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“Mystery Adventure, June 1936,” by Norman Saunders

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There's a game for every season—ice hockey, basketball, baseball, football. Life soon appears to be a game, and it isn't. In games the object is to win, but in life the object is not to win. The object of the whole world is to preserve the game board and the pieces, and there is no such game.

—Kurt Vonnegut

THIS ISSUE OF *eI* is for Tom Lesser, Rose Idlet, and the usual suspects who make up the annual Mission Hills (Los Angeles) Paperback Show and Sale.

In the strictly science fiction world, it is also in memory of J.G. Ballard, Jack Jardine, and Langley Searles..

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As always, everything in this issue of *eI* beneath my byline is part of my in-progress rough-draft memoirs. As such, I would appreciate any corrections, revisions, extensions, anecdotes, photographs, jpegs, or what have you sent to me at earlkemp@citlink.net and thank you in advance for all your help.

Bill Burns is *jefe* around here. If it wasn't for him, nothing would get done. He inspires activity. He deserves some really great rewards. It is a privilege and a pleasure to have him working with me to make *eI* whatever it is.

Other than Bill Burns, Dave Locke, and Robert Lichtman, these are the people who made this issue of *eI* possible: Robert E. Briney, Bruce Brenner, Jacques Hamon, Tony Jacobs, Earl Terry Kemp, Luis Ortiz, David Saunders, Norman Saunders, Robert Silverberg, and Daniel Zimmer.

ARTWORK: This issue of *eI* features original artwork by Ditmar, and recycled artwork by William Rotsler and Norman Saunders.

Of his back cover on this issue of *eI*, Ditmar says: “The graphic is titled “Robot Worship,” and it is subtitled “Bless me, Dragon! For I must sin.”

It's hard work, it's not pleasant -- just in solitude, writing. You can't have anybody around. It's a very lonesome business, and we're social animals.
—Kurt Vonnegut

...Return to sender, address unknown.... 34

The Official *eI* Letters to the Editor Column

Artwork recycled William Rotsler

By Earl Kemp

We get letters. Some parts of some of them are printable. Your letter of comment is most wanted via email to earlkemp@citlink.net or by snail mail to P.O. Box 6642, Kingman, AZ 86402-6642 and thank you.

Also, please note, I observe DNQs and make arbitrary and capricious deletions from these letters in order to remain on topic.

This is the official Letter Column of *eI*, and following are a few quotes from a few of those letters concerning the last issue of *eI*. All this in an effort to get you to write letters of comment to *eI* so you can look for them when they appear here.

Tuesday March 31, 2009:

Emil Reynolds: Thanks without end for the tremendous job you did on this memorial to dad. I am blown away. I have asked my daughter-in-law to print up copies for my immediate family that I can inscribe to each of them. Its important that they keep his memory fresh and know the kind of man he really was. There could be no more fitting memorial.

Thursday April 9, 2009:

Mick Deckinger: *eI43* is another outstanding, and scholarly issue. I especially like your approach in focusing upon a secondary writer (Mack Reynolds) who never achieved highest echelon status but still offered a varied and provocative output.



He did right to steer clear of the Penitentes. In the early 1930's, a documentary filmmaker named Roland C. Price traveled to Mexico, for the purpose of filming the secretive rites of the Penitentes.. He got his footage and was lucky enough to escape with his life, although not without injury. This footage was then sold to a sleaze producer, who combined it with a fictional story, offering, among other forbidden delights, topless posing and a topless flogging. He then issued the film under the *title Lash of the Penitentes* in 1936. You can see excerpts from it on YouTube.

I'm grateful Robert Lichtman jogged my memory with his review of *The Case of the Little Green Men*. This was one of the earliest books I read, while still a high-schooler. I saw the vivid cover illustration, and had to check it out of the library. I remember feeling a pang of regret, when it turned out to be a grounded terrestrial mystery, rather than the sinister alien invasion tale I was expecting. But, so what? I would still jog along my school grounds, taking special care to display the cover to all I passed.

If there was one memorable statement in this issue, it would have to be the following from page 38: "...the town's Monsignor, who was in New York interviewing boys on Times Square for summer jobs as his altar boy in San Miguel." *Perfecto!!!*



Friday April 17, 2009:

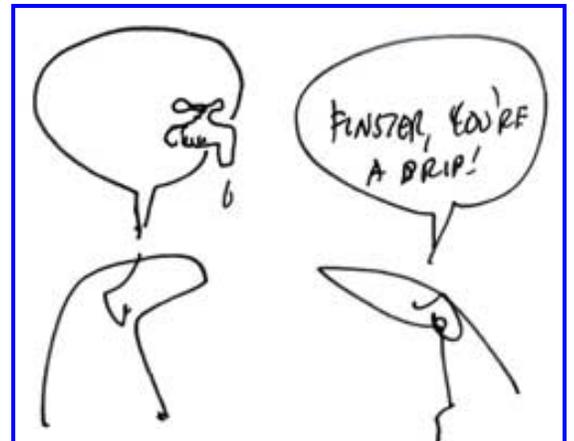
Lloyd Penney: Thank you for *eI43*, and congratulations to you for the FAAn Award for Best Fanzine! Well deserved, and I hope you've got your plaque on your shelf. I've got mine, but it's time to shed the laurels and get right back on the horse. With my unique mix of metaphors, here's a loc.

Chris Garcia, get yourself a movie camera, strap it on your forehead, and take us on a tour of your warehouse in Milpitas. I can only imagine some of the computerish curios resting in that warehouse. Still need a Comptometer?

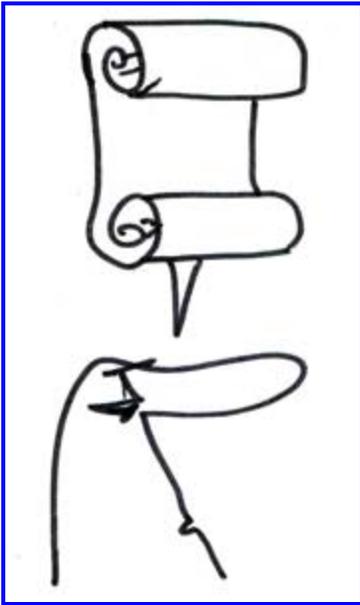
I have seen and read the various chapters of Rich Lynch's book on fandom in the 60s, and I hope there will be more. I am pleased someone's wanted to create such a book, but I am still hoping that others will add to it. I wish I could, but that's outside of my era. Perhaps fandom needs to be reminded that this is still an on-going project, and their help is needed, not to mention their memories.

A great Mack Reynolds story...dealing with the devil always makes for a good tale. Sometimes, there's a way out of the deal, and sometimes, the devil gets his due. And sometimes, as in this time, the devil got what he wanted long ago, and went along for the ride.

Those recipes from Mack Reynolds will be going into some recipe files, I can imagine. They look a step up from the usual hash brownies, but they sounds like they're a treat to the eye, too. "May I sample one?" said your God-fearing aunt, and you're torn between wanting to keep her status, or wanting to see what it would do to her. Auntie? Here, have two...



I think I would like to read *The Expatriates*, and see why Americans leave home. When Dubya was president, the number of Americans emigrating to Canada tripled to quadrupled, and more during the war in Iraq. One theme I keep hearing is that when you are forced to love your country, you don't love it at all. The United States is also one of the few countries not to sign up with the World Court for War Crimes (not sure of the exact title) because the Dubya regime knew that after some of the atrocities perpetuated in the name of the American people, many of their senior government officials, perhaps even Bush himself, could be brought up on war crimes charges. As if American justice was a higher or different justice, as if the life of an American was worth far more than any other life. You can't say it or write it any better than I could on page 28, Earl. You and Mack hit it on the head. Most people didn't recognize America during the Dubya regime, and now that Obama is in charge, the old friend of the world is slowly returning.



Reynolds books on my shelf...*Day After Tomorrow*, *Planetary Agent X*, *Rolltown*, *Satellite City*, *Space Visitor*, *Time Gladiator*. Most are by Ace Books, some by Lancer and Priory Books. All of those are paperback...I looked for hardcover, and all I can say is that my collection is wide-ranging. I have a copy of the young adult *Star Trek* novel that Mack wrote for Whitman/Western Publishing called *Mission to Horatius*. (Ah, there it is on page 56. Nope, it's not autographed. Emil reminds me that this was indeed the first *Trek* novel or novelization.) It was published in 1968. I guess you do what you have to do to keep the bank account keeping you afloat. If any of those Mack Reynolds stories were to resurface...

Great issue, and all tributes to Mack Reynolds are well deserved. As Fred Pohl said, perhaps the most underappreciated SF writer ever. There are some other people from that era I'd like to know more about...I saw Ted Cogswell mentioned a couple of times, and he's a prime example.

Friday May 1, 2009:

Jonathan Jensen: I have been reading your ezine, great stuff, but makes me want to partake in certain things again, which I'm sure would not be a good

thing. Ya understand I take it. The ezine is like reading Hunter Thompson and Jack Kerouac at the same time, great writhing. You writing a book on your experiences I take it?

Wednesday June 3, 2009:

Robert Lichtman: I love Harry Bell's cover painting on the April *e!* It gives the magazine a touch of class on top of the ongoing appeal that led to it being voted the number one fanzine in this spring's FAAn award polling. You and Bill are truly a winning combination.

I must confess somewhat shamefacedly that due to time constraints I haven't yet read Mack's "Burnt Toast and I sort of yawned my way through Malzberg's reprinted introduction to the Reynolds' "best of" collection. But I warmed up reading Mack's own "Introducing the Author" and my attention was on full as I made my leisurely way through Earl's "Revisiting *The Expatriates*." I'll confess that prior to reading it I knew little of Reynolds' life other than his time spent living in Taos and learning his stfnal craft at the feet of Fredric Brown (which I mostly know through Brown's widow Elizabeth's "Oh, for the Life of an Author's Wife" in *Happy Ending*, one of the Dennis McMillan series of Brown books reprinting all his work that escaped mainstream publication). Earl's article piqued my interest so much that I found and sent away for a copy of *The Expatriates*—it came yesterday and I look forward to learning first-hand more of Mack's incredible life. This will probably also lead me to some focused reading in my copy of *PITFCS*.

What more can I say about this issue? It's education and entertainment all in one. That's what I come away with after enjoying reminiscences of Reynolds by Price, Murray, LaDue, Sohler, Pohl, Swain—and of course Emil Reynolds and both Earl and Earl Terry. It's good to see my review of *The Case of the Little Green Men* in the mix, too, and I look forward to the availability of that delightful novel in future thanks to Earl's and Dick Lupoff's efforts.

Peculiar travel suggestions are dancing lessons from God.
—Kurt Vonnegut

Norman Saunders and Some Writers

by David Saunders

Question: Did pulp illustrators get involved with the writer and the editor when they produced black & white interior story illustrations?



Answer: Usually the art editor would describe a scene to depict, not the writer. The writer might signify in his text that a particular scene would be a good one to illustrate, but the editor had the final say. Different pulp publishers worked differently. Some editors would ask the illustrator to take home a copy of the selected passage of the text and return with a simple pencil sketch, but with another company, the editor would actually scribble a scene of stick figures and indicate the relevant elements. The artist might do a preliminary design during his visit. Some companies had less time and money than other. Then the pen and ink artist would draw up the approved scene. It was difficult to make changes to pen and ink, but if something was wrong, the artist had to paste a piece of paper on top of that section and redraw a new revision on top of it. In this way the interior black & white pen and ink drawings were supportive illustrations for stories, just like in published novels, or articles in *The Saturday Evening Post*. But... the covers were considered to have a different function by most pulp publishers, and that was strictly SALES PROMOTION. The stories were considered irrelevant to the cover artist's task of extracting pocket change from newsstand browsers. Whatever it takes to make a sale was okay. The only

editorial criteria was to maintain a general "LOOK" that was in keeping with the market identity of that magazine title, whatever it happened to be, for instance Fiction House was very concerned to get the greatest amount of pink thigh and bust onto every cover. Generally speaking, my father's pulp publishers had no interest in suggesting any elements relating to the stories contained within the magazines other than the conventional subjects associated with the magazine's theme. In fact it was very common for my father to show up with four or six finished covers to offer on speculation to a pulp publisher, who would often buy them all. It was a freelance relationship, so Dad had no idea where or when those covers might appear in print. On the other hand you can see many instances of other companies using covers that are very specific to their featured stories, such as *Detective Fiction Weekly*, but my father never worked for that magazine.



The illustration that my father and I posed for was published in the April 1969 issue of *Man's Story* for an article entitled, "The Vietcong's Passion Priestess of Death!" I am fourteen and Norm is sixty-one.

Question: Did Norman Saunders know many pulp fiction authors?

Answer: He did know many of them, but the only pulp writers I recall my father mentioning were Bruno Fischer

and L. Ron Hubbard. He must have known more, but those are the only names I recall his mentioning. Generally speaking, my father would visit the pulp publisher's offices only to drop off assignments or to pick up new assignments, so his weekly visits to the busy offices would only last a few minutes and there was no time to lounge around socializing. Dad had a lot of respect for the pulp writers but the funny thing was that almost ALL of the pulp writers dealt with the pulp publishers via the mail. They stayed home and wrote and mailed their stories back and forth for revisions. I understand there were multiple mail deliveries each day in those times. It was a very rare writer that actually showed up at the pulp publishers' offices, so there was no routine elbow-rubbing going on between writers and artists in the pulps. The artists would each pop in briefly once a week or every two weeks to drop off a cover for approval and to show five or six "prelims" for consideration. The offices were very busy so there was almost no time to sit around. The artist would get the art editor's reaction to the preliminary sketches and the payment checks were usually mailed, so the artist would leave the office within twenty minutes or less. So those few minutes were the only chance anyone would have to bump into a freelance artist at a pulp publisher's office every week or two.



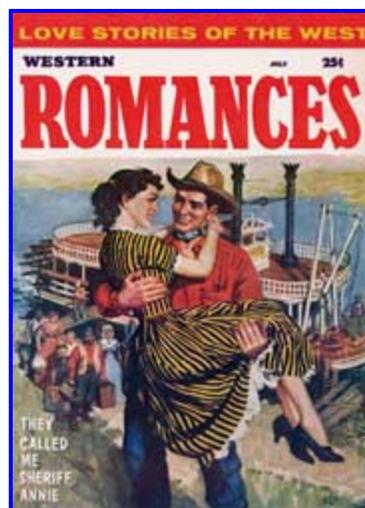
Gregory Corso and Allen Ginsburg

The writers would very rarely show up. It would have been an occasion if a writer dropped by, but there was very little numerical chance of an artist happening to be there at that exact same time. The only exception would be those writers who worked on staff all day, such as editors and their assistants. I guess each publisher was different, so this account may only relate to my father's circle of publishers, which were mostly Ace, Fiction House, Goodman, and Popular.

Dad knew several writers for the men's adventure magazines, such as Mario Puzo and Norman Mailer. He also knew some other writers, such as Allen Ginsburg, Gregory Corso, and the journalist Jimmy Breslin.

Gregory Corso was a beat poet. He went insane and was locked up in an asylum. I guess that was around 1964. Before the asylum was prepared to let him out they wanted him to provide them with a place of residence that might be wholesome and healthier than his previous residence in a Bowery flophouse. Allen Ginsburg was teaching at Columbia University, which was in our Harlem neighborhood. One of Ginsburg's students lived on our block. That fellow was named, Benji Solomon. Benji volunteered to let Gregory Corso live at his apartment with him

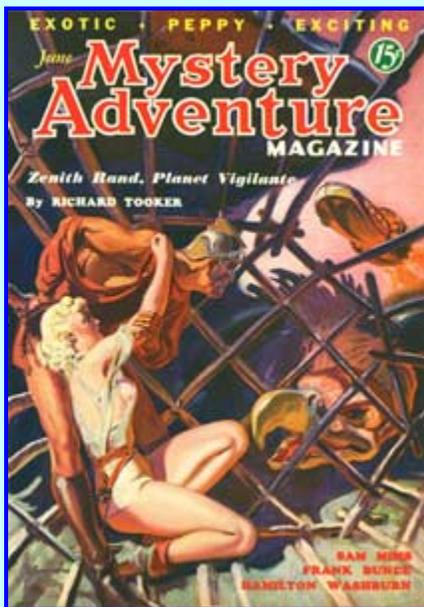
and his father. Allen Ginsburg was acting as Corso's benevolent sponsor and official caretaker during his recovery period, so he came over to look at Benji's apartment. He was not impressed by the fact that Benji's Dad was never at home and that Benji was selling pot out of his apartment, so Ginsburg said he did not think the insane asylum administrators would be impressed at his apartment as a wholesome place to recover. So Benji suggested the warm and friendly Saunders home as an alternative. Ginsburg came over to our place and had dinner with us and everything went just great.



Ginsburg was a wonderful person. He charmed us all. Our family meals were usually very stimulating discussions

with our six family members and at least three more people always happened to drop by at dinnertime. Dad had been a runaway when he was a kid and he had traveled with hoboes on the rails. That was before World War One. Dad had learned to cook Mulligan Stew by asking all the hoboes to contribute something nutritious to the kettle. Norm had always loved cooking ever since, and he always made unpretentious hearty stews, served with plenty of wine and lively conversation. When Allen Ginsburg was having dinner with us everyone seemed to agree with him. He had wise and articulate views on everything. He was brilliant. I met him seven times afterward from that time up until his death, and he was always an inspired thinker. During that first dinner together he spoke of Gregory Corso as a wonderful young man who was going through a rough period and would benefit from some tender loving care. So Gregory Corso moved into our house and spent three months recovering from his mental breakdown. We housed and fed him for free. We were very poor, but we had always had a Bohemian open-door policy. More than a dozen people used our house to recuperate, dry out, or hide from the police during my childhood. Dad even performed a couple of emergency medical operations on people in our basement! Eventually Gregory Corso got healthy enough to take off on his own and we gradually lost touch with him. My assessment of the “Beat” criteria is to suspend judgment and to accept the outcome of one’s creativity as a noble expression of life’s *flow*, as opposed to having an obsessive need to control the outcome of our creativity. The idea being that we are all the vessels of our times if we just let our everyday reality manifest itself in our creative expressions. That viewpoint seems to have added a lot to our American voice, even if we no longer consider the beat criteria as central to our creative goals—somehow that idea has been assimilated.

Question: How did Norman Saunders know Norman Mailer?



The cover painting Norman Saunders did for *Mystery Adventure Magazine*, June 1936, illustrating Richard Tooker’s “Zenith Rand, Planet Vigilante” is gracing the cover of this issue of *eI*.

Answer: I believe Norm knew Mailer from “the sweats” but I do not know if Mailer had previously written for pulps in the late forties or fifties. I think he worked for *Ellery Queen* and *Playboy* and *Esquire*. I heard that Mailer submitted stories to *Weird Tales*, but they never printed any of them. Anyway Dad knew him and I would wander into our kitchen at midnight and see the two Norms with their feet up on the table polishing off a full bottle of whiskey. Both were very red of nose and cheeks. He would crash face down on the sofa and be gone the next morning. Mailer was one of the most blustery and aggressive storytellers I ever met. Really a fun person. Norm and Norm really seemed to like each other. There was a lot of passionate mutual respect for each other even though I doubt if Mailer ever looked at any of Dad’s art or Dad ever read any of Mailer’s writing. They just felt a brotherhood of manly dispositions. Actually Dad never visited Mailer’s house so I guess it was Mailer who sought out my father’s company when he wanted a good drinking buddy to shoot off his mouth with until morning without any fuss! Dad was a generation older than Mailer, and yet they both served overseas in World War Two and both saw action. Mailer never got belligerent when he was drunk and that was something my Dad would not have tolerated. They just ranted about how fucked up the world was and how close to death we always are. Fun stuff like that.

QUESTION: When you were putting the *Norman Saunders* book together, were there any unusual things that happened, got in your way, delayed you?

ANSWER: It took me thirty-seven years to assemble all of the information and images for the *Norman Saunders* book, but when everything was compiled, Dan Zimmer and I spent one month working together to digitally create the entire book on one gigantic super computer. It was a fun and intense experience. We worked non-stop sixteen-hour days, seven days a week. It was very a creative process. When the book was finally complete Dan Zimmer and I were both extremely proud and extremely exhausted.

QUESTION: What was the single most difficult image to locate?

ANSWER: It took a lot of time and money and dedication to acquire every image in the book. The hardest task was to maintain a consistently high quality of images, when there are so many valuable paintings in different private

collections all over the world. The most practical and cost-effective solution was for me to travel everywhere with a large-format sheet-film camera with tripod and lights and shoot everything myself.

QUESTION: Anything about the project surprise you?

ANSWER: Dad and I had discussed our fantasy of making a coffee table book about his work every since 1972, when I had turned eighteen and he legally appointed me executor of his art estate. By that time different fans were beginning to seek him out and to refer to him as “the legendary Norman Saunders.” Dad had always considered himself to be an artist, but he had never met his “public” before. He was delighted to be signing autographs and receiving recognition after a lifetime behind the scenes, but Dad was disoriented by the fact that each fan who approached him was only aware of his work within the narrow context of their particular hobby. He had never before thought of himself as narrowly as “the artist who painted the first Conan paperback.” Dad’s fans had no knowledge of his overall career, and he realized there was no way anyone could even find out about his life’s work, because everything he made was for ephemeral pop culture, sold for pocket change at a newsstand, and thrown away with yesterday’s newspaper. Dad said, “My whole life’s work has long since turned into the dust of oblivion!” Dad and I discussed the oddity that we were the only two people on earth who had an overall appreciation of his entire life’s work, thanks to the fact that he kept files of his published illustrations. That was when we realized that the goal of the *Norman Saunders* art book would be to bring all of his work together in one book, to create a reference work that would include each different fan-base and all of their isolated interests, such as science fiction, pin-ups, pulps, paperbacks, pre-code comic books, men’s adventure magazines, or trading cards. Even within those categories are dozens of isolated factions. The long-term goal had been to compose the *Norman Saunders* book in a way that would bring together all of Norm’s separate fans into a larger community, unified by an appreciation for his work. That is why I dedicated the book to “inspiration.”



The biggest surprise for me on this project was that, despite my own intimate and encyclopedic knowledge of my father’s work, there was a slowly dawning realization as the book came into being that my father’s artistic accomplishment was even greater than I had ever understood. My life’s dream to bring all of the best examples of Norm’s work together in one book for his many fans was finally coming true, but in the process I was also gaining an even greater appreciation of the full magnitude of his artistic achievement. I turned to Dan Zimmer and said, “I can’t believe it! I’m totally devoted to my father’s work, and yet when I see it all laid out like this I realize he is even better than I thought!” I had never thought that would have been possible.

QUESTION: What is your favorite image in the book?

ANSWER: My personal favorite of my Dad’s pulp cover paintings appeared on the cover of *Black Mask*, July, 1949. Dad put red paint on his actual hand and made this big red handprint, and then

painted this great looking hard-boiled dame. The detailed fingerprint file and the wispy smoke are all painted so nicely. It is a masterpiece of that genre.

Portions of this were previously posted on PulpMags Yahoo group. Be sure to visit the David Saunders Museum at www.davidsaunders.biz.

I’m paranoid as an act of good citizenship, concerned about what the powerful people are up to. I suspect them of making money any way they can. It intrigues me that people want to be rich, and I try to imagine what they do when they are rich.

—Kurt Vonnegut, 1963

Deep Throats and Long Dongs

or

Pardon Me!

by Earl Kemp

I learned something new and exciting at this year's Paperback Show and Sale in Mission Hills, CA. There was quite a buzz going around among the booksellers and buyers that a new title had suddenly appeared on the "most wanted" collector's lists. And, it goes without saying that meant the value of that book jumped upward considerably, along with that sought-after status.

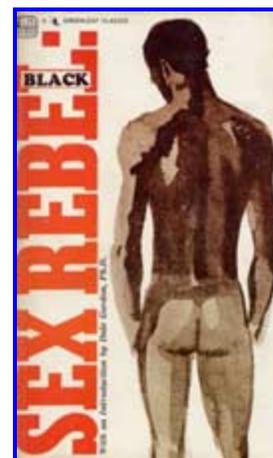
And it also goes without saying that it was a Greenleaf Classic title and I was the editor who put it all together.

That new "must have" title is GC323, *Sex Rebel: Black (Memoirs of a Gash Gourmet)*, by "Bob Greene" (written by Frank Marshall Davis), and it was published in 1968 with a grabber cover by Harry Bremner. It also had a special introduction written just for the book by Dale Gordon, Ph.D., better known as the always-prolific Donald H. Gilmore, Ph. D. That we bothered to get this introduction indicates that the book was especially inflammatory at the time it was published, and scholarly introductions by Ph.D.s were legal backups just in case the book became actionable to any extent.

And when it was published, Barack Obama was seven years old. In 1971, when he was ten, he moved to Hawaii to live with his grandmother.

Davis became his substitute father and mentor.

Davis was an active Communist, an intellectual, a writer, a thinker, and had himself fathered five half-black children. Little wonder he identified so closely with Obama, and Obama with him. Davis was divorced in 1970. Davis, in his early career, lived and wrote in Chicago, on topics such as politics, music, literature, verse, and drama. He wrote many books and collections of poetry. In his later years, in Hawaii, he continued his writing as well as made numerous editorial contributions to the *Honolulu Record*.



Cover scan courtesy
Bruce Brenner Collection
<http://www.vintagepbks.com/>

There are even a few academic books analyzing and discussing the writings of Frank Marshall Davis.

#

At Greenleaf, over the years, we published many books about blacks...how they lived, thought, acted, and survived... how they interacted with whites and how they struggled. Some of those books were even highly illustrated and sought to disprove the penis-envy myth that black males were hung heavier than whites. Black sex was a popular subject to white readers during the free-love years of the 1960s and it was never our intention, at Greenleaf, to portray blacks in any negative fashion.

The only highly publicized black penis of significant size during those years belonged to Long Dong Silver, who could tie his in a knot around his thigh but, unfortunately, couldn't perform worth a damn with it. There were numerous photo magazines of Silver doing his thing with his thing but none of them was published by Greenleaf.

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This news about a relationship, however distant, between Greenleaf Classics and the current US President send my thoughts rushing backward in time to a foreign place. A place where intrigue lurked behind each shadow and lots of people in Washington, DC didn't like the way the administration was running (perhaps ruining) things. Some of those people gravitated toward us, begging for help.

For some reason I never knew, the US feds didn't like Greenleaf Classics or anyone who worked there. They kept us

under constant intense surveillance including wiretaps, mail coverage, routinely following us wherever we went in the US, and outside the country. Because of their unusual and thorough interest in us, we fought back at every opportunity to do so.

In 1969 Richard Nixon was elected President. We didn't like him and he didn't like us either, and he went way out of his way to make that fact known to us, and put pressure on Greenleaf and its employees in every way possible to...to do *what* we could never figure out...but it had something to do with all the money we were making and their thought that most of that money should somehow be transferred over to them, either directly in cash or through the laughable catch-phrase of "campaign contributions."

By 1970, thanks mostly to Nixon's interference with President Johnson's Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, and his attempts at sabotaging the commission through his representative Charles Keating who, a couple of years later, embezzled a fortune from Lincoln Federal Savings and Loan, we found ourselves in a position where we were routinely receiving clandestine messages from a number of extremely high placed "deep throat" persons in Washington, DC. They were alerting us to ongoing measures from within the Oval Office inside the White House aimed directly toward us and some very unusual, very illegal things being rushed into the works nationwide.

Those were heady times, to say the least. Beyond my imagination at that time, to such an extent that I doubted if much of it was real. After all, we were only book publishers. We weren't even political activists. Some of us didn't even vote, and we certainly had no connections with professional politicians or any interest in acquiring any such connections. In fact, we hated most of them...and they hated us in return.

Due especially from continuous input coming directly from the Commissioners of President Johnson's search for truth about obscenity and pornography in the US, and the Commissioner's increasing encouragement and suggestions, we decided to publish *The Illustrated Presidential Report of the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography*. Our mentors applauded our decision and furnished us with reams of data regarding their deliberations and hand delivered a copy of their final rough draft report to us...all way in advance of any public release of the same material. We proceeded with their material, their blessings and, I should say, direct heavy input from some of the Commissioners themselves.

All this was very secret and hush-hush, almost as good as an international spy movie. I had fantasies of being Bond... James Bond, or at least something psychedelic from Austin Powers and just a dash of Greenleaf's own 0008. We had secret code names for various people and devious routings for communicating with each other either through mail or by telephone, with all of us keeping in mind that none of us, including the Commissioners, had access to a private telephone or mail addressed to us that wasn't thoroughly mishandled before being finally, after long delays, delivered to us...cleverly resealed...sure it was!

As GP555, lavishly designed by Harry Bremner, we published our illustrated version of the Commission's report in October 1970.

By 1971, Tricky Dickless Nixon's White House Plumbers were in full operation, undertaking all manner of criminal activities at Nixon's direct orders against any and all of Nixon's supposed "enemies," and guess who was high on his hit list...little old us.

Nixon ordered his criminal Attorney General John Mitchell to "get us at any cost." Mitchell assigned that task to his underling William Rehnquist who took great delight in following all those illegal orders. In fact, he was rewarded for his success by Nixon by appointing him to the US Supreme Court.

Most of the White House Plumbers, including Attorney General Mitchell, were eventually convicted of some of their crimes and sent to prison. Rehnquist became Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Nixon's hatchet man for the Commission, Charles Keating, was convicted of massive embezzlement and sent to prison. Go figure...?

Several Greenleaf employees were indicted for publishing GP555 and were tried and found guilty of "conspiracy to mail obscene matter" and sentenced to prison, concurrent with the White House Plumbers, who had to a certain extent followed Rehnquist's orders to orchestrate our downfall. The criminals putting the "criminals" away. Go figure...?

All the Nixon White House gang were routinely tried, convicted, and sent to prison. They included Attorney General John Mitchell and his Oval Office plumbers. Only William Rehnquist escaped the fate of the rest of the gang. And as Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court, declined to excuse himself because of his having orchestrated our downfall and, despite his “conflict of interest,” actually wrote the Court’s majority opinion upholding our convictions. Go figure...?

William Hamling, publisher of Greenleaf Classics, and little old me...a lowly book editor...were sentenced to three years in federal detention but we were actually released after the then federal bad boy minimum of three months and one day.

Over the years, as Rehnquist deteriorated into a stumbling, fumbling drug addict, nodding through Supreme Court proceedings, a little bit of revenge was eventually received. Go figure...?

#

When Bill Clinton was President, and nearing the end of his terms in office, I thought it would be just about time for a presidential pardon for me. If that were ever to happen, it would most likely come from Bill Clinton. Toward that end, I asked my attorney how I should go about trying to cause such an overdue event.

He sent me a 50-page application blank to fill out, along with the added information that I would have to first buy either a congressman or a senator to actually front the effort for me. Buying either congressmen or senators was, of course, way out of my financial reach. Besides that, the application blank itself was so complex, so incredibly intrusive and far-reaching, that there was no way I could ever possibly fill it out. In fact, even a joint effort of the FBI, CIA, and Interpol, knowing all they knew about me, could never fill out that application for a pardon.

Then, when the list of persons that President Clinton did pardon was released, I was appalled at how many “real” major criminals were included, and I’ll bet anything that not a one of them filled out one of those applications, but they certainly could have purchased a number of congressmen, senators, or at least one president. Plus, knowing who they were and what types of criminals they were, I was delighted that I was not included among them, and remained pardon less for an impossible transgression against the First Amendment.

Nixon’s ordering my conviction and imprisonment felt much more like receiving the Presidential Medal of Honor from him than a permanent criminal record. And, indeed, over time the reactions of everyone that really mattered supported that belief, turning me into a hero I could never have been, making me much more than I could have ever made of myself. A proud and honorable thing.

#

It is now quite early in President Obama’s tenure, and he is struggling to get out from under the most horrendous things ever done to the citizens of this country by the people charged with protecting and serving them. George Bush’s evil legacy and terrorism and murders that will take many decades to pay for, much less overcome...and never be forgotten. The crimes the Bush/Cheney administration committed against the US Constitution and the Bill of Rights alone...their warrant less surveillance of US citizens...their torturing and imprisoning hundreds of people for undetermined numbers of years for unspecified reasons...their...well, the list of their crimes is endless...and all of them at taxpayers’ expense....

I can’t help wondering, though, if I could be lucky enough to turn up on President Obama’s pardon list on his last day of office.

He’s my kind of guy....

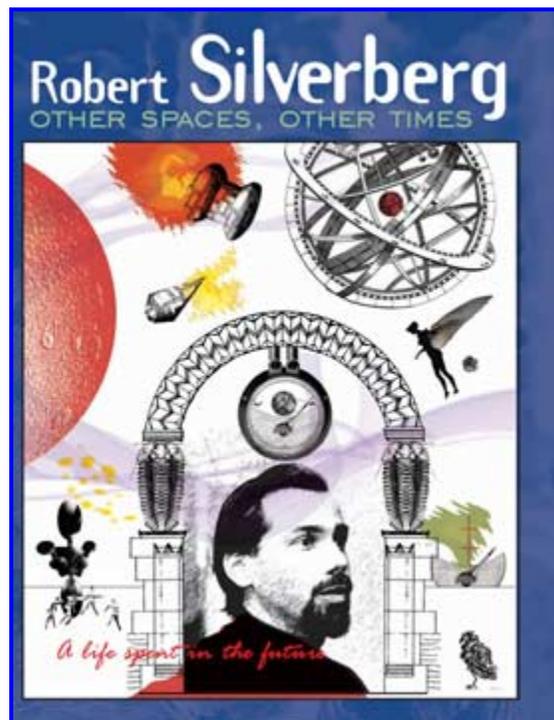
People have to talk about something just to keep their voice boxes in working order so they’ll have good voice boxes in case there’s ever anything really meaningful to say.

—Kurt Vonnegut

It Wasn't All That Easy*

by Robert Silverberg

I've been a professional science fiction writer for something like 55 years now, have had so many books and stories published that I long ago lost count of how many there are, and never have any trouble finding publishers to pay me for what I write. To a modern-day would-be writer, all that sounds pretty enviable, right? How splendid to be Robert Silverberg, you must think! All he has to do is move his fingers over the keyboard and salable fiction comes tumbling out! Well, let me tell you: I was once a would-be writer just like you, who looked at famous professional writers like Theodore Sturgeon and Robert Sheckley and L. Sprague de Camp with the same sort of envy, thinking that they had somehow been born with an innate ability to write stories that any editor would want to publish, and merely had to sit down and start typing in order to produce something splendid. I was wrong about that, as I discovered when I got to know those writers later on. Nothing had been magically easy for them. They had struggled to break in, and then, having made the grade, they had struggled to stay there. So had all the other writers I idolized, the one exception being Robert A. Heinlein, who seems to have begun his career at full velocity and kept right on going for the next forty years. And I struggled plenty too. I know I did, because the other week, while looking for something else, I came upon a file folder full of ancient rejection slips, and I was reminded yet again of that anguished period in my middle and late teens when I wanted desperately to sell a story to a science fiction magazine, any magazine, and had everything I wrote sent back to me with a nasty little "sorry, can't use it" note clipped to it.



Of course, I was only in my teens then. Not only hadn't I mastered the skills that a professional storyteller needs to know, I didn't know a whole lot about the world, either, and so the best I could hope to do was to recycle ideas that older writers had turned into stories, and do it not nearly as well as they had. If I had been 32 years old and worldly-wise, as Heinlein had been in 1939 when he wrote and sold his first sf story, I might have begun my career as effortlessly as Heinlein had. But I wasn't 32, and I wasn't Heinlein. (And even Heinlein got a story rejected once in a while, though such events were few and far between.) Instead I was 14 or thereabouts, and pretty wet behind the ears, when I began mailing stories to the science fiction editors of the day.

They came back with amazing rapidity. I don't seem to have kept the earliest rejection slips I got, which dated from early in 1949 and came from the premiere editor of the era, John W. Campbell, Jr., of what was then called *Astounding Science Fiction* and is now *Analog*. I remember them as crisp postcard-sized printed forms explaining that the story that had been submitted did not meet the magazine's present needs, and perhaps they were signed with the distinctive bold scrawl that was Campbell's signature, and why I didn't keep them I have no idea. What looks like the oldest survivor in the file comes from *Amazing Stories*, the first sf magazine that I read regularly, and it must date from 1949, because it bears a Chicago address and at the end of that year *Amazing* moved to New York. It simply says, "Sorry overstocked," written by hand and signed, "H. Browne, editor." Overstocked, all right: what I didn't know was that *Amazing* was completely staff-written and that Howard Browne, the editor, never read any unsolicited story. (Six years later I would become a member of Howard Browne's New York staff and sell dozens of stories to *Amazing*, but not even in my dreams could I have expected that in 1949!)

Here's another early one, from Fiction House, Inc., which published the grand old pulpy mag *Planet Stories*. It dates from April 1950, and was earned by my story "Where Alph, the Sacred River, Ran . . ." which I wrote that month and sold for \$5, a year later, to a semi-pro magazine called *The Avalonian*. "Dear Contributor," it begins. "We regret that your manuscript does not meet our editorial requirements. In general, we want well-plotted stories with emphasis on swift, colorful action. To get a clear idea of our specific needs we suggest that you read and analyze recent copies

of the magazine.” Sure. But I had been reading and analyzing recent copies of the magazine, staring intently at every word. The problem was that I wasn’t capable of moving from analysis to creation, any more than the baseball fan who carefully analyzes the home-run swing of his favorite slugger is able to hit one out of the park himself.

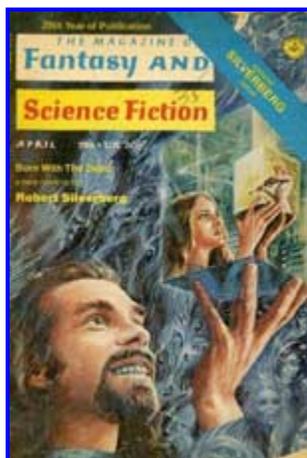


Photo by William Rotsler

But that *Planet Stories* rejection slip came with something special attached: a personal note from the magazine’s young editor, Jerome Bixby, to whom I had been writing letters about the stories in his magazine: “Right back at you with a bilious Fiction House rejection slip for your collection.” (And a bilious green it was, very unappealing.) “Where Alph, the Sacred River Ran . . .’ is one of the best fan jobs I’ve seen in a long time. Keep it up. . . you’re bound to connect sooner or later. Probably later, though, when your collection has grown some.”

I was thrilled. Before long, I sent Bixby another story, certain that he would accept it. But he had moved along to another magazine by then, and from his successor at *Planet* came a cruel postcard, not even a rejection slip, dated January 2, 1951: “We are holding your manuscript, ‘Introduction,’ for pickup or \$.06 return postage.” Not even “does not fit our needs”!



Robert Silverberg at the 1982 Nebula Awards

Another from 1950, from the low and slow-paying *Weird Tales*, thanks me “for the privilege of reading your manuscript. Its return does not necessarily imply lack of merit, but means that it does not fit in with our needs.” Another from *Amazing* in Chicago — “Sorry overstocked,” again. It refers to a story called “Homeward Retreat,” of which I have not the slightest recollection. From *Future Science Fiction*’s Robert W. Lowndes, to whom I would sell a host of stories years later: “We are sorry that your manuscript is not for us, and that we could not return it with an individual letter. We realize that a cold, printed rejection slip does not tell you whether your submission approached our requirements — but we receive such a large volume of manuscripts every day that. . . .”

I didn’t give up hope. Not completely, anyway. Certainly I was downcast by these rejections — I have cited here only these few out of more than a dozen from 1949 and 1950 — but I was driven by that peculiar madness that afflicts young would-be writers, and I sent my stories out again and again. Bea Mahaffey of *Other Worlds Science Stories* sent me a form that included about thirty reasons for turning a story down (“Logic is faulty”. . . . “Science is inaccurate”.... “Too dull and factual. . . .”) The two items that were checked for my story were “Not convincingly written” and “Poorly plotted.” Well, I was only fifteen. But I urged myself to write more

convincingly next time.

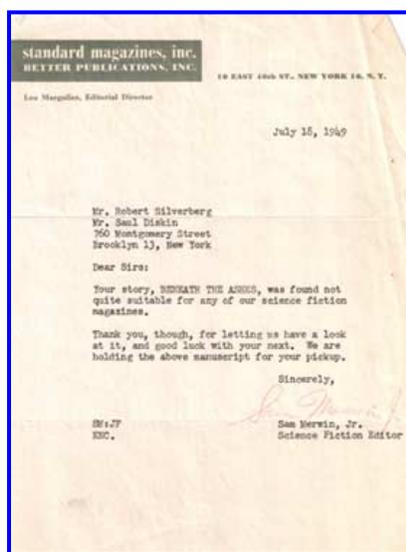
One of the pivotal rejection slips of my young life arrived in February 1951 from Morton Klass — the younger brother of Phil Klass, better known as the sf writer “William Tenn”— of *Super Science Stories*. (I’m not making that one up!) Addressing me as “Mr. Silverberg,” he said, “Sorry we have to return ‘Vanguard of Tomorrow,’ but it

doesn't quite make our grade. Most of the trouble lies with the plot, which — as you probably know yourself — is one of the oldest in science fiction. Well, you say, why can't somebody give an old plot a new twist? Heinlein took this plot and did it. Trouble is, we're not all Heinleins — at least not every day.

“You're young, but that can sometimes be an asset. Sf is always looking for a fresh viewpoint. Let's say you go to high school. What would high school be like on Mars? Procyon? Another time-stream? Hit 'em with the stories no one is writing, and see what happens. Us, too. We'd be happy to see more of your work.”

I was, of course, disappointed to see “Vanguard of Tomorrow” come bouncing back — I had written it one sweltering week in September 1950, using a punchy, high-powered short-paragraph style that I borrowed from Clifford D. Simak, and I thought it was great stuff. (I still have the manuscript. It isn't great stuff.) But Mort Klass's encouraging letter sank in deeply, and just two years later I began a book for young readers on just the theme he suggested that became my first published novel, *Revolt on Alpha C*.

Published novels seemed infinitely far in my future back there in 1951, and 1952, too. From William Hamling's *Imagination* came three printed rejection slips, and then a fourth with a scrawled note from Hamling in the margin: “Sorry, Bob, this doesn't quite make it. But keep plugging!” I kept plugging. Eventually I would sell him dozens of stories. From H.L. Gold of *Galaxy* came a typed note dated May 8, 1953: “Sorry we can't use ‘The Cure.’ However, we like your style and hope you'll try us again.” (He likes my style? Really, or was that just boilerplate? Apparently he did. Further stories brought longer notes from Gold, some of them encouraging, some of them vitriolic, but all of them useful.) (“Aside from a tendency to be overexplicit in spots and repeat in dialogue something already stated in narrative, you've told your story well. Trouble is that you don't have an ending.... !”) Gold beat me about the head and shoulders with many such notes, but eventually he beat me into shape and bought a goodly number of stories from me for his prestigious magazine, starting in 1956. (As soon as I got “The Cure” back from Gold I sent it to Sam Moskowitz of Hugo Gernsback's *Science Fiction Plus*, who turned it down in June as “well-written, smooth & clever. Good dialogue. The ending is very weak, but some of the background is interesting. Too long for the extent of the ideas.” I have no idea today what that story was about.)



I've got a sheaf of others from the early 1950s: a two-inch file of them. The most significant of them came from the now-forgotten Peter Hamilton, editor of the now-forgotten *Nebula Science Fiction*, published in Scotland. I had sent him “Vanguard of Tomorrow,” and he returned it in April 1953 with a lengthy note telling me he was turning it down because “it is very complicated for nonfans (who make up the vast majority of my readers) and. . . it seems to pack no punch or realism.” But, he added, he was anxious to help young authors on the way up, and advised me “to do a spaceship-alien planet theme, keeping the plot simple and the writing taught [sic!] and send it to me again. I'll do all I can to show you where you go wrong and suggest how to put it right, and I believe, with a little perseverance, you will make quite a promising writer.”

I took the advice to heart and wrote a 3,000-worder called “Gorgon Planet,” which Hamilton accepted in January

1954, paying me \$12.60. It was my first sale of fiction to any professional sf magazine, and I was on my way. Before long I had sold stories to Bob Lowndes and Bill Hamling, and then, in 1955, to Howard Browne of *Amazing* and the formidable John W. Campbell of *Astounding*, and after that I would be able to sell just about any story I wrote.

But not always to the first editor I showed it to. Even after my career was launched, occasional rejection slips still showed up. (John Campbell, 1963: "Glad to hear from you again . . . but I'm afraid this one really isn't a story." Larry T. Shaw, same year: "I'm sure someone will buy it, but what we need is something more intellectually slanted and strongly plotted." Damon Knight, 1969: "This one is ingenious, but I could not persuade myself that I cared what happened to either of the characters." And so on, every now and then, especially after I began writing stories for the very hard to please Alice K. Turner of *Playboy* in 1981. She bought a lot from me, but she turned plenty down, too.)

Yes, I did get to have a long and rewarding career despite all those early rejections, and no, it wasn't easy to get started, however it might look in hindsight. Many a time back in 1952 and 1953 I was just about ready to give up trying to sell my stories altogether, even as you sometimes are. For me that would have been a mistake. Perhaps it would be for you also. Some people, however keen their ambitions might be, simply will never learn the knack of writing stories people will want to read. If you have what it takes, though, you'll keep right on jogging down that bumpy road until you get where you want to go.

*Excerpted from *Robert Silverberg—Other Spaces, Other Times—A Life Spent in the Future*, and printed with permission of Nonstop Press, Luis Ortiz, and Robert Silverberg.

Writers get to treat their mental illnesses every day.
—Kurt Vonnegut

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The Big Show

by Earl Terry Kemp

We were almost ready for the Big Show, my father and I, all we had to do was drop his dog off at the kennel, and we were off. Excitement had been mounting all week as the days had ticked off until it was finally Saturday, and tomorrow, March 29, we would be attending the Paperback Collectors Show & Sale in Mission Hills (Los Angeles), California.

For those that do not know, this is an annual event hosted by mega collector Tom Lesser, and Rose Idlet of Black Ace Books. It is always well attended by a crowd of regulars. In this small group of like-minded individuals it is very easy to develop close ties. Half the fun of going to this show is seeing, visiting, hanging out, and, of course, eating, with old friends.

Dog downloaded.

Gas.

We are well and truly on our way. Finally...

It is about ten in the morning as we speed down the freeway. It is not too hot, yet, but it gets warmer as we hit the desert floor on our journey from Arizona through the Mohave Desert. At the most remote part, furthest from any civilization, we stop to drop off our good friend, Carlos. We have arranged to return to that same spot at high noon on Monday, and get in touch with him once more.

I glance back over my shoulder as we spin dust and sand in the air going down the road, all I can see is his serape and sombrero, and a faint wisp of smoke from his pipe. All is well.

Uneventful miles later, we reach the normal congestion that is the Los Angeles freeway system. Painful memories of long commutes, hours spent in traffic, flash back almost overwhelming me with the delight that I now live so far from any real point of civilization that weeks can go by without seeing anyone, even a distant car.

Oh well, it is still worth the moments of undeniable terror, after all, we are in the big city headed for the Big Show, all is still well...

We check in, it is just after noon, confusion begins. First with the room arrangements, no big deal. Next, the expected crowds of familiar faces are obviously not there. We consult, deciding maybe a late lunch will help materialize our old friends.

A long, very tasty lunch turns into a leisurely afternoon of killing time. Hours pass. Even the novelty of a television with over fifty channels, a few in English, wears thin. So, another sandwich, not wanting to spoil the expected usual dinner.

Evening comes. We are getting a bit worried. No old friends. No notes at the Front Desk. Finally, a clue, the phone in our room is not working. A wire dangles behind it disconnected, the plug-in socket on the wall, non-existent.

An annoying room change is required. Settled in again. Now it is getting late. We have been receiving relayed phone updates from our friend, Robert Speray, since late afternoon. None of the times set have been met. Night is creeping into the room. My father lives on farm time, up with the sun, and to bed when it sets. It is too early for me.

I spend some time watching a fascinating program. Some local bar is plugging videos from various contests featuring girls doing unmentionable things. However, it is the advertisement offering home delivery for Medicinal Marijuana that catches my eye. As I hastily write down the number, I wonder if they have a doctor doing the delivery, so he can write prescriptions for the sick and needy.

In the Police State of Arizona, even thinking about such things is outlawed. The punishment is hard labor in a work camp, wearing an ill-fitting pink jumpsuit, and forced to eat spoiled green bologna. Arizona is an enlightened state of being.

No time to pursue this thought. There is a knock on the door, at long last, it is Speray. I am saved from an eight o'clock bedtime. He immediately convinces both of us that our attendance at Tom Lesser's annual exhibitor-payback Saturday Party Before the Big Show is mandatory.

We are both pushovers and follow Speray out the door.

Tom and his wife throw a lovely party for the show retailers, filled with fans and writers. Making my rounds through the crowded hallways, I spot my father standing with Dick Lupoff. He waves me over showing me Lupoff's latest book. It is Fox B. Holden's *The Time Armada*, with Introductions by my father and Lupoff. A very impressive looking book, a wonderful homage to an old-time science fiction writer who Lupoff knew.

One thing leads to another and Lupoff and I are shortly deep in a discussion about Sam Moskowitz' *The Immortal Storm*, Jack Speer, and Chicago fandom of William Hamling's era.

Basically it is a discussion about young fifteen-year-old fan projects becoming professional ones, and all stemming from the first appearance of the "Silver Fox" Holden in Hamling's *Imagination*, as now reprinted by Lupoff's Surinam Turtle Press.

Another high point, aside from the walls at the Lesser residence covered by original paperback cover paintings by famous icons of pulpdom. One fan had brought three pen sketches done by Roy Krenkel of Burroughs' fame. All such artwork was a pleasure to behold.

Time flew by, meeting and renewing old acquaintances, much later we all stumbled back to the motel with a rosy and toasty glow, ready for the challenges of the morrow.



Peter S. Beagle with June and Len Moffatt.

We are up early the next morning, and practically first at the buffet style breakfast. This is good, it gives us time to eat before chatting with friends over coffee. We are delighted when fandom's cutest couple, Len and June Moffatt, join us. Soon fantasy writer, Michael Kurland and his wife, Linda, become a part of our small morning group.

I ask Michael about the circumstances that led him to posthumously finish some of H. Beam Piper's work (*H. Beam Piper: First Cycle*). He gives me a fascinating answer, detailing how much was his original contribution.

Over coffee, I listen to Len and June give an impressive listing of some of their current projects, such as a parody of Sherlock Holmes in verse. This interests Michael Kurland enough to want to continue the discussion after the Big Show. So, talk starts projects, which become bigger and more elaborate. This is one of the best things about

attending the Big Show.

Time flies during the press of conversation, the show had begun. I retrieve my stuff, books for signing, want list, and camera.

How to describe the Big Show? Words fail, so look at the pictures.



Ron Blum, Kayo Books, San Francisco, with fabulous illustrations.

It is crowded with people slowly edging down packed aisles alongside of tables stacked with hardbound books, paperbacks, pulps, and artwork. Everything is truly wonderful. I want everything I see, from the signed first edition of Robert Heinlein's *The Green Hills of Earth*, to the Bob Bonfils illustrations at Ron Blum's table. Any idea of using my want list has fallen to the wayside, it is too busy and there is too much to see to waste time on a detailed search of any kind. So, I wander around, just trying to take it all in.

Across the room, I see William F. Nolan (*Logan's Run*). He is one of the writer's I really wanted to see. I take out my copy of *Max Brand: The Man and His Works* (edited by Darrell Richardson, FPCI, 1952), racing over to Nolan. Panting, I hold the book up shyly. He smiles. He recognizes it with some small delight, telling me that yes, it does contain his very first work. Even more, he writes all this as he signs my copy.

I am truly in collectors' heaven.

After using my elbows to press through the crowd, I have made my first circuit. It is time to visit with my father, Earl Kemp, as he takes up the high chair to pontificate and sign sleazebooks.

Porn writer, Jerry Murray, was supposed to have come, but at the last minute canceled out due to illness.

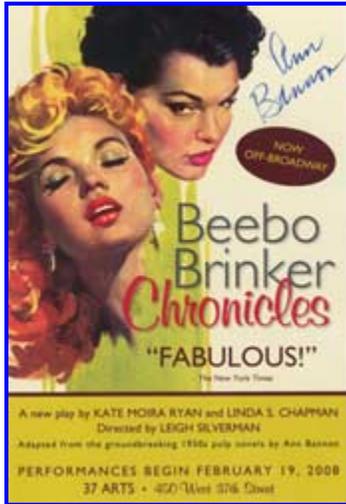
Old time family friend, Frank Robinson, was also on the list, and once more he did not show. Talking with Tom Lesser, I mention the rumor that someone is circulating a petition asking that Frank no longer offer to attend this event only to cancel at the last minute year-after-year. Tom smiles.

All is not lost, sitting next to my father is the beautiful Ann Bannon. Ann's writing has had a resurgence in recent years. The adventures of her main character, Beebo Brinker, have been made into an off-Broadway play and now are headed for the big screen.



William F. Nolan, after signing my book, with Tom Lesser.

Wandering on, I spot Karen Anderson with her confidante, Michelle Pincus, from LASFS. I corner Peter S. Beagle and he signs my book, an anthology containing his short story, "Professor Gottesman and the Indian Rhinoceros," which he tells me is his favorite.

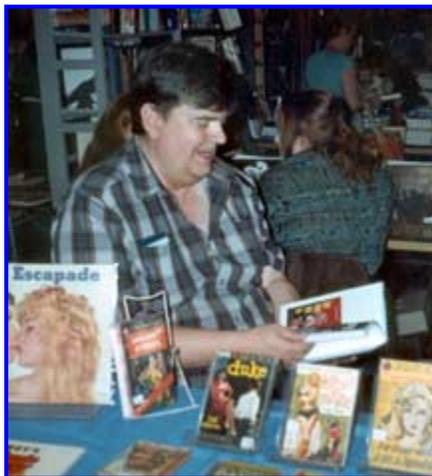


(Left) *Beebo Brinker Chronicles* postcard signed by creator, Ann Bannon.
(Right) Ann Bannon and Earl Kemp...the second cutest couple at the show.

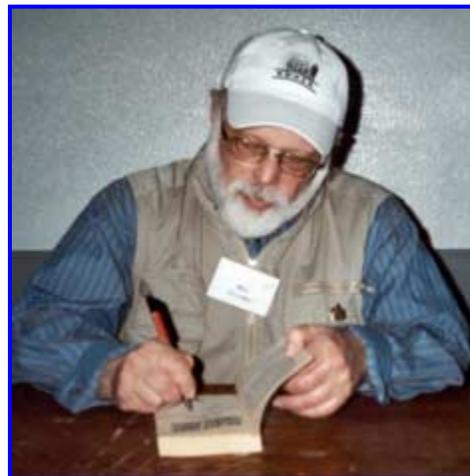
Sitting next to Beagle is writer Mel Gilden. For those who do not know Mel's work, take the time. He does that very hard thing, humor. So, while he signs *Surfing Samurai Robots* for me, he tells me an engaging story about the person it is dedicated to. It just so happens that Ms. Laurie, *Woman of Mystery*, is standing nearby. Mel points to Barbara Hambly, tells me to have the tall woman she is talking to sign my book as well. It turns out that Laurie is Laurie Perry, editor for Hambly.

Small world...

The morning session is nearly done, lunch beckons.



Lynn Monroe, dealer, signing his article in my copy of *Sin-A-Rama*.



Mel Gilden signing *Surfing Samurai Robots*.

I drop off my gear in the room, trotting back to collect my father and the rest of the gang. Sidestep: I catch Larry Niven alone, there I am, trying my best to captivate one of my favorite writers. Next I bump into one of the more fascinating, and mysterious, attendees, Jeffery Marathon Charles. I have to ask what he is doing with George Clayton Johnson (*Logan's Run*), and he tells me.

Now, I have known Clayton almost all of my life. He is one of the few older fans or writers that I have known that have gone out of their way to greet me at all times. A life-long friendship has developed between us due to this. It appears that the mysterious Jeffery Marathon Charles is filming a documentary about our mutual friend. I can hardly wait to see it...

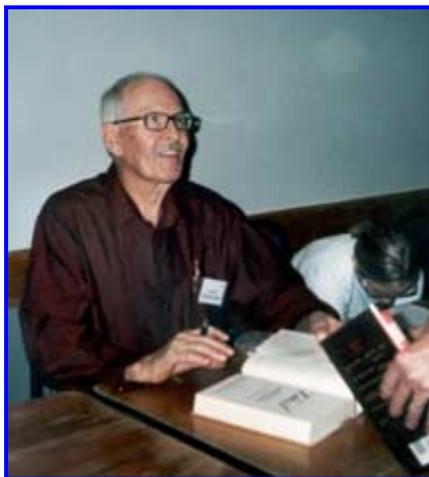


Jeffery Marathon Charles (left) filming George Clayton Johnson (right).

I managed to take one more photo before lunch, of the irascible David Gerrold (“The Trouble with Tribbles”), always a favorite.

Lunch was fabulous, so I really should not complain, but, well, you see, it’s like this. It took too long. Really my own fault, but, well, like I missed both Harry Turtledove and more importantly, Charles Nuetzel. I have been wanting to see Nuetzel since he wrote an article about his father, the artist, for my father’s eZine. Next year...

At about this time, the usual annual changes and challenges had descended on the Big Show. Fred Pohl did not attend. Let me tell you, this was a severe loss, even if expected. Ray Bradbury cancelled at the last minute. Need I say more.



Louis Charbonneau, with granddaughter.



David Gerrold

Once again, Tom Lesser managed to pull several magic tricks, foremost was when he materialized Jerry Pournelle.

After chatting with Jerry, I swung around to the other signing room, and caught old-time, long-time, science fiction writer, Louis Charbonneau. His appearance at the Big Show was really a major feather in Lesser's cap.

Not wanting to stand in another long line, waiting for Niven (the longest line at the event), I had wandered around a bit, buying a few books off my want list. The Big Show was starting to wind down, bargains, negotiations...deals were being readily made. So, I made a few. And as chance, or luck, would have it, ran into Larry Niven again, all alone, so he signed and signed, and posed for several photos. Great man.

Prof. Rob Latham, Eaton Collection liaison, offers a course in science fiction studies leading to a Ph.D. degree at UCRiverside. Rob dropped by to visit with my father by pre-arrangement. Also, Mike Buckner, one of my ex-brother-in-laws, long out of the picture. Mike, it turns out, has become quite a fan, purchasing stacks of Greenleaf Classics (most with my father as the cover model for paintings done by Bob Bonfils), and chatting up dealers and other collectors.

While Mike, my father, and I renewed old acquaintance, we watched the Big Show come to a close. Like phantoms in the dark, all wisps of smoke and fog, first the crowd and then the displays disappeared, leaving not even a piece of paper behind.

It was over, the Big Show. I can hardly wait for next year.

Even though the Big Show was over, the event was just getting into full swing. After blowing off the Big Top, the Tribe meets over dinner, drinks, and smoke, to discuss the event. Arrangements are made during our deliberations to bring stray members back into the fold. Visits to hermits, with gifts, and piles of paintings to be signed, are planned.

After a fine, tasty meal of Chinese, the Tribe, consisting of some seven members, made their way to the specified suite for the SerCon After Hours Main Event. This is an annual event, sponsored by the Illuminati, a resident Los Angeles sub-group closely affiliated with all such fannish events. Membership is not at all exclusive, new members are constantly being sought, encourage, and enrolled.

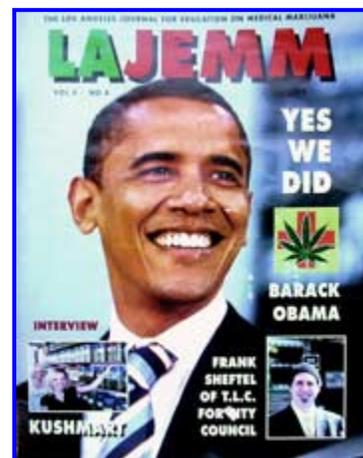
The Refreshment Committee procured a dozen bottles of top-shelf wine, and much more beer. More than enough for all, including several stragglers who missed dinner, still making their displays disappear, but having finally found their way to the SerCon.

The Medicinal Marijuana Committee had been busy all day as usual. Doctor appointments had been made, kept, and prescriptions obtained. A special envoy had made the long and arduous journey across town to the all-night bar and nude strip joint to obtain the now legal medicine that is a requirement for some of the more sick and demented members of the Tribe.

The appearance of a local magazine, *La Jemm* (*Los Angeles Journal for Education on Medical Marijuana*), kicked off the political focus group with a panel discussion about the relative merits of quality, quantity, and price. The 140-page, locally published magazine contains everything that an interested buyer needs. Possession of this magazine in the Police State of Arizona is probably forbidden and will result in a deep body cavity search. The magazine, as well as all such discussion, was a breath of fresh air, filled with the dense, thick, tasty, and very heady, smoke of freedom.



Mark Schirmeister with Earl Kemp, Rob Latham, and Mike Buckner.
Quite a distinguished lot!



The cover photo of the April 2009 issue is of President Obama.

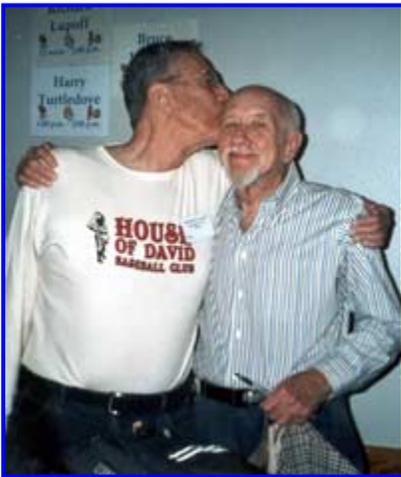
After sampling various wares, among them Strawberry Cough, which deserved its name, all members of the political action group were in agreement that it is high time the President legalize, and so stop the unnecessary violence on all of our borders.

The next order of business went to the Wine Tasting panel. Business broke down in chaos as members vacillated between wanting more, and more wine and beer, before making any choice known.

As the hours passed, and the din of conversation became louder, some concerns were voiced after midnight about addressing the regular pounding coming through the walls and ceiling. All attending members voted to ignore such unsolicited forms of communication.

With the wee hours of morning approaching, much esoteric information about many forgotten tomes was exchanged between attending members. Bottle after bottle was emptied and finally, through a dense purple haze of Strawberry Cough, the SerCon was officially closed after 3 am.

Some members needed repeated reminding of this as the revolving door never seemed to close.



Richard Lupoff and Earl Kemp,
incurable romantics.

But at long last, night ended, and weary and hung-over, we made it to the motel's buffet breakfast. While waiting for last-minute deals to be consummated, I had a wonderful chat with Michael Kurland and his wife, Linda, who it turns out is an attorney. It seems we all share an interest in stories about our inept and incompetent members of Law Enforcement.

Sadly, all things must end, we waved goodbye to our friends and drove off into the hell that is the Los Angeles freeway system. Not soon enough we were free of the bump-and-crash style of driving that is practiced in that city and found ourselves almost alone heading out into the deep desert.

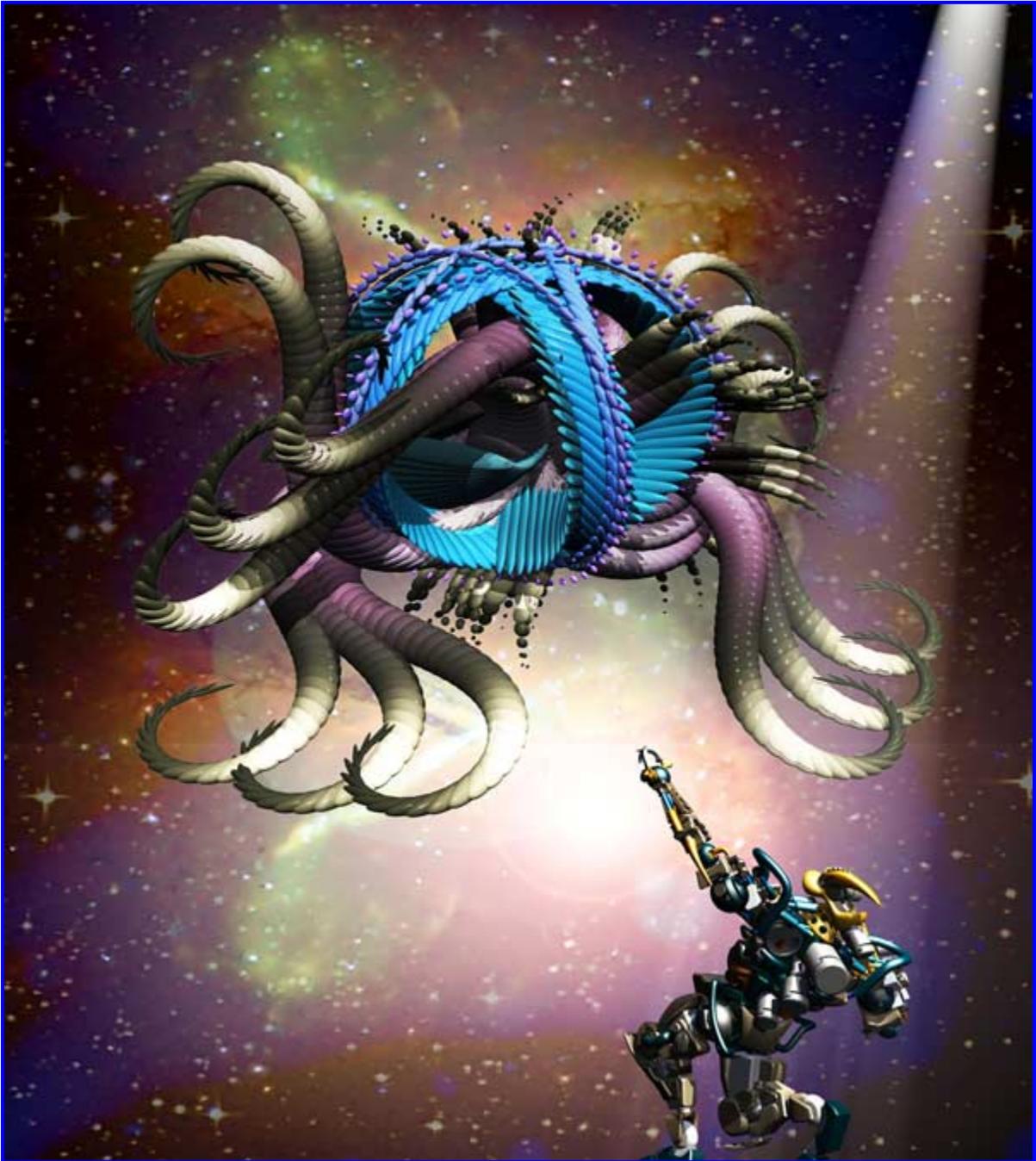
Out on the floor of the wind-swept sandy reaches we found our old friend, Carlos, again. Right on time, he had been waiting, sure in the knowledge that we would bring him a little treat.

Much later the last of the Strawberry Cough was gone. The memory of the smoke still lingers, even now, with the fine time my father and I had at the Big Show.

In spite of a very shaky beginning, the Big Show was a colossal success. The best one yet. I could tell. My father still had a big grin on his face, long after we downloaded the dog and turned off the engine.

This is what I find most encouraging about the writing trades: They allow mediocre people who are patient and industrious to revise their stupidity, to edit themselves into something like intelligence. They also allow lunatics to seem saner than sane.

—Kurt Vonnegut



“Robot Worship,” by Ditmar [Martin James Ditmar Jensen]