANDRO

Mar 19, 1996

2677W - 500N, Hartford City, IN 47348 USA

Canadian motel people in Ontario used to be pleasant to travelers 40 or 50 years ago when I used to take a drive up there every summer. Maybe they've seen too many US tourists since then, or perhaps it's only in the west they're surly. The only problem Juanita and I had was in an Ontario town where they'd had a uranium strike (in the main street, from the looks of it). Hotels overflowing, people with geiger counters prowling around in the shrubbery, streets full of potholes (or perhaps they'd been dug up by prospectors, and no room at the inn. We slept in our car alongside the road that night, and Juanita commented unfavorably about my pre-trip mention of the town as being a nice quiet place.

Excellent war memoirs; I've read some published in hard covers that weren't as interesting or as informative.

WOW! LOOK!
A LOC WITH
NO TYRES!



What
will they
think of
next?

Interesting movies indeed; none of them in any of our (Juanita's really) movie books. What the hell; I'll guess "THE RAPE OF THE SEA KING" as fictional, perhaps because it seems the least likely, and I don't have the Berton book to check it with. (Though I did find that it's a genuine book.)

See 'AFTERWORDS' for the answer.

I envy you getting to see and climb the Mexican pyramids.

On your response to Chester Cuthbert, one of my correspondents in California said she took her vacation on Cozumel? (some island off the Mexican coast with pre-conquest structures, anyway), and all the guides were German and they all told the tourists that the Mayans came from Atlantis, which made them Europeans, and they conquered the primitive natives and produced civilization. She's a college prof and was apparently angry enough to spit, especially since she couldn't do anything effective. She didn't discover whether the guides were really that stupid or just spinning yarns for the tourists. Either way, it's no help to scientific inquiry.

Cozumel? She probably took a day trip to the nearby mainland to visit the Mayan city of Tulum. And yes, I suspect the guides really are that stupid. My "MAYAN MARATHON" on the other hand, is as close to the ultimate truth as my imagination can provide... or something like that there.

Better GET something saved: my company "retired" me at age 59, with our savings depleted from a house purchase the year before. Nobody hires people at that age, and it was damned hard going, relieved by loans from friends....Social Security at age 62 helped a lot, but for 3 years or so our income came now and then from

our writing; Juanita sold some books and I was doing a monthly review column for 4 cents a word. Believe me, it's much better to have savings.

I agree. How much interest can I earn on \$100 over the next ten years? Enough to retire, do you think? Hmmm, maybe not.

From: HARRY CAMERON ANDRUSCHAK

Mar 21, 1996

PO Box 5309, Torrance, CA 90510-5309 USA

Received SC#5 and enjoyed it as usual. Congratulations on attending the Seattle DITTO. The last convention I ever attended was the 1993 CORFLU. I work weekends at the Post Office and it is not easy to get weekends off to attend conventions. I may or may not be able to attend the next DITTO to be held in Texas.

To update the LOC you published, I celebrated my 12th AA birthday on 17 March. Not bad for an athiest, eh?

Eh? EH? I didn't know you were Canadian...

Life continues as usual with me... I really should get better organized and start writing up a report of my vacation in Italy. Problem is, I still haven't got around to typing up my report of the 1994 Scottish Highlands Vacation. Sigh....

From: WALT WILLIS

Former Editor of SLANT, Co-author of THE ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR (with Bob Shaw).

Mar 21, 1996

(formerly 32 Warren Rd., now): 9 Alexandra Road, Donaghadee, N. Ireland, BT21 0QD

SC#5 arrived in good shape, escorted by an improbable selection of beautiful stamps. Thank you very much.

Thanks also for the mention of WARHOON #28. It's not however my complete collected writing, only about two thirds of it. It omits numerous shorter articles and stories, as well as material published after 1978, when it came out. The field is wide open for anyone to publish a companion volume, an opportunity for an enterprising young faned like you.

I'd love to -- if I had the time and the money, but alas....

I enjoyed your DITTO convention report, an original idea, nicely done. I was mildly surprised to note that Canadians retain the English spelling of centre. I'm afraid I had assumed that Canadians slavishly follow the example of USA in such matters. I am touched by this loyalty, which must be difficult to persevere with in the face of so much competition from US usage.

I was delighted by the MR. SCIENCE reprint. I was particularly pleased by the information that the natural colour of the sky is salmon pink. Of course, when one thinks about it, what else could it be?

The war memoirs were of particular interest to me this time because my Uncle Jack was killed at Ypres, and I kept half expecting to find mention of him in your grandfather's memoirs.

Of the four rare Canadian films, I nominate JAP ATTACK as the phoney.

See 'AFTERWORDS' for the answer.

The Mayan Marathon is well up to the standard of its predecessors.

In the zine reviews, I deplore your scorn for dehydrated water. This has a respectable literary parentage, being what kept the hero of THE NIGHT LAND (William Hope Hodgson) going during his journey underground. Its operation was quite simple: it was a grey powder with strong hygroscopic properties, carried in an air tight container. When exposed to the atmosphere it attracted more than its weight of water.

THE NIGHT LAND, utterly unreadable, and utterly fascinating, hard to put down.

I look forward with interest to your further memoirs, particularly your watching Diana Rigg cavort in the nude....

To make a short story short...I was in London England in the summer of 1970, where, among other things, I attended the stage play "ABELARD AND HELOISE" precisely in order to observe Diana Rigg in the flesh, so to speak, although I didn't know there was any nudity involved. At one point the stage was empty, and then I noticed the male star (name?) striding on stage from the right, totally nude. My mind was a complete blank for a moment, and then the implication hit me. If he is coming in nude from the right, then Diana Rigg must be.... My head swiveled left just in time to see a naked Diana Rigg reach centre stage and lie down in Abelard's embrace. I recall that she had the most wonderful dimples on her cheeks...and then they are discovered by her "father", Abelard is castrated (as happened historically) by the servants, and the next time we see Diana she is in a Nun's habit writing "spritual love letters" to Abelard, now a monk. I fear I didn't pay much attention to the play from this point, as I was concentrating on fixing in my mind the lovely vision of a nude Diana Rigg. Alas, it would have been difficult to follow the remainder of the play in any event, since the woman in front of me was so smitten by the brief sight of the naked Abelard that she giggled continuously for the next hour.

From: HENRY L. WELCH

Editor of THE KNARLEY KNEWS

Thu Mar 28 11:51:08 1996

Thanks for SCG 5. The Patri cover keeps confusing me into thinking it's a copy of The Zero-G Lavatory, but the internal content is definitely not related.

Cultural stereotypes are always interesting; especially when highlighted with satire as you did in your Ditto report. I try not to fall into the habit of judging based upon appearance, region, or otherwise, but every once in a while I am rudely awoken by some ridiculous stereotype I've placed on a person.

My guess for the fake movie is Jap Attack. I could probably do some research to check some of them out, but I have a life

See 'AFTERWORDS' for the answer.

Nigel Richardson's monsters that are destroyed by water reminds me of an Outer Limits episode I saw in syndication a few weeks ago. In that episode the dreaded space flowers take over the space ship and as soon as it lands then start multiplying and growing so prolifically as to be ridiculous. They can apparently root and grow anywhere including on the engine of an automobile with the hood down. All is not lost, though, when it starts to rain and they all shrivel and die. I guess SF has matured a little in the past couple of decades.

Ah, the famous "SPECIMAN: UNKNOWN" episode of THE OUTER LIMITS. Yes, it's quite daft, but it scared the hell out of me when it originally aired in 1964. I still prefer the old OL to the new series.

Your favorable comments about Mars in 2095 are encouraging. It started out as a joke worldcon bid and about the time the space shuttle Challenger blew up it became rather serious. We never reached critical mass with the core inner group so I'm about the only one who still bothers with the idea. Perhaps you might be recruited....

P.S. I hope you enjoyed the flying saucer article I sent to you with TKK 56. =====> Henry

Yes, I certainly did. Many thanks. You know, the Avro company promotional film has no sound other than narration, I guess because the Avro Saucer made such a hideously loud noise as it hovered that they were afraid potential critics would laugh it off, which they did anyway.

From: SEAN ALAN WALLACE

Mon Apr 1, 1996

I found SCG#5 of great interest, though I wasn't that much impressed by the cover this round, sorry to say. Perhaps I was terribly spoiled with SCG#4's cover, which may have been the case. And whether or not that is a good thing, I haven't yet decided.

"First Issues" by Terry Jeeves seemed rather short in its description of 'UNKNOWN', but otherwise managed to get the facts right. I'd preferred it to be much, much longer, although of course, because of space concerns that may not be possible. Of all the artists illustrating 'UNKNOWN', Ed Cartier *was* the best, especially for the Dec. 1939 ish's cover.

Again, the WW1 memoirs by your grandfather and Marvin's Mighty Mayan Marathon caught my eye, as both were intriguing from beginning to end. I must say, tho, that I couldn't, for the life of me, figure out which film was fake (re Four Rare Canadian Films). My best bet would be "DEATH ROCK", but all four sound rather ghastly and unbelievable.

See 'AFTERWORDS' for the answer.

Brad Foster's strangely reminded of his illo's which were done for 'VISION OF TOMORROW' in the late 60's-early 70's. An excellent artist.

P.S.S. Did not get SCG#1, #2, #3 included w/SCG#5!!! Now what? Should I start howling at the moon outside your bedroom window or something really dastardly ;-)

I will send copies when and if I can find any extra among my files, I swear.

[We also heard from a whole bunch of people who will probably appear in the next SPACE CADET.]

Afterwords

Well, time to fess up. Of the FOUR RARE CANADIAN FILMS I talked about last issue, every single one of them I made up! Hope you're not disappointed. I just wanted to see if I could invent a 'credible' bad film. I found your comments and best guesses fascinating. Hope you will forgive me.

I'm pretty happy with this issue. Got a fair amount of meat to it. Kept most of my loc comments as short as possible in order to shoehorn in as many of your locs as I could. Still have quite a backlog though. May have to do an 'all loc' issue at some point to catch up. I am extremely grateful that so many of my readers chose to loc. Thanks all.

Must admit I didn't spend very much time searching for typos. They'll leap off the page as soon as I get this printed....

Have every intention of getting SC#7 into the mail sometime in early December. ...Do I hear hearty guffaws resounding in the ether?....

Cheers!