

ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

This issue is dedicated to the memory of Chief Water Tender Peter Tomich of the U.S.S. *Utah*, born June 3, 1893, died December 7, 1941 in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. "Greater love hath no man than to lay down his life for another." This issue is also dedicated to all Pearl Harbor veterans, both living and dead.

It has been nearly a year since the deaths of Carrie Fisher and her mother, Hollywood legend Debbie Reynolds. Soon Fisher's last performance will be in theaters. It will be a bittersweet thing, seeing her on screen and knowing there will be no new performances from her.

— Lisa

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The 2017 **Breeder's Cup World Championships** were **November 3-4, 2017** at Del Mar Racetrack in San Diego, California. Gun Runner won the Classic, while favorite Arrogate finished fifth. A sad ending to a bad year.

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Deadline is **February 1, 2018**

Reviewer's Notes

In the latest *Zine Dump*, Issue #42, Guy Lillian talks about our publishing consistency. Having seen too many fanzines erode from semi-occasionally to never never, I want to try to make a counter-example. To take a noteworthy example, *Niekas*, which seems to have collapsed under circumstances which Garth Spencer, for one, found more worthy of a punkzine put out by six people whose total ages were in two digits.

Bruce Gillespie has said kind words about this publication, but it doesn't hold a candle to his brilliant and erudite *SF Commentary*. It too is available on eFanzines.com and I recommend all those who want a discussion of SF writing to hie themselves thence.

One of the things that the Internet has done is to spread ignorance. It might surprise you to learn that flat-earthers are reviving. Some might be doing it to be trolls, but what concerns me is that so many seem to be so serious about it. They show the usual techniques of conspiracists, for example accusing all those who speak to the contrary of being liars or having been bought. The Logic Named Joe has not made proper market penetration.

I am trying to get my life in balance. Having been defeated in one effort, I have risked others in order to have a livable situation. It looks as if our days of Worldcons are over and done. They're becoming less welcoming, anyhow, or so it seems.

But then, I am beginning to think that the age of fanzines is dwindling in the mist. The ways of doing have changed. So many now have graduated to the tweet, which is writing on the wind. (The way that NASFiC San Juan had only one Progress Report, and thought they were keeping people informed with their nonstop Twitter feed.) And even more ephemeral ways of communication loom.

Best wishes to everyone for a more successful 2018.

— Joe

RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



Buy my books. (All available on Amazon.com for quite reasonable prices, except the Hugo-nominated *Heinlein's Children*, which can be bought from NESFA for a reasonable price.)

— Advt.

During my recent hospital stay I was diagnosed with:

- Vitamin B12 deficiency
- Benign tumor of colon
- Sleep apnea
- Obesity
- Acquired underactive thyroid
- High blood pressure
- Type 2 diabetes
- Inflammatory bowel disease (Crohn's Disease)
- Elevated troponin level
- Lactic acid increased
- Urinary tract infection
- Acute nontraumatic kidney injury
- Infection in bloodstream
- Decreased platelet count
- Blood clotting disorder
- and . . .
- Shortness of breath.

Somehow, I am still alive. "Shortness of breath" was my main symptom, and "Infection in bloodstream" was the main problem.

Violet Mosse Brown died in Montego Bay, Jamaica, on **September 15, 2017**. She was the last surviving subject of Queen Victoria, having been born on **March 10,**

1900 to Elizabeth Riley Mosse and John Mosse. At the time of her death, she was the oldest living person in the world.

The oldest living person in the world is now **Tajima Nabi** of Kikai-chō, Kagoshima Prefecture, Japan, born on the **fourth day of the eighth month of the thirty-fourth year of Meiji** [gaijin August 4, 1900], the last surviving person born in the nineteenth century Common Era/Anno Domini.

Richard Francis "Dick" Gordon, Command Module (*Yankee Clipper*) Pilot of the Apollo 12 mission, died on **November 6, 2017**. Born **October 5, 1929**, Dick became a Naval Aviator and was in the third group of NASA astronauts, "The Fourteen". He first flew on Gemini 11, performing two EVAs. He was assigned as Command Pilot of Apollo 18 before its cancellation, and retired from NASA and the Navy in January of 1972 at the rank of Captain.

MONARCHIST NEWS

The Diet has passed legislation that will enable the Tennō to abdicate. The planned date is the thirty-first day of the third month of the thirty-first year of **Heisei** (gaijin: March 31, 2019). At that time he will assume the traditional title of Jōkō, an abbreviation of Daijō Tennō ("Retired Emperor")

On April 4, 1973, the Hon. **James Lascelles** married Frederica Ann Dührssen of Newport, Maine, and had two children, **Sophie** and **Rowan**. After their divorce in 1985, on May 4 of that year he married Lori Susan Lee of Albuquerque, in that city, and had two children, **Tanit** and **Tewa**. James Lascelles is the grandson of the late Princess Mary, Princess Royal, and is in the line of succession (though far down). So much for Ms. Meghan Markle.

His Grace **David Robert Somerset, Duke of Beaufort**, died on **August 16, 2017**. He was succeeded in the titles by his oldest son **Henry John FitzRoy Somerset**. The Duke is the senior direct-male-line descendent of the Plantagenets, being 33rd in descent from Hugues de Perche.

Mihai I of Romania died on **December 5, 2017**. Born **October 25, 1921** to Queen

Helena and King Carol II, His Majesty had the peculiar honor of succeeding his father twice, once in 1927, to be deposed in 1930, and again in 1940. The King was forced to leave the country in 1947 after the Communist takeover, and lived in exile in Switzerland, Florida, and other places.

He was succeeded in his claim to the throne by his eldest daughter, **Princess Margareta**. At present the claim will terminate upon her death, since the next in line, **Michael Medforth-Mills**, has been disbarred from the succession. (And don't talk about **Paul-Philippe Hohenzollern**.)

There was a state funeral in Bucharest on **December 16**. He was buried in the royal burial place at Curta de Arges.

YOU'RE SO VAIN

by Joe

There will be **three** solar eclipses in 2018. The first will be **February 15**, a partial eclipse visible over most of Antarctica, and in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, and the Falkland Islands. The greatest extent will be at 71° S, 0° 36' E, in Dronning Maud Land. The eclipse is part of Saros 150, which began August 24, 1729 and will end September 29, 2991.

The next eclipse will be **July 13**, a partial eclipse visible on the coast of Wilkes Land in Antarctica, in the Australian states of South Australia, Victoria, and Tasmania, and the Southland Region of New Zealand. The greatest extent will be at 67° 51' S, 127° 24' E in Wilkes Land. The eclipse is part of Saros 117, which began June 24, 792 and will end August 3, 2054.

Finally, there will be an eclipse on **August 11**, a partial eclipse visible in Newfoundland, Greenland, and Siberia. The greatest extent will be at 70° 24' N, 174° 30' E, off the coast of Russia near Wrangel Island. The eclipse is part of Saros 155, which began June 17, 1928 and will end July 24, 3190.

The next total solar eclipse will be on **June 2, 2019**, visible across the South Pacific and in Chile and Argentina. The longest totality will be 4 minutes 33 seconds, at sea at 17° 24' S, 109° W. The eclipse is part of Saros 127, which began on October 10, 991 and will end on March 21, 2452.

NASA Eclipse website:

<https://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/eclipse.html>

Other useful eclipse websites:

<http://www.hermit.org/Eclipse>

<http://www.eclipse.org.uk/>

BOLE SO NIHAI! SAT SRI AKALI!

Commentary by Joseph T Major

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1FfH83Xm04>

On February 22, 2013, San Antonio, Texas came to a halt. An armored car rolled through town with a police escort. It drove to a plaza near the Riverwalk.

The contents were removed. There have been state funerals with less solemnity. And yet this was for two pieces of yellowed paper.

It had all been very different on February 24, 1836. The Texicans had withdrawn into the improvised fortifications there, and su Excelencia el Presidente de México had himself arrived to deal out justice to the insurrectionists. The commander of the band of settlers, a failed lawyer named William Barrett Travis, wrote a desperate appeal. He laid out the situation as he saw it, cited the disparity of forces, and urged all the recipients of the letter to come help.

This was the letter being returned to the Alamo for temporary display. It is one of the treasures of Texas History. The letter is usually known by its grand if not grandiloquent salutation, "To the People of Texas and All Americans in the World".

The Sikh religion is of comparatively modern origin, tracing its origins to a line of Gurus, who commanded religious respect. The First Guru, Guru Nanak, was of a merchant caste, a Vaishya. He had some questions about Hindu practices, but did not establish a separate set of beliefs, focusing rather on philanthropic, charitable deeds, teaching of one God Who is in all of His creations.

His successors made the faith more formed. The Ninth Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur, allowed himself to be martyred by the Moghul Emperor Aurungzeb to protect the Hindus of Kashmir. His son and successor, Guru Gobind Singh, created an army. Gobind Singh was assassinated by Muslims in 1708 and with him

the line of Gurus ended, to be followed by the creation of an empire under the leadership of Gobind Singh's general Banda Singh Bahadur.

For the next century and more, the Sikh empire dominated the Punjab. In the First Anglo-Sikh War (1845-6), the British attained partial control of the Sikh lands, and in the Second Anglo-Sikh War (1848-9), they were subdued. Sikh troops participated in the defeat of the Indian Mutiny, earning the trust and respect of the British authorities. A number of Sikh infantry regiments were formed in the Indian Army.

The 36th Sikh Regiment was raised in 1894. As with all regiments in the Indian army, it had a small number of British officers, a larger number of Indian officers (referred to as Viceroy's Commissioned Officers), and Indian non-commissioned officers and other ranks.

The North West Frontier Province (now in Pakistan) is the location of the famous Khyber Pass. A number of forts, many built by the Sikh emperors, were rehabilitated, and more were built. About half of the 36th was posted to hold two forts in the Hindu Kush; Fort Gulistan to the east and Fort Lockhart to the west.

The two forts were not in visual range of each other. To amend that fault, a detachment of 21 Sikhs, under Havildar [Sergeant] Ishar Singh, was posted in the village of Saragarhi, between the two forts, where a signalman with a heliograph could transfer messages from one fort to the other, or report the day's events in Saragarhi.

On September 12, 1897, the message was not "Nothing to report."

A force of ten to twelve thousand Pushtuns, mostly Afridis and Orakzais, began an attack on the area. Since the forts could communicate through Saragarhi, it made sense to drive out or destroy the communications detachment and then attack whichever fort seemed more vulnerable.

This was communicated to the troops in the two forts. In response they sent back that reinforcements were coming — soon.

The Pushtuns attacked and killed one man before the rest withdrew to the fortified wall around the village. The Sikhs put up a desperate defense, causing immense casualties to the attackers. At one point some chief among the attackers offered the Sikhs rewards if they would surrender. This seems to be a

promise they thought the Pushtuns would not keep (see above about Guru Gobind Singh).

Superior numbers enabled the Pushtuns to finally break through the wall. Ishar Singh ordered the surviving men to withdraw to the final fortification, and covered their retreat, fighting until he was killed.

The survivors continued to resist until they were all killed, except for the signalman, Gurmurkh Singh, who had been communicating with the commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel John Houghton, in Fort Lockhart. (This was how the record of the battle was kept.) Gurmurkh shut down signaling and proceeded to fight the Pushtuns, killing an estimated twenty before dying in the tower, which the Pushtuns had set on fire to get him out. It was said that he died shouting a Sikh war cry, "*Bole so nihai! Sat Sri Akal!*" ["Shout aloud in ecstasy! True is the Great Timeless One!"]

The resistance of the signals detachment had left the Pushtuns unable to attack the two forts. Reinforcements arrived on the night of September 13-14 and the position was recovered on the fourteenth.

The number of Pushtun dead was subject to various estimates; it runs from 180 to 450.

In 1837 the British East India Company had instituted a medal for bravery to be awarded to Indian troops, the Order of Merit. The British government of India continued to award it (changing the name to Indian Order of Merit to avoid confusion with the newly-established Order of Merit) until 1947, though Indian soldiers became eligible for the Victoria Cross in 1911.

The [Indian] Order of Merit was awarded to every member of the detachment.

The 36th Sikh Regiment eventually became the 4th Battalion, the Sikh Regiment of first the British Indian Army and then today's Indian Army. There are two Guduwaras (Sikh places of worship) dedicated to the battle. September 12th is the Regimental Battle Honors Day of the Sikh Regiment, and the battle itself is one of the Battle Honors of the Regiment. The battle is remembered in media from epic poems to Bollywood movies.

I am determined to sustain myself as long as possible & die like a soldier

who never forgets what is due to his own honor & that of his country—

Victory or Death.

— "To the People of Texas and All Americans In the World"

FRAU IM MOND

Review by Joseph T Major of

GIRL ON THE MOON

(2016; Combat Haiku Press; ISBN 978-0692646373; \$14.49; Amazon Digital Services; \$3.99) by Jack McDonald Burnett

Volume 1 "Girl on the Moon Series"

Es gibt für den
menschlichen Geist kein
Niemals,
höchstens ein
Noch nicht.

— *Frau im Mond* (1929)

"Never"
does not exist
for the human mind
. . . only "Not yet."

— *Woman in the Moon* (1929)

Conn Garrow wants to be an astronaut. Not a scientific specialist, like geologist Wendy Pendleton of *Children of Apollo* (2002; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 3 #1) or astronomy student Frieda Velten of *Frau im Mond*. But a full-fledged astronaut, like Steve Lawrence of *The Pilgrim Project* (1964; discussed in *Alexiad* V. 12 #2).

Alas, she can't. She has bipolar disorder and can't go 238,000 miles away from her next refill. So official status is out.

Nevertheless, the spirit of Delos D. Harriman lives, and has been reincarnated in the body of entrepreneur and astronaut Peo Haskell. Conn becomes the right-hand woman of Peo, and through some devotion and other effort persuades her that she can store enough meds on a Lunar Module.

So, in 2035, Conn makes a lunar mission. She immediately runs into odd events. When she lands, she is greeted by someone identifying himself as Buzz Aldrin. It turns out that "Buzz" is actually a drone controlled by aliens who are very interested in First Contact.

Then, Conn discovers that her lunar lander has been damaged, perhaps sabotaged. (Wendy and Frieda would find it familiar.) So she has to ask her new friends to take her home. Which they do.

Returned to fame, Conn continues her work for Peo, well enough that Peo leaves everything to Conn. Enter a disappointed natural daughter, who claims undue influence. (Delos D. Harriman and Maureen Johnson, not to mention Wolf Helius, send their sympathies.) Not to mention the preacher who explains how those grotesque aliens (we finally get to see them in person) are demons. Then the government arrests Conn on various obscure charges.

Will Conn get over all her problems? Will these strange aliens prove to be beneficial or less so? Stay tuned and we'll have a resolution in the next volume, *Girl on Mars* (2017). [Mark Watney will be relieved.]

NO GUNS FOR THE SOUTH

Review by Joseph T Major of

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

(2014; CreateSpace; ISBN 978-1495935794; \$6.99; Amazon Digital Services; \$2.99) and ***HOUSE OF THE PROUD***

(2017; Jeffrey Brooks; ISBN 978-0692918951; \$19.99; Amazon Digital Services; \$7.99)

by Jeffrey E. Brooks
"The Shattered Nation Series"

In *Shattered Nation* (2013) Brooks described how the Confederacy won a razor's-edge victory in the War of Southern Independence. Now, it has to survive the peace.

Blessed Are the Peacemakers trying to settle the division of the Union at the peace conference in Toronto. Confederate Secretary of War and former Vice-President of the United States John Cabell Breckinridge of Kentucky has to face difficulties from his hosts, from the Union, and from his own party of negotiators. Lacking a decisive defeat and occupation of Washington City thanks to repeaters from Rivington, North Carolina, the Confederates have to get what they can.

The hosts have their own agendas. Brooks is to be commended for having the setting not be a faceless empty spot, but one with its own politics and arrangements. (As Colonel Garnet

Wolesley, an Indian Mutiny vet who finds General Breckinridge a most interesting person, would agree.)

Secrets on all sides make for problems. The negotiators seem almost determined to break up negotiations; though neither side is willing to go on fighting. There are several interesting people involved, and presumably everyone is glad that the new U.S. Secretary of War is unavailable. This individual (a more polite reference is unfitting) is no less than Benjamin F. Butler, a rat who switched from National Union to Democratic at a convenient time.

The negotiations are difficult, as the delegations do not speak with a single voice, the facts on the ground (e.g. the Union holding almost all of Tennessee) conflict with the desires of the two sides, and there is quite a bit of suspicion and double-dealing.

But in the end the two nations came to an agreement, of sorts, and now they can deal with their own internal problems. The Union has all these veterans, you see, and they just want to see their nation free. The Confederacy has to deal with its massive internal conflicts, and hold its first real election. And the Canadas have this uncomfortable feeling that something is not quite right. The continent might well be a *House of the Proud* and self-destructive.

In the Confederacy, the political opponents draw up lines and prepare to go into combat. General Lee (he having no access to nitrogenated glycerine from either Rivington or Atlanta) and General Johnston have taken themselves out of the running. Which means that the race falls to other victorious commanders. The anti-Davis contingent fixes upon M. le Général Pierre Gustave Toutant-Beauregard as their standardbearer.

Reluctantly, Breckinridge agrees to run. It doesn't help that he could be blackmailed for something he did in Toronto, meeting with the opposition. Since the Confederacy didn't get Kentucky, or much of a reparation payment, or the escaped slaves back, and had to give up the counties across the Potomac from Washington, D.C. (even though the U.S. is moving its capital to Philadelphia), some people are down on him.

Meanwhile, down near Waco, James McFadden, the captor of General Thomas, is in a situation that makes a compound of

religious extremists look calm and peaceful. The county is run by a hideously corrupt and aggressive political machine, and through his efforts at wanting to be left alone he finds himself at odds with a desperate and violent gang.

Up along the border with the Canadas, the bold Fenian men begin their gallant campaign. There is some interesting help, and a pre-emptive strike in train.

And in Louisiana a messiah has appeared; a self-freed slave known only as "Saul", who is leading his brothers in a war to the knife against the white slaveholders. This won't do, and exiled Confederate general John Hunt Morgan is sent down there to do something about it, as is James Russell Lowell, an Abolitionist with an ambition to be, one way or another, a second John Brown.

Their different efforts and fates are separated at first, but gradually draw together as the election comes closer. Some profit, others are humiliated, and the crisis focuses on the smallest and most trivial of events.

A couple of points about that ramshackle and divergent entity called the British Army: There is a reference to "grenadier companies", but the flank companies (grenadiers and light infantry) were abolished by then. Garnet Wolesley getting a knighthood of the Bath when not yet even a colonel would be extraordinary, and in our time line he became a Knight of the Royal Victorian Order then.

Brooks can draw together various plot threads in a way and create a story that at first seems far-flung and barely connected, but inexorably becomes a powerful narrative. There is more to come and the Confederacy, having solved one problem, has still more to face, and may not survive.

ZERSTÖRERMÄNNER BAND III

Review by Joseph T Major of
KAISERKRIEGER 3: DER AUFBRUCH
(*The Emperor's Men 3: Passage*)

by Dirk van den Boom
(2017; Atlantis Verlag Guido Latz;
ISBN 978-3864025564; \$12.00;
Amazon Digital Services; \$5.99)
<http://www.atlantis-verlag.de>

Rheinsberg was finding out that being Magister Militum had its own

problems. Like this report from the Rhine Frontier. The Reich he knew had never been like this: "Fortunately Bootsman Schmidt had learned English, as he had been planning to emigrate there. The couriers claimed they were from Grantville, West Virginia, and were establishing a new United States in Thüringen. . . ."

— Nicht aus *Kaiserkrieg*

Promotion from being a mere 2 I/C of one of the Kaiser's lesser ships of war to the rank of *Kriegsherr* hasn't upset Rheinsberg. It's the concurrent problems that are offputting.

In the third volume of this epos of a ship sent backwards in time and what happened, we get a portrayal from a different perspective. There's no "here we are and we can solve all your problems" attitude.

The Magister Militum has to deal with the former mutineers, the dilapidation of his ship, and the peril of the Goths. Any one of these would be a trial, all three of them are a burden. Oh yes, and Valens shows up again, having been taken prisoner after losing Adrianople. Pretenders in the hands of the enemy can make for problems. And there are religious problems, too.

Nevertheless, he persisted. In the Martin Padway department we have the launching and trial cruise of an actual steamship (with an engine of bronze, which seems a little nerve-racking, never mind the boiler). To solve two problems at once, the ship takes an expedition to Aegyptus with orders to proceed south to Axum, where there is **coffee**. (As opposed to Padway's time-wasting effort to get tobacco when he really needed a cuppa java.)

But there is still opposition, and it's not going to go away just because the good guys are good guys and know better. In fact, the rebels have gone ahead to Alexandria, where there is a painful but perhaps useful encounter.

Solutions are found but problems recur, and there are still difficulties over the horizon that will be seen when this is . . . *Fortsetzung folgt*.

THE WOMAN WITH THE IRON SPIRIT

Review by Joseph T Major of
MAID OF BAIKAL:
A Novel of the Russian Civil War

by Preston Fleming
(2017; Amazon Digital Services; \$2.99)

One complaint about Harry Turtledove is that too often, his novels are "calques"; history with a different set of names and places. Thus, *The Man with the Iron Heart* (2008; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 7 #5) is about Iraq, but set in Germany.

Fleming has done an unusual twist on this; he has Joan of Arc in Russia during their Civil War. Zhanna Stepanovich Dorokina (Жанна Степанович Дорокина) [and that should be "Zhanna Stepanova" (Жанна Степанова)] is a young Russian woman of Verkhneudinsk (Верхнеудинск) [now in our time-line Ulan-Ude (Улан-Удэ)] in the Buryat lands. She hears Voices, and they tell her to save Russia.

With the help of a young American army officer, come to oversee the wireless communications of the White Russian armies, she gains an introduction to polar explorer and Supreme Ruler and Commander-in-Chief of all Russian Land and Sea Forces Admiral Aleksandur Vasilyevich Kolchak (Александр Васильевич Колчак). She picks him out from a group of Russian officers.

That should give you an idea of how closely Fleming has followed his model. Zhanna gains the byname of the Maid of Baikal (Дева Байкала), the allegiance of a growing number of volunteers, and the suspicion of a few senior commanders who wonder why the Supreme Ruler should be listening so assiduously to a schizophrenic.

In spite of this, the White Russians achieve something approaching unity, and drive in on the Bolsheviks. But, the Maid of Baikal, for all her victories, finds out the hard way that doing personal reconnaissances can lead to problems, which may turn out to be fatal . . .

Fleming has researched the torturous and complicated interplay of personalities among the tumultuous and uncooperative White Russian movement, and displays no mean awareness of the sinews of war. A recurring problem, for example, is getting war material and supplies.

There are some problems. Why would the (Communist-controlled) Russian Orthodox Church use a Latin punishment? I'd think the Maid of Baikal would have been unmasked as an Enemy of the People, a pusher of the Opiate of the People, and subjected to the supreme measure of punishment — *Rasstrel*

(Расстрел), death by shooting with confiscation of all personal property.

Some of the more notorious problems of the White Russian movement are also glossed over. For example, there was Ataman Grigory Mikhailovich Semenov (Григорий Михайлович Семёнов) and his partner Baron Roman Nicolaus Maximilian von Ungern-Sternberg (Барон Роберт-Николай-Максимилиан Роман Фёдорович фон Унгерн-Штернберг), two men who played a key role in delivering Siberia to the Bolsheviks.

In the Afterword, the American officer who watched the whole thing comes back to Russia, in 1934. Where the Premier is a man known as Zhelezin (Zhelezniy; Железный). Fine, but “Zhelezin” is the latest pseudonym of Sidney G. Reilly, né Rosenblum, the Ace of Spies. Yet no one says “British Agent”, much less “Zhid” (Жид).

Terrible though a White Russian ostensibly democratic Russia might be for its peoples (think Путин [Putin]), it would have been preferable to the rule of Communism. Fleming lets us imagine a world without it. One wonders what Alyssa Zinov'yevna Rosenbaum (Алиса Зиновьевна Розенбаум) would do (Shrug?) and where Guy Burgess, Donald Maclean, H. A. R. Philby, Alger Hiss, and Noel Field would look for inspiration.

ALWAYS TRUE AND FAITHFUL

Review by Joseph T Major of

TRUE BELIEVER:

Stalin's Last American Spy

by Kati Marton

(2016; Simon & Schuster;

ISBN 978-1476763767; \$27.00

Simon and Schuster Digital Sales; \$2.99)

During the Hiss Case, Noel Field, his wife, his adopted daughter and his brother all disappeared into Soviet-controlled Europe. From that, I infer that they had knowledge about Alger Hiss and others that made it inadvisable to leave the Fields in any part of Europe or the United States where American officials or subpoenas could reach them.

— *Witness*, Whittaker Chambers

Joan Brady's *Alger Hiss: Framed: A New Look at the Case That Made Richard Nixon*

Famous (2017) wears its theme on its cover, as it were. Brady was pretty thoroughly demolished by Harvey Klehr in *New Criterion* (September 2017), so much for that.

I do wonder how Brady's Nixonite conspirators managed to influence the Hungarian government. As you know, Bob, in the Fifties Hungary had a Communist government. (With problems: see *The Bridge at Andau* by James A. Michener (1957).)

Noel Field, whom Hiss had tried to recruit for his GRU apparatus, had indeed fled to Hungary. Where he ran into the same problem that those who had gone before encountered; he was unmasked as a traitor and sentenced — well he wasn't but he was still imprisoned. And in the course of his confession he told of how his fellowcountryman Alger Hiss had worked for the benefit of Soviet Power.

But what drew Field into Stalin's Secret Service? The World War was for many the proof that liberal politics had decisively failed. Fortunately there was a land of hope out there in the wondrous East. As with so many of the educated sort, Field took the view that the only hope for a lasting peace was a people's democracy.

Enter the talent spotters of the Chief Directorate of State Security of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs. Field was identified as a useful sort by Hede Massing and her husband Paul.

There seems to be a weakness in Society of Friends belief. Back in the early days, they used to sit in their meeting houses and share their love for the oppressed indigenes, ignoring the smoke from burning homes of non-Friends being torched by said locals. Nowadays the American Friends Service Committee favors the Palestinians. There is a blindness about violence there. Noel Field's Quaker beliefs and values did not extend to the Ukrainian peasants, and he was not revolted by the liberation of Paris by the workers' army of Germany the way Frederik Pohl was.

While the Massings were recruiting Field for the NKVD, another new friend wanted to recruit him for the Razvedupr, Soviet Military Intelligence (GRU). Yes, this was Alger Hiss, then known as Agent JURIST. There was a small security error in the reports to the Lubyanka, NKVD headquarters, where Hiss was referred to *by name*. And also an “Agent 19”. Now Diana West has made much in her *American Betrayal* (2013) about Agent 19

being Harry Hopkins, FDR's close advisor. But the Massings didn't say Hopkins was there. They said that Lawrence Duggan was there. So West joins Brady on the ash-heap of history.

Field worked for the State Department for a short term, passing on secret papers. His former supervisor Sumner Welles pointed out later that this gave the Soviet decipherers plaintexts with which to compare secret messages.

Looking over his shoulder, Field left the State Department to work for the League of Nations. While in Geneva, he made a couple of bad associations; first with Ignatz Reiss, then with Walter Krivitsky. Since Reiss was killed trying to defect, and Krivitsky died suspiciously after defecting, this may not have reflected well on Field.

The next few years were not the most hospitable. Field and his wife Herta spent a few years helping refugees from Nationalist Spain, working in what became Vichy France. They fled to Geneva when the Germans took over the whole of the country.

He went into a similar job, working to resettle refugees from the Nazis. As a sideline, he signed up with the OSS. (Marton quotes some suggestive comments by William J. Donovan about that sort of person.)

Suspicion grew. Then in 1948, the House Committee on Un-American Activities had a senior, well-regarded editor and writer at *Time* testify. Field felt exposed.

The error that Chambers made in his assumption was that Field made his relocation under orders. He just went to Prague and tried desperately to become a member of the Communist Party.

Eventually they found a use for him. He was arrested by the StB and deported to Hungary, where the AVO began to question him. The questioning was quite energetic. Once Field figured out what he was supposed to confess to he did. Including working with Alger Hiss.

This testimony was featured in several of Stalin's wave of purge trials of the Eastern European Communists. The events of the great Soviet purge trials of the thirties repeated themselves as the defendants were exposed as having always been agents of capitalism, foreign intelligence services, and Trotsky. And one of the most maleficent fiends coordinating this anti-Soviet effort was a

certain Noel Field.

(British journalist Stewart Steven wrote *Operation Splinter Factor* (1974) which claimed that Field was secretly working for Allen Dulles in an effort to exacerbate the Cold War by having moderate Communists removed. Nigel West lists Steven's many errors and mis-interpretations in *Cold War Counterfeit Spies* (2016).)

Yet, in spite of having been the key man in this vast right-wing conspiracy, Field never went on trial! He was released after a few years, and found a petty job in Hungarian Communist Party publicity. He even finally got to join the Party.

For the rest of his life, Field was a devoted and enthusiastic Communist. He died in 1970, being spared the eventual end of it all.

Marton also describes the fate of that “adopted daughter” (actually, the Fields were only her guardian) Erika Glaser. She had an even worse experience than Noel and Herta; she ended up in a GULag prison camp near the Arctic Circle. Somehow she survived and returned to America. She was not as enthusiastic about the revolution of the proletariat as she had been.

Characters in literature can have real-life equivalents. Thus, Reinhard Heydrich, the Hangman of Prague, was eerily like the Un-Man of *Perelandra* (1943); the human thing with intellect, knowledge, and ability, but no soul, no there there. Noel Field was from a book that came out five years after that:

He gazed up at the enormous face. Forty years it had taken him to learn what kind of smile was hidden beneath the dark moustache. O cruel, needless misunderstanding! O stubborn, self-willed exile from the loving breast! Two gin-scented tears trickled down the sides of his nose. But it was all right, everything was all right, the struggle was finished. He had won the victory over himself. **He loved Big Brother.**

— 1984, Eric Arthur “George Orwell” Blair

BEHIND THE WALLS OF HELLAS

Review by Joseph T Major of

A PORTABLE COSMOS:

Revealing the Antikythera Mechanism, Scientific Wonder of the Ancient World

by Alexander Jones

(2017; Oxford University Press; ISBN 978-0199739349; \$34.95 Amazon Digital Services; \$14.39)

Sir Arthur C. Clarke said it was the most important thing in the Εθνικό Αρχαιολογικό Μουσείο [National Archaeological Museum] in Athens. Richard Feynman was thought odd for wanting to see it.

And yet, all they are talking about are several badly corroded lumps of copper. These have become, all the same, the most important find from the wrecked ship that went down off the coast of the island of Άντικύθηρα [Antikythera], northwest of the western tip of Crete, sometime after the hundred seventy-sixth Olympiad, or perhaps sometime between the consulships of Manius Aemilius & Lucius Volcatius (AUC DCLXXXVIII) to that of Lucius Aemilius & Gaius Claudius (AUC DCCIV); that is, sometime between 67 BC[E], when the last coin found in the wreck was minted, and 50 BC[E], the estimated date of the pottery found there.

It was fortunate that the divers bringing up the wealth of statuary lost on the wreck did not toss this box of junk over the side. Investigation of its nature began when someone noticed a gear wheel on the surface of one of the fragments.

But the investigation languished. It was not possible to break up the fragments without destroying what they were looking for. Remember, “When an archaeologist says something’s in good shape, he doesn’t necessarily mean it’ll start as soon as you shove a switch in.” (“Omnilingual”, H. Beam Piper, *Astounding Science Fiction*, February 1957). The development of advanced methods of scanning objects made it possible to discover what was inside those fragments.

The reconstructed gearing is quite complex. And what does it do? The current consensus is that it is an astronomical predictor. (If Hank Morgan or Allan Quatermain tries to impress Caesar by threatening to darken the sun, he can tell beforehand it’s going to happen naturally, in other words.)

There is a point implicit in this. The Device is too complicated to be a one-off thing. Such items would be scrapped when the means to fix them were no longer available, just as the bronze statues also raised

from the wreck would have eventually been melted down for other use if the ship had reached port. The implication is that there was an entire unrecorded field of mechanical technology in the Classic era.

For a thorough and complex evaluation of an unfortunately unique archaeological find, this book is hard to beat. Our technology may be just as incomprehensible in the aftermath of the Neobarbs.

COFFEE MUGS RATED

by Lisa

I have experience with mugs from four convenience marts. They are Pilot, Circle K, Speedway, and Thornton’s. Pilot offers my favorites. Theirs come in two sizes, large and small. The large is better if you just want straight coffee but if you want cappucino you will need the smaller, as the large will not fit in the cappucino machine. In the morning I go with small because I really like their sugar free cappucino enough to pay the extra fifty cents for the cappucino mug and its antiskid coating. In addition, these mugs make neat presents for Mr. Sam, the Bronze Star recipient at church. He got the Bronze Star for being brave enough to move an exploded shell away from his squad.

Speedway gets the two ranking. Their mugs only come in one size and are smaller than the Pilot large mug. They rank number one in convenience since there is one between home and work. Like Pilot they have sugar free cappucino and like Pilot, their mugs have handles.

Thornton’s mugs rank number three. They are bigger than Speedway’s but Thornton’s, at least the ones I have been to, do not have sugar free cappucino and are not nearly as convenient for me as Speedway.

Circle K comes last. Their mugs have nice insulation but lack handles making them harder to manage than the others. At \$1.99 they are the cheapest. If they had handles I would rank them higher. Their hazelnut brand is pretty good but not as good as sugar free cappucino.

CHRISTMAS TREES

by Lisa

This year I spent some time looking at the live trees being offered. The only one I

seriously considered buying were the ones in pots offered by Kroger. I just cannot bring myself to participate in killing trees for a few days of enjoyment. The ones in pots could have been replanted somewhere and lived. I did acquire two small artificial ones which I will use during Christmas and then give away. They were a dollar apiece and I can buy new ones next year for not much.

WRITING

by Lisa Major

November was National Write a Novel Month. If you have not heard of this, participants try to achieve fifty thousand words written during November. I tried my hand at it. I did not get anywhere close to the goal but I did end the month with 78 handwritten pages and a project I am continuing to work on.

WINDYCON 44

Con Report by Leigh Kimmel

Windycon is a fan-run science fiction convention held every year around Veterans’ Day in the Chicago area. It is one of the longest-running science fiction conventions in the Midwest, and I have many happy memories of going to it back in the 1990’s, when it was at the Hyatt by Woodfield Mall.

This year it was held over the weekend of November 10-12, 2017 at the Westin Lombard Yorktown in Lombard, Illinois, one of the northern suburbs of Chicago. Because we needed to be ready to load in as early as possible if we were going to have any hope of getting sales in on Friday, we drove up on Thursday. We made pretty good time until we were actually in the Chicago area. The Jane Byrne Interchange is still a backed-up mess of road construction, and we got caught in the middle of it.

Once we got through that snarl, we were able to move fairly well, and we got to the hotel in good time. I carried stuff in and mopped up some unpleasant spillage, then we settled in. I was going to do some writing, but I had picked up a nasty headache and ended up just crawling into bed and sleeping until the problem muscles relaxed. By supertime I was feeling better, and I even got some writing done in the evening.

On Friday we headed over to the main

hotel, hoping that this year they’d have the tables ready and we’d be able to load in early. However, they were adamant about the official start time, and weren’t going to budge until one of the really well-known dealers suggested that we should start staging stuff in the hallway to reduce the time it would take us to get set up. Suddenly they decided to cut us a whole hour’s slack — but we really needed to be starting several hours early, like the previous dealers’ room head let us do, if we were going to have any hope of being ready by the time the doors opened.

I pushed so hard on loading in and setting up that I had no chance to eat lunch, and by mid-afternoon I was famishing from hunger. I ended up literally collapsing in front of our table of books and sitting crosslegged, cramming raisins into my mouth in a desperate effort to raise my energy level to something manageable. We did manage to get finished setting up before the dealers’ room closed, and even made a couple of sales. But I was pretty shaky as we headed over to the con suite to have supper and hang out until the parties started.

They had some sandwich fixings, but they no longer had the ramen which I’d been really hoping for as something to unknot my stomach and make it willing to accept real food. I tried to eat my lunch, but ended up gagging on it, because my stomach simply would not unknot.

I did do a little munching at the parties, which helped me feel somewhat better. However, by this point we were having serious doubts about ever coming back, at least as dealers. Then we headed back to our hotel room and I jotted down a few notes on a novel, just to be able to say I had written.

On Saturday we got up and had the hotel’s complimentary breakfast, then headed over to the main hotel and had a second breakfast in the con suite. I even had some lox on my bagels, since the taste was interesting and I could use some protein after the previous day’s near starvation.

Then we headed to the dealers’ room, where we got signs up and put out a few last-minute items. When the doors opened, people started dribbling in, but sales remained stubbornly slow and meager. It became increasingly clear that we weren’t going to make our sales targets, or even our expenses. So I began to warn people that if they wanted

something, they'd do well to buy it now, because we probably wouldn't be coming back again.

After the dealers' room closed, we went up to the memorial for Bill Surret. We all agreed on how much of a figure of Chicago fandom he'd been. I remarked on how I kept expecting to see him at the door of the dealers' room, where he often did volunteer duty.

After it was over, we headed downstairs to the con suite, where we sat around and visited. I did some more fiddling with one of my novels, although I didn't really produce much in the way of useful text. We went to a few parties, but we really weren't feeling up to much. After a while we decided to just head back to the other hotel and turn in early.

On Sunday we had the hotel's complimentary breakfast, then got ready and carted out our personal belongings before checking out. Then we headed over to the main hotel, where we discovered that the dealers' room opened an hour later than it had on Saturday. This meant we wouldn't have such a rush, and would actually have a little time to hang out in the con suite and visit with people. However, it meant an hour's less sales time, which was not a good thing at a con where we were already way behind where we needed to be to even break even.

When we finally got into the dealers' room, I went ahead and boxed up some fairy figurines that had gotten absolutely no interest all weekend. I figured that the less we had to get packed before closing, the sooner we'd be out of there.

I also talked with some other dealers, who were not happy about their sales either. One of them remarked on how there were so few younger people there, and most of them were the children and grandchildren of the earlier generation of fans. This means that the convention isn't bringing in new blood, and as a result will shrink as older fans no longer come. We talked about how Windycon's conglom isn't reaching out beyond the people they already know, and particularly aren't reaching the host of younger people who are going to anime and comic cons all over the Midwest, and who might enjoy the more relaxed atmosphere of a fan-run convention, with its approachable Guests of Honor quite unlike the celebrities behind velvet ropes.

Once the dealers' room finally opened, we got some traffic and made some sales.

However, I started packing the rest of our figurines right after lunch, concentrating on the ones that had received little or no attention and moving on to the ones that had gotten interest, but no firm commitment to buy. I actually thought we were doing well on getting packed, but when the doors closed, we still had an awful lot of stuff that needed boxing.

Finally we had enough packed that I could retrieve the van and carry stuff out. It wasn't bad when I was just carrying out the big gridwall sections, but when I loaded the first books on the cart and was heading out, it suddenly became almost impossible to move. I looked down and to my surprise I discovered one of the tires had gone completely flat. Since there was no way to air it up at the convention, I had to grab one of the hotel carts and try to get things out that way. However, I then had to deal with the hassles of getting a cart that long to turn in a confined space.

As other dealers finished and pulled out, I moved forward until I was right in front of the door and could park the cart just inside the door and carry everything to the van. Even so, we were running so far behind that the dealers' room head finally helped me carry the last couple of loads, simply because he wanted to get home and couldn't leave until everyone was out. It didn't help that things weren't packing the same way going out as they had come, and I was not entirely confident we had a stable load. But I didn't have time to fiddle endlessly with it, so we got our personal belongings into the van and hit the road for Merrillville.

At the same time I was sort of bummed at having to say good-bye to a convention I've always enjoyed. But after such a severe flop, we really couldn't justify going back as dealers, and these days we don't have the money to go just to have fun. Maybe one of these days, if my indie writing career reaches the point that we could go and write it off as advertising, I might be able to think about it again. But most likely I'll probably just send advertising fliers next year, and hope that I'll see a corresponding uptick in book sales online.

At least we made good time going through Chicago. Traffic on the Jane Byrne Interchange was flowing reasonably smoothly, and we got to our hotel in Merrillville in plenty of time to take a soak in the hot tub. It

was nice and hot, and went a long way to relaxing our sore muscles. After that, we had supper and I did a little writing before turning in for the night and trying to get at least a little sleep.

On Monday we ate breakfast, then checked out and tried to find the local branch of our bank. However, that proved easier said than done, and after a few wrong turns, we decided to head back to the mall and see if the person at Vitamin World knew how to get there.

As it turned out, she was able to give us far better directions than we'd gotten previously (they gave a local street number for US 30, which threw us completely off). I was able to get the deposit made, pathetic as it might be, and then we jumped back on I-65 to drive home.

We thought we'd find cheaper gas further south, but the prices were going up instead. Finally we decided to just stop and get enough gas to make sure we could get back to Indianapolis safely.

I was fairly awake most of the trip. But right around Lebanon I suddenly got incredibly tired, to the point it was all I could do to keep my eyes open. I was ready to dig out another Monster just to stay awake. I was most definitely glad to pull into our driveway and not have to do any more driving for the day.

Windycon 44
November 10 to 12, 2017
Westin Lombard Yorktown Center Hotel,
Illinois
Reported by Sue Burke

My second Windycon wasn't quite as magic as the first. Some of the novelty of being in America has worn off, but I still had a wonderful weekend with about a thousand friends or potential friends enjoying and debating science fiction, life, the universe, and everything. The theme was "dystopia," and people had fun with that, too.

Friday, November 10
Chicago to Lombard

Two inches of lake-effect snow had fallen in my neighborhood and the Loop as I made my way at about noon to the convention. My husband had taken the car to go to work (not very far from Lombard, ironically), so I took

the "L" train to downtown and then a Union Pacific commuter train to the snow-free western suburbs, and the hotel shuttle picked up me and three other convention-goers. A car would have taken only slightly less time.

I checked in, wandered around, ate a baked potato and some pizza in the con suite, said hello to Starship Cat / Leigh Kimmel in the Dealer's Room, and eventually attended a panel on "NASA Tech: Not Just for Astronauts Anymore," where someone wondered how much use on Earth there is for an ion drive.

At the Opening Ceremony, author guest of honor Rudy Rucker opined that "we're not here for any productive purpose, we're here to mess around."

Immediately after that, I had been assigned to moderate a panel on Neuro Linguistic Programming, about which I know bupkis, but one of the scheduled panelists was a practitioner, as was another panel member who appeared out of nowhere, so I said very little besides "welcome" and "thank you." It turned out just fine. Later the head of programming said I got some of my (rather mystifying) assignments because I was willing to participate, even moderate, and was available at the times when a willing panelist or moderator was needed.

I popped in on a presentation about Fermilab and decided I must visit it sometime. Then I spend the rest of the evening wandering from place to place, fired a "missile pod" at the Royal Manticoran Navy fan party (i.e., I downed an alcoholic shot in an elaborate ceremony), and got to bed sometime after midnight.

Saturday, November 11
Westin Lombard Yorktown Center

After bagels and lox in the con suite, I attended a panel on "Is Science Fiction as Thrilling as It Used to Be?" where one panelist posited that science fiction seems to have a great innovation every twenty years, like New Wave in the 1960s, cyberpunk in the 80s, and New Space Opera in the 00s – so it's about time for something new again. Regarding the best age at which to read science fiction, an audience member said, "I'm older now than I ever was before," yet she was reading happily.

I got bored at the next panel, "Who Doth Smite Me?" about creating a fictional religion,

so I wandered around and, eventually, attended a Dave McCarthy and Helen Montgomery panel about launching the bid for a 2022 Worldcon in Chicago. The hardest part, Dave said, was the bid campaign, which will cost \$25,000 to \$30,000.

At 1 p.m., I moderated a panel on “VillainCon Submissions: What if writers of dystopian stories are really submitting their world domination plans for peer review?” We decided instead that the fun of dystopias was telling stories about rebelling against and overcoming evil milieux, although we could not decide what the slow-motion dystopia of Twitter and Facebook is going to yield.

At 2 p.m., I moderated “Developing a Language,” and with a little effort I kept us more or less on track as we talked about the differences among actual languages and cultures, how to express that, and whether invented languages could be as complex.

I broke for lunch, and alas all the meatballs in the con suite had been eaten. Then I went to “The Apocalypse Is Now” where a medical doctor described how a really bad influenza outbreak could destroy Chicago. At “The Future of Civilization,” which included science guest of honor Holly Wilper, the panel decided that “the future is a scary place” – as I said, the con theme was dystopia.

I caught a few songs by the music guest of honor, Erica Neely, including one in which not everybody died. (She tends to sing grim songs.) After dinner, I saw her again on a panel about “Living On or Off the Grid,” that is, off social media and the internet, and we concluded that while the government has way too much data on us, corporations have immensely more and they’re acting on it, not necessarily to our benefit.

After a social hour called “Writers & Donuts,” which was exactly that, I appeared on a 9 p.m. panel about “Dystopian Recipes.” The moderator wasn’t enthusiastic for what she called “sordid” sources of protein, however, so we never discussed anything resembling Soylent Green.

I listened to a choir sing in Klingon, then prowled the halls looking for friends and parties, and retired well after midnight.

**Sunday, November 12
Lombard to Chicago**

After more bagels and lox, and some

caffeine, I made a 10 a.m. panel on “Measures of Sentience,” then one on “Is English Dead?” which was the funniest panel of the weekend with such con, discussing concepts like the failure of “business casual” language. At noon, I went to “Tutti Frutti Literature,” about how changing social norms were affecting fiction. The title apparently refers to slang for an uncommon sexual practice, but someone on Twitter thought it was a slur against gays, and social media slow-motion destruction ensued. No one gets to make the slightest mistake anymore, and everyone gets treated as the enemy.

Then it was time to catch the shuttle bus to the train station. The weather had warmed up, so it was raining hard, not snowing. My husband (who had stayed home to do his master’s degree homework) offered to come pick me up, but I got back faster than it would have taken for him to make a round trip across greater Chicagoland.

Windycon 45 will be held November 9 to 11, 2018, again in Lombard, Illinois, with the theme “Unexpected Heroes.”

WORLDCON BIDS

- 2020
New Zealand
<http://nzin2020.org/>
- 2021
Washington, D.C.
<http://dcin2021.org/>
- 2022
Chicago
- 2023
Paris
<https://sites.google.com/site/parisin2019/>
New Orleans
- 2024
United Kingdom
<http://www.ukin2024.org/>
- 2025
Pacific Northwest
Perth, Australia

NASFiC BIDS

2019

Utah

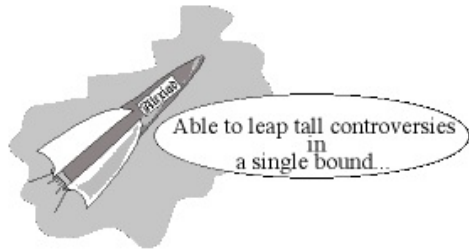
<http://www.utahfor2019.com/>

100th Birthday Wishes

Sir Arthur Charles Clarke, CBE, FBIS

born **December 16, 1917**, Minehead,
Somerset, United Kingdom
died **March 19, 2008**, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Happy Birthday to you,
Happy Birthday to you,
Happy Birthday to you, Sir Arthur,
Happy Birthday to you.

Letters, we get letters


From: **Rodford E. Smith** October 17, 2017
stickmaker@usa.net

Charles M. Schulz was the author of *Peanuts*. I recently learned that one reliable way to spot forgeries of his characters was that most forgers spell it Schultz. :-)

Did you know that H. Rider Haggard and Rudyard Kipling were long-time correspondents?

The mention in his MidAmeriCon review by Taras Wolansky of fantasy novels which omit mention of both architecture and servants made me smile. In a fantasy novel I am currently trying to sell one of the characters is a commoner invited by a noble friend to the grand palace in the capital for the Winter holiday. She keeps wondering — and sometimes learning — just who prepares the food, moves luggage in and out, cleans the carpets and tapestries and so forth. She is a bit peeved to find that not only do servants make those entering apartments stand while their garments and shoes are cleaned, but that she's not even allowed to dress herself! Another character is a cataphile noblewoman brought up on the city who enjoys pointing out architectural features and relating trivia and humorous stories (such as the time during her childhood when she fell through a ceiling into the Queen's Bath). She takes the commoner and several others on a trip into a cathedral clock tower; the enormous bells hung above that open-topped chamber make the commoner rather nervous. They make part of their trip through the structure in a narrow corridor inside the top of the very thick sanctuary wall, just below where the roof starts.

This was what I liked about M. A. R. Barker's books about Tékumel. The countries had complete economies; clans that grew things, made things, sold things, transported things, not just lords and priests and wizards and thieves and assassins and bards. They also have cats (Tsolyáni: "tiúni").

— JTM

I enjoyed the rest of Taras' description of the con, especially his coverage of Brother Guy. I knew him before he became a Jesuit, because he's part of a Chicago-based group of fan I sometimes hang out with at cons.

In the comments, Tim Lane and you both mention schools for superheroes which came before mine. Didn't a guy named Xavier beat all of those into print? :-)

I am a long-time fan of *PS235*, BTW.

I have to wonder why you didn't put the "Joy Takes Many Forms" cartoon nearer to my column. :-)

I was concerned to read about your recent health problems, and glad of your recovery. You are in my prayers.

From: **John G. Hemry** October 19, 2017
jack-campbell@earthlink.net

A remarkable book has recently been translated into English. *The Unwomanly Face of War* by Svetlana Alexievich is a collection of interviews with women who fought on the Eastern Front during WW II. I highly recommend it. Very powerful and covering perspectives too often missing. I recall during the 1980s debates in the US Navy over putting women sailors on combat ships. They couldn't possibly handle the physical demands of hauling male sailors to safety, the argument went. It's too bad these stories weren't available then, of 16-year old girls hauling men out of burning T-34 tanks (the women combat medics rode into action on the outside of the tanks since there wasn't room for them inside the armor). Many have heard of the Russian female snipers and pilots, but this adds many more accounts. I can see why it won a Nobel Prize. "I wrote my name on the Reichstag...I wrote with charcoal, with what was at hand: 'You were defeated by a Russian girl from Saratov.'"

Take it up with Martin van Creveld.

This year's worldcon in Helsinki had a couple of features that other worldcons ought to copy but probably either can't or won't. The dealer room was outside the ticketed area, meaning that anyone could come in and browse the offerings. That wouldn't work for the dealer room at a comic con or Dragoncon, which are already gridlocked for long periods, but the average worldcon vendor would probably appreciate the extra sales opportunities. The other unusual feature was that the city of Helsinki gave every member of the worldcon a free mass transit pass for the period of the convention. That meant the con goers could easily patronize places away from the convention center and probably paid for itself in the extra business it created. But it's unlikely any city in the US would pony up similar free passes.

Another thing learned in Helsinki from my Finnish publisher is that only two percent of the Finnish book market is ebooks. The country is as wired and accessible as any European state, but the Finns simply prefer their books in physical form. Old bookstores crowded with customers was a welcome sight for an American. The worldcon itself had attendance capped at 6,000 by fire marshals. Every day there was a long line of people waiting in hope of getting one of the day passes before the 6,000 limit was hit.

I confirmed once again this year that Dragoncon continues to be the only US convention with a regular venue that includes a hotel with a Trader Vic's restaurant, and therefore a bar serving real Mai Tai's. Most cons would benefit from real Mai Tai's, I think, as would most programming panels.

I'll be Guest of Honor at CONCAVE 39/DEEP SOUTH CON 56 at the end of February. I hope to see some of Alexiad's regulars there.

I don't think we can make it.

— JTM

From: **Richard A. Dengrove** Oct. 23, 2017
 2651 Arlington Drive, #302,
 Alexandria, VA 22306-3626 USA
RichD22426@aol.com

Real late for the August 2017 issue but here

are my comments.

I will start with yours, Joe, on a forthcoming HBO series *Confederate*, where the Confederacy wins and slavery has survived until today. Also, your comment on the movie *Black America*, where the Blacks start an independent nation out of the United States and it becomes an economic powerhouse.

You complain about their biased assumptions and their inability to examine assumptions about history. Not uncommon for these tropes. I have heard people doubt, that slavery as an institution would have survived until 2017 because of changes in the economy. In fact, they have doubted it would have even survived until the 20th Century. The second plot also has its critics. I have heard people doubt that Black slaves could hardly have set up an army sufficient to defend any independent nation.

However, sloppy history is common in alternate history, and is only one way to judge them. You can judge them by their story and whether they give you something to think about. Not that the alternate histories you mention do either. However, I really liked Dick's *Man in the High Castle* even though I don't believe the Nazis could have conquered the US, or even developed an atomic bomb.

To your examples of bad alternate history in one place, may be added Tomkin's *The Bitter Cup*, which you disparage elsewhere. Yes, alternate history that takes the cake. The idea seems to be that Wallis Simpson rather than becoming queen becomes the royal mistress, and gets all sorts of intelligence that she delivers to the Nazis. With it, they can get the British to sue for peace.

For you, Joe, the tale goes off the rails. For me, it struck a wrong note from the beginning: from what I gather, neither Wallis Simpson nor Edward VIII possessed the intelligence for such spectacular espionage.

Reality can be as weird as alternate history. Certainly weirder than *The Bitter Cup*. In the letter column Robert Runté claims that people who talk to themselves are given fake Bluetooth earpieces lest they attract attention. Of course, while I find that idea weird for others, I might invest in one of those. I find no voice friendlier than my own.

Robert Runté wonders about fake bluetooth earpieces for those who talk to themselves. Lloyd Penney talks about the late Rodney Leighton. He got the impression Rodney didn't

like him. With Rodney, it was difficult to tell. Somehow I stuck with Rodney enough through some bad times, and ultimately was considered a friend.

I had to edit some of Rodney's letters to take out some of his comments about depression and what he wanted to do about it.

I heard from Robert Runté about fake earpieces. I heard from George Price that Werner Heisenberg couldn't make much headway on the atomic bomb because he was an advocate of German science. I got the impression he was considered an enemy of the school of thought called 'German Science,' which scorned relativity and quantum mechanics.

On the other hand, I wouldn't doubt that, although the advocates of 'German Science' were removed from their high positions long before the war ended, the concept of 'German Science' prevented any Nazi progress toward an atomic bomb. That that was among the reasons why they decided the project wasn't worth erecting the factory sized facilities needed.

'German Science' was an ideology, which, for a time, was tacked onto Germany's Nazi ideology. However, it doesn't take an ideology for officers to scorn new weapons and keep old fashioned weapons. I gather that is the natural attitude, for officers. In fact, any attempt to replace the old weapons is seen as disarmament. Hence, the reluctance of the US Navy to embrace air warfare largescale before World War II.

For many, the past is always halcyon. Taras Wolansky accuses me of white washing the atrocities of the Native Americans. I just said that they were more often the villains in the old Westerns than now. On the other hand, were people better informed then of Native American atrocities? The old Westerns, I remember, were filmed from the '30s to the '60s, many years after the last 'Indian' Wars had ended.

With the Native Americans, I end my comments. They have included alternate histories both good and bad, people who talk to themselves, and the Nazi lack of an atomic bomb.

December 11, 2017

What's my excuse for sending a response to an October *Alexiad* in December? All I can say is here I am. Do with the LOC what you will.

Thank God, Joe, you're recovering from your blood infection. I was going to blame old age. However, my sister's boy friend had a blood infection that nearly killed him. He is a physician and he claimed you could get it at any age, and from shaving. At least, from a very unlucky shave.

That is very real. However, this is a delusion. You joked, in your prologue to "Then You Flew Your Lear Jet Up To Nova Scotia," that primitive peoples could be made to believe all sorts of ridiculous things about the cosmos. However, it was quite serious in another way. I gather many Europeans long believed that Europeans could use eclipses to tame the wild savages.

I gather it didn't work, though, when that old saw was put to the test with the Zulus. They took the eclipse then as a sign of good luck and slaughtered the British in the battle of Isandlwanda on January 22, 1879.

"An eclipse of the sun, of two-thirds totality, was due to occur at one o'clock in the afternoon, but even those who were then unoccupied failed to notice the event."

— *The Washing of the Spears*, Donald R. Morris

The eclipse was part of Saros 129, which began October 3, 1103 and will end February 21, 2528. The eclipse was visible in Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, German West Africa, Baroteseland, and German East Africa. The eclipse was annular, with greatest duration being off the coast of German West Africa.

— JTM

Others have been equally as arrogant in fighting the enemy. In your review of *A Prophet Without Honor*, I can believe Hitler would throw a tantrum when he found Berlin could not be defended.

He believed he was the greatest leader who ever lived; and all failures were due to others. I gather this was result of being puffed up by yes-men for many years. In fact, it was treason to tell him no.

I hear, though, that he could actually be

humble about his private life. Near the end, one of his secretaries reported that he confessed he would have made a terrible father.

We go from Hitler to the fellow who sold Czechoslovakia out to Hitler, Chamberlain; or did he? I read JFK's book, "*Why England Slept*." According to it, Chamberlain was bidding his time until England could be ready for war. Unfortunately, according to *Winston's War*, Chamberlain didn't even do a good job of getting England ready. It wasn't that he wasn't trying; but before a country will fight, it has to be roused. A strategy of appeasement isn't going to do it.

We have spoken about Nazis in the real world. How about the Nazis in the fantastic world of German crackpot-ism. It isn't that the Nazis didn't oppose some crackpot-tery. They were on the lookout against Nordic gods, runes, Rudolph Steiner's anthroposophy, and astrology. In fact, I hear Himmler employed a spiritualist to detect whether people were polytheists or monotheists.

Next, we go beyond the Nazis and take a more cosmic look at history. I am presuming Taras Wolansky meant a Technological Singularity when he spoke about a Singularity. According to Frank Tipler, that means we will be replaced by hyper-intelligent robots, and they will integrate into a network that ultimately becomes close enough to our idea of God.

My description of Technological Singularity concludes my comments on Alexiad's articles. Now for the letters. For my first comment there, I get to give my views on one of the great issues of our time – how to handle telephone calls. I seem to have a system similar to the late Milt Stevens. He never answered unknown callers, but had them leave a message.

In this time of phone pests, you can't be too careful.

Next, I go to my own letter on the novel *The Child Buyer*. You Joe commented on it. I said what was happening to the child bought was appalling. You said the big problem was that what the big corporation was doing to the child was illegal.

I can't be as optimistic about the law as you are. Particularly where industrial titans are concerned. I worked for the Federal government for 35 years. And that something was illegal didn't matter if a big enough interest wanted it. That is unless it collided

with like interests. Because of this, appalling is the best argument you can make against certain policies.

So much for the shame of *The Child Buyer*. Now, for the shame of a whore. A friend who is a genealogist decided that a client of his would not like to hear that an ancestor headed the local whore house.

I have somehow gotten myself into a debate over whether the client would have liked it. As an example, Joe, you give Nell Gwyn. But, of course, she was made famous as the king's mistress not the madame of a local whorehouse. While she may not have determined the fate of nations, she was pretty close to the source for that.

Having commented on someone in the 17th Century, I will now comment on George Price's letter, which concerns a current problem, robocalls. He says that calls he doesn't recognize, he lets leave a message. So did Milt Stevens. So did I?

I agree with George on something else. He says that there was an anti-Japanese hysteria in the US during World War II. I agree. Also, I have a tale. A Japanese woman gave me a book about the internment once. Apparently, the military handled it in a completely heavy handed manner.

However, it was decided to hand over the operation to a civilian, David Eisenhower, Ike's brother. He was not the right man for the job, though: he was too depressed by the prospect because he believed those interned were loyal Americans. Instead, he handed the job over to a Dillon S. Myer, who agreed with him; and saw that those interned were treated with some respect.

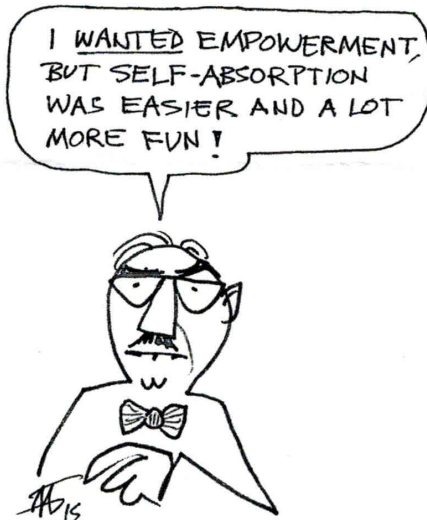
I have agreed with George on a number of things. I do have something to disagree with George about, though: hunting down the leaders of the various Communist purges and punishing them. It is not that I deny that Leftists failed to complain. It is just that I have never heard of anyone complaining.

There are a number of reasons. One is since Russia was never actually conquered, the guilty have remained beyond the jurisdiction of international tribunals. Even during Boris Yeltsin's time in office.

Now I go back to agreeing with George Price – because I agree with Sue Burke – the politics of the US have become too polarized. Sue is right: there's often no way these days of disagreeing without being disagreeable to the

other side.

In fact, polarization is worse than George thinks. According to this one pollster, in the last election, a goodly number of supporters of Bernie Sanders later decided to support Donald Trump. They wanted an extreme candidate. Any extreme.



As for Sue's last comment, I would like to second the motion. Whatever disagreements I have had with George, I find him a nice and intelligent individual. Having lunch with him, though would be a problem. While I'd like to, for now, I have no plans to go to Chicago. However, if I'm ever stuck as O'Hare, like I once was, maybe we could arrange it.

So our praise of George Price brings me to the end of this letter. I commented three times on the Nazis, once on Frank Tipler, once on robo-calls, once on Hershey's *The Child Buyer*, once on genealogy, once on the World War II anti-Japanese hysteria, once on the Stalinist purges, once on the polarization of the American electorate, and once on George Price.

From: **Tom Feller** October 27, 2017
tomfeller@aol.com

Thanks for e-mailing the zine. I will really miss Milt Stevens, both for his letters and for

our occasional meetings at Worldcons. I'm glad you got to see the eclipse.

Got plans for 2024?

—JTM

From: **John Purcell** October 29, 2017
 3744 Marielene Circle, College Station,
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askance73@gmail.com

Well, Joe and Lisa, here we are again. I printed off your latest issue so that it is resting on the desk before me as I write this probably brief letter of comment.

First and foremost, Joe I truly hope your health is much better these days. Based on what you wrote here and have written on Facebook, it sounds like you've had quite a scare. Please do what you can to take care of yourself. I see you mentioned science fiction books — in a science fiction fanzine?? Seriously? — and how you feel such a disconnect with the current crop of novels and stories. I don't blame you for wanting to write your own stories, which is something I have also dabbled in from time to time. I wish you luck with that. Also, I gave your name to Valerie for my potential Christmas books gift list, specifically *Heinlein's Children*. I would like to read that some day.

I was more worried about having to pay for it. The current statement is \$, \$, \$, \$ but I want to get a final printed bill.

— JTM

Lisa, my wife holds an art class at a senior living facility here in town on the first and third Saturday of each month. She's been doing this for almost two years now, and some of these folks are very talented. They can either use acrylics, colored pencils, crayons, try their hands at copying pictures of flowers or animals which Valerie provides, and she really enjoys working with them. Besides being a small source of income, it is something she likes to do. There are so many senior care centers in this area I wonder if she can make that an on-going venture. Who knows? The main thing is she has a good time doing this, and those delightful people really enjoy it, too. I have been there many times as well, and have naturally gotten to know them. Such wonderful

people. I am very glad Valerie does this.

Thank you, Joe, for the heads-up on the total solar eclipse that will be tracking across Texas in seventeen years. Hmm. So it's coming through on April 8, 2024, eh? I shall pencil that date in Just In Case we are still here. And by that I mean as a planet or civilization, not as in a "we're moving" kind of a deal. With my luck it will be raining that day.

It sure sounds like the NASFiC (North America Con 2017) in San Juan, Puerto Rico was a real bust. I mean, Taras Wolansky did a good job of writing up the convention, especially the panels he was on, but based on not only his report but on what others have written in other zines and blogs, it was a real mistake for NASFiC being held in Puerto Rico. Low attendance and travel costs probably hurt the future of such a venture, but at least Hurrricanes Maria and Irma visited the island much later. Now I am more concerned about the future of Puerto Rico itself. It's bad enough that the effects of Hurricane Harvey are going to be felt for many years in Houston; heck, the aftermaths of Katrina and Sandy are still very evident. It is possible Puerto Rico may suffer for decades after this.

The con site was "cool", but you'll note that fewer people went than voted for it.

—JTM

And finally, the lettercolumn. Appropriate and perfect to lead off the locs with Milt Stevens. My newest issue — *Askance* #42 — is doing the same thing in tribute to Milt. He has long been a splendid voice and presence in fanzines and conventions, with a presence that ranged far beyond his activity in LASFS. We are all going to miss Milt terribly. Nicely done, Joe.

With that, this loc is done. Many thanks for keeping this fanzine going, Lisa and Joe. It is greatly appreciated. As always, take care of yourselves and I truly hope Valerie and I can meet the two of you in the near future.

From: **Joy V. Smith** November 4, 2017
 8925 Selph Road, Lakeland, FL 33810-0341 USA
pagadan@aol.com

I'm glad you're feeling better! I enjoyed the reviews and the historical background; and

thanks to Taras Wolansky for the NorthAmeriCon report and excerpts from the panels, including the astronomer's quote from the Vatican. I loved his response to the query, "Why does the Vatican have an astronomical Observatory?" "Because they couldn't afford a particle accelerator."

Re: The High Tech column on sidearms and longarms, *True West Magazine* has lots of interesting background on guns, including a variety of reproductions. I also enjoyed the other reviews, reports, and LOCs — and the closing piece, "That is The Sound of Inevitability."

News on the Home Front: Gradually the debris from Hurricane Irma is being cleaned up. Our two piles of branches was picked up a few weeks ago, and here's the county's update:

From the county: Debris Recovery Stats as of Nov. 1

- Total loads collected: 37,114
- Average size load: 50 cubic yards
- Total cubic yards removed: 1,646,051 cubic yards of the estimated 2.1 million cubic yards of vegetative debris.

Be glad you can get workers and trucks in without their having to be transported by plane or ship.

— JTM

From: **Elizabeth Garrott** November 5, 2017
 3300 Preston Highway, Room 121,
 Louisville, KY 40213-1332 USA

I was raised by missionary parents on the shore of Hakafa Bay in northwest Kyushu, whwhere we have 1-o-n-g memories about the fleet that Khubilai hired from the god-king of Pyongyang in the vain hope of adding the Sunrise Islands to his Khanate. Mongol warriors didn't ride boats as well as they did horses. My fellow-M-K from the generation before mine Ed Dozier dug up a remnant of the wall our predecessors built for defense against the Mongols, and has his name on the historical marker that now accompanies the preserved dig. I suspect the current god-king of Pyongyang's resentment of America owes something to our having seeded South Korea with a religion that cannot acknowledge his presumed divinity. Somebody better warn my

fellow Southern Baptist Jimmy Carter that his visiting won't carry the weight he thinks.

It will validate the self-image of the Jong-un Wang, though.

— JTM

Japanese Christians translate the second person of the Trinity, the Son, as Miko. The term for the daughter is hi (pronounced same as English he). The shamans regnant of both the Yamato of Honshu and the Yabatai of Kyushu bore the title Child of the Sun. The position could be held by women, to the astonishment of their trading partners from the continent. Since women's names frequently end in -ko, the Chinese traders reported that as the name, rather than the title, and since we still can't read the pre-Sinification script, Japanese historians took their word for it. After the unification of the tribes, the dominant family claimed the Sky Brightening Great Goddess as an Ancestress.

I'd enjoy seeing the King of Pyongyang step on the Self-Defense Clause of the Japan Self-Defense Air Force charter. The young men of that group would be proud to teach him what trouble is.

From: **George W. Price** November 7, 2017
4418 N. Monitor Avenue, Chicago, IL
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October *Alexiad*:

I was saddened to learn of the death of Jerry Pournelle.

He and I went back a long way. At the 1961 WorldCon in Seattle, Poul Anderson (whom I already knew) introduced me to him. My wife and I hosted a long bull session one night in our room with Jerry and the Andersons.

The following year, when I was the treasurer of ChiCon III in Chicago, I recruited Jerry to be on a panel discussion of "Politics in Science Fiction." I moderated the panel, and that was one of the few parts of the convention that I saw — most of the program I had to miss because I was too busy behind the scenes. Conventions were far smaller then, and the four or five people on a con committee did nearly all the work. There were no staffs of gofers. Ah well, life was simpler then.

* * * * *

Usually I don't bother picking nits such as minor misspellings. But Joe's review of Wurtenbaugh's *A Prophet Without Honor* makes a big point of the book's editing errors, notably Hitler's name always being spelled "Adolph" instead of "Adolf." This impels me to gleefully point out that in the cartoon at the head of the review, "seig heil" should be "sieg heil." And the following review has "Erkennt gefahren" when it should be "Erkennt gefahren."

Take it up with the relevant artists.

* * * * *

Rodford Edmiston's "Joy of High Tech" discusses cases of having a rifle and a pistol both chambered to use the same cartridge. I instantly thought of the "Hopalong Cassidy" westerns by Clarence E. Mulford which I devoured as a child circa 1940 (long before the TV series). As I recall (I'm not looking it up), Hopalong's sidekick "Red" Connors carried a revolver and a Winchester repeating rifle that took the same .44 cartridge. Hopalong himself used a single-shot .45-90 Sharps rifle with much greater range than that Winchester; it was definitely not compatible with his .45 revolvers. I hope I remembered all that accurately.

* * * * *

Richard Dengrove notes that "one TV series made in Los Angeles had skyscrapers in DC. There aren't any here because Congress has passed laws limiting the height of buildings."

In the same vein, back when Washington had streetcars, they were not "trolley" cars. Overhead trolley wires were deemed to be unsightly, so instead the power was carried by a third rail below the street surface. The pickup stuck down through a slot between the running rails. It looked exactly like a cable-car slot. So instead of trolley cars Washington had slot cars — though I doubt if that term was ever used; Washington may have gotten rid of its streetcars before the slot-car toys came along.

* * * * *

Darrell Schweitzer says the late George Scithers "taught me to write a proper limerick." I will note the obvious: limericks are even better when they are improper.

* * * * *

Sue Burke says that I insist "that 'the church of climate change' was behind the uproar over the US leaving the Paris Accord," and she lists a number of big corporations who opposed leaving. Oh, now, I have never intended the "church of climate change" trope to include everybody who accepts the reality of climate change (which includes me). I use it to ding those who insist on making a religion of it — which mostly means those who see skeptics not as adversaries to be refuted with facts and rational arguments, but as evildoers who should be denounced as heretics and cast into outer darkness. Calling someone a "denier" is not a refutation.

As to that long list of corporations, I suspect that not all of their managers are really so solidly convinced of climate change. Some may be just cynically saying whatever will win media approval and, even more important, pull in fat government contracts and subsidies.

As I have said before, I am prepared to accept the reality of man-made climate change, though the evidence is not nearly as solid as I would like. Where I part company with the herd is in what policy we should follow.

I think it is futile to rein in our energy use to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, because most of the less developed nations are simply not going to cut their emissions until they have caught up with us in wealth. Do not expect them to willingly stay poor to save the planet. (I've read that China is still commissioning two or three new coal-fired power plants per week.) So any cutbacks we make will damage our economy without noticeably slowing the climate change.

Our strategy should be to use our wealth to prepare for the inevitable changes. Get ready to rebuild coastal cities inland as the sea level rises, prepare for agriculture to move farther north, and so on, as events warrant. This is what the "church of climate change" desperately does not want to hear, because they are committed to imposing a "command and control" economy. Sometimes I even suspect that command and control is the real objective, and climate change is only an excuse.

Have it out on climate change between each other, not here. That's another topic that generates abundant heat but little light.

— JTM

From: **Sue Burke** November 28, 2017
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First of all, Joe, I'm glad to hear you're feeling better.

Sorry to hear the sad news about Milt Stevens. At least we'll always have his LOCs in back issues.

As for my own health, I got a flu shot, then immediately got a cold.

Lisa, you say that a neighboring community slaughtered its Canada geese after one attacked and chased a police officer. This seems like a clueless response, since the birds are notoriously aggressive, and they chase people and animals all the time. A goose even bit me once. Here's a clue for your neighboring community's police officers and residents: Keep a safe distance from bears, wolves, Canada geese, rattlesnakes, snapping turtles, gorillas, moose, lions, land sharks, and other ill-tempered animals. If they bite you, it might be your own damn fault (in my case, it certainly was). These animals don't deserve to die due to human ignorance. If you have a problem, there are many alternatives to slaughter. Airports have to scare away Canada geese all the time. Ask them how.

There were three geese at the church the Sunday after Thanksgiving. No one bothered them and they bothered no one.

— JTM

Thank you to Taras Wolansky for the recommendation of H. Beam Piper's story "Omnilingual." I found it at Project Gutenberg, gutenberg.org/ebooks/19445, and I read it and enjoyed it: linguists at work. But these days, archeologists wouldn't smoke so much, especially when they're at work in a closed site. Smoke is a contaminant.

Speaking of linguists, Robert S. Kennedy says that he had a number of problems with the movie *Arrival*. So did some linguists, who thought it took the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis far beyond plausibility. They were also surprised to see a linguist living in such an expensive home. Still, while it more or less accurately portrayed how linguists work, I preferred Ted Chiang's novella, "Story of Your Life," because it had no time travel, even though I love time travel.

Congratulations to Lloyd Daub on his retirement. He mentioned Sue Blom's alternative history book about the Incas, and Joe asked what became of her manuscript. It was published, and I still have a copy, *Inca: The Scarlet Fringe*, by Suzanne Allés Blom, published by Forge/Tor in 2000, ISBN 0-312-87434-0. The principal character, Atahualpa, was moved to the south, and the book ends with a stirring battle. Sue wrote a sequel, which I critiqued and which has even better battles, but the manuscript was probably lost at her death, alas.

Taras Wolansky chides me to watch my puppies, and he's right. John C. Wright was a founding member of the Sad Puppies, but he was nominated for the 2017 Hugos by the Rabid Puppies. I should have kept my anguished vs. frothing juvenile canines more clear.

I've submitted a report on Windycon 44 to this issue. If you want to read even more of my deathless prose, I have a novelette in the November issue of *Clarkesworld*, "Who Won the Battle of Arsia Mons?"

http://clarkesworldmagazine.com/burke_11_17/

It's about a fight among robots at Arsia Mons, an extinct volcano on Mars. Someone once pointed out that Mars is the only planet inhabited entirely by robots, and since robots are still controlled by people, and we tend to do foolish things, I imagined the most ridiculous but completely logical thing robots could do on Mars, and how it could go wonderfully wrong.

From: **Taras Wolansky** November 29, 2017
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Alexiad October 2017:

Joe (review of *Hitler's Monsters*): "Far

from being Christian, Hitler was resolutely and thoroughly anti-Christian." He seemed to regard Christianity as a Jewish plot to unman the Aryan race. Though an atheist, he nonetheless admired the warlike qualities inculcated by Islam and Japanese Emperor worship. (We know all about this from his surviving cronies.)

As the book documents, he also had a mystical streak, of course, believing himself a man of destiny. (According to J. R. Dunn's *Days of Cain*, this came from the strange things he glimpsed during the war, as the Time Police foiled an endless stream of assassins from the future!)

John Purcell: "Wasn't this [Wiscon] the convention that a couple [of] years ago had an issue with Elizabeth Moon as a Guest of Honor?" What was the problem, that she was an ex-Marine? I imagine an ex-ISIS or ex-PLO fighter would be more welcome! [:)]

Sue Burke: "The 'church of climate change' ... opposed [to] leaving the [Paris] treaty included a number of corporations". This is known as "running with the hounds". Corporations know it is dangerous to their bottom lines to openly oppose international elites on climate issues.

Also, as China has shown, talk is cheap. Their diplomats pay lip service to global warming, even as their industrialists set up new coal-fired power plants at a furious rate.

BTW, I was amused to discover that, due to their panic flight from nuclear power, Germany and Japan are also adding new coal-fired plants.

George W. Price: Even lifelong anti-Communists (like you and I, I suspect) underestimate the evils of communism. Name one of them who would have predicted that a privileged North Korean border guard would be riddled with parasitic worms!

I don't know from a specific prediction, but I recall that Viktor Belenko told how his unit of the Air Defense Force got new officers' quarters, but the building started falling apart before it was even finished (*MiG Pilot: The Final Escape of Lt. Belenko* (1980)), by John Barron). Read P. J. O'Rourke's "Ship of Fools" (*Harper's Magazine*, November 1982; *Republican Party*

Reptile (1987)) for some lacerating descriptions of the ruins.

Before the fall of the Iron Curtain, if anybody had told me the East German secret police kept a library of dissidents' smells (for bloodhound purposes), I would have laughed.

"It seems to be a part of their general strategy to keep conservatives off balance with constant accusations of racism". In 2008, journalists on the secret, progressives-only online group, Journalist, plotted to blunt the impact of the knowledge that Barack Obama had for 20 years attended a Black church where the minister weekly howled his hatred of America and white people. ("Not 'God Bless America', God Damn America!" he thundered.) One progressive journalist proposed, "Instead [of defending Obama], take one of them - Fred Barnes, Karl Rove, who cares - and call them racists". —Wikipedia. That "who cares" is particularly illuminating. (This all leaked out in 2010.)

Joe: *Inca*, by Sue (Suzanne Allés) Blom, was published by Tor in October 2000. I recall that I had a pleasant discussion with her about the book, at some convention shortly before it was released. She had a blowup of the cover on the back of her wheelchair.

See Sue Burke's and Lloyd Daub's letters.

On another subject, I'm still amazed that, after all these years, they actually made a sequel to *Blade Runner*.

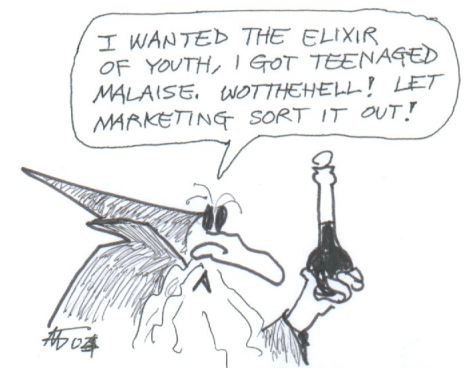
I daresay that I would have enjoyed the new movie, *Blade Runner 2049*, a bit more if I weren't so familiar with the original, for all that the sequel is murky, slow-moving and overlong. As the new film fell into every cliché that the original avoided, I must confess that I literally laughed out loud at the developing melodrama. Fortunately the film had gotten rather noisy by that time, so I didn't annoy people.

The clichés did make the film easier to understand, on the other hand. Rusty junkyard future? Check! Inexplicably evil plutocrat? Check! Enslaved orphans? Check! Obligatory resistance movement? Check!

Note that when I unfavorably compare the new film to the "original", I mean the original original, before director Ridley Scott started

messing with it.

There's a saying that an editor likes a story better after he, er, adulterates it. This applies to movie directors as well. Very late in the making of *Blade Runner*, Scott got the "brilliant" idea that, contrary to Dick's novel, protagonist Rick Deckard is himself a replicant. Not only does this destroy the main theme of the film, as Rutger Hauer (who played replicant Roy Batty, Deckard's foil) pointed out in his autobiography, it also means that the plot no longer makes sense.



I am reminded of the plot summary one of Sarah Hoyt's co-bloggers gave about all the current YA fiction he was getting for the library he worked at:

"In the dystopian near future, climate change has wrecked everything. The EvilCorp/EvilGov has taken power, crushing freedom and reorganizing society into an unfair class system designed to make teens angst. Actiongirl Unlikelyname is completely ordinary and totally special. She must join the Resistance and make a choice that will change her world forever: which generically hunky guy will she be with at the end of the trilogy?"

— Commentary by Christopher R. Chupik, According to Hoyt, "Rejection of a Dark Age", May 25, 2017

— JTM

From: **Lloyd Daub**

November 30, 2017

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Nothing like waiting until the last minute. I'm doing that to St. Peter, and he'll probably return the favor.

Per Sue Blom's alternate history Incas. She left me all her writings and research, but said that if I did not feel up to continuing, I could give them to her local SF friends. Since my own main interests lie elsewhere, and are bearing fruit, I allowed them to keep the material. They insisted they could complete the series. I have heard nothing since. It was still a better chance than the materials had with me, at least for the foreseeable future.

In your review of *Winston's War*, you had occasion to re-quote Oliver Cromwell's rebuke that Parliament had sat too long, doing nothing, and that they should go. And I kept thinking about the US House and Senate. And the Deep State. And swamp-draining. How remarkable it is that it should be sexual harassment allegations that seem to have taken the place of Cromwell. Nothing else seems to have worked. But based on the retirements and resignation talk I am seeing, we could at last see a changing of the very old guard. Time for investigative journalism to talk to and about the bureaucrats. Their sclerosis is of a different sort than old age.

Not that I am opposed to growing older, of course. And given today's health care, 70 now is what 60 used to be. Let us all keep going for as long as we can. I for one am looking forward to what replaces the NFL after its dissolution.

Combat Football? (Norman Spinrad, "The National Pastime", *Nova 3* (1973))

— JTM

From: **AL du Pisani** December 1, 2017
945 Grand Prix Street,
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The early summer rains are here. While there were some rain in October and early November, most of them were typically the one inch in one hour storm with wind and hail.

One of the early storms had so much hail that the roof of a nearby shopping center collapsed. But of late November we had some rain of the come in the evening and stay for the day variety. The type that penetrate deeply into the ground, and promise growth, not destruction.

Not that the rest of the country is as wet – The Western Cape has bad drought, and it is not currently their rain season. My mother in the Northern Cape had some rain, but need a lot more. But they do not get their rain until it rains here, so hopefully they will get some more soon.

The biggest local news recently has been the firing of Robert Mugabe as leader of Zimbabwe. Only took 37 years. Believed to have stolen every election in Zimbabwe this century. Gotten rich while impoverishing his people. A great man and example to our local leaders. May he die soon and rot in hell.

This does give some hope for our local process – but I do not know if the rot had set in too deep, and too many tax payers had been chased out of the country.

The major problem is that the ANC has three five year election cycles running: This year is the culmination of the ANC internal leadership election. Last year was the local government elections, and in two years will be the national elections. As a result of this the ANC does very little apart from gearing up for the next election. Usually by trying the policies that will cause this election's bunch of voters to vote for them.

In Johannesburg, we had a Democratic Alliance coalition take over the city government. For most of the past year and a half they have been trying to fight fires caused by years of neglect, corruption and nepotism.

Item: The roadmarkings are not being updated, because the ANC city government had a cozy deal whereby a friend of the ANC was paid over the odds for paint. When the new city government wanted to cancel the contract, this guy filed a court case, demanding that they continue to buy the paint at exorbitant cost from him, and getting an injunction against the city from buying road paint from anybody else. I have no idea when and at what cost this will be resolved.

Item: the main power station in the city is 75 years old. Spare parts are not available. Most of the supporting infrastructure was built using Imperial measurements, and not converted or replaced at the conversion to

metric about 50 years ago. There is no money in the budget to replace the infrastructure.

Item: Roads continue to deteriorate, and large parts of the city's roads need to be resurfaced or rebuilt. Not enough money in the budget.

With a taxpayer base who continue to see very little spending in their own neighborhoods, and huge demands that the People must be housed and fed and educated and be given jobs. I do not know how much of this is sustainable.

Nor is much of the country: I recently read about a statement that was made about 20 years ago: That South Africa has nine provinces, of which three are economically productive, three break even, and three do not function. Apparently, in the years since, the bad provinces had deteriorated, the break-even provinces treaded water, and the productive ones were milked.

Item: The Auditor-General has tabled his latest report on the state of the various high level government functions – most of which did not pass. He reported about R 50 Billion in irregular and unauthorized expenditure. The Minister of Finance has announced that they expect a tax shortfall of about R50 Billion, and will have to make other arrangements. And Jacob Zuma want to roll out "free" university education – Tasking the Minister of Finance to come up with another about R25 Billion per year – For this the state needs to reduce expenditure, but still need more tax income.

Item: The state electricity supplier Eskom are in dire straits. A lot of information is leaking out about how much the Gupthas managed to loot from them. The new build of coal fired power plants are running about a decade behind schedule, at about a 100% cost overrun. The cost of electricity is getting higher each year, and they have asked for a tariff increase of 19%. And they need it: A local financial analyst has a little graph, showing how since 2003 the total number of employees have gone up by 50%, their average salaries have nearly tripled, and the amount of electricity supplied has remained constant. And it looks as if they really want a very expensive nuclear power deal with the Russians, that just about everybody involved says is unaffordable.

Item: More and more tax payers are unhappy with the slow responses they get from the tax man when the tax man have to pay them, while the tax man puts lots of pressure

on people who have to pay them. That with the number two tax man who have just come back from administrative leave – He was investigated for depositing the best part of R1 million in cash into various ATMs. The investigation did not find anything suspicious about said transactions.

A lot of people are fixing their hopes on the ANC party conference in December, where the ANC have to elect a new leader. But even if the "right guy" gets in, there is no guarantee that he will be able to eject Jacob Zuma from ru(ing)ning the country, nor of fixing the problems we face. Because too much of the problems are due to policies and practices and cultural effects.

And then you have things like the Life Esidimeni scandal – Ironically, the Life hospital group and the Esidimeni hospital are the two parties not involved: At the Life Esidimeni hospital, about 3,500 mental health patients were receiving long term care. About two years ago the Gauteng Health Department decided that a) it was too expensive, and b) the care should be devolved to the people, in the form of a number of NGO's. So the patients were removed from the hospital and parceled out to the NGO's. One of the local Universities were training medical personnel there, and the students could see that it was going to be a disaster, and wrote a letter of protest to central government.

And then, after a while, it became known that some of the patients had died of neglect in the hands of the NGO's – About 140 odd so far, with about another hundred unaccounted for. And there is currently an inquest into what happened, and why, and what can be done to prevent a recurrence. But as far as I know, no moves have been made to remove the patients from the NGO's, and return them to the hospital.

I had a talk with an Old Liberal, who first had to tell me how despicable the Afrikaaner Nationalists were, then explained how Thabo Mbeki caused the ANC to betray Nelson Mandela in 1994, in the process also killing off all hopes for reconstruction, development and an increase in unity in the country. He claims that at the end of Mandela's life, only two people remained loyal to him, one of which was Zelda le Grange, an Afrikaaner girl once supplied to him as secretary, who remained with him as his secretary until the end.

To some extent this Old Liberal is never

going to be satisfied with any government, and his beef with the Afrikaaner Nationalists is of long standing – and not just the ritual of twenty to two. In the last years of Apartheid, a liberal commentator could only say two sentences of dissatisfaction with the ANC, after he had said twenty sentences about how much he hated Apartheid and the National Party. Where he had to say another twenty sentences about the National Party before he could say another two sentences about the ANC.

Mike Resnick once said, as I recall, that the problem of colonialism was that it eliminated existing social structures and prevented the learning of new ones.

—JTM

I had too little opportunity this year to go to meetings of the Military History Society, at the War Museum. But of the talks I attended, two were outstanding.

The first was by a Recce, and he talked about a seaborne attack in the harbor of Namibe which the Special Forces did. This talk appear to be part of a program to make people aware of what the South African military was up to during the Border War, now that the 30 year secrecy clause of the Official Secrets Act has passed. He mentioned that the seaborne Special Forces soldiers of the era also wrote a book called *Iron Fist from the Sea*, as a history of the unit. He participated in the writing of the book, which was apparently done with the approval of the current military leadership of the armed forces, since he was supplied with his original after action reports, to assist him.

As somebody who participated in the operation he talked about, there was of course a lot of small details and anecdotes which colored the talk. Perhaps the funniest moment during the talk was when he mentioned that as a result of the operation, six medals were awarded, then reading out the names of the medals and the recipients – All of the recipients were Russians sent from the Soviet Union for the recovery and salvage of the three ships sunk.

The other talk was by the commanding officer of one of the two units involved in Operation Hooper – a 1988 series of battles around Cuito Cuanavale in Angola. (Last year I listened to a talk by the officer commanding

the other unit involved.) Interesting chap – very entertaining, with pictures setting the scene and lots of anecdotes. Certain of them I heard before, such as the water tanker driver which took a shower in the outflowing water, after a near hit by a 250kg bomb punched a hole into the tanker.

This was also done as part of an outreach program where people involved are telling of their experiences, countering the narrative of how they were beaten by the Cubans and Angolans.

My eye is healing well, but still not as sharp as it was before all of the unpleasantness. I hope to have a final visit to the eye guy, before leaving on holiday in mid-December.

I wish a good Christmas season to all of you.

From: **John Hertz** November 29, 2017
236 S. Coronado Street, No. 409, Los Angeles, CA 90057-1456 USA

Br. Guy Consolmagno was one of the reasons I was sad I couldn't attend the NASFiC. But must T. Wolansky write "rejoindered"?

I've long urged we entitle discussion "Neglected" rather than "Forgotten" books.

H. Ellison's introduction to the Tachyon collection of van Vogt *Futures Past* (1999) is indeed worthwhile.

Speaking of D. Schweitzer, I believe he and I were on a Lunacon panel discussing van Vogt's literary virtues. Schweitzer said, "His stories end."

He himself is so immeasurable I daren't speak to him about meter.

I've suggested the St. Louis convention pronounce its name "Arch on!" but without success.

I'm with S. Burke about meeting for lunch and disagreeing. <File770.com> 27 Sep 17 p=37986.

Have you read G. Benford's latest, *The Berlin Project*?

Indeed I have, and reviewed it in *Alexiad* V. 16 #3 WN 093 June 2017.

— JTM

WAHF:

Martin Morse Wooster, with various items of interest.

Steve Fahnstalk, Nic Farey, Pat McCray who got it.

Earl Kemp, who said "Keep it up." Thank you, Earl.

SCIENCE QUIZ

A college science quiz once included the question: "How do you determine the height of a building using a barometer?" There are other answers besides the desired one (differences in air pressure). For example:

- Drop the barometer from the top of the building, timing the duration it takes to fall the complete distance to the ground. Using $d = \frac{1}{2}gt^2$, calculate the height of the building.
- Less destructively, lower the barometer on a cord from the top of the building. Measure the length of the cord to determine the height of the building.
- Measure the height of the shadow of the barometer and the height of the shadow of the building. Using the known height of the barometer, calculate the height of the building.
- Swing the barometer on a cord pendulum-style at the base of the building and again at the top, timing the swing at each location. Using the difference in the gravitational attraction of the earth, calculate the height of the building.
- Find the builder. Offer to give him a barometer if he will tell you how high the building is.

Any other suggestions?



<http://arthurkingoftimeandspace.com/creativeprocess>

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Art: What we are mainly looking for is small fillos. Your fillo will probably be scanned in and may be reused, unless you object to its reuse.

Contributions: This is not a fictionzine. It is intended to be our fanzine, so be interesting.

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