



# SCIENCE FICTION

## ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

VOLUME 3 NUMBER 2 – AUGUST 2008

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**EDITOR'S COMMENTS:** This is written and edited by Dale Cozort for the August 2008 distro of FAPA. All original writing in this zine is copyrighted of course.

This will probably be a smaller zine than my last one. It's sandwiched between getting a distro for POD finished and going to a writer's conference.

What's happened in my life since May? Well, I lost an aunt. She was 78 and in poor health, so her death wasn't unexpected. It hit me hard though. My mom's side of the family is now down to my sister, one cousin, and one aunt. I remember a time when our lives revolved around a tight-knit group of people, most of whom are now dead.

On the good side, I ran my own writing contest on Gather.com. It went well—40-odd entries, everyone seemed to enjoy it, and good entries won. I called it the Slushpile Simulator Contest. The idea was to enter the first two pages of a short story, novel or anything in between. Entries were anonymous, with a side-contest for who could be the most anonymous and for who could guess the identities of the most authors. I was trying to give people a taste of being on the other side of the desk—of reading the beginnings of stories from people they don't know and making tough calls on which ones go on to an editor and which ones don't.

As contest administrator I entered, but was not eligible to win. I took the opportunity to do some experimental writing, things I would never ordinarily write. I've included the parts of two of my entries that I posted in the contest.

It has been a good summer for me. I haven't written as much as I would have liked to, but I've gotten out and enjoyed the summer. I'm trying to get back into reasonable shape and I've been doing 4 to 5 mile bike rides almost every day. I can tell a difference, though my body responds much more slowly to exercise than it did ten or even five years ago.

In any case, enjoy the zine.

## SLUSHPILE CONTEST ENTRY: JAR JAR BINKS MUST DIE

Yeah yeah. We'll get to the Jar Jar Binks stuff! Can't you see I'm choking!

Yeah, you! The reader. Who else do you think I would be talking to? Get over here and give me the Heimlich or whatever they call it! Spots growing in front of my eyes! Can't get a breath! Brain cells dying! Help me! This isn't New York. People don't stand around and let other people choke to death!

Oh thanks! Let me get my breath. What took you so--- No. No. Gratitude. You saved my life. Thank you! Okay Give me a couple of minutes. Okay. Glad you were here. Not too often that you pick up a story and get to save the author's life. That would have been so humiliating. Choking to death on a goldfish. And not even a real goldfish, just one of those goldfish-shaped sort-of potato chips. What a way to go.

Could you get me a glass of water? I've got that kind of bile taste in my mouth. Thanks. You're not a bad reader, in spite of the fact that you almost let me choke to death. No. No. Gratitude. You saved my life. Thanks for the water. This tastes like real Evian. A lot of people refill those bottles with tap water after they empty them. I do.

So. What were we talking about. Oh yeah. Jar Jar Binks. Well back when the fictional worlds started leaking into the real one I realized that Jar Jar Binks was going to become real. When a character hits a certain level of recognition he can break out of the fictional world and into the real one. Of course we all know about Darth Vader. I can't believe they elected him governor of California. Of course Santa Claus and Tarzan were no-brainers. I here Tarzan is going to be a spokesman for the World Wildlife Fund. Look for ToysRUs to latch onto Santa. First tier characters like that had already become real. I knew that second-tier characters like Jar Jar and Benito Mussolini would be coming next.

I decided then and there that there wasn't enough room in this world for Jar Jar Binks and me. One of us was going to have to go, and me doing the figuring I figured he should do the going. I was here first, after all.

You want to pull up a chair? Where are my manners? Someone saves my life, even if they did take their own sweet time about it---No. No. Gratitude. Thank you again. Yeah. Pull up a chair. No. Not the green one. You don't want to know why, but don't sit in that one. Get one from the table. There. Isn't that more comfortable? Would you like a drink? A goldfish? Nah. Just kidding about the goldfish. I'm going to pitch them. There's cold pop in the refrigerator.

All settled? A little more comfortable? Okay. Well anyway, I'm committed to my little act of character assassination. Yes. Pun intended. Yes. You can groan. You did save my life after all—after standing around and almost letting me die—No. No. Gratitude. Feel free to groan.

So anyway, I waited and plotted his demise. I waited and I laid the groundwork. I hung around the clubs where the science fiction characters went. I got to be buds with Spock. I dated that hot chick from the first Star Wars movie. You know, the queen who dated the young Darth Vader even though he was like nine. Anyway she came across twenty-something and hot. Dating her got me into a fistfight with Darth, but Spock came through for me in the pinch. Pinch. Get it? Yeah, you can groan again. You did save my life, too late to save a brain cell or two—No. Gratitude. Feel free to groan.

That was when Leonard Nimoy met Spock. Instant hatred.

*Like I said, experimental. Not at all the sort of thing I would normally write. I doubt that I'll ever finish it. At the same time it was kind of fun to write.*

## A SLICE OF MY LIFE: MY DAY IN COURT

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As some of you know, one of my aunts was involved in a lawsuit a couple of years ago. An unrelated couple suddenly ended up owning or claiming to own a large farm and over \$200,000 worth of farm machinery and vehicles that belonged to her and her husband. This happened shortly before her husband died of prostate cancer. She sued to get the property back. I testified in the trial. I didn't have a major role, but I did establish three crucial things. First, I heard one of the defendants tell my aunt that the property had not been sold, that the defendants were only renting it. This was a couple months after ownership had changed hands according to paperwork

Who is your next witness?

MS. TIBBETTS: Dale Cozort

THE COURT: Would you come around this way, over here next to this chair, stand up here and raise your right hand.

DALE COZORT, being first duly sworn was examined and testified as follows:

THE WITNESS: I do.

THE COURT: You can be seated. And then state your name for the record, please.

THE WITNESS: Dale Cozort.

THE COURT: And spell your last name.

THE WITNESS: C-O-Z-O-R-T

DIRECT EXAMINATION BY MS. TIBBETTS:

Q Mr. Cozort, what is your address?

A XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Q What is your relationship to Lillie Lenstrom?

A I am her nephew.

Q What is your relationship to Wilma Rudolph?

A I'm her brother.

Q What is your educational background?

A I have a bachelor's in computer science and a master's in instructional technology.

Q Where did you receive those degrees from?

A Northern Illinois University.

the defendants filed. Second, my aunt said very early on that she had not agreed to sell the farm. Third, my uncle told me that the farm had not been sold. Fourth, one of the defendants claimed that the farm was worth approximately \$200,000. It was actually worth roughly four times that according to an expert witness.

In any case, I figured I would include my part of the testimony so that people can get a feel for what it was like. I was terrified, and not particularly articulate, as you can see.

Q When did you receive those degrees?

A The bachelor's in 1983 and the master's in 1998.

Q Where are you employed?

A I'm employed at xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx and I also work in the evenings at xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx.

Q What do you do at Xxxxxxxxxxxxx?

A I'm their computer support person, and I also teach computer classes.

Q And what do you do at the night job?

A I teach computer classes there also.

Q When you were a child, did you visit with your aunt and uncle Lillie and Ralph Lenstrom?

A Yes, we did.

Q How often would you visit with Ralph and Lillie when you were a child?

A Well, pretty much every working day they brought their son to stay with us while Aunt Lillie was at National Lock from -- well, up to age, I think it was either eight or ten, something in that order. We'd go over to their house on weekends probably at least once or twice a month.

Q When you were a child, were you close to your Aunt Lillie and your Uncle Ralph?

A Yes, we were.

Q When you became an adult, did you continue to visit with your Aunt Lillie and Uncle Ralph?

A Yes, we did.

Q How often when you were an adult did you visit with Aunt Lillie and Uncle Ralph?

A I would guess probably somewhere in the range of five to ten times a year.

Q Would that be visits where you would come up here to visit with them, or would they come down and visit with you?

A I would come up here to visit with them.

Q Do you have children?

A Yes, I do.

Q How old are they?

A I have a stepdaughter that's 25. I have a daughter that's 14.

Q During the course of the years, have your daughter and stepdaughter visited Aunt Lillie and Uncle Ralph?

A Yes, they have. My stepdaughter visited several times both Ralph and Lillie and David, and my daughter has visited quite often. She stayed over night at their house a couple of times.

Q Prior to Ralph Lenstrom passing away, did you communicate with Ralph on the telephone and/or via e-mail?

A Yes, we did -- yes, I did.

Q Would you describe your relationship with Ralph Lenstrom as close prior to his passing away?

A Yes.

Q When David Lenstrom passed away, did you come up here to the Rock County area to visit with Ralph and Lillie?

A Yes, I did.

Q Did you attend Ralph -- or did you attend Dave's funeral?

A Yes, I did.

Q When you came up to Wisconsin after David had passed away, were you ever able to meet and speak privately with your Aunt Lillie?

A On a few occasions, yes.

Q When you met with your Aunt Lillie, was anyone else present?

A Not always. I mean, there were times that the two of us were alone.

Q Did you observe Cathy Simpson in relation to your Aunt Lillie during the course of David's funeral?

A Yes, I did.

Q And what did you observe about Cathy's conduct with Aunt Lillie during the course of David's funeral?

A Couldn't get -- there were just -- she was just all over Aunt Lillie. It was -- it was like a barnacle. I spent the entire funeral wanting to talk to Aunt Lillie alone and say how sorry I was that David had passed away, and that entire time I was there, I did not get an opportunity to do that.

Q In November of 2003, did you have any conversations with Matt Simpson about the possibility of Matt purchasing David's farm?

A This was November of 2003?

Q Correct.

A Yes, I did.

Q Okay. Where did that conversation take place?

A It was at Janesville hospital; Ralph was at the hospital at that time.

Q And what did Matt Simpson tell you about his desire to purchase David's farm?

A He said that he wanted to purchase it. The work he was doing was kind of a down payment. He intended it as being kind of a down payment on the farm. He seemed somewhat concerned that Ralph was sick and, you know, no definite arrangements had been made, and I guess that answers the question.

Q Did he -- did Matt Simpson discuss with you possibilities of he and his wife caring for Aunt Lillie after Ralph passed away?

A Yes, he did.

Q And what did Matt tell you?

A He said that -- I believe that that was the occasion that he said that - it was kind of that was part of the deal, basically, the farm, you know, he would promise to take care of Aunt Lillie if he got the farm.

Q And what was your response to these statements by Matt Simpson?

A Well, I told him that as far as I was concerned, that as long as, A, any deal that he made with the farm was fair, and, B, as long as Aunt Lillie agreed to it, I didn't have a problem. I didn't personally want the farm. He asked me that, you know, whether or not I wanted the farm personally. I said I did not, that my only concern was that, you know, whatever deal they made was fair to Aunt Lillie and Uncle Ralph and that Aunt Lillie was on board with it.

Q Did you visit with your uncle Ralph Lenstrom at any time in November of 2004?

A Yes, I did.

Q Where did you visit with Ralph Lenstrom in November of 2004?

A I visited with him at his home at Brandherm Road.

Q During that visit, did Ralph Lenstrom tell you that David's farm had been sold to Matt and Cathy Simpson?

A No, he did not.

Q When you visited with Ralph Lenstrom in November of 2004, did you also visit with Lillie Lenstrom?

A Yes, I did.

Q During the course of that visit, did Lillie Lenstrom tell you that David's farm had been sold to Matt and Cathy Simpson?

A No, she didn't.

Q Did you have any conversations with Matt Simpson on December 22nd of 2004 about the value of David's farm?

A Yes, I did.

Q Where did that conversation take place?

A At David's farm. I had gone up there to get the last few things of Wilma's out of the house, and Matt arrived while -- Cathy was there initially. Matt arrived while we were in the process of getting the stuff out.

Q And who initiated the discussion regarding the valuing of David's farm?

A I believe it would have been Matt.

Q And what did Matt say?

A He said that basically -- he said that, yes, they got a deal, but the tax assessment was around a little over 200,000, so he didn't feel that the price was unreasonable.

Q And what was your reaction to Matt's statements?

A Well, I think initially he had said that there was an assessment involved, and I tried to pin him down as to who had assessed, and then at that point he talked about the assessment, and my reaction was, "Well, if it, you know, if you think it's reasonable" -- well, he had asked also about the investigation that John Fitzgerald was doing, although he didn't mention John's name. And I said, "Well, if you feel that it's reasonable, you know, that this is a reasonable price, what you really need to do is get, you know, use whatever input you have on Ralph to get Ralph and Wilma, talk things over, find out exactly what is going on, you know, if it is unreasonable, then that's -- if it's reasonable, then yeah, then it's reasonable."

Q During that discussion about the John Fitzgerald investigation, did Matt Simpson indicate to you whether he wanted the investigation dropped or dismissed?

A He brought it up twice during the conversation and seemed concerned about it. I don't believe he specifically said -- asked me to drop it. I really don't think I would have had the ability anyway.

Q Did you discuss with Matt Simpson any conversations you had had with Lillie Lenstrom about whether or not she was aware of the land contract?

A I don't believe I did. I did tell him that I had -- that I had talked to Ralph, and Ralph had denied selling it to them because of Lillie's objections.

Q Did you have any discussions with Lillie Lenstrom about whether or not she had sold the farm to David -- or to Matt and Cathy?

A Yes, I did.

Q When did you have that conversation with Lillie?

A Let's see. It would have been on November -- I believe it was the 24th, the first time I came up to get Wilma's stuff out of David's.

Q And did Lillie Lenstrom disclose to you that she had sold David's farm?

A No, she did not. She denied having sold it.

Q What was Lillie's reaction to your telling her that there was a land contract?

A She didn't seem to believe that. I also talked with her after I had -- after I had talked to Matt Simpson, and I told her that he had said that it was sold, and she said that it's not sold and it's not going to be sold.

Q Were you present at the Lenstrom home when Cathy Simpson and Lillie were also present January 5th of 2005?

A Yes, I was.

Q Who else was present other than yourself and Cathy and Lillie?

A Her husband Red was there also.

Q During that January 5th, 2005 visit, were there any discussions about whether or not Cathy and Matt had purchased David's farm?

A Yes, there was.

Q And what, if anything, did Cathy Simpson say during the course of that conversation?

A She told Lillie that "It's not sold. It's still yours. We're just renting."

Q Did you ever have an argument or an unpleasant encounter with Matt Simpson at his place of work?

A No, I did not.

Q Did you have any discussions with Matt Simpson about what he intended to do with the contents of David's home after the purchase?

A Yes. When I went up there on, I guess it was December 22nd, he had said that one of the reasons why they were building the garage was so they could put David's furniture in there when they moved in.

MS. TIBBETTS: I have no further questions.

Thank you.

THE COURT: Mr. Terschan?

MR. TERSCHAN: Just a few, Your Honor.

CROSS-EXAMINATION BY MR. TERSCHAN:

Q Did you ever work on Mr. Lenstrom's computer?

A Yes, I did.

Q Did you go through it after he died?

A You mean -- yeah, I did go through the files.

Q So you were going through the files, and being a computer teacher or involved in computers heavily, you were able to manipulate the files and work with them?

A I was able to look at them, yeah.

Q Now, you've indicated your relationship with Ralph Lenstrom was close, I believe you said?

A Yes.

Q What kind of things did you do with Ralph?

A Well, he's been part of my life since I was -- about the time I was born.

Q Well, let's talk about the last five years, then. In the last five years, what kind of things would you do with him?

A Well, let's see. When my daughter was about seven, we went down to the river and both tried to catch frogs for her when she asked us to.

Q Was that within the last five years?

A Let's see, she was about seven. No, I guess it would have been seven years. Well, pretty much every year we would go up and we had a family get-together and kind of a potluck. We'd have that every year. When I would go in -- when I would go up there, I'd pretty much chat with Ralph. In the later years, he talked a lot about his Korean War experiences.

Q How often did you see him in the last five years?

A As I pointed out earlier, an average of probably a range of probably five to ten times a year.

Q Now, you said you had a conversation with Matt about the value of the farm?

A That's correct.

Q And that took place where?

A December 22nd. It was at David's house, the Highway 81 property.

Q Okay. Did that discussion -- was that discussion amiable or heated or hostile?

A Not particularly heated.

Q Just a discussion?

A Just a discussion, yeah.

Q When you spoke to Ralph about the sale of the property when you asked him whether he had sold it, when was that?

A That would have been -- it was the end of November, probably about the 27th or 28th.

Q And are you sure he didn't tell you to mind your own business?

A No. He said -- I asked him if the property had been sold. He said that it had not because Aunt Lillie had --well, actually what he said was that the -- he had tried to put together something where Matt and Cathy got kind of right of first refusal on the farm, but Aunt Lillie did not want to do that, so it had been dropped. At the same time I asked him if the trust had been given, and he had pretty much the same response that Aunt Lillie didn't want to. She wanted to take care of herself or choose who would take care of her, and so she -- so nothing had been done.

MR. TERSCHAN: All right. That's all I have.

THE COURT: You may step down. Thank you.

Next witness.

## SLUSHPILE CONTEST ENTRY – THEY KILLED LIKE MEN

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"They killed like men." Janine Hart didn't move from the fetal position. She didn't look up. I looked down at her, huddled under a cot in the one partially intact building in what had been a small Ugandan town whose name I couldn't pronounce.

"Concrete walls six inches thick but they still nearly got her." Jake Smith, the translator

touched the portion of the wall where the door had been.

"You know this wasn't really elephants, right?" I said.

"Elephants rampage and kill people," Jake said.

"That they do. It happens more in India than over here, but yes they do," I said. How many people?"

"At least one hundred and fifty," Jake said. "Maybe more."

"And one survivor," I said. "If they really thought it was elephants I wouldn't be here."

Jake made a gesture that took in a panorama of smashed huts and more substantial houses. "No shell holes. No shell casings. No tracks from trucks or tanks. Lots of elephant tracks up to the town and to the smashed buildings. Elephants could smash things up like that. Nothing else short of a bulldozer of a tank could."

I wandered around the wrecked town, looking for patterns. "The Ugandan army's been in a lot of these buildings."

"They looked for survivors and got the rifles and pistols out before looters got them," Jake said. "And the ivory."

"How many guns?"

Jake shrugged. "A dozen—maybe fifteen."

"And one person got a shot off," I said. "They might have hesitated because of the laws against shooting elephants, but enough of them were poachers that I can't see that stopping them. So why only one shot?"

Jake said, "It might have happened too fast. Might have happened at night."

"It happened within a two hour window around dawn yesterday," I said. "See if you get me a map of where they found the guns."

As Jake walked over to the Ugandan army detachment, I tried to make sense of the scene. I've got to admit that I was baffled. That got worse as I correlated where the guns were with the positions of the bodies. "Just like the other three," I said.

Jake said, "Three of them, huh?"

"I'm not sure if you're supposed to know that," I said. "Oh well."

"Any survivors?"

I said, "Not until now. And she hasn't said anything else."

"How is this like the other three?"

I thought about how much to tell him, then shrugged and said, "If there were guns in the houses everybody died in bed or at most barely got out of them. Not guns meant they got some warning—maybe five minutes based on the positions of the bodies. This was systematic. Planned. Everybody dead inside of fifteen minutes—probably less."

"Elephants aren't dumb. Maybe this bunch got tired of people shooting at them," Jake said.

"So they studied the town, pinpointed where the guns were, came in at dawn and got into position. Then they charged in from five locations simultaneously, bypassing houses without guns until the ones with guns were taken care of."

Jake took off his hat and scratched his head "That doesn't sound likely, does it?"

"A human army couldn't have taken this place down any faster or more efficiently," I said.

"Well, they say elephants are smart—"

I shook my head. "This would take so many cognitive leaps that—well bigger than man versus baboon."

"So someone trained them?" Jake shook his head. "Why? Why not just go in and shoot everyone?"

"If they're trying to scare people this is more effective," I said. "But the resources it would take for this level of training—and African elephants aren't as easy to train as Indian ones—"

A helicopter had been making ever wider circles as I looked over the town. I didn't any sign that they had found anything. I said, "Tracks converge on town and appear to diverge on the way out. We can follow some sets tracks but I'm not entirely sure we want to find whoever did this, even with a couple of hundred armed men backing us up."

Jake said, "The woman is still not saying anything useful."

"Janice Hart? Any idea who she is?" I asked.

"Nurse of some kind I think," Jake said. "I guess we're not even sure the name goes with the woman. Just an educated guess. Just guessing that it was her husband or what was left of him by the door, too."

"Any idea how recent the ivory is?" I asked.

"Some of it isn't more than three or four days old." Jake shook his head. "Something wrong here. Isn't there cell phone coverage?"

"We would be at the fringe of it, but yes." *And if it's like the other two, the nearest tower is down. Apparently knocked down by elephants.* Out loud I said, "Any camera phones or cameras?"

"I'll check."

"If it's like the last two times—"

"What?"

*Most of them will be crushed, probably deliberately. If any survive they'll show rampaging elephants.* I hesitated, then said, "Cell phones and cameras aren't real common out here, and there's a good chance the few there were got crushed in the—whatever happened here."

## A SLICE OF MY LIFE: GETTING THERE AFTER DARK

---

Getting there after dark was a really bad idea. I told my daughter that several times as we got ready to go. My aunt's farm had been empty for two weeks. It's out in the boonies in Wisconsin, in Avon Township, an area that even the sheriff's deputies call "The Wild West". My aunt was 84 at the time, widowed and unable to live on her own on that isolated farm for a variety of reasons. My sister and her husband stayed with her most of the summer. During the part of the summer when they were tied up my aunt stayed with us.

My sister and her husband were coming back late the next night. They didn't want to arrive after dark to a deserted farm, so they asked me to take my aunt up there the day before they arrived and check the place out, then stay overnight there with my aunt and be there when they got there. At the time my then 15-year-old daughter was fascinated by the farm, so she decided to come along. That started the problem. There may be a 15-year-old girl somewhere in this world who can pack quickly. My daughter was not that girl. She dawdled, chatted on the phone, took a long shower as the afternoon wore on. We had a 90 minute drive ahead of us, and I saw the minutes ticking away. I repeatedly warned her: "We really don't want to get there after dark".

We finally got going. At that point we still had a shot at getting there before dark but it was going to be a close race with the sun. The farm is in an isolated area, as I noted. Several miles before we got there we had to stop because three deer were standing in the middle of the road and wouldn't move until I repeatedly flashed the lights and sounded the horn. The deer set us behind five or ten minutes. The sun was beginning to set. Darkness was starting to fall when I finally got to the gate to my aunt's farm. There were only minutes of daylight left when we pulled up to her farmhouse.

As we pulled up to the farmhouse, I noticed something. I could see a light in the hallway. I was the last one out of the house and I was almost 100% certain I had left the light on, but the hallway door closed. I shouldn't have been able to see that light. In the fading light I checked the doors and looked over the windows. Locked and no sign of forced entry that I could see in the failing light. I decided that I must have left the door open, so we went in, carrying our luggage. We got lights on and started to settle in. Then I

noticed something else. One of the bedrooms is normally locked, and I was almost 100% sure I had locked it before I left. It was unlocked.

Now I had a problem. There was no sign of a break in, and no sign of anything missing from the house. At the same time, there were two indications that things were not the way I had left them. We were planning to sleep there that night. I wasn't comfortable with that idea, though I didn't have any good alternatives.

One of the differences between city people and country people is their attitude toward guns. For country people, at least in the Midwest, guns are just a fact of life. My uncle had died a year or two ago of prostate cancer, but I knew there were still several of his guns in the house—including a 38 revolver. I'm a city person, and not really that comfortable with guns, though I have fired them and have had a quickie course in gun safety. I got one of my uncle's guns out, loaded it and thought the situation over.

There was a chance that I had left the bedroom door unlocked and the hall door open. That seemed unlikely. I'm usually careful about that kind of thing. There was a chance that someone had broken in by picking a lock, looked around and then left without taking anything, or taking something we hadn't noticed was missing yet. There was also, unfortunately, a chance that someone had broken in and was hiding somewhere in the house. The more I thought about it, the more I realized that I didn't want my daughter and aunt going to sleep in that house until I had ruled that possibility out.

If there had been definite signs of a break-in we would have left and called the sheriff. There wasn't any such evidence though, and we really had no place to go that wasn't 90 dark minutes away. I decided, probably foolishly, to search the place, revolver in hand. I explained my reasoning to my daughter and probably scared the bejeebers out of her.

Then I searched the place. I kept my finger off the trigger and the revolver pointed up as I searched the bedrooms and the closets and under the beds. Then I climbed the creaky stairs and repeated the process in the upstairs. The farmhouse isn't very big, but it seemed to have an almost unlimited number of hiding places as went from room to room. I kept telling myself that if anyone had been there they were probably long gone. Deep down I didn't

believe that. I was uncomfortably aware that if someone was hiding there and they had gun they would almost certainly get off the first shot. With thoughts like that going through my head, you can imagine how relieved I was when I was finally satisfied that no one was lurking in the house.

My daughter and still didn't sleep much that night. My aunt thought it was all a bunch of foolishness and went on about her business. The only slight casualty was my daughter. As I said, I scared the bejeebers out of her. She found a knife somewhere and kept it with her during my search. For some reason at some point she decided to test out the sharpness on her hand. It was sharp enough to give her a nasty cut that we had to bandage.

In a work of fiction this would all have gotten resolved in some way. I would have found someone or something that explained the things that spooked me.

## FROM THE NOTEBOOK ERA: THE DEEP FUTURE

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*This is a slightly modified version of something I wrote in the summer of 1978 when I was amazingly young and the year 2000 seemed a long way off. I set it aside and it sat forgotten in a notebook until a recent cleaning spree almost sent it to the trash. I got started reading it though, and decided to share it. I added the Photoshopped animals later.*

I took a walk this morning and for some reason as I walked I started thinking about the future. Not the future in terms of tomorrow a year from now or even fifty years from now but the future say a thousand or ten thousand or a million or ten million years from now.



Suppose a man from 1978 suddenly found himself ten million years into the future. What would he find? I doubt that he'd be able to recognize even the landscape. Would Rock River exist, or Kent Creek? The Great Lakes? Probably not, at least not in

Real life isn't always like that. I never did figure out how the door got opened and the other door got unlocked. Nobody bothered us that night or the next day. The outbuildings have been broken into twice since then, but the farmhouse itself seems to have been left untouched. Avon Township has lived up to its "wild west" reputation several times. About a year later a couple of my aunt's neighbors were doing some work for her in her front yard when shotgun slugs started hitting all around them. A couple of hunters were blazing away at a deer, and ignoring the house and barn they were shooting toward. There have been other incidents around the farm that I'll probably tell you about someday. Overall, getting up there after dark is a bad idea.

their present form. More importantly—what type of inhabitants would he find in that world? A super civilization? A world without human life? Both?

I've got two conflicting opinions on what he'd find. Opinion number 1 is the typical science fiction future world that Heinlein or Anderson have built up—mankind expanding to the stars, a technology-based civilization, maybe with contact with extra-terrestrials, maybe without. Mankind itself alters only slightly in physical and behavior patterns.

I have problems with that future though. We don't really have any way of extrapolating technological growth for more than a few hundred years. Think about it. We've expanded knowledge and technology so much and at such a geometrically increasing rate. In ten million years what would we or rather our descendants know? What wouldn't they know? Lots of short story possibilities there—the last researcher finds the last fact left to be found out.

Can you imagine how specialized the scientists would have to be if knowledge kept increasing at the current rate?

What if we contacted a civilization more advanced than our own somewhere along the way? Most people think about invasions and wars when they think about that possibility, but there are other possibilities. What would happen given peaceful contact and interchange of ideas and technologies? First, what would happen to the specialists—engineers, physicists, linguists,

accountants, doctors, teachers if the contacting civilization had technologies in those fields that made ours obsolete.

What effect would there be on music, literature, philosophy, theatre, art, political science, religion? There ought to be quite a few potential stories in those areas.



Also I think the invasion idea could be handled better. Invasion wouldn't have to be military. It could be ideological or economic. Maybe you could make some kind of a parallel with what happened to the American Indian. Sell him a gun and eventually he forgets how to use a bow and arrow—and then you have him at your mercy. If you read about the Indian wars and you look for it you'll usually find some reference to the Indians running out of gunpowder right before the cavalry rides up.

The point is: if a society can't manufacture something that it is dependent on, it becomes subject to whatever the people or society that supply that something want to make it subject to. The Indians never whole-heartedly wanted to exterminate white settlers completely because if they did the Indians would lose the trade in gunpowder, whiskey, cloth, that had become important to their survival. Economic invasion could also be

through superior techniques or capital that drive native businesses out of business. I can think of quite a few stories to write from that angle.

I think I got a little off the subject, but the point of all this is that while I can theorize about the future, all of the concrete possibilities I talked about are things that would happen in the next few hundred or a thousand years. The

technology of a society ten million years from now would be so alien if the current knowledge and technology explosion continues that I can't imagine it. There isn't enough data to extrapolate that far ahead.

If a human technological society exists ten million years from now and if it continues to expand in knowledge and technology, it would be so alien I can't even imagine what it would be like. However, I've got another opinion of what kind of a world my hypothetical man that goes forward ten million years would find.

I would say that he would step out into a world where there is not just one intelligent species. In other words there might be several different species of men and possibly other intelligent animals. That opinion assumes that our current surge of technology will burn itself out and collapse. Mankind will go back to the hunter-gatherer or primitive agriculture stages. With the easily available coal, gas, oil and ore supplies used up there will never be another industrial revolution. Man will become dependent on nature again and nature will shape him into different species for the different parts of the world—men for the jungle, men for the desert, men for the mountains, all going their separate ways in response to their environment and eventually over millions of year, becoming separate species.

This opinion also assumes that animals other than man will develop the things that now separate humans from animals—tool use, speech and greater intelligence to name a few.

There is no real barrier to animals gaining greater intelligence, and as far as speech and tool use goes chimps and gorillas already have shown some capacity for both. I read an article recently that talked about tool use by birds. It said that at least 16 kinds of birds have been observed using simple tools. Some of the examples it gave were of eagles dropping rocks on ostrich eggs and caged birds raking in food with a roll of newspaper. Those aren't exactly the height of technology but compared with what we had a million years ago its not bad. Ten million years from now we may have monkeys, birds, wolves, cats, elephants, mongooses (mongeese?) all what we would consider intelligent. What would a world with multiple intelligences be like?

*A lot of ideas here. Some of them I now consider quaint or naïve. Some of them I turned into science fiction stories of various kinds. I took the idea of an economic invasion and turned it into a short story called **The BEMs**. Others of the ideas are now in one of my many unpublished novellas and novelettes.*

MAILING COMMENTS

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**Jack Calvert:** Your comments to Peggy Rae Sapienza: My wife is also a watch stopper, but with her it is digital watches. My pockets kill all but the most hardy of miniature flashlights in very short order, but that is probably a matter of being very active and perspiring a bit. I also enjoyed the bits about the ecology of Chernobyl.

**Jim Caughran:** Interesting chart on income distribution. I've always thought that increased concentration of wealth inherently makes an economy less stable and governments more corrupt. Actually, that may partly reverse cause and effect. More corrupt governments do a poorer job managing the economy and also provide more opportunities for wealthy pseudo-entrepreneurs to use the government to get rich.

**Eric Leif Davin:** Interesting comments on the Westinghouse Museum.

**Gordon Eklund:** Interesting take on the pro-Southern view of the post-Civil War era. My take on the Civil War and its aftermath is probably a bit unorthodox. I sometimes toy with the thought that the US might have been better off just letting the deep south states go their own way. The deep south had no future as an independent economy because its cotton/plantation base was too destructive to farmland. Without the ability to expand to new territory it would have died in fairly short order.

On the other hand, the precedent that states could simply walk away from the union if a majority or in some cases a vocal minority of their citizens wanted to would have been a very bad thing. Some mechanism that allowed secession but made it difficult would have made sense—maybe a requirement for a plebiscite that won two-thirds or 70% of the popular vote. That would make things more difficult, while still preventing the central government from getting dominated by a block of populous states that imposed their will on other parts of the country. Oh well, the issue got settled a long time ago.

It is a shame that after fighting the civil war the north didn't finish the job by forcing a reconstruction that gave African Americans an economic base and

that protected their right to vote. The problem was partly that the north was almost as racist as the south during the crucial period.

Interesting take on the election of 1876. Yep, that one was definitely stolen, one way or the other. On the other hand, by that criteria every presidential election the Democrats won from the time black votes were suppressed in the south in the aftermath of the Civil War until the mid-1960s was stolen, as was every Senatorial and House of Representatives majority they held during that period. Oh well, all water under the bridge at this point.

I've often wondered if the fact that South Carolina was settled from Barbados with an already fully developed plantation economy might have been a key factor in pushing the entire deep south down a dead-end path. South Carolina was extremely destructive to southeastern Indians too in the early days after it was founded, sponsoring wars to generate Indian slaves. Those wars virtually emptied Florida of its Indian population, leaving a vacuum that the Seminoles eventually evolved in. Recent historians have discovered that pretty much every surviving southeastern Indian tribe was created by the pressures of South Carolina's slave wars, with often disparate ethnic groups being pushed together by the imperative to either defend themselves from slavers or to become strong enough to be slavers themselves.

**Steven Green:** Your comments to the other Dale: Interesting story about the Doomsday book on laser disc. I never had a laser disc, but I thought it was a cool technology. Still do. On a personal level, I've had to migrate some of my writing from Commodore 64 format floppies to Amiga format floppies, then to MS-Dos windows format floppies, and finally to CD-R/DVD=R. From what I hear, a lot of data from early space probes is on unreadable tape formats.

Your comments to me: I have a Live Journal account too, though I don't visit there much. Gather is not as fun now as it used to be, but it is still attractive.

**Ben Indick:** Enjoyed reading about your science fiction discoveries. I also like the cover. I have a small collection of pulps and I love the artwork.

**Robert Lichtman:** I was interesting to hear that you lived on the Farm commune during the 70's. I admired that commune, and kind of thought it was the wave of the future during the naïve years right out of college. I still think it was an interesting experiment. Your comments to Garcia: Sleep apnea is somewhat connected to weight gain, but there are people at normal weight who get it, even the obstructive kind. Recent studies seem to show that untreated sleep apnea is an independent risk factor for strokes, heart attacks, and damage to some parts of the brain. Not sure if that responds to your point, but I thought it was interesting.

On preserving FAPA distributions: I wonder if it would be feasible to scan older issues onto a series of DVD-Roms. Probably not due to the amount of work involved. It might make sense to have a voluntary program where people submitted a PDF copy of their zines to be included in a CD/DVD-Rom archive. I've been toying with the idea of starting something like that for POD.

**Fred Lerner:** Your comments on Steve Stirling's revivals of the classic science fiction *Venus and Mars*: I thought that the Venus version (*Sky People*) was a wonderful playground that was way too big for the story he set in it. That may be colored by the fact that I was in the process (about two-thirds done with the rough draft) of writing a different approach to this type of novel that is probably not publishable now due to the similarities with Stirling's stuff. Similarities had to have been coincidental. I had the basic idea 30 years ago and actually started writing my version in 2003. I'm pretty sure he was plotting his story before I started writing mine, though not before I started plotting it. Oh well. That's what I get for procrastinating. *Court of the Crimson Kings* is an excellent story. It modernizes the Mars setting very well.

I like the comments from the three umpires.

**Eric Lindsay:** Your comments to the other Dale: The issue of color laser printers costs versus the cost of toners is a real problem. I hate the idea of buying a printer and then pitching it after the toner is gone, but that is where the financial incentive lies. Your comments to Jack Speer: I like the idea of concentrator solar cells, but I wouldn't want them on my roof, especially not the ones that require any kind of active cooling. Any failure at 500 suns is something I wouldn't want to have happen within kindling distance of my

house. I could see concentrator systems working in standalone power plant though.

Your comments to Tutihasi: The Prius battery is a Nickel Metal Hydride (NIMH). Key patents on that technology are owned by Cobasys, a joint venture between Energy Conversion Devices and Chevron, the oil company. Cobasys has refused to license NIMH batteries for transportation uses, though they have produced some themselves for General Motors. The key patents run out in 2014. At that point hopefully NIMH batteries may get cheaper and more powerful. That may actually come before 2014. Cobasys sued some of the major Japanese battery manufacturers a while back for infringing on their NIMH patents. If I understand the settlement it restricted the power of batteries the Japanese companies could sell in the US up to a point, but it allowed the companies involved to begin marketing larger NIMH batteries in the US before 2014. I think it was 2010, but it might have been earlier.

In any case, several factors may intervene to make all of this irrelevant. Cobasys has been losing money at the rate of \$80-90 million per year and Chevron is getting tired of eating that kind of losses. Chevron and ECD are trying to sell Cobasys, with the rumored buyer being General Motors. I'm not sure where that leaves potential customers other than GM, but at least GM would have access to the technology. If Lithium-Ion battery manufacturers get the problem of thermal runaway solved so that it doesn't lead to batteries catching fire or exploding, then NIMH patents become irrelevant. Lithium Ion has a better power-to-weight ratio anyway.

A dark horse in all of this is Firefly's Advanced Lead Acid Batteries. Firefly is a spin-off of Caterpillar, the heavy equipment manufacturer. Their first series of batteries probably wouldn't make for a very good electric car, but if they can get some of the more advanced versions out they may be a contender. They should have much better durability, ability to accept deep discharge cycles, and considerably better power-to-weight ratio than standard lead-acid batteries. Right now Firefly is targeting "hotel loads" for big trucks. The idea is that when a trucker stops for a sleep-over he or she can run an air-conditioner, a TV and other appliances off of the battery rather than having the truck idle to run those things. If they succeed in that initial market they may later look into the hybrid car and electric car markets.

**Janice Morningstar:** SUVs seemed to fade fast around here when the price of gas went over \$4 per gallon. Prices have dropped lately and I'm not sure what impact that will have if it continues.

**Robert Michael Sabella** Enjoyed the reviews, the humor and the list of zines received. Interesting stats on the number of fantasy versus science fiction stories published per year. Part of my problem with the current science fiction market is that a lot of older favorite authors have died or retired and I haven't found as many new ones to take their place.

Your comments to Dale Speirs: I'm glad to hear that you enjoy Alternate History, and especially non-World War II stuff. I hope you enjoyed my two scenarios from last issue.

**Bob Silverberg:** Ah yes, transferring data from one make of computer to the other was a lot of fun in the pre-DOS era. I had a similar experience after things had pretty much standardized on Windows. I bought something called a SuperDrive—essentially a floppy drive that would read either normal floppies or ones with 120 megabytes of capacity. They were kind of a competitor to the early zip drives. I loved the drive and I used the 120 meg floppies as backups. I found out the error in my ways when the drive went bad and I discovered that SuperDrives had lost out in the format war with zip drives. I couldn't find a replacement drive and didn't have access to the data for several years. Fortunately there wasn't anything absolutely time-critical on the disks, and equally fortunately I didn't throw the disks away. Finally I stumbled across an old laptop with a SuperDrive and a bad hard drive. Someone was about to throw it away, but I took it off of their hands, booted it up using a light-weight Linux LiveCD and used the drive to transfer my data to a jump drive. Problem solved. Lesson learned.

I got to thinking about your analysis of where the science fiction market is going from a few zines ago. I wonder if it might make sense to see if publishers would be interested in some kind of "Robert Silverberg Presents" line of books featuring younger authors who you feel are worthy of recognition. It might keep your hand in the game and push the industry in a better direction, as well as providing pen money. Just a thought and one that you've probably heard before, but it's free, so do with it what you wish.

**Dale Speirs:** One of these days I'm going to have to figure out your numbering system on these zines. I enjoyed your review of *Lest Darkness Fall*. You're right about it pointing out the need for the technological underpinnings to be there before a lot of inventions can happen. In my Alternate History scenarios I sometimes move inventions around by a few

years or a decade, but rarely more than that because I'm never confident that I've identified all of the technologies that had to be in existence before one I'm after could exist.

I haven't read *Pasquale's Angel*, but it sounds like AH done right. I also enjoyed your zine listings. So much to read and so little time. I was wondering how insurance companies were reacting in the aftermath of Katrina. How do you get ahold of all of these zines and how do you find time to read them? I noticed a couple of AH zines in there. I'll have to see if I can track them down and take a look.

I also enjoyed your journal reviews, especially the ones on intermittent plate tectonics, human migration in the Pacific, the consequences of removing large animals from an ecology, and what happened in the stock market crash of 1987.

Moving on to the next zine: Interesting observation in your comments to Sweet Jane. You say that the era between 1850 and 1950 was an anomaly due partly to lack of competition for books. That probably explains my reading to some extent. My parents didn't get a TV until I was in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and regulated the amount of time I could watch TV after that. As a result reading was my escape rather than TV. The stuff I read as a kid wasn't generally of very high quality. I fixated on series books, starting out with Hardy Boys and Tom Swift, then moving on to Rick Brant, Ken Holt and Three Investigators. I took a detour through young adult stories of the 1920s and 1930s like Rover Boys, the original Tom Swift, Jerry Todd, Poppy Ott, then moved on to The Saint before getting heavily into science fiction. When I didn't have anything else to do instead of turning on the TV I would just take a stack of books to the couch and read 4 or 5 of them in a day. I guess that still made me a couch potato, but at least I was a literate one.

Your comments to Voice of the Habu: I've been at the deathbed of three elderly relatives now and was there when two of them died. Death can be a long agonizing process, even when the person is barely clinging to life. In a lot of cases the coming of death was a mercy. I miss the aunt who recently passed away, but if I could somehow zap her back to life I wouldn't unless I could also fix a lot of the things that were wrong with her. She was diabetic and had osteoporosis so bad that her bones were as brittle as chalk. She had a shattered hip and three fractures in her back. Her arteries were 90% clogged on average and some veins in her stomach were completely clogged. Her stomach tissue would have died if she hadn't died from what killed her. If she had lived she would have been in a hospital off and on for months trying to get everything fixed. Fixing the veins in her stomach would have required

a surgery with barely more than 50% chance she would survive. If she did survive she would have had a painful recovery period, after which she would have had to get surgery to get her back put back together. Even if that had worked she would have still been unable to walk and terribly susceptible to bones breaking, and on borrowed time with the clogged arteries.

Your response to A Propos De Rien: You make a good point about possessions owning you if you let them. I treasure my time far more than I treasure any possessions I might accumulate. Dealing with clearing out my mom and dad's house after dad died put the whole possessions thing in perspective. A good 90% of what they had was worthless to anybody but them, and much of it made their lives more complicated and less enjoyable.

Your comment about "locust" fans: Yeah, I've encountered that at a few cons. Too bad.

I always enjoy your writing about the Canadian scene. You realize of course that most Americans and the bulk of US media totally ignores Canada. Interesting about the impact of high oil prices up there. I'm guessing that there is at least one more partial oil bust in our future. Much of the current price is anticipation of still higher prices, and the balance between supply and demand is delicate. I could easily see prices dropping back down to the \$60-70 barrel range, though I would be surprised to see it go down much more than that. The dollar has weakened enough that going much further down than that doesn't make much sense.

It will be interesting to see how governments and the public will react to any price downturn. Will we continue to develop alternatives and rebuild infrastructure in a way that works with higher energy prices or will we go back to SUVs and long commutes once the pressure of high gas prices temporarily eases?

I enjoyed your article on the Canadian rationing system. Not surprising to find out that not everyone in Allied countries were paragons of virtue during World War II.

**Milt Stevens:** Good comment to Searles on the good islands already being taken.

**R –Laurraine Tutihasi:** Love the cover. I know what you mean about deadlines converging. I'm rushing this to print one day after I finished

putting POD together yesterday. Sending it Monday morning if all goes well on the printing. I hope it will get to California on time.

I'm impressed that you sold a house in LA in this economic climate.

**Shelby Vick:** Be careful. You might talk me into going into politics. Probably just kidding. Got to admit that the perks sound attractive. Your comments to Robert. I worked at MetLife about 8 years ago for about a year and a half.

**Roger Wells** Interesting allegory about walking bicycles.

**Egoboo awards:** Sorry I didn't get a ballot in. I was pleasantly surprised to be ranked in a couple of categories. Kind of figured I would be invisible after a brief spate of zines and a three zine absence. Congratulations to the winners.