

Hard Science TALES

Sixth Issue

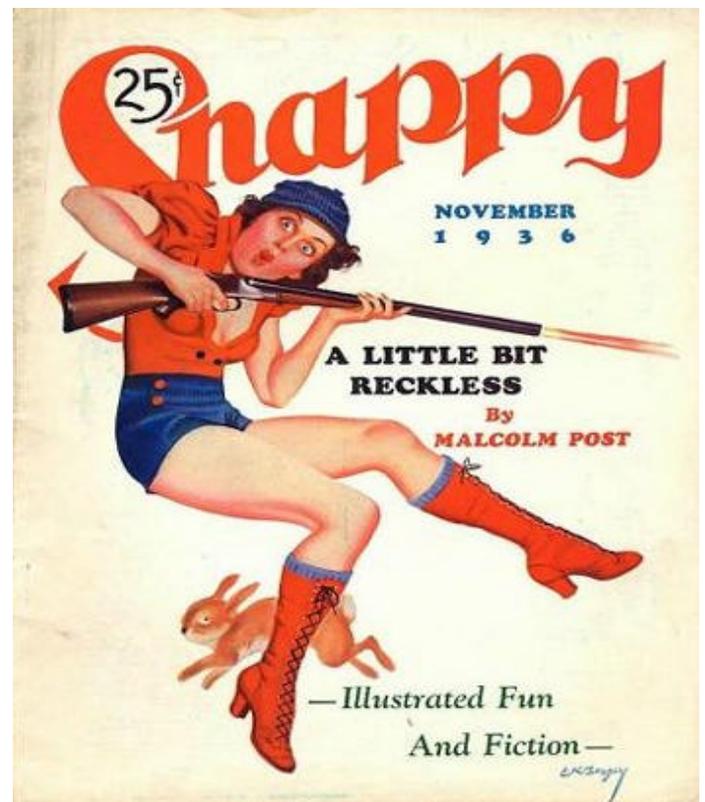
Try Your Wings

It seems clear to me that flight is well within our capabilities. (Don't interrupt me with any non-sensical science about size of bones and distribution of muscle!) And no, I'm not talking about building better airplanes nor rocket ships; I'm talking about free flight, just like Superman.

Personally, I have clear memory of flying when I was an infant. I use Superman as my example advisedly, since I'm talking about his (original) flight style, in which long strides become leaps, and leaps become soars. I clearly remember flying down stairs, just floating above the steps, touching every 10th or 12th step or so, to continue propelling myself forward to an eventual soft landing.

My recent heart surgery was done to make me able to withstand the coming ankle operation, but it had the side effect of increasing the flow of blood (and oxygen) to my brain. I therefore expect that I will soon be remembering everything I've forgotten in the last 66 years, including the illusive mechanics of personal flight.

But I already know exactly how it goes, and it really is quite simple. By fluttering my hands, pushing air down with my palms, I scoop more of it under myself, thereby providing lift for long leaps and, with practice, even for lengthy trips staying a few yards over the surface of ground or



water. No one here, I am sure, would dare to argue with the scientific method I've just described; obviously, my methodology is perfectly logical.

I think it's proof of my devotion to SNAPS that I have imparted this scientific truth to you readers, so that you can enjoy its benefits too.

Hard Science Tales Volume 2, Issue 3, Whole Number 6 comes to you from Joyce Worley Katz, PMB 152, 330 South Decatur, Las Vegas, NV 89107, on June 10, 2005. This is created for SNAFFU members and other Vegas fan friends, for the third distribution of SNAPS (The Southern Nevada Amateur Press Society.) Hard Science Tales is also posted to www.efanzines.com for the amusement of the rest of fandom. Thanks to Arnie Katz for production help and for this nifty template. The pix is from a 1936 prozine.

Letters:

Eric Mayer (Blog: <http://www.journalscape.com/ericmayer>):

I've always felt there was something "wrong" with probability theory. If you examine the events of your own life you begin to realize how improbable it all is. What were the chances of you running into your future spouse, say, just when you did, or coming upon this or that fanzine, which put you in touch with someone or other, which led to something else. (There are probably less fanzine fans than major league ballplayers. So one is "luckier" to be a fan, in a probabilistic sense, although I wouldn't mind earning a couple million a year either...) Each of our lives is practically an impossibility. Except, once the nearly impossible happens, then weirdly, its probability is 100% (I guess) As far as lives go, "something" has to happen, but it is still weird that in some sense exactly what does happen is so unlikely. I've often thought the breakdown of probability would be a good premise for some sf. Been done, probably.

You got my point exactly! And since probability really is improbable, I feel I must reject all science that's based on that theory.

Chris Garcia:

Capt. Fremont was a strange guy. Supposedly he would also wake up in the morning and mix a heaping spoonful of dirt in with boiling water. Or so the story goes.

I'm a fan of weird ways to measure stuff. Use a thermometre to figure out how high a building is (give it to the super and say "Here, you can keep it if you tell me how high the building is) or even stranger, how far a star is by figuring out how often people are abducted by Aliens (the closer the system, the more abductions, though the correlation may not be as direct as I present it). You will have my thanks if you do manage to measure it (preferably in furlongs)

I've very much enjoyed your How I Found Fandom pieces. Sadly, my stories of finding fandom are so boring that I seldom tell them (I rolled over in my crib and Dad was there, explaining the

Breen-Doggle and teaching me to read with issues of Granfalloon).

You know, Fandom has a way of dragging wonderful people into the fold. Sounds like you have the wonderful position of having that proven. It's a mitzvah, as my people are apt to say, what JoHn and James did. Use your new improved speed well.

I've heard that same story about Captain Fremont. And I imagine there are valuable minerals to be gained from eating dirt. I ate quite a few mud pies when I was a kid. I guess I can credit my booming health, strong bones and agility to that, and other such Scientific Experiments.

Lloyd Penney:

I broke into fandom as a mediafan, being a devoted fan of the original Star Trek. Of course, that was close to 30 years ago. Today...I still read a lot, but barely watch any television at all. I work in the evenings, and I thought that when I started the job, it would cramp my style...not nearly as much as I had thought. There's so little I miss, and the evening job can take as little as an hour an evening. (Although last night was 3.5 hours, never thought it would end.)

Yvonne has certainly found out over the past year or so in her relatively new involvement in space advocacy groups that it is no different from SF fandom. There's politicking galore, backstabbing, rampaging egos, an old boys' network, personality conflicts, all-out wars...it was so familiar, but I think she was disappointed, expecting something a little better. She was in Washington recently at the International Space Development Conference, and she tried to get the ISDC for Toronto for 2008 or 2009...no such luck, the old boys said no, but she might yet try for 2010.

The people you recall from the early Ozark days sound like many people we might meet today. Not the most beautiful or handsome, not the most homely, but a fine selection of strange sorts that find each other, and feel not so strange any more.

Internet radio...there are so many stations which "broadcast" on the Internet only, and I haven't taken the time to find them, but I do listen to BBC Radio 2 via the Net when I can. I wind up listening to afternoon, evening and late night programming because Great Britain is five hours ahead of the Eastern time zone where I am.

You make a great point, about the similarity of fans, regardless of the fandom. Guess the strange types just gravitate to each other --- and then, unfortunately, their organizations all tend to have the same types of interactions, good and bad.

Alien Voices (mailing comments)

Eutrapelia (David Gordon)

I was fascinated by your report of going to Torcon II in 1973. That was the first Worldcon that Arnie and I missed (except for the one in Germany) after we were married. We were young, poor, and desperately wanted to go. I am sure we would have met you there, if we'd made the trip.

I envy you getting to meet Alfred Bester; I never did. My favorite sf book has always been *The Stars My Destination* (and I am also very fond of numerous shorter pieces by Bester.)

But what you say about the changes in how fans and pros react to one another is certainly true. Not that the pro-sickness infects all of them; many fans-turned-pro continue to be the same good guys they always were. But often the con committees put such barriers between the authors and the readers that it daunts even those who'd like to be treated as equals. The advent of the Green Room ruined fandom, or at least that aspect of it.

However, the years have changed me. I no longer thrill to the idea of meeting authors; now I have no time for anyone but friends I get to see so rarely. For me, conventions are family-style reunions; the banquet, programs, demonstrations and exhibits can go to hell! Give me a place to sit, a can of TAB and a circle of friends, and I'm content.

Bat Signals #2 (Teresa Cochran)

Having spent so much time with the blind or near-blind throughout my life, I am always intrigued by the methods that are used to interact

with the world. My dear Aunt Ilah, who was always near-blind then lost the rest of her sight as she aged, went to a special school that taught her how to cook, clean, even sew. She continued to live alone as long as she could, and took very good care of herself. But she wasn't completely self-sufficient; she loved to have me describe paintings to her. She was also extremely particular that she look right, and that her surroundings be neat and clean, so wanted her companions to check after her.

I believe I read a mystery story once in which the "detective" was blind, and solved the murder by sound clues only.

Your courage in hiking Red Rock is awesome. Even with vision, I fear falling.

Softcore Fantasy Adventures (Arnie Katz)

What prompted you to name your mailing comments "Ping-Pong Paddlin' Home"?

I've always liked your analogy of fandom being like a parade; we all join in when we encounter the parade, and march along with the others for our time. Personally, I like the feeling that the parade will go on even if I stop to rest by the side, or completely fall out of step.

I agree: If Woody is fandom's best recruiter, then rich brown is surely the best indoctrinator fandom has seen. His encyclopedic knowledge of fandom's history and customs makes it easy for new fans to find a comfortable niche.

I also agree that it's time for another group fanzine in Vegas.

Flipper (John Hardin)

I love television (some of it, anyhow) but I share your hatred of "Everybody Loves Raymond". I sure don't. It offends me that this guy is supposed to be a newspaper columnist (albeit a sports writer) but he's so damned stupid. I just can't buy it - you don't get to write sports (or anything else) by being a no-mind.

Your description of the scariness of bombers dovetails with my feelings upon having seen a tank rumbling down the road. I'll never forget the immediate flash of terror. For that matter, I once saw a flight of gunships barreling toward me, producing the same level of panic. I was attending a Vietnam Veterans parade in New York ... the first

one, long overdue, ten years after the fact...and heard the marchers begin to scream at the roar of the copters approaching. Some of them threw themselves to the ground, and I understood for the first time their left-over battle shock. I couldn't help but burst into tears; I wanted to crawl under the pavement. I never felt the same about veterans again.

Jojadoq (Lori Forbes)

What a gas! A grandmother who read science fiction! I'm impressed. I can't say I admire her taste in collecting Harlequins, though; I consider telephone books to be better literature! Still, don't you wish you could talk to her now about those early prozines she must have read?

You said, "When she passed in the mid-80's, she still hadn't forgiven the Japanese for Pearl Harbor, if you can imagine." Have you? Have you also forgiven the Germans for the concentration camps? How about the Spanish for the Incas? The Pilgrims for the Indians? The Romans for the Christians? Do you forgive the English for Scotland? Do you forgive the Egyptians for the Jews? Do you forgive the Trojans for the Spartans? Have you forgiven whomever for whatever? How much time do you think is appropriate for continuing to mourn 9/11?

I'm with Granny. I think we should all have a long memory for suffering, because I think that's the only way to stop it repeating itself.

Lori, I'm so glad you are writing here. I know it doesn't come naturally to you, but you do it well. And, you have interesting view points that I love to read.

Mid-Life Crisis (Linda Bushyager)

Carnivale is the best fantasy I've ever seen on television. In fact, I'm not sure it isn't the best fantasy drama ever. I certainly agree with your comparison to Ray Bradbury's works; that's how it hit me, too. I can hardly wait for it to return. I believe the ads I've seen have said that the next will be its final season.

I really like that so many HBO original presentations are full stories with definite endings. For example, the current run of Six Feet Under will bring that story to its conclusion. It's a winner,

too – I recommend it to anyone, though I have difficulty explaining exactly what it's about. Although the family owns a mortuary, that really has little to do with the plot. It's more of a close analysis of their lives and times.

Not too surprisingly, my favorite is Deadwood. Since I'm such a student of western history, I appreciate its veracity. The realism is beyond shocking; it's a look at the grit of the old west that reminds us just how lucky we are not to be back in that time.

I also like 24 very much; I really love the hero, Jack Bauer (?) The first two seasons were especially gripping. I often came to the end of each episode and realized I'd been sitting there for the hour with my mouth hanging open, in breathless shock. And, at least once, I was so into it, so caught up in the drama, that I burst into tears (after they nuked Nevada.)

On the other hand, I don't mind auto-flush toilets. I only encounter them in airports. It seems to me that you're less likely to walk into an offensive stall when there's an auto-flush feature. But I'm impressed by the stupidity of the woman you described, who thought it would somehow come out and pick up her paper toilet seat cover!

The Peripatetic Phan (Kathryn Daugherty)

Thanks for the kudos on SNAPS. But the real heroes are the entire group, who are making it work.

I only recently learned that you are widely known for your expertise in cooking and other things culinary. I had no idea...but I should have guessed for the excellent dishes of yours I have samples. I look forward to more chances – and will be interested in discussing some of your views on convention and fan-party edibles. I've always admired the artistry of some of fandom's better convention hosts and hostesses – Aileen Forman and Cathi Wilson come to mind. Me, I just throw a bunch of money at the problem, or toss some chips on the table. They actually Program the edibles, and Design the looks of the display.

Curiously enough, right now I'm doing an editing gig – editing a cookbook for a lady. It's a great collection of her Mississippi grandmothers' recipes. Just reading it makes me hungry for down-home cooking.

You got one thing right: I have lived in the Science Fiction Village for a very long time. But I'm not really sure what that means.

I agree with you that Woody's history of Vegas fandom always makes interesting reading. I'd like to see several people take on the same subject, each with their own versions; I think the contrasts and agreements would make it fascinating. I'd particularly like to see Ken & Aileen Forman's history reprinted. Wonder if anyone still has it in file?

Wood Pulp (Woody Bernardi)

Thanks for your remarks about my fannish memoirs, Woody. I really appreciated it. There's no chapter in this issue because I ran short of time and decided to do the mailing comments instead. But I'll resume, hopefully next issue. And, I think I'll tell you a great deal more (than you ever wanted to know) about Dave Hall, the high school senior who was my ultimate gateway to fanzine fandom. Though he's Gone now, to that great convention in the sky, I never want to forget him, because he helped me find fandom.

Your remarks to JoHn about watching baseball in order to eye the players, makes me wonder why you never developed a taste for professional wrestling and its Beautiful Bodies. I'll admit that, until you come to Understand, the violence level can be daunting for a new fan. But the beauty and grace shown by these incredible athletes (of both sexes) outweighs the apprehension one feels when watching their antics. Truthfully, I don't like many sports much at all (though I share Kathryn's interest in the Olympics.) Wrestling is one of the only exceptions, not despite the fact it is programmed, but because of it, and because of my admiration for the men and women who do it.

Der Fliegende Hollander (James Taylor)

Was it JoHn who said that he thought of your zine as "The Flying Dutchman" since he doesn't speak German? I'm with him...but not just because of the language. In fact, that's one of my very favorite operas, and you seldom hear it, or even hear it mentioned as much as it deserves.

It's also my name for one of my favorite Ross Chamberlain illustrations, which I have in shades of yellow and black hanging on our hall wall. I don't know if Ross thought of it as The Flying Dutchman, but I always have; I've always meant to ask him if he'd ever run off a version done in stormy blacks and blues. Of course, it also has a strong fannish connotation, since it has a Stormy Petrol flying overhead (that was Francis Towner Laney's nickname.)

You say you now regret not going into LASFS with a tape recorder, when you were a neo and the Old Guys were still around, to question them about their salad days in fandom. I regret I didn't know better questions back to ask the old crew in the Poplar Bluff days; I'd like to have Keasler's convention report of the NolaCon party, for example, or to know what he thought when he first met Lee Hoffman.

Of course, I also regret lots of non-fannish opportunities I squandered to question the older-and-wiser. Thus I missed out on lots of home-town history from the ancient who lived next door, more stories about backwoods Kentucky before the turn of the century, family history from the great-grands who were still alive when I should have been smart enough to ask. What made Brother Gene Sells talk so much about the "cigarette sucking daughters of Satan wearing their red patent leather shoes walking down the road to hell"? (Is that not one of the most evocative damnations you've ever heard?)

Still being curious, and just a tiny bit smarter, I do have the presence of mind to ask: Why do you say that your own convention volunteering soured your opinion of Pros? There's a story here, I'm sure – Tell, TELL!

You've seen an impressive number of movies recently. Not one of which I've seen, or am likely to see unless they come to t.v., and maybe not even then. I admit to a curiosity about Moulin Rouge 2001, but only because I was such a fan of the 1950's Jose Ferrer movie of the same name. That movie was also my introduction to fine art, representing as it did the first time I had seen Great Paintings.

And, it's theme song was also one of my all-time-faves; I still sometimes twiddle it out on the keyboard. I gather there is no real connection between the two movies except the title. Pity.

Do you watch much television? I wonder if we enjoy any of the same shows?

Profane Revelations (Charles Fuller)

I remember the feeling in the 1960s, that the space program was forging ahead, that despite the many setbacks we were doing it, and we were only just a little way from the stars. How wrong we were! We did get the thrill of accomplishment from what was done, and the climax of the moon landing at the end of the decade (July 21, 1969). But I doubt many of the St. Louis fans I was with on that day could have imagined how the entire program would fizzle and fade like a spent 4th of July rocket.

And yet, we've increased our knowledge a lot since then, with more images of what's out there, and more probes and 'scopes to increase our views of the even further away. But I doubt any among us really have that feeling, which we had in the mid 1960s, that we'd live to see a colony, live to see First Contact, live to know so very much more than we know now.

At least we can be thankful that we haven't yet lived to see exactly how close we can get with "something else" delivered over the pole. And in the 1960s, we were expecting that dread event with near certainty.

Actually, contrary to your remarks to Ross, it seems to me that the injunction to "never discuss religion or politics" is much less quoted now than it used to be. But you are right about one thing, keeping it to the blogs does lower the chance of violence in social setting. (I recall too clearly discussions of the 1960s efforts to integrate Arkansas schools degenerating into someone hurling a chair at another guest. The hurler was from Little Rock; no doubt that's why he behaved so badly.)

Some SNAPPY Thoughts:

I'm totally delighted that we've got this thing going so well. I notice that Disty #3 is marred by some of the "regulars" (if twice can make you regular) are missing this time. But, on the other hand, it's no fannish sin to miss out now and then, particularly if you come back next time. (Otherwise, the Scowl of Ghu be on ye!) And, it's great that some new participants have joined us.

On the other hand, I wonder if it is time to discuss going all-electronic. Two or three people have already mentioned that the cost of paper production is prohibitive to them. And some others have said they don't mind printing out their own copies of each mailing.

How 'bout it, gang? Should we give up the paper versions, and go high-tech? I'll be anxious to hear what you have to say.

Some Personal Facts:

May was a tough month: I had two heart procedures. But they are over now, and were completely successful. I am an intrinsically better, more healthy person now than I was before, with better circulation, and a distinctly pink tinge to my formerly ashen skin.

On the other hand, the heart surgeon says I'll have to wait a little longer for ankle surgery. And, I'm getting less mobile, sometimes it seems by the day. This does make me cranky, because I don't like the pain and frustration. The results of this tiny little accident in April 2004 now seem they'll last another year before I get back to myself. So, bear with me. I'll be hobbling around ungracefully, cluttering up the place with walkers and canes and almost tangible complaints.

Meanwhile, does anyone want a kitten? I have three friendly little furballs in my backyard, cute as buttons, needing real homes. I do hope I find places for them before I see you next month! (end)