



TIME AND AGAIN

January 2009

Time and Again

Issue #8 January 2009

"In science fiction nothing is taken for granted; in fantasy nothing requires explanation."

-- Fredric Brown, intro to *ANGELS AND SPACESHIPS*

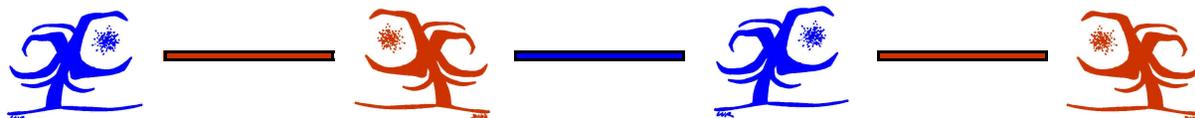
Editor: Dave Locke <time3again at gmail dot com> P.O. Box 485, Pownal, VT 05261

Primary source of inspiration and advice: Eric Mayer

Schedule: Time and again (and here you thought that was just the title...)

A full bushel of thanks to Bill Burns of eFanzines <<http://www.efanzines.com/>> for the presentation and storage of this fanzine. *Time and Again's* page at the eFanzines site is <<http://tr.im/12vc>>.

Production notes: Main text font: Trebuchet MS. Software is primarily Microsoft Publisher, PDFCreator, Gadwin Printscreen, and Irfanview & PhotoFiltre.



Editorial Assistant: Toesie



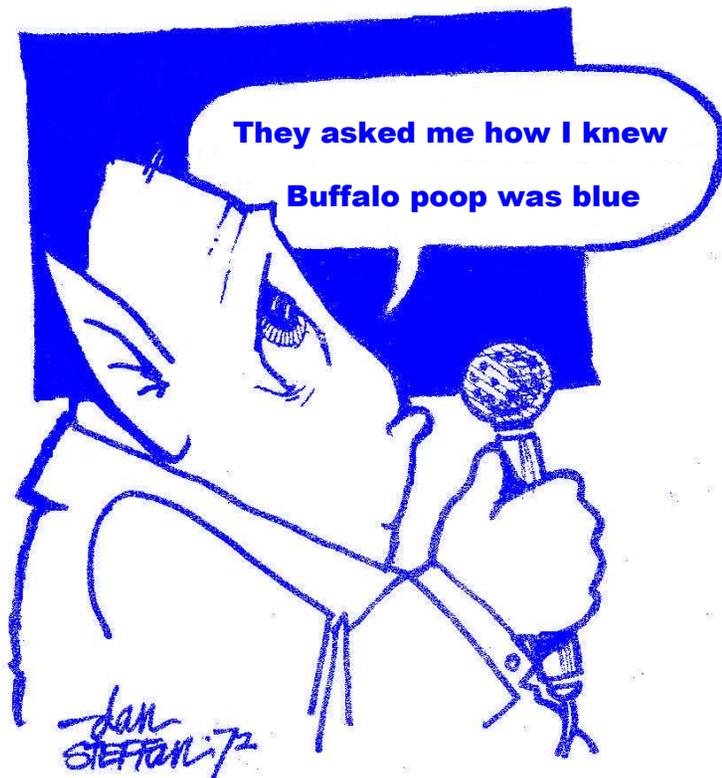
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Diabologic

editorial, by Dave Locke

It's that time of the millennium to experience the night sky:

The year started out quite like the past few, with a look at the APOD (Astronomy Picture Of The Day) page <<http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/>>. Of course, the page on January 1st can today be accessed by going to <<http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/ap090101.html>>. Which is good because there are a lot of potentially useful links there. However, the raw text is interesting enough:

Astronomers all over planet Earth invite you to experience the night sky as part of the International Year of Astronomy 2009. This

year was picked by the International Astronomical Union and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization because it occurs 400 years after Galileo turned one of the first telescopes toward the heavens. Peering through that small window, Galileo discovered that the Moon has craters, Venus has phases, Jupiter has moons, and Saturn has rings. This year you can discover these and many modern wonders of the amazing overhead tapestry that is shared by all of humanity. If, like many others, you

find the night sky wondrous and educational, be sure to attend an IYA2009 event in your area, and tell any schools and children that might be interested. Also, please feel free to explore the extensive IYA2009 web pages to find international media events that include blogs, webcasts and much much more.

You all remember Galileo.

Today we are all descendants of Galileo, still engaged in the same struggle, albeit on different terms. Imagine the orthodoxy of his day, when the religious conservatives insisted that the Earth is the immovable center of the universe. And imagine his nobility and courage when he was overheard after his trial muttering under his breath, "And yet it moves." -- David Moody

So go celebrate the International Year of Astronomy. You don't have to do it by lying on your back on the lawn at night, as in T&A's #4 editorial I described having done it in the late '40s/early '50s. Still, probably not a bad way to do it, though.

It was worse than some of the scales in our bathrooms:

It was the middle of last year. The *Bad Astronomy* blog reported: "*Slimmer Milky Way Galaxy Revealed By New Measurements*". *Science Daily* wrote: "*The Milky Way Galaxy has lost weight. A lot of weight. About a trillion Suns' worth, according to an international team of scientists from the Sloan Digital Sky Survey (SDSS-II), whose discovery has broad implications for our understanding of the Milky Way.*"

Further on in *Science Daily* we read: "*The Galaxy is*

slimmer than we thought," said Xiangxiang Xue of the Max Planck Institute for Astronomy in Germany and the National Astronomical Observatories of China, who led the international team of researchers. "We were quite surprised by this result," said Donald Schneider, a member of the research team, a Distinguished Professor of Astronomy at Penn State, and a leader in the SDSS-II organization. The researchers explained that it wasn't a Galactic diet that accounted for the galaxy's recent slimming, but a more accurate scale."

No, we're not aliens. Apparently we've always been here:

Things that appear new in and around science often just don't make the cut. For a moment there was the thought that we, and our sun, weren't actually a part of the Milky Way galaxy. The Milky Way is eating a smaller galaxy, called the Sagittarius Dwarf. Because the Sagittarius Dwarf galaxy has far less mass than our own, and the Milky Way has far stronger gravity, the Milky Way has destroyed the other galaxy and turned it into a long stream of stars. This stream is at an angle to the plane of the Milky Way's disk, and intersects that disk. The Sun is very near the position of this intersection. That much appears to be true. Going beyond that, there was a supposition that we (you, me, Earth, Sol, the whole shebang of our solar system) actually belonged to the Sagittarius Dwarf galaxy. But, no. Our Sun's motion relative to the plane of the Milky Way says the Sun's orbit is in fact in the plane of the Milky Way. It's not plunging through the disk at a high angle, like the stars of the Sagittarius Dwarf galaxy. Our Sun's orbit is aligned perfectly with the plane of the Milky Way, and not at all with the plane of the Sagittarius dwarf. Sci-

ence works like that. If something ain't right, sooner or later that comes out.

For a moment, it looked like we might have some fresh fuel for generating new science fiction stories. But, that's okay. I've gotten quite used to the Milky Way. Happy to be here. Happy to have always been here.

But I haven't been here this long:

Not as long as the lead character in 2007's movie *The Man From Earth*. From the IMDb plot summary: "An impromptu goodbye party for Professor John Oldman becomes a mysterious interrogation after the retiring scholar reveals to his colleagues he is an immortal who has walked the earth for 14,000 years."

I've watched science fiction movies since the mid-50s, and I've never encountered a better one than *The Man From Earth*. It's extremely faithful to the nature of Jerome Bixby's story, and turns a talking-head movie into the SF equivalent of *My Dinner With Andre*. Astonishingly, it appears to have been made on somebody's pocket change. With the decent cast and screenplay, it shows that SF as idea and concept can be mesmerizing. As opposed to what we usually get when a well thought-through SF story is translated to the screen: an 'A' budget thrown at what is rendered as a grade 'Z' story. I can't recommend this movie enough to a true fan of science fiction, especially one who laments that SF in the cinema rarely holds a candle to written SF.

However, while I'm here...

Guy Lillian, in his review of *T&A #4* for *The Zine Dump #20*, noted that "it's a good genzine, with no evident agenda except good articles." Well, that does indeed cap-

ture most of my intent for it, that it be considered good and have no agenda other than to be good. And the impression I'm getting from the reviews and the LoCs is that my intent is working out. But I said that Guy's comment captured most of my intent for it. What I didn't mention is that working on this genzine presses the old nostalgia button, gives me something good to do, and keeps me out of trouble...



McSorley
Among The
Nightingales,
by Cyrus
Banning
Condra
(9/30/16 - 11/30/04)



This article first appeared in *Awry* #10, 1/76, the final issue of that genzine. Those of you who have read recent issues of *Time And Again* know that I thought a lot of Cy Condra, as did most everyone in, at least, the LArea's erstwhile Petard Society which existed from the 60s to the 80s. So far as I know for sure, Cy only wrote two articles for fanzines. This was the second one, I was more than pleased to have it, and I've always considered it to be one of the very best pieces published in *Awry*.

Some years ago I wrote something in praise of Joseph Mitchell's *McSorley's Wonderful Saloon*, a collection of twenty profiles Mitchell had originally written for the *New Yorker* magazine. Enthusing over his accounts of McSorley's Old Ale House (oldest saloon in New York City); Dick's Bar and Grill; Houdini the Calypso singer; Captain Charley, who talked as though hit on the head with a cow; and Professor Sea Gull, putative historian of Greenwich Village

and guttersnipe bon vivant extraordinary, I left a couple of loose ends to be gathered up in this present writing.

For example, in writing *Obituary Of A Gin Mill* in *McSorley's Wonderful Saloon*, Mitchell wrote if it as Dick's Bar and Grill whereas in real life it was Nick's, the proprietor, Dominic Settiducatti, being commonly known as 'The House', H. Allen Smith's *To Hell In A Handbasket*, Doubleday, Garden City, 1962, not only devotes a couple of chap-

ters to the place, but includes Nick's picture as Plate No. 32 in the Photo Section.

This is very open treatment indeed, compared to Michell's camouflage, and it reflects the difference between the free-lance and the house writer. Michell, writing in the late thirties for the *New Yorker*, couldn't possibly give free publicity to one saloon out of thousands unless its story -- like McSorley's -- was of national interest. But Smith in 1962 was free to write, "When I first joined his fraternity Nick's saloon was a foul trap across the street from its present location. Joe Mitchell once wrote two memorable pieces for the *New Yorker* ... and I suspect that many of the stories in those articles had their origins at Nick's," which tells us several things. Smith is obviously under no restraint by the *New Yorker* or anybody else and further knows that not enough people read books -- even his own -- to make any difference in the take of Nick's or any other saloon so publicized. And his "... and I suspect ..." is palpable understatement -- than he, no one knew better that Mitchell was writing about Nick's.

Indeed his own description of a typical 'Cabaret Night' in the foul trap reveals that Mitchell himself occasionally participated in the action. On that particular night Smith had coaxed Helen Morgan (at that time having problems and in eclipse) to come down and belt out a few songs for old time's sake, and her presence proved inspiring. And amidst the noise, the action, and the crowd, stands out the figure of Joe Mitchell, writer and anomalous non-drinker, whose contribution to the festivities seems at once both vivid and obscure.

Smith writes, "I remember glancing up at one point and seeing Joe Mitchell behind the bar with an enormous carving knife in his hands, raised aloft, the point of the blade

aimed downward at the chest of Vinnie, who was Nick's partner. Vinnie had hold of Joe's wrists and Joe was straining mightily, trying to bring the knife down and kill Vinnie. And across the bar stood Joe's wife Therese, watching the scene. She did not cry out for Joe to stop, nor did she cry out for Joe to kill Vinnie -- she just stared, fascinated by it all. Then along came Nick and took the knife away from Joe and a bit later I asked Joe what the trouble had been and he said what trouble..."

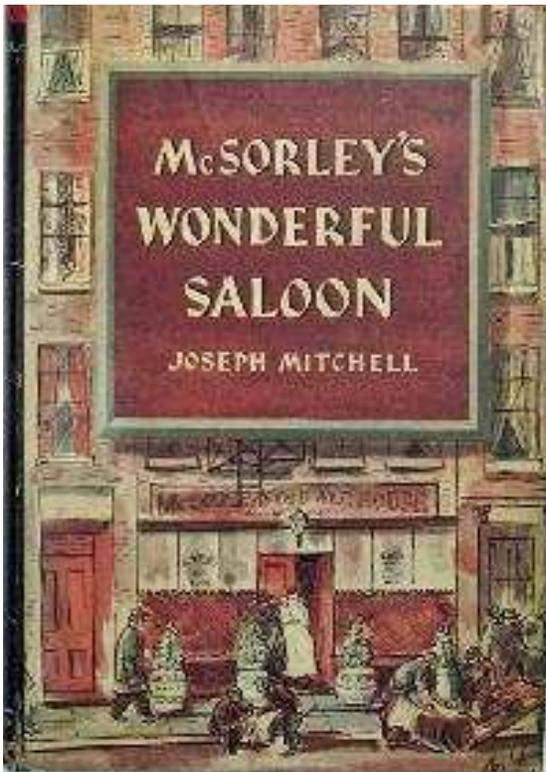
This was the Joseph Mitchell whose first profile on Dick's Bar and Grill (entitled *Drunks* in his first book, *My Ears Are Bent*, Sheridan House, New York, 1938) opens its second paragraph with, "While I never drink anything stronger than Moxie, I often go into Dick's to observe life..."

That night had Vinnie spiked the Moxie? Well -- that's life.

The loose ends mentioned at the outset and which I now propose to gather up, involve Professor Sea Gull and his unlikely literary protege, William Saroyan, whose impressions of American literature at the time he came on the scene conflict somewhat with mine. What follows may make me sound as though posing as an expert on American literature, which I am not. An ordinary reader with an ordinary interest in the shindigs of the Avant Garde Old Frontier, I was born and raised on an Iowa farm and am expert only on a few things relating thereto, including horse manure, the aroma of which I can always tell, whether pitching or reading it -- though possibly may write it sometimes, unaware.

But first some background for those to whom all this is new. (Some dust, Lushington). There once was a man who called himself Professor Sea Gull...

Professor Sea Gull, a very real person named Joe Gould, had the ability to listen to hours of conversation and later write it down verbatim if he chose. With an eidetic memory -- a human tape recorder -- he was also a nut. Gripped one day by the conviction that what ordinary people say is just as much history as the major military and political mistakes for which they have to pay and suffer, he was inspired to confound the Muse and reform the discipline of History by setting down for the benefit of future generations every conversation of interest that he heard. It was to be a unique work -- *An Oral History Of Our Time*, he called it -- and diligently passed the word that he was working on it.



Moving in somewhat less than exalted circles as he did, the kind of talk he heard in tenements and public parks, Skid Row bars and occasional bouts in the gutter, turned out to be mostly hard luck yarns, dirty stories and tales of sexual prowess fit to pale the *Perfumed Garden* and make old

Rabelais himself pant and whinny in the woodshed. And when he announced that he had managed to fill two hundred and seventy school composition books with an estimated 20,000 conversations running to nine million words of this stuff -- about eleven times as long as the Bible -- he stood revealed as human interest material of a kind that *New Yorker* editors drool over in their dreams but never expect to find in the flesh.

So Joe Mitchell wrote him up. He became a minor celebrity.

He was also a fraud, for in fact the Professor had quickly tired of the drudgery of writing and quietly shelved the project while maintaining an illusion of progress as a conversational gambit. And any impulse to tell the truth was quickly stifled when the Oral History plus notoriety proved a gold mine. Suddenly he was getting attention, free drinks, and frequent small sums of money from tourists who in imagination saw themselves also becoming immortalized as their words too winged to swell the Oral History's ever-growing bulk. A lovely racket, and he did quite well.

But Joseph Mitchell was not satisfied. Some of what the Professor had told him he had taken on trust with assurance of proof to come and it was not forthcoming. He had sent only a few of the two hundred and seventy composition books supposed to be in storage and difficult of access, nor counted them as he was bound to do. Profile writers are exceeding stubborn about verifying facts, so Mitchell turned bloodhound and satisfied himself they didn't exist. But by the time his second profile on the cover-up of the fraud appeared, Professor Sea Gull was dead and gone, having in 1957 himself become an entry in the Big Copybook in the Sky although on earth his semblance con-

tinues to cavort among us in the pages of Mitchell's *Joe Gould's Secret*, Viking Press, New York, 1965; in print at \$4.95 and well worth it.

The literary connection between Saroyan and Joe Gould -- unlikely though it seems -- was this. In 1929 Gould had written an essay, *Civilization* -- perhaps his only published work -- that Saroyan found and read a few months later in a second-hand copy of *The Dial*, one of a number of obscure literary magazines now long defunct. This was during his formative period when he was floundering around desperate to become a writer and getting nowhere.

Gould's essay seems to have had a catalytic effect on Saroyan, pointing him in the direction he was soon to go. In later years Saroyan not only credited Gould with having been a major influence on his writing career, but on the occasion of a personal meeting attempted to show his gratitude by taking Gould out for dinner and drinks and talking so volubly that Gould said afterward, "I couldn't get a word in edgewise."

Prior to this at about age thirty, Saroyan by that time successful, sought after, and apparently with his head somewhat turned, had written of Gould's essay that, "It freed me from bothering about form ... To this day I have not read anything else by Joe Gould. And yet to me he remains one of the few genuine and original American writers. He was easy and uncluttered and almost all other American writing was uneasy and cluttered. It was not at home anywhere; it was a little sickly; it was literary; and it couldn't say anything simply. All other American writing was trying to get into one form or another and no writer except Joe Gould seemed to understand that if worst came to worst you didn't need any form at all."

I admit this impressed me; my personal response being, "Well!! That's quite an indictment and if its second level of meaning is what I think it is -- until Saroyan came along no one knew how to write -- I want to go into that sometime, but not here.



Joseph Mitchell

Which fills in the background and brings everyone up to date. Now to gather up the loose ends.

If I read the man aright, 1929 and the Depression years should have seen American Writing bankrupt and down the tubes in company with the Stock Market sae that Saoyan caught it just in time. Other writers -- James Thurber? Ring Lardner? Robert Nathan? James T. Farrell? F. Scott Fitzgerald? John P. Marquand? E.B. White? Clarence Day? Don Marquis? Erskine Caldwell? Ernest Hemmingway? -- all of them sickly, literary, uneasy, and cluttered, were unable to say anything simply (he implies) until, inspired by Joe Gould, he showed them how. Modesty of course

forbids him to say so in so many words, but what else can one infer? It's hard to swallow.

The more one ponders what he says, the more pungent the aroma from the barn. Augean, almost.¹ If worst ever should come to worst (whatever that means) you not only won't need any form -- you probably won't even bother to write, like Joe Gould who wrote as little as one possibly could, yet who Saroyan calls a writer.

And that grandiloquent dismissal of all American writing (he says in one place 'almost all' but one can infer that he and Joe Gould are the only exceptions) is sweeping, superficial, and false enough to make anyone eye him narrowly and ask, "What makes him talk like that?"

He was posing, of course. While intelligent and shrewd enough to judge of things he knows well, nothing shows the capable literary critic. And at that time no question but that what he knew best and felt most deeply was his inner compulsion to become a writer and loathing of his inability to do so. That second level of meaning -- that only he knows how to write -- is nothing but bravado. He's bluffing. It's on the third and possibly deepest level that we get the message loud and clear. He's really saying, "My writing was uneasy and cluttered, not at home anywhere, trying too hard, miserable, sickly, literary, and unable to say anything simply" -- all of which was certainly true until, like any other beginning young writer, he found himself.

An intuitive interpretation such as this is hard to prove, perhaps impossible. Yet it's not uncommon to suppress things too painful to face consciously and shift them over to some other, outside entity that one can denounce in safety. Here, almost certainly, Saroyan put what he most loathed within himself outside, making it an attribute of

what he felt most opposite and alien to -- the body of successful writers who were being published and of whom he despaired of ever becoming a member.

The brighter side, his turning for the better, was something to remember as indeed he did. Joe Gould bumping him in the direction of success (however accidentally) must have looked like Deliverance from Evil, Money from Home, and How to Make Good Home Brew Without Failures all wrapped up in one. No wonder Saroyan later tried -- rightly if however clumsily -- to requite him.

But he went about it wrongly. Nothing he says rings true. Except himself and Gould no one could do anything right and even his praise for Gould comes out self-praise. God forgive us all, he was doing what I myself have done and suspect us all susceptible to do though rarely on so magnificent a scale; so shot with folie de grandeur, so complete an image of equal parts of Charles de Gaulle and narcissistic Joe, the robot can opener in Kuttner's Gallagher stories, squealing with delight at his own transcendent loveliness -- in Dean Grennell's succinct phrase, Sheesh! Or perhaps, Sheeg!!

The way people fool themselves ... years ago at the Douglas Santa Monica plant I was trying to make some kind of Tooling tie-in between the Aerospace and Airframe halves of its schizophrenic personality which, human nature being what it is, never quite came off. But the Director of Tooling liked part of it and turned me loose to fit it in among the various Tooling design and control groups. At long last and at the bottom of the totem pole I checked into a minor function that was the responsibility of one, let us say, A.B.C. Newberg.

I explained how things would have to be done in the future and he heard me with disfavor, dragging his feet and

protesting that such things were not provided for in the Standard Practice Bulletin, their departmental Bible. Unknown to him this was already in process of being revised so, having noticed his fifteen-year pin I merely suggested as an Administrator of long experience and on familiar terms with the powers that be, he was uniquely favored to bring about any such needed reform. He brightened up at this and said, "Yes, I'm pretty well known around here," and made no further demur.

I then spent a few minutes in the men's rest room reading the graffiti on the stall door, those upwellings that make us (you should forgive the expressing?) privy to the basic promptings and resentments of others, staring with unfeigned interest at the one that said, and I quote, "A.B. C. Newberg is a bald-headed idiot."

It gave me pause. "Egad," I told myself, "he is well known around here."

But enough of such pleasures.

I can't agree with Saroyan about the state of American Literature in 1929. It was exciting, it was lively; there was more going on than he realized. For one thing, defenders of conventional prose were still over-reacting to the stream-of-consciousness technique in James Joyce's *Ulysses* and getting it or keeping it banned in Boston while enthusiastic proponents were ecstatically trying the technique themselves with results that for the most part don't seem very well remembered today. At the same time the field of poetry was still in shock from the publication of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* seven years before (in 1922), concerning which rational discussion was only beginning to be possible. *The Waste Land* differed from the stream-of-consciousness technique in that its best effects resulted from a concept normally anathema in any form of serious

writing -- deliberate ambiguity. I've always thought *Ulysses* a sideshow of no particular importance or interest either, but *The Waste Land* intrigues me and seems worth talking about.

Normally I detest ambiguity; to me good writing means clarity, style, and again clarity -- its object is to make the writer understood. To say unmistakably what one wants to say and above all to be interesting (my own output to the contrary notwithstanding) is what one strives for. Sweat blood if need be, but at all costs avoid ambiguity.

Yet this was precisely what *The Waste Land* did not do, and say whatever else one may, as a conversation piece it was an instant success. Probably sui generis -- there maybe later works of equal stature by other writers but I don't know of any -- other than a new school of poetry it seems to have inspired instead new schools of literary criticism. Except the Bible and Shakespeare I doubt any other work has been such instant Paradise for critics and commentators, flocks of whom to this day flit through its branches, peck the fruit of its phrasing, and scatter their droppings -- in the form of more or less well digested studies -- and all over the adjacent ground of literature.

One of the happiest spots in this Happy Hunting Ground is *The Burial Of The Dead* around which some of them are always shrieking and twittering. A sample may move you to join them ... I think ...

Stetson!

*You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!
The corpse you planted last year in your garden,
Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?
Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?
Oh keep the dog far hence that's friend to man
Or with his nails he'll dig it up again!*

*You! Hypocrite lecteur! -- mon semblable --
mon frere!*

Which meant to the writer possibly more than it means to you, and especially if you regard Stetson as old hat. Frankly, the poem is neither intended nor possible to be understood in the conventional sense; the man doesn't really care what you think he means, he wants you to feel the way he feels -- feeling being to poetry what clarity is to prose.

The mystery of *The Waste Land* has challenged scholars for decades -- everybody wants to know what he's really saying and nobody knows; very few men and probably no women ever will. This is because each word or phrase evokes particular emotions on different levels, and only those whose background of reading and emotional experience most closely approach those of the poet can be expected to respond as he did. It is something like 'in' jokes, where the common background is everything. Nevertheless others can speculate as to how he felt and why.

Eliot's reading background was extensive; he read, wrote and spoke six languages, including Sanskrit, untranslated fragments from all of which are scattered freely throughout his work. Yet while from any point of view scholastically a rather special person, his emotional background by contrast seems almost ordinary. Of course he had his problems and their compensations; his offset for a hang-up that left him sexually inadequate being a promiscuous wife. And he was a banker by trade.

So one may perhaps understand why he wanted to express himself and share his feelings, though why anyone else would want to read him in order to feel the same way, God only knows. He put out some odd lines. In another poem there occurs:

*In the palace of Mrs. Phlaccus, at Professor
Channing-Cheetah's*

He laughed like an irresponsible foetus.

His laughter was submarine and profound...

Which raises in me a sense of wonder as to how a responsible foetus might laugh.

Certainly people will long continue to read *The Waste Land* and puzzle over what it really means, but readers of *McSorley's Wonderful Saloon* will be content to presume that he was hit on the head with a cow, shrug their shoulders, and let it go at that.

Another tidbit for critics is that moment of introspection in the London room where Philomela's picture hangs on the wall and the poet expresses a succession of emotional experiences in these words:

...yet there the nightingale

Filled all the desert with inviolable voice

And still she cried and still the world pursues

'Jug Jug' to dirty ears...

And here my own experience with nightingales clearly diverges from that of the poet with whom I must unhappily take issue.

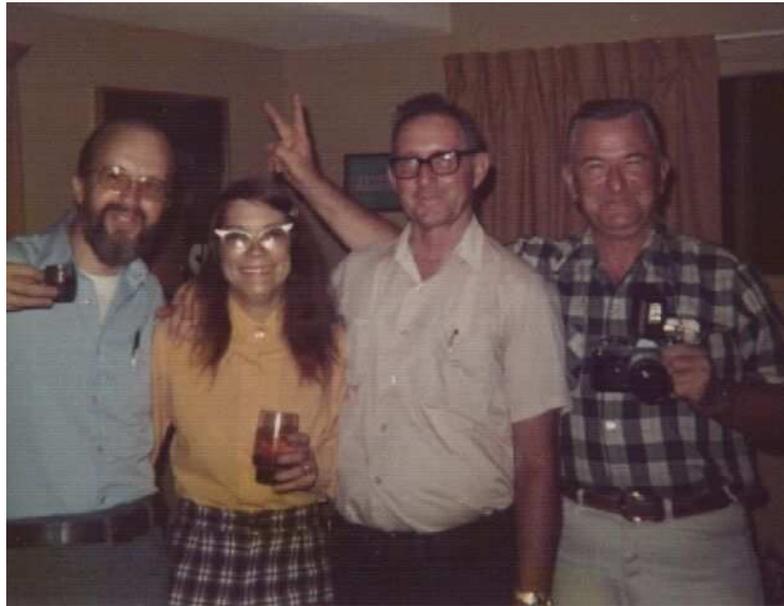
The nightingales around my house (for example) lurk in the shrubbery during the evening, wait until everything is quiet, and then at midnight or thereabouts cut loose with all the finesse of a steam calliope or king size bull horn. To awake as I have done, gibbering in panic and clinging to the chandelier, while outside the corpse planted in the garden has resurrected at a bound and is fleeing down the road a quarter-furlong behind though gaining on the friendly but departing dog, is a truly traumatic experience. And let me add that even at this acme of emotional stress one knows that what he heard was not 'Jug Jug' and

he who says it was himself has dirty ears if not a dirty mind.

Being moved by afterthought I have just consulted the Authority who on occasion tells me what I think, and she says a trifling detail up above there needs correcting; that our birds are not nightingales but mockingbirds. My rejoinder that it's all the same since they are obviously mocking nightingales she dismisses out of hand on the feeble grounds that there aren't any nightingales around here to mock. This sounds specious and evasive to me, but let it pass.

Philomela? Who is she? We find that in classic allusion, Philomela (Philo - lover of; mel - melody or song -- by no great leap of the imagination 'lover of song') signifies the nightingale which is also identified with the philomela of Greek myth.

Looking further we learn that the Philomela of Greek myth was the young sister-in-law of a Greek king, Tereus, who enticed her to come visit her sister, raped her, and cut out her tongue so she couldn't tell who did it, though she managed nonetheless in a piece of needlework. In the Latin version the gods in pity changed her into the nightingale, though surely they could just as easily have restored her tongue since the nightingale she was turned into had a tongue, and while about it, being gods, could just as easily



**Ed Cox, Tina Hensel, Cy Condra, Dean Grennell
Dave Locke's fan den, mid 1970s, Duarte, California**

have tinkered her virginity back in shape as well, but the wisdom of the gods surpasseth understanding. They changed her sister into the swallow and Tereus into -- of all things -- the hoopoe which at least gets to sleep nights, I think. The Greek version naturally is backwards; sister becomes the nightingale, Philomela the swallow; Tereus I don't know what - possibly the extra-marital lark. So much for Philomela except that anyone who takes all this on trust will do well first to check up on mockingbirds.

That the use of ambiguity both in writing and understanding his stuff is hard to explain is well shown in what is possibly the best-known commentary on this passage, by the professional literary critic, Edmund Wilson. In his *Axel's Castle*, a study of imaginative literature (not stf cbc.) of 1870 to 1930 Mr. Wilson hath writ:

"The picture is like a window opening upon Milton's earthly paradise -- the 'sylvan scene,' as Eliot explains in a note, is a phrase from Paradise Lost -- and the poet associates his own plight in the modern city, in which some 'infinitely gentle, infinitely suffering thing,' to quote one of Eliot's earlier poems, is somehow being done to death with Philomela, raped and mutilated by Tereus. But in the earthly paradise, there had been a nightingale singing; Philomela had wept her woes in song, though the bar-

barous king had cut out her tongue -- her sweet voice had remained inviolable. And with the sudden change of tense, the poet flashes back from the myth to his present situation:

And still she cried, and still the world pursues
'Jug Jug' to dirty ears.

The song of birds was represented in old English popular poetry by such outlandish syllables as 'Jug Jug' -- so Philomela's cry sounds to the vulgar."

Speaking as one of the vulgar myself but without getting particularly upset, I would like to quote from Joseph Mitchell's preface to *McSorley's Wonderful Saloon* and say that "I regard this phrasing as patronizing, repulsive, and vulgar," except that I feel that here Wilson was simply floundering.

I doubt there was ever a 'Jug Jug' in the whole body of English literature until Eliot wrote it, though that's not the point. The point is that 'Jug Jug' has no place in the description of the struggles of a tongueless person. Even a child ought to place 'Jug Jug' high on the list of sounds impossible to one without a tongue. The front part of the tongue plus the roof of the mouth back of the front teeth makes the 'J' sound. The hard 'G' also needs the tongue -- without a tongue, you can't say 'Jug'. And also perhaps Wilson was not aware of the reader who, familiar with both birds and poetry, had long since reported that Eliot actually had confused the nightingale (which does not say 'Jug Jug') with the European nightjar which apparently does. And I shall head most of you off at the pass right now with the obvious aside that American nightjars (in the old days at least) were usually found under the bed.

I remember reading a little of Eliot's poetry in High School; there was *The Hollow Men* from which the phrase

"Not with a bang but a whimper" has been made so much of, and the more clearly remembered *Sweeney Among The Nightingales* (Eliot really had a 'thing' about those birds) which starts out:

Apeneck Sweeney spreads his knees
Letting his arms hang down to laugh

Which gave me the creeps until I understood that he was sitting down and sprawling back and that he, not his arms, was doing the laughing. Also I remember an unfortunate student (for once, not me) who read it "A penneck" instead of "Ape Neck", being misled by the look of the word just as one might say "mizzled" for "mis-led", being misled by the look of the word -- I have known it to happen. The rest of the poem, somewhat puzzling to the student I once was, now leaves me not only puzzled by oppressed by feelings of Weltschmerz, Alas poor Yorick, and Sic Transit Gloria Mundi, which is probably what Eliot was driving at all along.

As indicated above, *The Waste Land* gave impetus to several kinds of criticism that are still going strong; literary criticism has become a full-time occupation for so many people that inevitably there had to appear a specialist and an ultra, a critic of critics. The first of these,² I think, was Stanley Edgar Hyman whose *The Armed Vision*, Vintage paperback no. K20 triggered much of this perhaps overly-familiar essay. With a rare wit and penetrating insight he takes up or rather takes apart the leading literary critics, of whom Eliot himself was one. From perhaps a too-heavily Freudian standpoint, Hyman (coincidentally himself a *New Yorker* staff writer) tells both what they do and why they do it.

One of his subjects, William Empson, an Englishman particularly enraptured of ambiguity as a means to com-

municate feeling, is by no means himself amiguous in expressing his views. His impromptu comment on *Alice In Wonderland* is a marvel of precision and to me a revelation.

Like everyone else I have long known that Charles Lutwidge Dodson, the 'Lewis Carroll' who wrote *Alice In Wonderland*, was obsessed with photographing naked little girls; thought it freakish, and let it go at that. No so Mr. Empson whose reactions I am lifting unashamedly from pages 250-251 of *The Armed Vision*, In talking with some friends about literature and criticism and all that, he happened to mention that there were things in *Alice* that would give old man Freud himself the creeps. Being pressed to explain, he explained, taking *Alice* "as a conjuror takes his hat, (producing) an endless swarm of lively rabbits from it..."

"To make the dream-story from which *Wonderland* was elaborated seem Freudian one has only to tell it. A fall through a deep hole into the secrets of Mother Earth produces a new enclosed soul wondering who it is, what will be its position in the world, and how it can get out. It is in a long low hall, a part of the palace of the Queen of Hearts (a neat touch), from which it can only get out to the fresh air and the fountains through a hole frighteningly too small. Strange changes, caused by the way it is nourished there, happen to it in this place, but always when it is big it cannot get ou, and when it is small it is not allowed to; for one thing, being a little girl, it has no key.

"The nightmare theme of the birth-trauma, that she grows too big for the room and is almost crushed by it, is not only used here but repeated

more painfully after she seems to have got out; the rabbit sends her sternly into his house and some food there makes her grow again.

"The symbolic completeness of Alice's experience is I think important. She runs the whole gamut; she is a father in getting down the hole, a foetus at the bottom and can only be born by becoming a mother and producing her own amniotic fluid." (Dodgson had) "...the desire to include all sexuality in the girl child, the least obviously sexed of human creatures ... he is partly imagining himself as the girl child ... partly as its father ... partly as its love -- so that it might become a mother -- but then of course it is clever and detached enough to do everything for itself."

So obvious -- why couldn't I have seen it like that?

And what was I saying about striving for clarity and saying unmistakably what one wants to say? Wasn't that what Dodgson was doing? Can you find a more straightforward, clearly written, children's fantasy than *Alice*? Yet Empson picks it up, twists it around into what you see there -- and makes me believe it! God knows what shocking truth in *Peter Rabbit*, *Jack And Jill*, or (whisper it) *McSorley Among The Nightingales* await the light, but in view of Erich Fromm's suggestion that *Little Red Riding Hood* is a copulation drama representing women who hate sex, I really don't think I want to know.

Indeed, though writing clearly as I can and only to set the record straight as to how I differ with Saroyan (and dispel Dave Locke's implied canard in the last *Awry* that I'm a Professor Sea Gull type more prone to talk about what I'm going to write than write it -- which may be rue though truth itself shall not prevail when I set out to

write) I shudder to think what some budding Empson out there could read into this innocent line of prattle. One thing certain; I am monumentally uninterested in any photographs of naked girls ... unless full grown and the fuller the better.

Getting back to the subject somewhat, Eliot has probably been eclipsed in the public mind by an aggressive ex-Pennsylvanian transplanted to Paris and actually doing something else. Gertrude Stein, initially a patron and critic of the French Impressionistic school of painting was moved to try to do with words what they seemed to be doing on canvas with results superficially similar though not truly equivalent to the work of Joyce and Eliot. Choosing words for their associations and sound rather than for meaning, she also used intricate patterns of repetition that seem both resulting from and tending to sustain a state of self-hypnosis so that it seems fair to classify her work as more nearly a form of automatic writing.

So the period from 1918 to date has seen concepts and techniques from psychoanalysis permeate the field of creative writing to the point of making it if not a whole new ball game, at least one in which players and spectators alike share an enlarged understanding of the reasons for the rules. Speaking as the ordinary interested reader and subject to correction if wrong, I think that to make blanket statements about the whole body of American Writing without such things in mind is not to know what one is talking about. Anything one says may be true of some tiny segment while false as to the whole, and the sheer bulk of what is being published makes it impossible for anyone to keep current. The problem of bulk in publishing in itself is worth another essay ... which I shall probably never write.

Let us wrap up the subject of ambiguity, beginning with a belated aside that if Eliot's wholesale use of ambiguity ran flatly counter to tradition, which was deplorable, his message to this best of all possible worlds was worse. The poem is his outcry of protest and despair at finding himself in a world of anarchy where nothing makes any sense, including -- his detractors were only too quick to point out -- *The Waste Land*.

That mistrust and distaste for ambiguity is normal and instinctive is nowhere more evident than in our majority response to its lowest form -- the pun. Being pressed for space I recently stored an ancient and enormous farm dinner ell in the shower of the guest house bathroom, reserved for gentlemen at the Petard party. During the party Dean Grennell glanced in and said, "So that you can get ringing wet?" at which I had to laugh, though if I were Nero and he a Christian I'd have thrown him to the nightingales. No doubt he goes around wringing doorbells.

He and I share a fondness for odd song titles. One of my earlier favorites was *I've Got A Cross-Eyed Papa But He Looks Straight To Me*. Later I found such things as *Celery Stalks At Midnight*; then parodies such as *Big Crash From China* inspired by *Big Noise from Winnetka* and *North*, a take-off on Benny Moten's *South*, with the original melodic phrasing inverted. Finest of all are reversed titles of which Red Ingle's parody of *Nature Boy* must be best known -- *Serutan Yob*, though my favorite is that shining jewel *Ooch Ooch Agoonattach*, which sounds like an Eskimo Rock Session but is really our old friend *Chattanooga Choo Choo* puffing along in reverse. I should have bought that record when I found it second-hand for a dime, but it was beat up -- played to death. So it must have been good...

Dean and I have used this little gem for a number of things -- greeting, farewell, comment on the unspeakable or inexpressible -- what you will. It's haunting, lilting; it deserves to be put in rhyme and I'd do it except the only rhymes I can think of are snatch, catch, scratch, and others of that ilk which somehow I hesitate to work with...

And even as I write there comes an anguished phone call from Ed Cox seeking somebody's address and also deliverance from torment. He was present when Dean and I were introducing *Ooch Ooch Agoonattach* to Bob Tucker and Rusty Hevelin at Dave Locke's the other night; amazingly he had never heard of it before and now it was driving him up the wall. "I'm writing this Gothic novel, you know," he said, "and right in the middle of a critical part I find myself starting to write *Ooch Ooch! Agoonattach!* -- if the dog comes wanting out I kick him away with Ooch! Ooch! -- i won't be long till he starts saying it back at me! You and Dean have got a lot to answer for --"

I can only suggest that if it's so powerful he incorporate it into the yarn as some kind of sorcerous incantation (to life a plague of nightingales, or something) or else turn it around again and play choo choo.

The familiar essay is a delight to write; it can wander all over the place and end at the writer's pleasure. I think that now, with some 5000 words conscientiously put to paper, the pleasure is mine.

¹ While writing those words I had a vision of an eight or nine year old Dave Locke being introduced to Greek mythology; reading about the labors of Hercules. King Augeas had kept three thousand horses in his stables for thirty years without ever having had them cleaned until he set Hercules to do it. In the myth Hercules cleaned out the stables by running two rivers through them. I can see

Dave's chubby face setting first into an expression of doubt, then utter disbelief, as he ponders that in thirty years those horses have long since been buried under tons of their own excrement. Shaking his head and tossing the book aside, he is muttering, "That's a lot of horse manure..." ³

² Looking up Stanley Hyman in *Contemporary Authors* I was shocked to find it referring me to the *New York Times* obituary columns, consulting which I learned that he died July 29th, 1970, at the untimely age of 51; about a year before I started reading him. I feel a sense of personal loss; his was exceptional intelligence coupled with strong common sense, and lovers of literature are poorer for his passing.

³ Not trusting to memory I have belatedly looked up the Augean Stables and found those horses were actually oxen. Apparently my vision could have stood a little fine-tuning, for what Dave really said was, obviously, "What a lot of bull..."





column, by
Lee Anne Lavell



Much Nothings About Ado

Invasion of the Killer Walnuts and other cautionary tales

I believe I have mentioned before that I live in a semi-rural area (although less rural than it used to be when I first moved here). My house, which fronts the east, is quite long. It is often mistaken for a double since it has two front doors. (It also has two side doors in addition to the three doors plus two garage doors in the walkout basement. But that is beside the point.)

Near the north end of the house is a medium sized hickory tree and, at the south end of the house next to the driveway, is a large black walnut tree. These trees in late summer usually bear a moderate amount of nuts which are immediately gobbled up or stored by the plentiful squirrels

in the area.

However, one year something went terribly wrong. I don't know whether it was the temperatures or the rainfall or a combination of those things (and perhaps others I don't know about), but the trees went crazy. The branches were so loaded with nuts that they could hardly hold them. Usually the hickory nuts would barely reach the ground before the squirrels got to them and they disappeared. As for the walnuts, maybe a few would be scattered on my driveway and lawn. That year the ground below the hickory was loaded with nuts, but it was the walnuts that became the real problem. They were every-

where! My gutters were clogged with them. Mowing the lawn was nigh on to impossible. And the driveway! The poor poor driveway! The gravel disappeared beneath the load of nuts. It was *crunch crunch crunch* all the way down to the garage.

The squirrels were both rotund and exhausted. I took bag after bag into the school where I taught, to give to teachers who requested them. One teacher said she and a friend would drive out to my house and gather them for themselves. They got only a few yards down my driveway before they stopped their car. They got out and just stood there for a while, amazed. They spent several hours picking up nuts. I supplied them with extra bags. It didn't even make a dent in the crop.

So, if you have a walnut tree in your yard, beware. It may turn on you someday.

Never Teach a Cat a Trick

At one time I had a seal point Siamese cat named Gum-mitch. He was the most intelligent cat I ever owned (or perhaps, more accurately, owned me). Someday I shall write more about him and my other cats, but this concerns just one incident.

When he was a couple of years old I thought it would be neat to teach him a trick. Teaching a trick to a cat, I was told, was nigh on to impossible. Cats just do their own thing. Nevertheless I thought I would try. I will teach him to kiss me, I decided.

The way I went about this was as follows: I held him on my lap while I said, "Kiss kiss." I then pulled him up to face and bumped his face against my nose and mouth.

Then I promptly gave him one Tender Vittle piece (which he loved). It only took a couple of times for him to figure this out. All I had to do was say "kiss kiss" and he would march up to me and bump my face and receive his treat.

That went well, I thought.

Too well.

A couple of days later he suddenly jumped on my lap, bumped my face and then sat there staring at me, waiting. Oops, I thought, did I accidentally say something that sounded like "kiss?" I ignored him. He bumped my face again, and again I ignored him. Another bump. I got up and walked around the house doing various things. When I finally sat down again, there he was ... bump. I finally gave up and gave him his treat. He had me trained.

So, do not ever consider trying to teach a trick to a cat. They will find some way to turn it to their own advantage and you will become even more of a slave to them.

How to Traumatize a Small Child

When I was young (ah, yes, that old phrase) I had long hair—very long hair. It was so long that I could almost sit on it and I am tall and have a long waist. My hair is very thick as well.

At that time I lived next door to a family that had a small boy, about four years old, I would say. He loved my long hair.

Eventually though, the hair became so heavy that I started having neck aches. My neck also began to pop when I would turn my head. It was very annoying. Pop, pop, pop. Loud, too. Or at least so it seemed to me (but then my ears are very close to my neck). I finally decided that I needed to get it cut. I don't do things half way.

When I got it cut I had it done *very short*, in what was then known as the Mia Farrow “Rosemary’s Baby” bob.

So, there I went, waving goodbye to the little boy next door, and when I came back all my long hair was gone. They boy was very upset, almost in tears. I felt very guilty.

A few days later I decided to get a moderate length wig so I could have different hairstyles when I wanted. So again, off I went with my short hair, waving goodbye to the little boy next door, and back I came, wearing my moderate length wig. The little boy saw me and got very confused. He kept mumbling something about hair long, hair short, hair long. To calm him down I decided to show him it was just a wig so I took it off.

The kid got almost hysterical. He actually fell over backward. It took some time before I could settle him down so I could explain to him about wigs. So remember. if you are planning to get a drastic haircut, prepare any young ones around, since hair today, gone tomorrow could be hazardous to your child’s health.

Roaming Around

Back in the “good old days” when one could go out for a drive just for fun and not have to worry about gasoline prices or global warming, I took on a project that probably I should have had more sense than doing, but ahead I went anyway. I have a friend who was in his late twenties at the time. He did not know how to drive. He had panic attacks when he got behind the wheel. He knew the mechanics, all the rules of driving but he just couldn’t apply them. Of course I thought to myself, well, I can teach him

to drive. Since I knew a little bit about panic attacks I thought that getting him into areas that were as least threatening as possible would be what to do. He, another friend whom he trusted implicitly and I went for a lark drive. I headed southeast of Indianapolis, where I knew there were lots of country roads with virtually no traffic.

After a while I asked him if he would like to try to drive. He turned me down, as I had expected, but did indicate he would think about it. We did this several times until he finally relented and thought he would make the attempt. I made sure our friend was in the back seat as she has a tendency to brake and show other signs of anxiety when she isn’t driving herself. I sat on the passenger side and locked myself into what I hoped looked like a very relaxed position. He drove for about twenty minutes on gravel back roads until finally another car came along. After it had passed he had to stop. Fine. The next time he was able to continue after he met another car. And so it went, each time driving a little further until finally we came to a small town named Boggstown. The next time we went in a different direction, wandering around until we came across a town. Hmmm, I thought. This looks familiar. Boggstown. How did we get here, I wondered. I thought we went in a different direction. The next time: Boggstown. And the next and the next and the next. My friend got his drivers license but we never got away from Boggstown until we were able to progress to highways.

So I guess whoever said that “all roads lead to Rome” was wrong. They lead to Boggstown, or at least all the country roads do.



Notes From Byzantium

column by **Eric Mayer**

I don't listen to music on the radio any more. The short snatches I've heard recently seem to consist of homogenized play lists of commercially successful songs, few of which appeal to me, interspersed with D.J.s straining to sound loud, frantic, aggressive and stupid, like so much of today's society.

There was a time when I went around accompanied by a radio soundtrack all the time. I grew up with plastic transistor radios you could cart anywhere. Later I always turned on the car radio before I put



...THE **START** OF WHAT COULD BE A GOOD IDEA...

my foot on the gas pedal. I'm not even sure the cars I drove ran unless the radio was playing. Every stereo system I bought included a good AM/FM receiver.

During the fifties and very early sixties, when I was grade school age, I only liked novelty songs. My parents had record albums but what did Ray Coniff, Frank Sinatra or Perry Como have to say to a kid? (Except maybe, "get lost so the elders can be alone"?) Fortunately the radio stations displayed better taste than mom and dad, playing classics like "Alley Oop," "Purple People Eater," "Little Space Girl," and the whole brilliant oeuvre of David Seville and the Chipmunks.

In the summer my dad spent hours every morning raking up trash left by the previous days' visitors to my family's picnic grove. The trailer he used to haul the garbage to the dump was attached to the station wagon and as he worked he'd listen to the car radio. He had instructions to shout for me whenever one of my favorite songs came on. In my mind's eye, the tree the Purple People lit in when he came to earth is a white birch, bent over by a long ago ice storm, just like the birches surrounding the tables at the park.

By the time I was in college my friends and I disdained AM radio, which is where popular music lived in that era, because the Top 40 never con-

tained enough "good" music. In particular, radio lacked our favorite band, the Kinks, who didn't have many American hits. How we reveled during those few weeks when "Lola" neared the top of the charts and "our" sound was heard in the land.

FM was where it was at in those days. I recall driving at night, headlights illuminating a winding two-lane back road, one hand on the wheel, the other on the tuner, turning the dial back and forth, trying to hold onto a distant FM station which kept threatening to drift out of range. More than once I pulled out of the depths of the night some weird, seemingly endless, psychedelic opus. The title, artist and station were lost in the deep space radio noise that kept washing up over the music. I never heard those songs again. They might as well have been broadcasts from another world, received only on the tinny sounding radio of the old Plymouth as it rumbled past black empty spaces that were fields, shadowy mountains of discarded coal ash, and dingy houses, one window in each filled with a television's wavering blue glow.

Long before that, when I was still into novelty songs, my friend Bobby and I decided it would be fun to have our own radio station. We were sure our younger brothers would love to tune in to our station, if they knew what was good for them.

As I recall, the station's music library consisted of one badly scratched 45 rpm of "See You Later Alligator" by Bill Haley. For variety we also featured the Chipmunks' version -- the same record played at 78 rpm. The song is actually about a rough patch in a relationship. The singer sees his baby "walkin' with another man" and nearly loses his head, but it turns out to be a misunderstanding. We didn't give a gator's tail for any of that. All that interested us was what she says in the chorus:

"See you later alligator, after 'while, crocodile."

It sure was a catchy chorus, and suitably ridiculous.

"See you later alligator, after 'while, crocodile."

You can't listen to it just once!

Simply sitting beside the ancient record turntable and listening does not a radio station make. The magic of radio is that you can't see where the noise is coming from. Or so we reasoned. In order to create a realistic radio experience we took the turntable down into Bobby's basement which featured a window level with the lawn. Since we weren't planning a television station, the window interested us only because we could open it a crack. (With the basement lights off you couldn't

see in very well) Then a couple of paper cups attached to either end of a long string extended outside made a transmitter with a broadcast radius of over twenty feet, sufficient to reach our audience at the base of the maple tree. We could have reached the back of the basement but unfortunately our show didn't have listeners in the oil furnace area.

This worked decently, but not well enough. Almost immediately we switched a more sophisticated broadcast technology -- an old garden hose. Once you put the hose up to your ear -- and shook the water out of your ear -- you could hear what was going on in the basement much more clearly. The depth of sound was superior to the cup and string, especially in the bass register. The equipment even added echo to music, rather advanced for the time.

The audience did have to trade the radio receiver back and forth. And it was necessary to clamp a hand over the ear that wasn't pressed against the nozzle so as to block out the sound coming naturally through the partially closed window and ruining the effect. But why would our audience need a free hand to enjoy hearing "See You Later Alligator" over and over? Our demographic was too young to drive, obviating any need to hold onto a steering wheel even if the

broadcast had been available on a car radio, which it wasn't. The hose couldn't reach the driveway.

We did our best to vary our programming. Aside from playing Bill Haley's original and the Chipmunks' cover, we sometimes just set the needle down on the chorus. We also introduced both versions enthusiastically and at great length, and announced the name of our station:

You're listening to WGTR. Proudly serving Bobby's back yard since 2 PM. WGTR. Your only choice for the best reptile tunes. We play the scales.

We also advertised the hand drawn comics and lemonade which would could be purchased by our listeners at the end of the broadcasting day, unless they were yellow bellied sapsuckers who didn't want to play along.

I'm sure our little brothers remember the radio station as fondly as I do. Unfortunately we only went on the air once. Afterwards, whenever we moved the turntable to Bobby's basement our brothers never seemed to be around.

It's too bad our station didn't have much reach, that we knew about. But who can explain those tricks of the atmosphere? I like to imagine that somewhere, some time, someone's driving along a dark road, randomly changing stations and there

suddenly emerges, from the hiss and crackle:

See you later alligator, after 'while crocodile,
See you later alligator,
So long, that's all,
Goodbye.





Martians, Go Figure

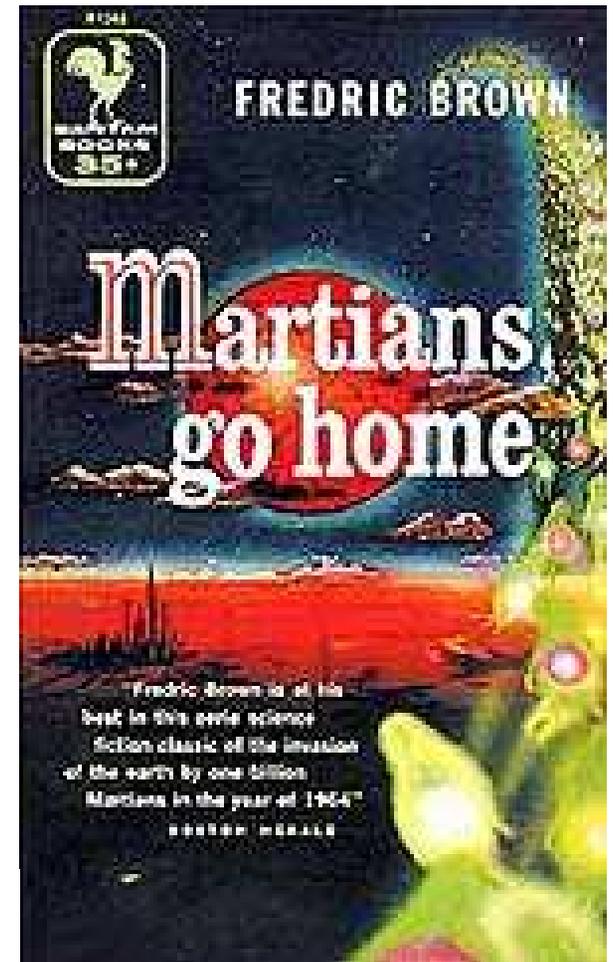
by Dave Locke

Originally published in Roy Tackett's *DYNATRON* #100, 12/91. Here in *Time and Again* we've discussed this story a few times, which resulted in my moving this article to the top of the reprint list. So here's my take on the novel, and the movie, and those pesky Martians.

It was March 26th, 1964 when the earth was invaded by one billion little green Martians. That was roughly one Martian to every three of us humans. They were unharmable, obnoxious, and with no purpose except to expose all earthly secrets both public and private. They drove us nuts. We had no privacy at all. We didn't know how they got here or why, finally, they went away.

I first learned about the coming invasion in

1956, back in the Golden Age of SF when I was twelve years old. I was also ill at the time, had previously read all the school library's selection of juvenile skiffy, and there were no unread Hardy Boys, Rick Brant, or Tom Swift, Jr. in my own small collection. My mother drove to the nearby village to pick up our mail, stopped at the variety store, and brought home



letters, bills, junk mail, and the well-packaged Bantam edition of Fredric Brown's *Martians, Go Home*.

These disrespectful aliens were so interesting that much of the time I lost awareness of being sick. I'd never heard of Martians like this. But then, no one else had, either.

Yes, we should have been prepared.

But for the form in which they came? Yes and no. Science fiction had presented them in a thousand forms -- tall blue shadows, microscopic reptiles, gigantic insects, fireballs, ambulatory flowers, what have you -- but science fiction had very carefully avoided the cliché, and the cliché turned out to be the truth. They really were little green men.

But with a difference, and what a difference. Nobody could have been prepared for that."

The Martians were green and about two and a half feet tall. Mouthy little wisecracks: *"Look, Mack, straighten up and fly right. Is this Earth or isn't it?"* They wore loose blouses, tight-fitting pants, and shoes. All green. They were like

dwarves in reverse, with short torsos and long limbs. Large, bald heads, big mouths both figuratively and literally, and hairless. Lots of little differences.

They didn't teleport, they kwimmed. *"You need apparatus to teleport. Kwimming's mental. Reason you can't do it is you're not smart enough."*

You couldn't touch the things: *"both hands went right through it and closed on one another"* when trying to grab at a green neck.

How were they here, really? *"We just learned the technique of long-distance kwimming. Just short-range before. To do it interplanetary, you got to savvy hokima."*

Why were they here? *"That's none of your business, either, but it'll be a pleasure to give you a hint. Why do people go to zoos here on your lousy planet?"*

Brown began his Postlogue with: *"to this day, nobody knows why they came or why they left."* He ended it with: *"Nobody, but nobody, misses them or wants them back."*

A number of people considered themselves solely responsible for the departure of the Martians, and not everyone considered them to actually be Martians. Some thought they were devils, and that they returned to hell.

In the Author's Postscript, the publishers leaned

on Brown to divulge all, because they considered it *"unfair to your readers not to tell them."*

Brown's response was as apt as his story telling abilities:

Many things are unfair, including and particularly that request of my publishers!

I had wanted to avoid being definitive here, for the truth can be a frightening thing, and in this case it is a frightening thing if you believe it. But here it is:

Luke is right; the universe and all therein exists only in his imagination. He invented it, and the Martians.

But then again, I invented Luke. So where does that leave him or the Martians?

Or any of the rest of you?

All right, let's get down to the nitty gritty. Is there anyone remembering the book who didn't just feel a mild surge of nostalgia? I've read it several times, and remember it with fondness just a mere five years after a last reading.

And is there anyone who didn't read the book

who wonders if it had any point to make? Did any good come from these beings who appeared and disappeared without apparent means or reason? Was there some purpose to their bedeviling us in running our secrets up the flagpole and throwing them at bulletin boards? Did their smirky and slimy little accompanying comments serve to do anything more than whip us into an adrenalin rage? Was there any sign that something positive or negative would grow from their having been here?

Well, the memory is tricky. The book can play differently at different times. We all know it's a recognized classic. Not all of us like it. Not all of us who actually love Brown's writing bring *Martians, Go Home* to mind when remembering him fondly.

Someone who read it a long time ago, to pick one example, was fellow fan Al Curry. He was the most recent one I spoke to about the book (because they'd made a movie from it, and I'd just finally managed to find it to watch, and he was the closest one to mention that to because he worked where I did and the next coffee-break conversation would seem a likely place to drop that topic; but I surge ahead of myself).

I told him that in the mid 80s I'd read that a movie was being made of this story. And that I'd



encountered mention of it in an APANAGEzine by Jymn Magon, who has so many gold records nailed to a load-bearing wall that his house sags. That the movie was being made wasn't a reason to

cheer, but I was interested. Early in 1991 I read that the movie made about \$30,000 at the box office and placed near dead last for the 1990 movie year. No theater in Cincinnati carried it. No video store could get it. I saw two minutes of it in a trailer on the front of a rental movie by the same producing company (a movie so bad I couldn't watch it).

I told Curry I'd seen it, finally, on cable.

He said he'd read the book, and all he remembered was that it was extremely irritating, and what was it about again?

It was about a bunch of extremely irritating Martians.

Oh, well, maybe that was why he found it so damn irritating.

No doubt. Definitely there were aspects like that.

So how did it play on the screen?

Maltin reviewed it in his *Movie And Video Guide* 1992:

*Martians Go Home (1990) C-89m.
1/2 Dir: David Odell. Randy Quaid, Margaret Colin, Anita Morris, Barry Sobel, Vic Dunlop, John Philbin, Gerrit Graham, Ronny Cox, Harry Basil. TV songwriter Quaid accidentally summons a

billion green wisecracking Martians to Earth; chaos (limited by the film's low budget) ensues. Fredric Brown's classic sci-fi humor novel misfires on the screen, partly because the pesky Martians are all played by mediocre standup comics. [PG-13]

And partly because the anticipated but of course necessary script-diddling was not consigned to, let's say, a William Goldman. And partly because an original story was translated to a derivative screenplay (e.g.: skiffy author protagonist becomes tv songwriter so he can summon Martians via a *Close Encounters* bare-bones little ditty, and reverse the ditty to send them away, as opposed to not knowing how they got here or why, finally, they went away). And partly because ... and because ... and ad barf nauseam.

It wouldn't do to cast kind words upon such an anemic rendition of this very alive story. Perhaps it could be rendered unto the screen a dozen times without truly capturing its essence, or enough of its essence to get excited about it.

Still ... all disappointments and problems aside, and definitely all comparisons aside ... the movie does have its moments. Certainly, on its own terms, it turned out far better than I expected go-

ing in. Sure, it didn't look promising going in, and cable TV ran it in the early afternoon and late at night, whenever it wouldn't interfere with someone who wasn't deliberately tuning in for it.

So, if you stand on your head, you can find something to like about this, while envisioning Fred Brown spinning in his grave. Takes a real attitude adjustment. Takes knowing that there isn't the faintest chance in hell that this movie will look like *Martians, Go Home* any more than Gerardo Rivera looks like a real reporter. Takes recognizing that just about everyone involved had decent skills and apparently the desire to present an amusing story within the confines of a pocket-change production.

Forget the comparisons, recognize the budget, see the effort (unfortunately), and watch people work to make the most of what at least has the appearance of being fun. The movie does indeed have its moments. Though ultimately it fails it's a cheap noble effort that generates some intentional amusements and laughs, and it retains a flavor which is not at all contrary to the inherent story of *Martians, Go Home*.

Did it have a point to make? Was there purpose to this story?

Of course there was. *Martians, Go Home* examines the honesty and openness with which we deal

with each other. Were there conclusions? Not ultimately. Were we better off for the unsettling experience of encountering one billion little green wiseass whistle-blowers? The presumption is there that we were, but no proof. If Brown had drawn a conclusion the story would not have been the classic that it is. Brown showed or displayed pictures; he didn't nail them to the wall.

It was March 26th, 1964 when the earth was invaded by one billion little green Martians.

And I'll never forget it.



Books on my mind

Just to make life excessively simple for you here in Pure Quill, your comments are in black and that editor Locke's comments are in blue. And to make life simpler for the editor, he's hat-in-hand requesting that letters of comment be submitted in either RTF or email, which everyone has regardless of their computer's operating system.



The first item here isn't a letter of comment. It's a post to the Trufen mailing list. Well, that's going to be close enough, especially since it's from Curt Phillips and I didn't want to let him get away without having something in this issue...

Curt Phillips 15 Nov 2008

A very good issue, Dave. I may have to uncharacteristically write a LOC for it. I continue to be surprised at how you seem to have a knack for creating theme issues literally at the last moment. I mean, you had no possible way of knowing what my article was going to be about until a few hours before I sent it - because I didn't know either - and that was only a few days ago, and yet you managed to pair it up with a complementary piece by Len. You've done this a couple of times now and it's far more than can

be explained by co-incidence. Clearly you have now proven that there are indeed *true* Secret Masters of Fandom at work among us, and that you are one. Your fan-pubbing talent has betrayed your secret to all of Fandom...

Aw, crap, I thought I was being more careful than that.

Is Len Moffatt expected at Corflu Zed? Now that I know that he was a Corpsman with the Marines in the Pacific during WWII I'd very much like to sit down with him and ask some technical questions. I've been researching that very topic for a few years now.

Probably not, considering the travel involved, but I have no inside knowledge as to whether Len and June will be

travelling up that way in March. They will, however, see your inquiry.

Lloyd Penney 27 Nov 2008

I think we're one of Robert Bloch's last stages of fandom, Dave. I'm reading much more than I watch these days ... it really has to catch my eye in the theatre or bookstore, for that matter. Are we jaded? Good thing we have a sfnal contraption to help get a little sensawunda out of our fanac ... what would we do without the Internet, hm? Spoiled rotten, we are.

Iraq has been a headache and a wallet-ache for any country which took part in it ... I am hopeful that when Barack Obama takes office, there will be more attention paid to wrapping Iraq up, and more attention paid to Afghanistan. I think the Canadian and US governments can work closely together on Afghanistan, and wrap that up, too.

Financial crisis ... I keep hearing that Canada won't suffer as much as other countries, because our banks are highly regulated, but the current Conservative government, even though it screams frugality and fiscal responsibility, has spent the large surplus that the past Liberal government had built up just for such a crisis as the one we're in. We may have yet another federal election soon ... my vote goes to None of the Above. The US federal debt has topped \$10 trillion? No wonder the world has money problems.

Ah, there's that bear, waiting patiently for the waitress to come back to his table with his lunch.

Any movie or television remakes will never be as good as the original. I really have no interest in seeing fellow Canadian Keanu Reeves in *The Day The Earth Stood Still*.

Sorry, folks, that movie has Michael Rennie and Patricia Neal and Hugh Marlowe in it. Not Keanu Reeves.

I saw both renditions of the story, and rewatched the original before seeing the remake. I thought they were both watchable.

Then again, I have no critical faculties...

So long as you understand, early on, that the remake is attempting to infuriate you with how stupid people with suits (and kids without brains or discipline) can easily be, then you'll see that it sets up Klaatu's initial mission for him. He came with a purpose. The way he's received and subsequently treated shows that there's validity to that purpose, and it takes glimpses of humanity in individuals to make him see that there's another side to the story.

I liked the original movie, though in this day and age there are too many crudities to it. Today my regard for it is mostly based on nostalgia. The remake is actually better in a great number of ways, though not enough better to call it a great SF movie. It is, however, worth seeing. If you watch SF movies with the hope of finding the occasionally decent one -- or, if you're lucky, the less occasionally great one -- then see this. It's not great, but it's definitely a watcher.

Joseph Major, what we all need to do is go through one of Wil McCarthy's fax machines, and we will all be young and strong and in much better shape. Then we can all be cranky old fen in neofan bodies.

Dave, you are right, *Bambi vs. Godzilla* was indeed created by Marv Newland, of Winnipeg, Manitoba. And, according to the credits, Marv was created by Mr. and Mrs. Newland. I'm allowed an occasional brainfart...

As usual, after the last issue I fired off a brief email to say: "TIME AND AGAIN #7 has just gone up at the eFanzines site. The TIME AND AGAIN page at eFanzines is <<http://tr.im/12vc>>, and I send you this email simply because your name is mentioned at least once in the issue." That prompted Alex Yudenitsch to write.

Alexander Yudenitsch 16 Nov 2008

I made the local again! Getting to be a habit -- or you aren't getting enough LoCs...

Okay, it's both...

Good to see that you made contact with Grant Canfield (though "I look forward to your upcoming retirement" is a somewhat odd thing to say) -- and amazing that he even remembers the brief contact we had. And he's right, I did see his work in Lichtman's TRAP DOOR (which I still have to LoC, so don't let him see this).

Oops. Oh well, that's fair. He was talking about owing me a LoC, too...

And, this time, I did feel that "Diabologic" IS an 'editorial', and you did "make everything fit in and sort of add up" -- and the 'adding up' is your fanediting career, AND you even tied it back to SF itself; well done!

Lee Anne Lavell 11/17/08

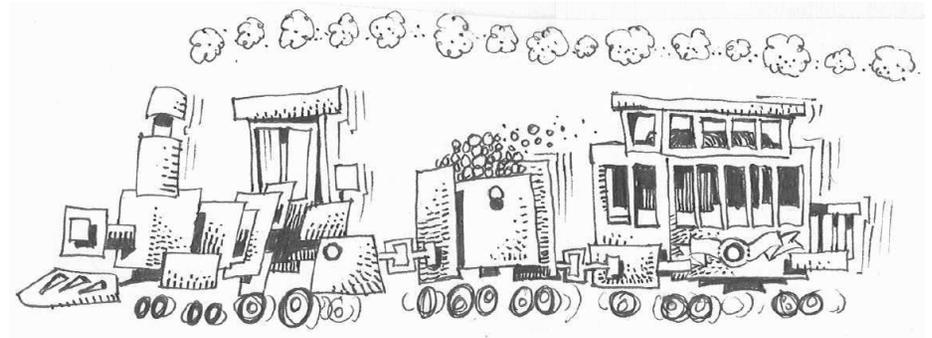
The first thing that hit me with this ish was the Emmett cover (logical, since it's the first thing one sees). Ghod! The intricacy of the thing! Why does the mailbox (that is a mailbox, isn't it?) at the front (that is the front, isn't it?)

say "Finish"? (or does it say freight?)

It says "freight". Looks more like a toolbox. Of course, he can't carry much freight in a toolbox, but I don't think he'd want to carry much freight in a contraption like that.

I was fascinated by Curt Phillips' column about "A Young Man's War..." The one thing that is seldom mentioned about WW2 is the "Home Front." We, the very young, the elderly, the infirm and most females, also felt that we were doing our part in the war effort. Many women worked in factories ("Rosie the Riveter") keeping production going while the men were away. We grew "Victory Gardens," served as "air raid wardens," bought War Bonds and stamps, etc. Us kids participated in paper drives, collected tin foil and all sorts of stuff like that. Sure, we weren't being killed like the guys in the service, but we were acutely aware of the possibility of invasion, air raids and sabotage and were prepared for it ("Loose lips sink ships," air raid drills at school, black blinds on our windows) But no one that I know of honors the "homefront" or attempts to recreate that.

I Get Around: I have chronicled earlier my problems with the Buick that only I could start. For the most part I



have been fairly lucky with my cars. Many years ago I had the drive shaft on my Rambler (beep beep) break the day before I was to trade it in and pick up my new car. I told the repairman to fix it just enough so I could drive it down to the lot—use scotch tape even. He managed it with a minimum of cost. Flat tires: Since we are not too far from the Halloween season as I am writing this, I am reminded of the penchant of pranksters to let air out of tires. However, we suffered one with a new wrinkle. A couple of our tires had been over-inflated to an alarming degree.

Notes from Byzantium: As always I find Eric Mayer's column the highlight of the issue. Even when he is “out of inspiration” he is interesting. I can relate to his problem. I am a spree writer. I can sit around for weeks struggling to think of a subject, then *!Wham!* you can't keep me away from the keyboard.

Pure Quill: Mike Deckinger: Regarding those bargain basement DVDs—I am at present slogging my way through *50 Great Horror Movies*—12 discs at a nice cheap price. I'm sure that most, if not all of the films are in public domain and some suffer from bad sound tracks (making me wish they were closed captioned) but amidst all the drek there are some gems, making the collection more than worthwhile. Included are *Nosferatu*, *Metropolis*, and two silent Lon Chaney films: *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, and *The Phantom of the Opera*. It also includes Roger Corman's let's-make-a-movie-for-\$10 this weekend: *Creature from the Haunted Sea* and *Little Shop of Horrors*. Also another Corman film where he had a bit more money: *The Terror*, in which Jack Nicholson has the lead. Zombie fans should be in heaven with this set as there are lots of those, highlighted by the original *Night of the Living Dead*.



There are also some curios, like the two “Wong” movies starring Boris Karloff as the Chinese detective. Eric Mayer: I've now lost another ten pounds or so. The trick in losing weight is a) watching both one's carbs and calories, b) keeping a food diary, c) taking vitamins, which in my case seem to rev up my metabolism. And, of course, exercise.

Chris Garcia 18 Nov 2008

Howdy, Dave! Always good to see *Time & Again* on eFanzines and this is no exception. Solid issue which starts with a realization I'd never made: you live in Vermont. I don't know anyone from Vermont. I've been there, briefly, but now that I know you, I can cross off another state from the “I don't know anyone who lives in...” list.

This is the 5th state I've lived in. Started in New York and, in sequence, moved to California, Kentucky, Ohio, and, as of 2/9/08, Vermont. Nice states, but now I'm waiting for that Mars colony to open up.

It was fanzines that got me into written SF. That's a little over-simplification, but I was reading fanzines before I was reading SF. I took to SF, particularly the stuff from folks like Vonnegut and Farmer, but the fanzine was al-

ways my first love. I Still read SF, though not as much as I should. Honestly, since High School, I've probably been more of a Crime reader than an SF reader. You know, I know I've seen an issue of *Awry*, probably at the 2006 WorldCon Fanzine Lounge. I don't think I read it, but I know I saw it.

I don't think we get enough Curt Phillips in zines these days. I've been lucky to get a couple of short pieces from him over the years. I thought it was one of the best pieces of fan writing that I've read all year. As a historian, I understand where he's coming from. I'm not a reenactor myself, though *The Lovely and Talented Linda*, my darling girlfriend, goes in for things like *Lumiere Teas* and so on, reenacting the prettier times of French Court and so on. I see reenactors of a different sort, old skool computer hobbyists trying to resurrect old machines, and I get the same feeling that I get when I watch a Civil War re-enactment or even a Renn Faire: these guys are paying homage to the olden days at the same time as skipping over some of the harsher realities. It's one of the things that I appreciate about war re-enactors over Renn Faire types: they show the harsh reality with the reality (to a degree) and that's much more historically honest, I think. I've seen one or two re-enactments that were actually pretty gory because they had effects guys on staff!

I hope I'll be seeing Len at LosCon next week. He's a former TAFF winner and an all-around nice guy. I gotta try and get him to write something for me. I love Spam. It's delicious.

Lee Anne Lavell gets it exactly right! It's our fault for getting greedy, for over-reaching ourselves and spending more than we had in hopes of making enough to cover it. It's why I really don't support the idea of bailing out indi-

vidual investors and why I think the Banks should be paying at least some kind of price. Yes, I know there are people who had perfectly normal mortgages who lost their job because of the downturn and can't afford to pay their bills, and that sucks. It flat-out sucks, but there wouldn't be a bail-out for them in regular times when someone lost their house because they couldn't pay. Now, making it a requirement that before getting any aid they rework the terms of mortgages and make every reasonable effort to keep people in their homes, that's a good idea, but not a hand-out. I've always held the concept of personal responsibility as the tent-pole of my political philosophy, and if you get in over your head, well, you walked too far and you've gotta deal with it. Now, the people who were sold hard by the mortgage banks to take loans they obviously didn't qualify for and ensured the takers that they were safe, they should be fined and taken out of the business, but in the end, it's always You that has to be sure You can handle it. That's why I don't have a credit card. That's why I will never buy anything I can't pay for completely out of pocket (no debt for me). I'm pretty much immune from this downturn, which is the one nice thing about owning almost nothing.

I love that Brad Foster cartoon. He's really something and totally earned his Hugo this year with the great work he's been putting out in colour that us eFanzines folks have been pubbing. Wonderful article from Eric too. He's always got the most interesting things to say. I love getting LoCs from him on *The Drink Tank* and even moreso when he sends me an article.

[Curt and Eric are two of the fanwriters whose word-smithing I most look forward to reading myself. Doesn't](#)

matter whether I'm encountering it in an article, on a blog, in a mailing list, or even in correspondence. I share corro with Eric and not with Curt, but when I turn the coin around I see that I've met Curt (the '05 Midwestcon, which was also Howard Devore's last appearance there), but haven't yet met Eric (though there's a good possibility we'll correct that this year).

In my corro with Eric I had to apologize for spelling his name wrong in the last issue of T&A. Naturally I gathered up all my excuses for sub-par proofreading the past few months, noting of course that the cataract didn't help and it would be a few months before I could get that taken care of. After the apology I noted that I would wander off to flagellate myself in expiation. Eric's response accompanied his LoC.

Eric Mayer 19 Nov 2008

No problem. I'm the worst proofreader in the world. Besides I've sene my name spelled endless ways, the worst being on the mailing label when I subscribed to F&SF - Eerie Meyer.

The most recently encountered misspelling of my name was on the checks I initially received when I started a checking account here in Vermont. They dropped the "e" off of my last name, as you know because I remember emailing you a screenshot of my first cancelled check. The bank is into online banking, and they provide a digital photo of the front and back of each of the few checks which actually manage to make it back to the bank, as opposed to the electronic processing which has become so common. Naturally I noticed that my name isn't spelled "Lock", as did my son who I wrote the check to. However,

I needed checks more than I needed good spellchecking, so I didn't complain. Brian, however, penned in an "e" on the end of my printed name. Well, it's his name, too...

Another excellent issue. Like you, I think eFanzines, sent off at the touch of a button, are delightfully science fictional. I understand that paper zines are somewhat different entities and there are fans who prefer those differences, but paper is hardly the wave of the future. Also like you I have turned more to mysteries as modern science fiction became unpalatable to me. It isn't just that my tastes have changed. I have reread and thoroughly enjoyed older sf and I even sometimes read and enjoy vintage sf I missed way back when. I'm not sure what it is about modern sf that renders it mostly unreadable for me.

This is indeed a puzzle, and I wish there were more "vintage sf" that I'd not deliberately passed up back in the Long Ago.

Since I love history I enjoyed your personal publishing history. Alas, my own publishing history would barely fill a paragraph. Let's see, around 41 issues of my perszine Groggy from 1978 to around 1992 if I recall. 6 issues of a digest size genzine, Deja Vu in the late eighties featuring work by fans, small press and mini-comics folks, and briefly an apa-zine for eApa. Deja Vu might be classified more as a small press zine. I did dozens of mini-comics and even a mini-zine which can't be considered fanzines. I also did two or three zines for a Hoax Apa Mike Gorra had in the early seventies. And, if I were trying to be a completist I would mention the oneshot Tedscan but then I wouldn't want to mention that would I?

Len Moffat's Spam poem is a classic. If he'd released it way back when he'd be famous. Monty Python would owe him royalties too. "Spam, spam, spam..." A fan said it first! Heck, that's right up there with our invention of geosynchronous satellites. Loved it.

Curt Phillip's article was wonderfully moving but all the same, I have to observe that it is partly the ability of military heroism to move us that allows the politicians to again and again drag countries into utterly useless wars and to waste the lives of idealistic young people. The isolated war of defense against aggression is no doubt necessary (see WWII) but I don't think the United States has engaged in a necessary war in my lifetime.

An uncle of mine was badly wounded in the D-Day invasion and prefers not to talk about it. He just says he was exploring a house, ran into a German, who was as surprised as he was, they both drew their weapons and quite by accident he lived and the other man didn't. Nothing to celebrate but pretty much what wars amount to for most who fight in them. Or so I suppose. I was damn lucky I flunked my induction physical during the Vietnam era.

Nevertheless, as Curt's article illustrates, military and nationalistic symbolism is effective. I know I teared up at my dad's funeral when the flag was removed from his coffin (he being a WWII vet), folded and presented to my mom in the name of the president of the United States, notwithstanding that I loathed the current president of the US and the filthy war he had lied us into.

Having read your own terrific piece about car troubles, I may never get back in a car again! And these troubles don't even account for the past thirty-odd years. How many more vehicular disaster stories have you accumulated I wonder? I've had my share of car problems but gen-

erally I've lucked out in that my breakdowns have occurred near to home. (Hmmm....do you suppose that might be because I rarely venture far from home?) I've only had one smoking incident. Took the car to Mr. so-called Goodwrench for some minor repair and on the way home steam and smoke started pouring from under the hood. I hurriedly turned around and made it back to the garage. The whole vehicle was practically engulfed in a cloud. Turns



out whatever goodwrench had been working on the car had had to unfasten all manner of hoses and had somehow forgotten to reattach them all. Doesn't top ending up with parts leftover though. I am almost afraid to say it ...knock on wood?...but today's cars seem to require less repairs

then yesterday's or maybe I've just got progressively luckier over the years. The most expensive stuff I'd had to have fixed recently has involved emissions equipment which doesn't affect driving in the least.

Very interesting commentary by Lee Lavell. I guess I must not have a credit rating. After my first marriage to a credit-holic (and shopaholic) I decided to eschew borrowing money. So today, while I don't own much, I also don't

owe anyone in the world a cent, and it feels good. Yes, trying to live in our credit society on a cash basis can be difficult at times but it is, in my opinion, very rewarding and worth the effort. Well, look where the credit mania has gotten us. What a mess. I am only too familiar with the kind of warped ideas about credit that Lee details. People latch onto a credit card and they seem to think they've dug up a treasure chest. It doesn't seem to register that that credit limit doesn't really represent money belonging to them. They gleefully spend it as if it's theirs, all



theirs!! The way I figure is, if you can't afford to spend X amount on an item then why would you figure you could afford to spend X amount plus an enormous pile of interest. When your economy relies on consumer spending, but employers refuse to pay workers living wages let alone enough for massive consumer spending, then the solution is to just "give" the consumers imaginary money with which to consume. Or at least that's a solution until the whole scam inevitably falls apart. Kids ought to learn in school that when you buy something on credit, until you pay it off, you don't own it, it owns you.

Finally, I want to thank Brad for another masterful illo. Yeah, that's exactly what it feels like in that crawlspace. Was that him I heard bumping around under there a few weeks back? I thought it was a squirrel in the walls.

Jim Williams 2 Jan 09

Very solid group of articles. I'll have to give a nod to Len Moffatt's entry as my favorite. The portion about the public library giving recognition to WWII vets was quite interesting, but the reprint of Len's 1945 poem about spam was a delight. It stands up well in comparison to Monty Python's much later skit about spam. Plus it appears to stick much closer to reality while still being funny.

Lee Anne is correct that the public bears much blame for the financial crisis, but I don't think it's at all "superficial" that "deregulation and the lack of oversight" are at the heart of it all. Some people may make bad decisions, but when the government makes them it puts us all behind the 8-ball. And the Bush regime made them by the cartload. I suspect that this particular Bush will be considered the worst President we've ever had or very close to it. Even Nixon looks good in comparison.