

FORNAX #3

Fornax #3 is a fanzine devoted to history, science fiction & gaming as well as other areas where the editor's curiosity goes. It is created by Charles Rector. In the grand tradition of fanzines, it is mostly written by the editor.

If you want to write for *Fornax*, please send email submissions to crector@myway.com with a maximum length of 1,000 words. No fiction, poetry or artwork please. Any text format is fine. There is no payment other than the exposure that you will get as a writer. Of course, Letters Of Comment are always welcome. If you want to read more by the editor, then point your browser to: <http://omgn.com/blog/cjrector>

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From the Editor

My First Paper Fanzines

I have spent most my life in small towns and rural areas. Such settings are fit for those of us who prefer nice quiet lives. However, they are lacking in certain cultural offerings such as organized fandom and with that fanzines.

Starting in the late 1980's while living in Fayetteville, AR, I started collecting old sci-fi magazines, most notably Ted White/Elinor Mavor era *Amazing* and *Fantastic*. From them, I learned about fanzines. However, there was no organized fandom in Fayetteville and zero fanzines either. And yet those old prozines indicated that there were hundreds of fanzine titles being published every year.

It was not until 1997 when my mother and I moved to Little Rock that I discovered organized fandom in the form of the Little Rock Science Fiction Society (LRSFS).

The LRSFS was a group that met at least once a month at the local Books a Million store. Consisting of only about half a dozen hard core members when I joined it, the group rarely discussed sci-fi books or magazines. Instead, it was mostly about comic books, movies, TV shows and gaming. This was reflected by its president Libby Singleton, a comic book writer and its secretary Susan Pierce, a hard core gamer if there ever was one. The LRSFS also every once in a while held a sci-fi convention called RockKon.

Soon after joining the LRSFS, I inquired about fanzines and where you could get them. Most of the other members acted as they had never heard of them before. As a native of Louisiana, Pearce had seen some in the past, but was under the impression that due to increased costs of publication and postal rate increases, fanzines had died out. Later on, I looked through those fanzine review columns in *Amazing & Fantastic* and could not find a single fanzine listed that was from Arkansas. In 1998, Barnes & Noble came to Little Rock and there I first saw both *Locus* and *Science Fiction Chronicle*. However, by that point in time both of those were professional publications and were no longer fanzines.

After I moved to Illinois aka the State of Corruption in November 2000, that pattern continued to hold. I could find publications such as *Space & Time* that were formerly fanzines, but the real things remained out of my grasp. Even worse, there was no such thing as sci-fi fandom or even fans in either DeKalb County where I lived during 2000-2001 or in McHenry County where I have been living since September 2001.

Sometime in 2012 my luck turned for the better. For some reason, while searching on Google for something, I came across *Planetary Stories* in the listings. From there I eventually found EFanzines.com. Ever since then I have been spending upwards of 12 hours a week reading up on the fanzines that were out of my reach for so long. Eventually, I figured out how to create my own fanzine and the result is *Fornax*.

However, I was only reading fanzines that were available electronically while publishing a fanzine myself. It was not until after I emailed Mr. Robert Jennings concerning the status of his fanzine that I ever acquired a copy of his fanzine *Fadeaway #45*. Through Mr. Jennings I subsequently was able to gain a copy of *The Insider #308*. And so my odyssey concerning fanzines is now complete.

GamerGate is Over

No matter how you approach it or define it, it's pretty clear that GamerGate is all over with. In its wake is an altered online gaming news media landscape. Most of the gaming press websites have adopted standards of conduct. There are many new websites that cover gaming from a gamer's perspective, not from a corrupt standpoint.

Granted, it's always possible that a gaming press website will slide back into doing things the bad way, however given the zero tolerance for corruption stance now held by most gamers, it's pretty clear that any deviance from honest news coverage will be fraught with peril. This is especially the case given how so many gaming press websites have lost much of their audience and are just barely hanging on by the skins of their teeth. The days when gaming news websites could reap huge profits while wallowing in corruption are now over.

Let the new era of computer gaming journalism begin on a high note and put all the trolls who gave GamerGate a bad name behind us.

The Lack of Historical Webzines on the Internet

One thing that's surprising about the Internet is the lack of history webzines. This is interesting given the popularity of historical print publications. One would think that with all the folks who are interested in researching, writing and reading history these days, there would be a healthy market for this sort of stuff. When you add in wargaming and wargame related publishing, you come to realize that there is a significant untapped market here.

As far as I'm aware, aware, over the years, there has been only one history webzine of note. This is the *War Times Journal* that stopped running new material around 2005 even though its website is still up. Last year, there was an attempt at producing a fanzine called *The Pleasure of Ruins* that focused on archaeology. It folded after only two issues.

The same thing is true of webzines devoted to historical fiction. Millions of historical fiction books are sold every year. This is especially true of the ever popular westerns sub-genre. There is only one webzine devoted to the whole of historical fiction, *The Copperfield Review*. There are currently only 2 western webzines, *The Western Online* and *Frontier Tales*. Neither of the western webzines are especially good as they focus on what's called "action fiction" to the exclusion of other forms of storytelling.

On top of that, there are not all that many websites devoted to either westerns or historical fiction other than author's websites and some blogs. One can only wonder just why there are not more historical fiction type websites out there. Then again, there are zero webzines of romantic fiction and few romance novel oriented websites outside of those devoted to specific authors. It could be that since there is no discernible fandom around those genres like there is around fantasy, horror & science fiction, there would be little online interest in more mainstream genres.

No Award Best Fan Podcast

As far as I'm concerned, none of the 2015 Hugo Award nominees in the category of Best Fan Podcast are worthy of that award. For my money, the absolute best fan sci-fi podcast is The Incomparable at <https://www.theincomparable.com/> . The very best podcast in any genre is called "Two Against Podcast" that you can find at Deadpit at <http://www.deadpit.com>. The gap between the quality of the award nominees and the two aforementioned is pretty substantial. And that's even assuming that podcasts constitute enough of a significant element in the fannish life to be worthy of a Hugo Award category in the first place.

The Attack on the Confederate Heritage

Back when I was growing up in Wisconsin, my attitude towards the Confederate battle flag was that it was pretty abhorrent. Then, in 1984 when I was 20 years old, I moved down to Arkansas with my parents and gained a new perspective.

Contrary to the view that I often heard in Wisconsin, Southerners turned out to be folks who had little sympathy for either the Ku Klux Klan or Neo-Nazis. If anything, there was less racism in Arkansas than there was in Wisconsin. For instance, you hardly ever heard anyone in Arkansas use the word "nigger," while in the Badger/Dairy State it was pretty common.

One thing that was evident early on when I was in Arkansas was just how much more the Civil War meant to the folks in Arkansas than in Wisconsin. Libraries in Wisconsin did not have all that many Civil War books. For instance, they usually had no more than one volume of the Official Records of the War of the Rebellion (O.R.'s), the collection of battlefield reports and other material relating to the Civil War that was generated by the Union and Confederate armies. On the other hand, it was common in Southern libraries to have at least as many Civil War books as all other areas of history combined. Almost every Southern library had a complete set of the (O.R.'s). It was far easier to do research in the Civil War than in any other historical subject.

Far more than in the North, the Civil War was the defining moment in Southern history. It gave the people of the South a common heritage and identity. That being the case, the Confederate flag is a positive aspect of Southern culture. Given that only a small minority in the South in 1861 owned slaves, slavery was not what the Civil War was fought over in the first place. Other issues such as the tariff and the size and scope of the Federal government were more important at least as the typical Southerner was concerned.

One would think that as a nation, we would have come to accept cultural diversity. You certainly hear people say that diversity is a good thing all the time.

And yet, we have all sorts of alleged grownups taking the position that because of a single deranged killer, we should throw the Confederate flag away. That we should engage in full-fledged historical desecration. Things have gotten so absurd that Apple has withdrawn most of its Civil War games from its Apps store because they included Confederate flags.

Flags do not kill people. People kill people.

Essay:

Biography of an Unknown Soldier

In the past, it has been the practice of biographers to focus almost exclusively on the well-known, the big shots, and the media's favorites. One example is that of Robert E. Lee about whom historian Thomas L. Connolly says: "In this morass of over thirty biographies and hundreds of other monographs and articles, the image of Lee has been that of the Christian Knight-Soldier, magnificent in victory and in defeat."¹

For this reason, I have chosen to do this essay about my father, William G. Rector, Jr., (1917-1992). He is unknown as a soldier; yet he and his fellow soldiers of the 41st Infantry Division (147th Field Artillery Regiment) were instrumental in destroying the Japanese Empire. This, then, is a story of unsung heroes.

For my dad, it all started in September, 1939, when Hitler's legions of death and destruction swept into Poland and turned such sleepy and innocent Polish villages as Auschwitz and Treblinka into code names for barbarism. Shortly after Hitler unleashed the dogs of war, President Roosevelt first increased the National Guard's unit strength by fifteen percent (Dad enlisted in Battery B, 147th Field Artillery Regiment of the South Dakota National Guard.) In late 1940, national mobilization was ordered. About one year later, the 147th Field Artillery was sent from San Francisco en route to the Philippines. Because of a storm, they had to stop at Pearl Harbor; and then a week before the famed Pearl Harbor attack, they left for Australia.

Australia turned out to be a mess; there were only about three thousand allied troopers in all of Northern Australia. It looked as if the Japanese were going to invade! Well, they didn't and they missed to prolong the war indefinitely, for Australia would prove to be our main offensive base during the war. After some fooling around in Australia, some minor combat action in the Bismarck Sea, and service with the elite "Dakota Scouts," dad was sent to the Officer Certification School in Brisbane, Australia in the fall of 1943. After he graduated and was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in Field Artillery, he was assigned to the 41st Infantry Division.

Shortly after he was assigned to the 41st Infantry Division, the 41st was sent to Hollandia for its first major combat campaign. The importance of Hollandia can be best summarized by the following paragraph from a volume of the U.S. Army Official History by Robert R. Smith:

Anchorage at Hollandia were known to be capable of basing many of the largest combat vessels, cargo ships, and troop transports. Inland plains in the area were thought to provide almost unlimited potentialities for airdrome development. Aircraft operating from fields at Hollandia could dominate most Japanese airdromes in western New Guinea and nearest islands of the Indies, could fly reconnaissance and bombing missions against the western Carolines, including the Paulaus, and could provide support for subsequent landing operations along the north coast of New Guinea. Small naval vessels, such as motor torpedo boats (PT's), operating from Hollandia area bases, could interdict Japanese barge traffic for miles both east and west of that region. Finally, the Hollandia region was capable of development into a major supply base and staging area for the support of subsequent Allied operations farther to the west.²

The operation was to be a pincer operation between the 24th and 41st Infantry Divisions. Resistance by the enemy was expected to be very tough; yet, it wasn't. Indeed, as Smith notes:

To the allies the Hollandia operation had proved to be an unexpectedly easy tactical success, since the Japanese had been strangely ill prepared to defend this potentially powerful base. General MacArthur had sent one and two-thirds reinforced divisions against Hollandia on the assumption that 14,000 Japanese, including nearly two regiments of infantry would be found there. But no strong Japanese resistance and little coordinated defense had been encountered there. It appears that about 11,000 Japanese of all services were at Hollandia on 22 April and that ground combat elements were represented by no more than 500 antiaircraft artillery men.³

Hollandia's airfields, despite being great prizes, proved to be bothersome as shown by Lieutenant General Walter Kreuger:

Hollandia, Cyclops, and Santani airdromes had sustained a terrific bombardment, but the engineers put them into shape for some of our planes to use them in a comparatively short time. Cyclops field, for example, was used by some planes on 28 April and Hollandia field by some C-47's on 2 May and by considerable traffic on 4 May. But complete development of these fields was seriously handicapped by the heavy rains which slowed up construction and delayed road work made it difficult to bring up heavy equipment.⁴

Yet, despite those difficulties, Hollandia became a major asset in the winning of the war. As soon as Hollandia was secured, my dad's battalion was rushed to Wakde Island. The importance of Wakde Island was as Smith states:

Although General MacArthur's planners had given up thoughts of seizing Wakde Island as an adjunct to the Hollandia operation, they did not drop the area from consideration. First, the area was apparently capable of development into a major air base for the support of subsequent operations. Second, as more information from various intelligence sources became available at General Headquarters concerning Japanese airdrome development, troop disposition, and supply concentrations at Wakde-Sarmi, the area began to acquire a threatening aspect. It was a base from which the enemy could not only endanger the success of the Hollandia operation, but also imperil allied progress into the Geelvink Bay area. Indeed the Allied Air Forces considered that an early seizure of the Wakde-Sarmi region after the capture of Hollandia was a prerequisite to continuing the drive toward the Philippines.⁵

And so, without fanfare, in a four-day operation, the various units of the 41st Infantry Division overran the islands of Wakde. The stage was now set for "Bloody Biak." According to Smith:

Biak was important because it lies off the coast of New Guinea, and because its capture would a virtually safe advance to the Philippines. Biak had few good harbors and the bulk of its coastline was fringed by rough coral reefs--this made the going quite tough.⁶

Biak, as a battle, was savage--it ranks with Buna, Saipan, Tarawa, and Guadalcanal (1st phase) in the Pacific battles. However, at Biak, the Japanese, for the first time, used tanks against the Americans. However, despite the 11,000 man garrison, savage fighting, and harsh terrain, the 41st came through. Biak was also important for a certain near-encounter as evidenced by naval historian Samuel Eliot Morrison:

The Japanese Navy here tried to interfere with an amphibious operation for the first time since Bougainville (Nov. 1943). Admiral Toyoda realized that heavy bombers based at Biak would be a handicap to his plan for a big naval battle in mid-1944--a plan of which we shall hear more. He therefore decided to transport 2,500 amphibious troops from Mindanao to Biak. Three attempts were made by a reinforcement echelon of destroyers under Rear Admiral Sakonju, who

was no Tanaka. Once he was turned back by a false report of an aircraft carrier, and on June he was chased off by Crutchley's cruiser-destroyer force. Toyoda now assembled a really powerful striking force, built around super-battleships *Yamato* and *Musashi*, which should have been able to sink anything in Seventh Fleet. Three days before it was to head for Biak, Commander in Chief Combined Fleet (Toyoda) decided, correctly, that Spruance's Fifth Fleet was about to land in the Marianas, and pulled all naval forces north into the Philippine Sea.⁷

The culmination of Toyoda's plan was the Battle of the Philippine Sea, or "The Great Marianas Turkey Shoot," which didn't exactly come out the way Toyoda thought it would for as Brigadier Peter Young relates:

The Japanese lost about 460 trained aircraft crews, 3 aircraft carriers and various other ships sunk and damaged; while the U.S. Fifth Fleet lost only about 130 aircraft and few ships. The Japanese were greatly crippled; never to have another real chance to win the naval side of the war.⁸

Biak also proved to be the last important army operation prior to the reconquest of the Philippines. Leyte was captured, then Manila, by U.S. Sixth Army forces. Then, finally the 41st Division--now part of the U.S. Eighth Army--saw action at Zamboanga. According to Smith:

Zamboanga is located on a long peninsula that juts out into the sea. It has several airfields in its vicinity, and since the recent landings in Palawan failed to yield any really good airfields, the value of the Zamboanga increased dramatically. After facing some initially tough opposition, the 41st Division broke through and seized all of its objectives.⁹

For dad, the war was over, for he was granted a leave in time for Easter, 1945. He was then sent to Fort Bragg for additional training for the Japan campaign. Just as he was preparing to leave for the Pacific, the two A-bombs were dropped and the rest was history.

Now, the above were the combat operations of the 41st Infantry Division while my dad was with them; but there are several unofficial happenings of importance.

After the big raid on Darwin, there weren't too many white women around; but there were some Abos around. Abos were the Aborigines of Australia and they were extremely dark skinned. One soldier stole a pair of Aussie shoes and two apples when they were unloading the sunken ships in the harbor. He made a deal with an Abo girl whereby, in exchange for the shoes and one of the apples, the girl agreed to have sex with him. So one night, he is lying on top of her having sex when he hears this "crunch" sound. He opens his eyes and guess what? She's eating the apple while having sex! Naturally he became known as "Apple."

In New Guinea, the Japanese had treated the natives (especially women) very badly--rapes and the like. Since having the support of the natives was important--having sex with a native woman became a court martial offense with the sentence being thirty years in a military pen. One soldier didn't fare that well, for the New Guinea natives didn't like foreigners messing around with their women. He went out, got caught with a native girl by her father and brothers and so failed to return to duty the next day. Dad was sent out to find him; and along the way, he met up with a few natives who had served with the Dakota Scouts. They promptly took him to the missing man. The Melanesians had stripped him, suspended him by his thumbs from a tree, inserted a rose bush thorn up his penis, and then they took another thorn to push the first one up, and another, and another. Somewhere in the process, the soldier died. Dad cut him down and carried the corpse back to camp with the help of two of the natives.

In the Bismarck Archipelago, there was a hitherto unknown (to the western world) elephantiasis that devastated the native men. Most of the men on Woodlark Island, for instance, had testicles the size of two softballs--one native's testicles were about the size of a volleyball. One American soldier caught elephantiasis and his testicles were swollen to the size of softballs so the army sent him home. Dad looked him up in the hospital two years later and his testicles were still as large as baseballs. The doctors didn't know what to do; they were still experimenting. He died a year later.

Because the men were "deprived" of "healthy sex lives," some of them planned to rape Japanese women in the invasion; but the A-bombs kept them from carrying out their plans.

And now, just what was thought of the 41st by the brass? Well, on June 15th, 1945, General of the Army Douglas MacArthur said after an inspection:

"Everything is as I expected to see it in splendid shape. This is one of my oldest and proudest divisions. Its achievements have been of the first order. I have the greatest affection for and pride in the 41st Division."¹⁰

And so ends the service career of my father.

Endnotes

1 Thomas L. Connelly, "Robert E. Lee and the Western Confederacy: A Criticism of Lee's Strategic Ability," Civil War History, June 1969, Vol. XV, p. 116.

2 Robert R. Smith, United States Army in World War II: The War in the Pacific, The Approach to the Philippines (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1953), p. 13.

3 Smith, p. 85.

4 General Walter J. Kreuger, From Down Under to Nippon (Washington, D.C.: Zenger, 1979), pages 67-68.

5 Smith, pages 207-208.

6 Smith, pages 207-281.

7 Samuel E. Morison, The Two-Ocean War (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1963), pages 320-321.

8 Brigadier Peter Yong, editor; Richard Natkiel, cartographer, Atlas of the Second World War (New York: Paragon, 1979), p. 156.

9 Smith, pp. 591-597.

10 William F. McCartney, The Jungleers: A History of the 41st Infantry Division (Washington, D.C.: Infantry Journal Press, 1948), no page number given.

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Game Review:

Chivalry & Sorcery (C&S)

Chivalry & Sorcery (C&S) has been one of the best kept secrets in the history of Role-Playing Games (RPG's). First created in 1977 and released that same year by Fantasy Games Unlimited (FGU), C&S has generally been considered by those who have played to be one of the absolute best RPG's ever made, if not the best. And yet, it has been known only to the most hard core gamers with most RPG players and the public at large being oblivious to its very existence.

In many ways C&S was a groundbreaking game. This was the game that pioneered the use of the term "game master". It was the first game to place the setting over the game mechanics. C&S was the first game to have levels for monsters. Unlike other RPG's, C&S was created by two individuals with lifelong interests in history: Wilf K. Backhaus & Edward E. Simbalist.

C&S differed from the established Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) game in that it offered its players a realistic experience. Its combat system was at the time the most detailed and realistic yet to be in a RPG. It also offered its players a realistic feudal society. The historical customs in this game were drawn from real medieval life. Truly, C&S was the Middle Ages brought to game form.

C&S was set in the Middle Ages with the code of chivalry, feudalism and even the Roman Catholic Church when the latter was a moral institution. Unlike D&D, this was a mostly historical game as opposed to a fantasy game. There are monsters in this game, but they are more realistic than in D&D and similar titles.

Unlike D&D and other games, C&S is firmly rooted in historical scholarship. It was originally published with over 130 pages of instructions in small print. These rules covered such things as combat, magic and monsters. The rules were both complex and yet well-structured in such matters as interactions in medieval society. The magical system in C&S included over a dozen different forms of magic.

C&S also played like a natural game. Unlike other RPG's, it did not have arbitrary and artificial rules and limitations on characters. For instance magic users could wield weapons such as swords. The only rules and limitations on the characters in C&S were based on historical rules and customs instead of any conceptions of "game balance." All this made C&S the very first true RPG. It really was a game in which players could pursue any goal that they wished to achieve.

Another way in which C&S differed from all preceding RPG's was that it included guilds. Primarily, these were groups of magical practitioners. However, as in real medieval life, there were guilds of blacksmiths and artificers. Combined with the peasantry, C&S made it possible for players to recreate the medieval economic system.

It is no exaggeration to say that C&S was the first true role-playing game. It was a game in which an entire world was created. This world included societies, history and magic. The characters were free to pursue any goals that they wished to.

However, C&S was not a perfect game. Its layout was poor and it was graphically unappealing. This hindered its appeal.

Another aspect that limited its appeal to gamers was the very things that made it such an outstanding game: its attention to detail. The rules for C&S are a book in their own right. The rules are highly complex and difficult for even the most dedicated game master to get a handle on.

All of this is most unfortunate for C&S is a game that to this very day stands out for its qualities. The game is backed by the historical scholarship that informed it, its well thought out rules, its intelligent design and its innovative world construction.

Chivalry & Sorcery is superior to Dungeons & Dragons in every way. It is the very model of a complicated, well-executed role playing game. To this very day, it is unsurpassed as a RPG.

Book Reviews:

Genghis: Birth of an Empire by Conn Iggulden

Back when I was a teenager during the late 1970's and early 1980's, historical novels were only about Americans and the British. Most of these novels were about the

Age of Sail. Now, historical novels are being written about the full; range of the human experience, about historical events that happened far away from North America and Western Europe. Likewise, great historical personages of a distinctly non-white, non-Christian are now seen as worth of the attention of historical novelists.

One such great historical personage who has just recently received the historical fiction treatment is Genghis Khan. His early life story is the subject of *Genghis: Birth of an Empire*. The author of this ambitious work is Conn Iggulden, author of the Emperor series about Julius Caesar. Iggulden has shown himself to be capable of writing impressive novels about great historical figures and he does not disappoint here.

For almost all of this work, Genghis Khan is referred to as being "Temujin," his birth name. It is only on the last page of the last chapter of this novel that he takes the name of Genghis Khan. This helps add to the credibility of the novel for in real life it was not until just before he undertook his great wars of conquest that Temujin adopted the name for which he became famous in world history.

This is a well-paced and historically accurate novel. It is heartily recommended to everyone who loves historical fiction.

Tell Me, Pretty Maiden by Rhys Bowen

One of the hottest areas of popular fiction today is the historical mystery. These are mysteries that are set in the past making those historical works as well. Unfortunately, the history in these books is generally poor while the mystery aspects are the writer's main focus. As far as this writer is concerned, Steven Saylor is the only writer who consistently does a good job with both the history and the mystery.

Tell Me, Pretty Maiden by Rhys Bowen is a novel that manages to mangle both the history and the mystery. For one thing, it is set in December, 1902 and yet it refers to events that happen later on. For instance, it has a costume party in which of the characters dresses up as the Scarlet Pimpernel even though the novel of that name did not get published until 1905. There are so many mistakes of this sort that one wonders just what kind of editor handled this book.

Even worse, the mystery in this book basically ends about fifty pages before the end of the book. What follows is just so much boring padding that involves a contrived episode in which the female detective gets herself committed to a mental hospital for no good reason. The fact that the heroine is a female private detective when there was no such thing is something else that is irritating about this book. Add in that two of her best friends are liberated women in Victorian America and you have an unlikely historical work.

As a private detective, Miss Molly Murphy is pretty lackluster. She repeatedly does stupid things like walking down dark alleys at night. Neither she nor any of the other characters has a telephone although in 1902 America, such things were commonplace. She repeatedly dismisses suspects because they don't look like criminals. Basically, Murphy is an idiot who gets lucky. Too lucky to be believable.

Even worse is the way that coincidence plays too much of a role in this story. That and the way that Murphy is able to solve her cases despite her stupidity helps to ruin the novel for the reader. Murphy supposedly has a police officer boyfriend, but she resents him for his helping her and also for the fact that he is not always able to help her. Talk about contradictory.

In sum, *Tell Me Pretty Maiden* is a stupid book on both the history and the mystery. Avoid it like the plague.

Bullet for a Bad Man by Ralph Compton (David Robbins)

Ralph Compton passed away in 1998 at the age of 64. Normally, that would stop the publication of novels under his name. However, the late author's publisher, Signet Books, in conjunction with the late author's estate, has continued publishing novels under his name by hack writers. All of these books have Compton's name in big letters on the top and on the bottom, it reads in small print, "A Ralph Compton Novel by (fill in the blank name of hack writer)".

In the case of *Bullet for a Bad Man*, the hack writer in question is David Robbins. Robbins has published over 200 books both under his own name and that of others. None of Robbins's books have ever made the best sellers lists. This makes you wonder why the publishers have used his services instead of someone who would help them sell more books.

The back cover of this paperback original novel would have you believe that it is about two brothers, one good and the other bad. Only problem is that when you read the actual work, it's pretty clear that one of the brothers is bad while the other is so rotten that he can only be characterized as being satanic. Oddly enough, the worst of the two brothers is the one who is presented as being the good guy.

Even by the standards of hack writing, this is a horrible book.

Website Reviews:

[Austro-Hungarian Land Forces 1848-1918](http://www.austro-hungarian-army.co.uk/) at <http://www.austro-hungarian-army.co.uk/> is a comprehensive website devoted to its subject. Features include a thorough collection of links and in-depth discussion of military events involving the unification of both Germany and Italy as well as World War I.

Guild of Blades Publishing Group at <http://www.guildofblades.com/is> a game publishing company that focuses in on adventure games.

[Inspector Fitch's Space Merchant Realms Help & History Website](http://www.angelfire.com/space/inspectorfitch/) at <http://www.angelfire.com/space/inspectorfitch/> Although this website was never completed, it has a number of useful links pertaining to the still existing game of Space Merchant Realms. Its most notable feature is an in-depth history of the original game of Space Merchant.

MUD Stats at <http://mudstats.com/> MUD Stats follows as many as a thousand different MUD's. It follows traffic and has a variety of statistical information, charts and graphs concerning the world of MUD's and MUDDing.

Richard A. Bartle: MUD Writings Archive at <http://mud.co.uk/richard/archive.htm> is the archive of all the articles published by MUD fan and scholar Richard A. Bartle.

Movie Reviews:

Alien Apocalypse (2005 TV)

As previously related in the review of the pathetic flick *The Man with the Screaming Brain*, actor Bruce Campbell struck what many observers considered to be a questionable deal with producer Sam Raimi. Campbell would have starring roles in several low budget productions made by either Sam Raimi or some of Raimi's friends. One such production is the made for TV movie at hand, **Alien Apocalypse** that premiered on the Sci-Fi Channel earlier this year and is now out on VHS and DVD.

Alien Apocalypse is a piece of hack work. The basic plot has already been used in numerous flicks before and will likely be used in many more movies. Essentially, this made for TV movie is about astronauts Ivan Hood (Bruce Campbell) and Kelly (Renee O'Connor) who return to Earth after a space mission only to discover that in the meantime, aliens from outer space who look an awful lot like giant termites have invaded and taken over the world. Their reason for doing so is that they are attracted by Earth's bountiful forests and the aliens' home planet is almost all out of wood. Now it is up to Hood and Kelly to lead the oppressed human population in a bloody uprising to overthrow the evil alien conquerors.

In the advertising for *Alien Apocalypse* that ran on the Sci-Fi Channel, this TV flick was promoted as being a comedy. Actually, **Alien Apocalypse** is anything but that. There are some witty lines but the overall effect is dullness. Bruce Campbell has practically nothing to work with. The ending is flat.

Basically, the production standards especially the directing and photography are comparable to an episode of the *Hercules & Xena* TV series that Raimi used to produce. There is plenty of music and stock footage from the *Hercules & Xena* series in **Alien Apocalypse**.

However, the writing lacks the quality that marked the Hercules series. The writing in this TV movie is flawed, stupid and not funny at all.

The acting in **Alien Apocalypse** is generally bad. Bruce Campbell looks bored and not interested throughout it. He simply is not at the top of his game here. Renee O'Connor tries her best, but since she has zero talent as an actress, that adds nothing to the movie. When the humans and aliens engage in battle, it is so fake that it is almost painful to watch.

The level of the makeup and special effects in **Alien Apocalypse** is low even by Sci-Fi Channel standards. The wigs worn by the humans in this TV movie are downright awful to look at. Some of the fake facial hair looks like it is on the verge of falling off. There is a half-naked girl whose skin is smooth and hairless so much so, when must have a huge quantity of razor blades stashed somewhere.

Alien Apocalypse is an awful piece of celluloid. It has zero scientific credibility. The aliens supposedly conquered Earth, but whenever we see any combat, the alien's weapons fail to work and/or are extremely inaccurate. Huge numbers of aliens perish in combat while hardly any humans die in these battles. **Alien Apocalypse** is a flick that needs to be avoided like the plague.

Definitely not recommended.

Death Race (2008)

The makers of the 2008 flick **Death Race** would like you to think that it is a remake of the 1975 movie Deathrace 2000. Actually, there is not all that much resemblance between the two movies despite the name and a somewhat similar plot basically, the 1975 original took a clever idea and turned it into an original piece of futuristic cinema. This remake is just simply an ugly cliché ridden piece of garbage.

The 1975 original was about a nationwide cross-country race in which the race car drivers got points for running pedestrians over with their cars of death and destruction that included long barbs sticking out of the front of the cars. Some of the pedestrians were crazed fans who willingly threw themselves in front of the cars so that their favorite drivers could gain in the competition. These drivers had original names such as Herman the German, Matilda the Hun, Nero the Hero, Thomasina Paine, Calamity Jane and Frankenstein. Death Race 2000 also featured some very good performances from David Carradine, Fred Grandy & Sylvester Stallone. There is also John Landis, who would later become famous as a movie director, portraying a mechanic.

One of the drivers begins to be plagued by his conscience about participating in what is essentially organized hit and run driving.

Meanwhile, there is a conspiracy in the federal government aimed at curtailing the death race and it has infiltrated an operative posing as a navigator into the race itself. The original Deathrace 2000 was a very well done thriller that has proved to be a most memorable work of cinema.

On the other hand, **Death Race** took a preposterous idea and pushed it to the max with the result that the audience's suspension of disbelief is shattered. For starters while the original movie was directed by the capable, if unglamorous, Paul Bartel, this alleged remake was helmed by Paul W.S. Anderson who has been responsible for more than his fair share of bad movies (AVP: Alien vs. Predator, Mortal Kombat & Resident Evil). Anderson also threw in numerous Hollywood clichés concerning innocent men behind bars and made a movie that more resembles a video game than anything else.

The plot of **Death Race** is poorly thought out. The movie is set at a prison, which like all prisons, is run by a corporation strictly for profit. Jensen Ames (Jason Statham) is a prisoner who has been framed for murdering his wife. The prison warden, Hennessey (Joan Allen) makes a deal with Ames that she will set him free if he will first represent the prison in the "Death Race" that is run by prisoners in a nationally televised race to the death. Setting a prisoner free just for driving a car? Yeah right.

While the plot is badly conceived, the cinematography is even worse. Poor editing and excessive zoom shots mess up racing sequences that were already generally repetitive and boring. Poor production values make it difficult to discern just which race car is in the lead. Given how so many previous car race movies have excellent photography, it makes you wonder just what was going through Paul W.S. Anderson's head when he was making this poor excuse for a motion picture.

Another problem with this movie is that it is set too near the future. Death Race 2000 was set 25 years in the future while in **Death Race**, the American economy collapses in 2012 and the events in the movie come just a few years later. It seems unlikely that American society could change so much in less than a decade from now.

In the end, **Death Race** is just a glorified video game on celluloid. It is a movie chock full of stock characters all of whom are made of cardboard. The cinematography is horrible as is the acting, directing and script. Unless you happen to like horrible movies, this is a flick to stay away from.

Fanzine Reviews:

<http://us3.campaign-archive1.com/?u=cc8a1b320e2ad6c3e53ba7193&id=49ddea342e>

The Goreletter Michael Arnzen's Weird Newsletter

Volume 10, No. 1

Back in the day, Michael Arnzen's *Goreletter* was a frequently published text-based E-Newsletter. Today, it is only sporadically published, heavy on graphics and short of useful, interesting stuff. The best thing in this issue, aside from the horror poetry, is a link to sign up for THE DARK MAGAZINE. Oddly enough, Arnzen does not appear to be either an editor or writer for this particular endeavor.

<http://efanzines.com/Fadeaway/Fadaway-45.pdf>

Fadeaway #45.

Fadeaway is a fanzine that is about the history of popular culture. Its focus is on cultural artifacts that were very popular back in the day, but are now largely forgotten. This fanzine features the writing of its editor, Robert Jennings. In issue #45, Jennings points out that the root cause for why the Hugo Awards are so screwed up is its use of the Australian Ballot. Additionally, according to Jennings, the WorldCon no longer attracts fans who are primarily interested in novels and short fiction, but instead in a social gathering where they can make friends and have fun with old friends. The main article in this issue is about a series of sci-fi stories in the old *Argosy* magazine about the invasion and conquest of America by rampaging Oriental hordes and the resistance offered by guerrilla fighters. The "Reader Reaction" section contains a great many high grade letters of comment.

Unlike this fanzine, Jennings makes it clear that he does not want to be the sole writer of most, let alone all, of *Fadeaway*. This makes his fanzine an attractive place for all those fans with an interest in history who want to get published.

***The Insider* #308 Michelle Zellich 1738 San Martin Drive, Fenton, MO 63026-2304**

The Insider is the clubzine of the St. Louis Science Fiction Society that apparently has difficulty getting any more than four members or so to attend its meetings. While the club may be lacking in members, it is overflowing in publication talent as shown by this colorful fanzine. There is a lot more science coverage here than what my daily newspaper has. The best part is the fanzine review column by Robert Jennings of *Fadeaway*.

<http://efanzines.com/Reluctant/ReluctantFamulus-105.pdf>

The Reluctant Famulus #105.

Issue #105 of *The Reluctant Famulus* is one of the most history minded fanzines I've seen this year. Of special note is Alfred D. Byrd's piece on what if the South won the Civil War. It takes the unusual tack of viewing the war as a cultural conflict. It also takes into account the potentialities of Braxton Bragg's 1862 invasion of Kentucky. All too many Civil War historians have given this campaign short shrift and have focused instead on the war in northern Virginia.

Another item of note is Gene Stewart's "Rat Stew" column that takes on the skeptics who have made skepticism into a kind of secular religion. These are folks who scoff at all UFO reports as well as archaeological ideas that go against the established wisdom no matter how much evidence supports the ideas in question. For example, the established wisdom is that the pyramids were originally tombs of the pharaohs even though no mummies have ever been found in them. Any ideas presented that would seem to fit the evidence better are trashed by these so-called skeptics as being just so much pseudoscience.

Longtime fan John Purcell contributes a review of a novel that quite frankly I had never heard of before. There is also a bountiful letters section.

Perhaps the best way to sum up *TRF* is that it's a lot what this fanzine would be like if folks submitted original pieces for publication here and if more folks sent LOC's my way. Hopefully, this time next year that will be the case.

Letters of Comment

Replies by the Editor are in between brackets. []

tyrbolo@comcast.net

Hi Charles,

Glad to see another issue of *Fornax*.

The whole issue of American expansionism is an ugly can of worms. No matter how you approach the topic you'll find equally valid counter arguments. A lot of it was driven by the media of the times. A modern equivalent is the media rush to validate the attack on Iraq without any attempt to investigate any facts.

It's a lot easier to spin the narrative when your head is up your ass, the world seems like a dark smelly dangerous place full of bad things.

All the American exceptionalism in the world won't change what the map tells you about BRICS. Every push against that just makes the truth harder to spin.

Project Gutenberg has ended the series of USMC histories about the island hopping cross Pacific campaign. I had some friends and relatives involved and it is interesting reading but not for the faint hearted. Okinawa was the last island fight.

On the anime front there is a new episode (#9) Ghost in the Shell which is extending the Motoko Kusanagi saga.
animefreak.tv

I hear there is going to be a fifth Bourne movie with Matt Damon. Scarlett Johanson is supposed to do Motoko Kusanagi in the near future.

Chaosium has gone back to its origins with Peterson and Stafford coming back.

Keep 'em coming

Dave Haren

[You must be one of those Canadians who does not want his homeland annexed by the United States. Just curious, but would you be interested in writing an article for *Fornax* about either anime or Chaosium since those are subjects that I don't know much about?]

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June 16, 2015

Dear Charles:

Thanks for Fornax 2, and I will try my best to come up with a cogent loc for this issue, but no promises. I'll see what I can do.

I don't have a membership for this year's Worldcon, so I have no vote to discuss, but when I see what's happening with the Hugos this year, I am glad I have no vote. The rampant manipulation of the ballot saddens me, and like many others, takes away any pride I had in the awards.

Given what the GamerGate boys did to people like Brianna Wu, I don't see how anyone can support anything from these jackasses. Still, I must agree with you on Best

Fan Writer. I don't know any of these people, and I don't think I've ready anything of what they've written, if anything.

For Best Fanzine, I receive Journey Planet, and know of Uncle Timmy's Revenge of Hump Day, and Tangent SF Online...the other two, I am not familiar with at all. If I had the vote, Journey Planet would get it.

Television can contain so many good things...too bad it has so few today. There is already some level of enslavement. I know of local fans who try to follow upwards of 20 to 25 different television shows, and spend most of their evenings and weekends trying to catch up. I enjoy a couple of shows, plus news and documentaries. I'd rather be informed than entertained.

I regularly get, respond to, and enjoy BCSFAzine from Vancouver, and I've been getting this clubzine for many years.

Lots of other zines you list that I'm enjoying...I am just happy that people are still producing zines for others to read. Fandom always seemed to be a forum of information and conversation, so the idea of a fan-produced magazine always seemed so natural. Too bad it's not like that now.

I think I will fold...lots more to do, and I should get to it. Thanks for this, and see you the next time.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

[As it happens, I don't have any sort of membership with the World Convention either. As for Brianna Wu, my understanding is that the FBI investigated the alleged death threats to "her" and found them to be without merit. As for Gamergate, it won and as such it is now over. At least that is unless the gaming press gets any ideas about going back to wallow in corruption. As for TV, it sounds like you still give your TV set a regular workout. I stopped getting cable TV a few years ago. Ever since I discovered that YouTube runs movies and TV shows, I've pretty much stopped watching DVD's & VHS's on my TV]