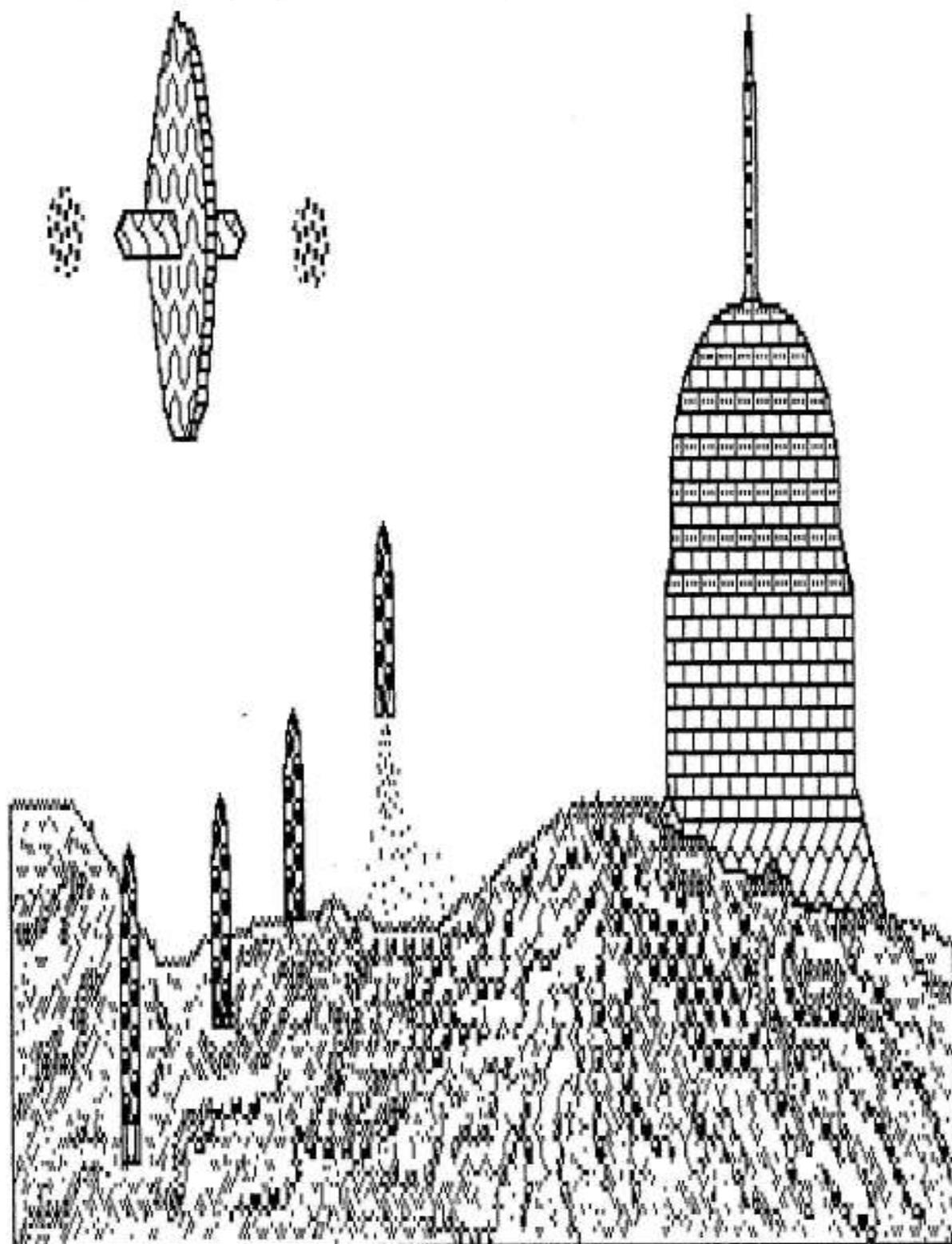


SPACE CADET

#1

(or: The Aging Old Fart Nostalgic Time Waster Gazette)



The Space Cadet Gazette #1 – December 1994
Published quarterly (or whenever I feel like it)
by R. Graeme Cameron,

who is no longer living at:

1855 West 2nd Ave, Apt. #110,
Vancouver, B.C., Canada, V6J 1J1

E version note: As of 2008 my address is:

**Apt # 72G, 13315 104th Ave,
Surrey, B.C., Canada V3T 1V5**

The Space Cadet Gazette is available for \$1.00 per issue, or \$4.00 for four issues, or \$1,000 for a thousand issues, or \$1,000,000 for a lifetime subscription (necessarily my lifetime, not yours).

SCG is also available for the usual: trade with your zine or regular letters of comment.

SCG is open to submissions, especially (short) articles reminiscing about your personal experience within the SF genre, be it fandom or your favourite books, movies, conventions or whatever. But in truth I will consider anything that evokes the 'sense of wonder'. No payment, but lots of egoboo.

Copyright reverts to contributors upon publication. I reserve the right to edit any and all contributions.

Editorial

Welcome to the first issue of the world's youngest perzine: SPACE CADET!

(This is a complimentary issue. If you have already subscribed, your subscription will begin with issue number two.)

Some of you may know me from the pages of BCSFAzine (the monthly newsletter of the British Columbia SF Association -- registered as the West Coast SF Association) of which I have been "God-editor" since 1989.

The pressure of producing BCSFAzine to deadline has begun to wear me out and I have given notice I will (probably) vacate the position in October of 1995.

This will give me the freedom to pursue my fiction-writing goals.

At the same time, I do not wish to give up fan-writing entirely. SPACE CADET is my solution to adopting a more leisurely approach to the subject. In these pages I will write about matters of interest to me and -- I hope -- of interest to my readers.

I am most interested in hearing what you think of this first issue. By all means drop me a line (and better yet, a cheque for a lifetime subscription!)

THE GRAEME

can no longer be reached at:

graeme_cameron@mindlink.bc.ca

E version note: As of 2008 I can be reached at:

< rgraeme@shaw.ca >

Table of Contents

- 03) – Confessions of an SF Addict
- 08) – Marvin's Mighty Mayan Marathon
- 10) – War! What of It? – by Charles S. Cameron
- 16) – Ed Wood's Flying Saucers!
- 22) – Letters of Comment

All articles by R. Graeme Cameron unless otherwise credited.

Confessions of an SF Addict -- *by R. Graeme Cameron*

Thought I'd tell you about some of the more significant events in my childhood which may possibly account for the nature of The Graeme as I exist today. Hmmm, where to start.....

Earliest dream. The bedroom of the house my father rented in Dayton, Ohio, when he was studying at Wright Pat Airbase. I'm asleep in my crib. (I'm about 2 or 3 years of age). I dream I wake up and glance fearfully around the room. Everything seems normal. My brother (seven years older) is happily asleep in his bed. Then the closet door swings open. A SKELETON walks out! Eeeek! Arrgh!

1954, Ottawa. I'm 3 years old. My family is living in a tenement while waiting for our house to be completed. I'm in the front yard with a neighbour kid, my "best friend". Hah! We're taking turns climbing onto an old footstool to drop a large rock into the bed of a red wagon. Why? To see a cloud of dust and rust boil into the air with each impact. My 'buddy' takes position atop the stool, raises the rock high... and drops it on my head! Eeek! Arrgh! I make it up three flights of stairs before collapsing on the landing outside our apartment door... How many people do you know who've actually had rock(s) dropped on their head?

Same year. Lying in the bottom bunk bed I share with my brother in the kitchen (it was a tiny apartment). I'm not feeling well. Mom has made me lemonade. My brother Stew lets me look through his viewmaster set. I'm particularly entranced with the three reel set about Tom Corbett, Space Cadet and his adventures on Mars. He and his crewmates discover an ancient Martian tomb! Inside they find an antigravity device. The colours are brilliant, luminous. The scene exotic beyond words. I fall in love with Mars. I look at those reels again and again...

1955. I'm four years old. We're now living in a two story house with three bedrooms and a full basement. Cost my dad less than \$4,000. I have a bedroom of my own. But much of my time is spent in front of our black & white TV. One of the shows I watch religiously is Disneyland. In March of 1955 the 'Tomorrowland' presentation was Man In Space utilizing the authors of the Collier's space articles, Willy Ley, Wernher von Braun, and Heinz Haber. I don't understand most of what they are saying, but I am impressed by their German accents, even more impressed by the nifty model spaceships they use to demonstrate their concepts. I can remember my dad laughing heartily at the cartoon segments illustrating what living in weightlessness would be like.

Late in 1955 the second of the 'Disney Space Program' shows is broadcast, Man and the Moon. I find the cartoon preamble on the subject of Lunar superstitions somewhat boring, but the actual live action footage of a trip into Lunar orbit takes my breath away. It all seems so real! If Disney believes space travel is possible, it must be true!

Another dream, this time in our house in Ottawa. I seem to be sitting in a highchair on the landing by the basement door, looking out through the door's half-moon shaped window at the moonlit backyard. I'm vaguely resentful as I know I'm too old to be in a highchair. Suddenly with a start I see there are lions running from backyard to backyard peering in through house windows. I begin to shake with fear. I'm trapped in the highchair. Then something peers through the window at me. Not a lion. A Tyrannosaurus Rex! I scream myself awake.

1956. I've taken to drawing spectacular space battles and cities being crushed underfoot by hideous monsters. I also create ingenious mazes filled with the tortures of hell and inhabited by thousands of frantic stick figures racing madly about trying to escape. Every month I bundle them up and give them to my mother to mail to my grandparents. Every month my Grandfather's response is the same: "What's wrong with this boy?"

Confessions of an SF Addict – continued

1957. Universal Studios decides to release its stock of classic and not-so-classic horror films to TV, and so Shock Theatre comes into my life. Every Friday night (I think, or was it Saturday night?) I'm allowed to stay up late and watch these incredible films for the first time. I fall in love with the acting styles of Bela Lugosi and Boris Karloff. Mostly horror of course, but some SF, like *The Invisible Ray*. The delicious thrill of being scared in the safety of my livingroom couch lingers with me yet.

On October 4th, 1957, the world changes. The Soviets launch Sputnik 1 into orbit from the Baikonur Cosmodrome. I am six years old. That evening everyone in my Ottawa neighbourhood stands on their front lawns searching for a faint dot of light streaking across the sky every ninety minutes. There is no snow yet. I remember the evening as being fairly warm. My family has our green plastic lawn couch out in the front yard and atop it my two-foot-long telescope. Once people realize they can actually see Sputnik with the naked eye, they come running from all directions to line up at my telescope, even though the 'view' of the satellite is virtually the same: "I can see it! Looks like a dot of light!" I suspect no one actually manages to track Sputnik with my feeble scope, probably they are only catching glimpses of stars. Still, excitement runs high. There is very much the feeling that something incredible, even miraculous, is taking place. I remember charging 25 cents a peek, but that may be a false memory, or a scam I pulled on just a few peers. I'm sure my parents would have had something to say about it if they had caught me. What stands out in my memory is the shared event, the awe everyone felt, the thrill. That good old 'SF Sense of Wonder', but for real!

Two months later Disney airs *Mars and Beyond*, the third in his famous space series. The shots of the trip to Mars are exciting, but I particularly enjoy the cartoon segments visualizing what life on Mars might be like. Mars is still my favourite planet....

1958. I'm lying in bed reading. My mother is downstairs doing the dishes. She hears me cry out in terror and despair. Frantically she runs up the stairs to my room. Shakily I hold out the book *Charlotte's Web* to her. "The spider died!" I sob....

During the summer me and my friends decide to destroy the surviving remnant of an abandoned farmhouse, namely the stone-lined walls of its basement. Stone by stone, in the course of the summer, we hammer at the connecting mortar and lever the stones into the stagnant pool of rainwater collecting in the 'pit'. By summer's end we've reduced the basement to a half-submerged mound of rubble. Why? It was a fun project. And one which leads me to develop an entirely new theory as to who is really responsible for the destruction of various ancient monuments... hordes of bored kids with nothing better to do....

1959. I'm in grade school, and the teacher is insisting I spend at least half an hour reading a typical "See Jane. See Spot. See Jane kill Spot." book which bores me to tears. At home I've already devoured the entire Tom Corbett Space Cadet series. Why are they holding me back? Frustrating.

In 1959 there's a wonderful new show on TV, called *The Twilight Zone*. Disappointingly, only a few episodes can be called proper SF, but they excite me tremendously. Particularly like *Will the Real Martian Please Stand Up?* and, of course, *Time Enough at Last*, which reduces me to tears. Just shows how much I was into reading already at eight years of age! (I assume you've seen it? The episode with Burgess Meredith? The post-holocaust library? It's a classic.)

A show I like much better though, because it is 'real', is *Men into Space*. Even my father approves, as it's done documentary-style, giving engineers the respect they think they deserve. I just like the idea that space travel is being taken seriously.

Confessions of an SF Addict – continued

Also in 1959 my brother sees Teenagers From Outer Space at a drive-in. He comes home and tells me he's not really my brother but is actually a Martian hired by my parents to replace my brother. He backs this up with 'authentic' details cribbed from the script of the above mentioned film. My eight year old mind goes frantic with worry. Could it be true? But secretly I'm thrilled. My brother the Martian. Wow!

Round about this time I begin collecting Classics Illustrated comic books, particularly those dealing with works by Verne and Wells. War of the Worlds, The Time Machine, and First Men in the Moon are my favourites. To this day I consider the Classic's Illustrated version of the Martian tripod fighting machines to be the definitive version. Because I am so taken with the comics, I begin seeking out the actual books at the library.

It's 1960. I'm nine years old. As a birthday gift I receive Assignment in Space with Rip Foster by Blake Savage! The cover shows two sleek scout craft blasting each other to bits while a Delta winged mother ship drifts in a lower orbit. There are two moons visible. I am filled with wonder.

1961. My comic book collection grows apace. I collect Scrooge and Batman like everyone else, but also titles like Space War, Space Adventures, and Turok Son of Stone. Even more exciting, the Aurora company begins releasing model kits of all the classic movie monsters. I build about a dozen of them, each one of them painted as carefully and lovingly as a ten year old is capable of. I'm very proud of my monster models. And, oh yeah, this is the year Yuri Gagarin becomes the first man in space. Pretty damn exciting actually. It makes me feel very smug. I've been right all along. Spaceships weren't 'just' Science Fiction. Now they were science fact.

1962. I am 11 years old. My mother gives me enough money (\$1.00) to go out and buy 3 pocket books to begin my very own library. I bring home:

- The Longest Journey, about two cats and a dog on a quest. My mother approves. I can keep it.

- Those About to Die, all about "the sadistic Roman games — the costliest, cruelest spectacles of all time." My mother does not approve. She throws the book in the garbage. My brother fishes it out. I steal it from him. I become interested in classic literature.

- The Red Planet, by Russ Winterbotham, its cover featuring a green, rodent-like Martian quadruped (with multiple tentacles sprouting from its back, of course!) menacing an astronaut wearing a stylish black and yellow spacesuit. Miraculously, my mother tentatively approves. My SF library begins to grow in leaps and bounds.

Also in 1962 I discover that grade school isn't all bad. In the school library I read three classic Juveniles: Marooned on Mars by Lester Del Rey, Sands of Mars by Arthur C. Clarke, and Red Planet Mars by Robert Heinlein. I'm hooked for life.

That same year I'm allowed to go downtown by myself for the first time to watch a movie, a colour underwater documentary by Jacques Cousteau (possibly titled The Silent World). I remember perusing the outside posters wondering if coral could be all that interesting, when I happened to glance up and spot the marquee of the Rialto Theatre. They were running The Three Stooges Meet Hercules! Then I discover that once a month they show an SF triple-bill of movies from the fifties! A monthly pilgrimage develops. Movies and books. Movies and books. I'm hooked on movies and books.

And magazines. In 1962 I discover Famous Monsters of Filmland (starting with issue #19) and become the neighbourhood expert on films no other kid has even heard of and none of us have ever seen. And of course, I also get to see stills and read info on all the films I have seen. Wonderful. Even better, Ackerman publishes seven issues (alas, only seven) of Spacemen, devoted entirely to SF films. It's hard to describe the joy of

Confessions of an SF Addict – continued

purchasing these zines. They are big, with striking, colourful covers, and they even smell good! Fresh printer's ink, I guess.

1962 also witnessed the first showing of *The Jetsons*, a sort of space version of *The Flintstones*, but with far niftier gadgets.

1963. I'm 12. Ballantine Books begins publishing Edgar Rice Burroughs Martian and Venusian series in pocketbook. I buy every one. But absolute best of all, the new TV series *The Outer Limits* hits the airwaves. To this day it remains my favourite SF TV series. This in spite of the fact that the Zanti Misfits episode gave me a phobia about insects that lasted twenty years, and the 'Chromite' walking jellyfish alien from *The Mice* episode was so scary that it wasn't till the third rerun I was able to force myself to sit through the whole show. Also great fun, *Magnus*, *Robot Fighter* debuts on the comics stands.

1964. *First Men in the Moon* appears in a local Ottawa theatre. It's the first Ray Harryhausen effects film I've ever seen. I become a life-long fan of stop-motion animation. *Monster World*, the companion magazine to *Famous Monsters*, begins its ten issue run. I collect them all. *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea* begins on TV. It's sort of mindless fun. I enjoy it.

1965. I'm 14 years old and very sophisticated, or so I think. I'm finding *Famous Monsters* and *Monster World* just a tad juvenile, so am delighted to discover Calvin Beck's *Castle of Frankenstein* magazine. At last, the genre is receiving the respect it deserves! Why, *CoF* is so adult it even depicts the occasional nude starlet, though I don't mention that to my mother. On the other hand, the best that TV can offer is *Lost in Space*. I'm embarrassed. *Outer Limits* is killed in January, and September witnesses the birth of this abomination? I am mortified. Not till years later do I begin to appreciate the wacky sense of fun pervading *Lost in Space*. And there's a new comic book I begin collecting, *Mighty Samson*, about survivors in a mutant-ridden post WWII New York.

1966. I'm saved! The SF genre is saved! At last, a witty, sophisticated, adult SF series! Not as 'realistic' as *Men in Space*, or as frighteningly suspenseful as *The Outer Limits*, but *Space Opera* at its best, with humorous, complex characters and great special effects. I'm talking about *Star Trek*, of course. I had followed the advance publicity avidly, and was greatly relieved not to be disappointed. The sets appear hokey now, and every second alien woman appears to be wearing a beehive hairdo, but the show is wonderfully representative of the times and retains an innocent air of enthusiasm that alone makes it still worth watching.... Oh yes, in 1966 my mother and I had had moved to Toronto, my parents having divorced.

1967. Having acquired an 8MM movie camera capable of taking single frame exposures, my friend Frank and I experiment with stop motion animation, producing 4 minute versions of *The War of the Worlds* employing plasticine Martians and Frank's HO scale train set. It's also the year of the 67 June war between the Arabs and the Israelis. At that time Israel was universally perceived (at least in Canada) as the underdog, and that, plus the incidental fact that my best friend Frank was Jewish, inspired us to write a spoof of *Star Trek* that in hindsight is somewhat racist. Titled *The Fifty-Seventh June War*, it runs about 16 pages and features dialogue of this sort:

KIRK: "Look, Spock, I don't like fleas any better than you do, but we've got to land on that flea-bitten hunk of sand called New Egypt!"

SPOCK: "But sir, Nasser Lunatic the Third may resent our intrusion on his privacy."

KIRK: "How can anyone with a harem of three hundred wives have any privacy?"

Confessions of an SF Addict -- continued

SOUND OF TRANSPORTER DEVICE IN OPERATION.

KIRK: "Well, here we are in the middle of Nasser's harem. Remind me to recommend Mr. Scott for a promotion."

SPOCK: "Here comes Nasser.... Greetings, oh father of a thousand camels and six cockroaches, oh great harem hobbyist, oh slayer of a thousand fleas, oh breather of foul air, oh friend of all jackals, king of the hyenas—"

NASSER: "Stop! We all know how great I am. What are you doing in the middle of my privacy?"

Well, at the time we thought it was funny. The exercise was fun. It must have got my subconscious to thinking. One evening while sitting in bed attempting my Latin homework, I started playing with Latin words to see what weird sounding alien names I could come up with. For example, 'Maluii' (to be pronounced 'mal-you-eye', not 'ma-louie'). Then I started daydreaming about what the aliens would be like (reptilian of course!) and what sort of plot.... then it hit me in a flash! What would be the easiest, most fun and profitable way to earn a living? Be a SCIENCE FICTION NOVELIST! Hah! Get up when you feel like it. Do a little bit of typing. Mail an Ms. and get a cheque back a week later. Perfect!

Of course, 27 years later I still haven't published anything professionally, so I do admit I was a little naive in my first approach to my life-long goal, but hey, I'm only 43. Plenty of time left... I hope...

So 1967 witnesses me scribbling down assorted plot ideas for novels with real catchy titles like Viptran Ltd. and The Inner Planet. A new hobby! Also go to Expo 67 in Montreal. I remember thinking, in my first glimpse of the sight from a nearby parking lot, that the collection of unusually-shaped buildings looks like a colony on another planet. Very impressive!

Less impressive was the new TV series The Invaders. I didn't care much for anything to do with UFOs and think the series is idiotic. That the aliens could be identified because their little fingers always stick out strikes me as stupefyingly dumb. I hardly ever watch the show.

1968. The year Apollo 8 orbits the Moon. The year that both Lost in Space and Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea are cancelled. Star Trek survives, but enfeebled by lower budgets. Patrick McGoohan's The Prisoner begins, a truly adult, intelligent SF show. It is also the year my mother and I move to Vancouver. I begin my first attempt at a novel, called Against the Maluii, the first paragraph of which reads:

The company rep. thumbed nervously through his manual. His fat stubby fingers faltered as they turned the pages; he couldn't find the information he needed. He silently cursed the company for their eccentric policy of issuing paper manuals to its agents. Why couldn't they use portable knowledge blocks? They were so much easier to handle.

Oh well, you have to start somewhere. And finish. In 1968 I turned 17. By this time all my formative SF influences had taken effect and everything since has been mere evolution. So I'll end this article here.

In conclusion let me just note that I was lucky enough to grow up during the unfolding of the space age, during the period of the SF literary field's greatest growth spurt into general acceptance, and at a time when new technology was bright and shiny and full of promise. In short, I grew up when the future had a future. I was damned lucky. To this day I remain nostalgic for all aspects of the SF of the era of my childhood. I remain

Confessions of an SF Addict – continued

unconvinced that the current generation of kids has access to anything like the ‘Sense of Wonder’ I experienced growing up, but for their sakes, I hope they do. I’d like to think they do. But I doubt it.

P.S. On second thought, the above assessment is too glum. When I think back, I was the only kid I knew who read Famous Monsters, the only teenager I knew who approved of the space program. My SF interests developed in extreme isolation. I’d like to think that today, regardless of the myriad kickboxing video games and mania for ‘investing’ in baseball cards and expensive comics, there are kids who haunt the video stores looking for the B movie classics, who regularly read Starlog and Cinefantastique and Cinefex (not to mention Scary Monsters, Fangoria, Cult Movies, etc.), who get Locus and SF Chronicle to decide which SF novels to buy, who in short, keep abreast of all the opportunities the modern expansion of specialized interest commercialism offers the discriminating SF buff. Amid the mountains of dreck, there is a new generation seeking gold. I hope!

Marvin’s Mighty Mayan Marathon – by R. Graeme Cameron

In May of 1981 I spent a month touring the ancient cities of Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras under the guidance of Professor Marvin Cohodas of the University of British Columbia. I kept a journal. It is extremely self-indulgent of me to reprint it here, but hey! That's what perzines are for! Besides, I thought you might get a kick out of it.

THURSDAY -- APRIL 30TH, 1981

Just lifted off from Vancouver airport. Very smooth... Now we're crossing the San Juan islands. There's a low-lying fog on the North side of the islands, a wispy fog like cotton... The sea is crystal-clear, every cabin and boat a bright gleaming dot amid green, heavy fuzz textured islands. B.C. Ferry has a long pale wake, against steel blue water... Victoria seems small indeed.

Cascades are so much icecream snow floating above a blue haze... We're flying just under flat wisps of grey clouds... Looking down on the American coast reminds me of military relief models... Liftoff very early in the morning, so parts of the mountains along the coast are not lit up yet... There's an island like a gigantic sperm -- four-sided quadrangle with a long sand spit tail... We're flying at 16,000 feet, perfect for viewing buildings, roads, yacht basins, etc. Good to be flying.

Think I have everything I need. Thanks to the sale at the ArmyNavy store I look like a character out of Graham Greene or Somerset Maugham: White cotton pants, white cotton shirt, light checked tan and white jacket, light straw hat. Everything made of cotton as far as possible. Must have cotton. Determined to survive the tropical heat...

I'm now sitting in a Mexicana 727 waiting to leave Seattle. Splendid view of the city when we came in: extensive freeways, large park and reservoir, space needle close to the water, impressive downtown, Kingdome like a dirty, fluted mushroom....

We're moving along the runway... liftoff! I'm on my way to Mexico! Hot damn! Dream of a lifetime! Happy, yes.... beautiful view of Mt. Ranier across the aisle... Oops! Be more specific! Let's see... Ranier... Sharp ridges leading up to a rough pyramid (a good omen), subsidiary blocks like mounds... Arrgh! My pen is leaking! Must be the altitude... Just flew past Mt. Saint Helens volcano. The pattern of snow clearly indicates intense erosion of its unstable surface. The edge of the crater is jagged and sharp. The mud flows are like a dirty pudding

Marvin's Mighty Mayan Marathon – continued

spreading through a green carpet. Spirit Lake a sad remnant. Devastated areas quite distinct from 3300 feet. Clouds of vented steam lazily drifting about the U-shaped crater. From above the mountain looks like a large frosted boil. A privilege to see it in its present active state.

Just found out the Prof. is carrying the same amount of cash as I, so we sink or swim together. Course, I'll need \$ to survive when I get back -- not having a job to come home to -- so I'd better not spend it all. Worry about that later. Glorious trip ahead!

Our group of 13 is hopping about, exchanging seats, so they can all get a chance to talk to Marvin about their upcoming essays. He drops down beside me, eager to discuss my topic, then remembers I'm auditing the course. Since I won't be receiving credit (don't need any more credits. Got enough to graduate!), I don't have to write tests or essays, just enjoy the lectures amid the ruins. His mind wanders back to the last essay I did on the previous course I took from him. He says I did well in my "*On the use of Jaguar Imagery in Mayan Ceramics*" essay. Excellent in fact. Good approach, he says. Good start on a difficult subject. Then he informs me I'll be rooming with him and Mark till his wife Barbara joins the group. Okay by me. Had hoped to be rooming with some of the girls though....

Was sitting on the can while flying over Los Angeles. Something symbolic in that... Over arid Baja California now... High mesas, bare eroded bones of rock... Now crossing the gulf to the mainland. Bright sun. Puffy clouds below. Dark green patches in the sea are reefs, I suspect... Wakes of fishing boats make me think of Steinbeck's "*The Log from the Sea of Cortez*". Ah yes, he spent a lazy summer sailing the waters below in a sardine boat. Now I fly above the ghost of his passage...

Reached wide yellow beaches, discoloured tidal pools.... Turning South to fly down the coast.... Getting lower.... We're going to make a brief stop in Mazatlan before going on to Mexico City.... There are strange, eroded swirling lines of rock between the tidal pools, like a vast strip mine planned by someone on an acid trip. Strange phenomena of rivers coursing through deadly dry, arid land. No vegetation that I can see, from this height anyway.....

My objective approach, studying, writing it all down, should allow me to keep calm and cool in the oven-hot weather I'm about to experience, at least that's the theory....

Now descending toward the cloud layer. I love flying above clouds!... Aha, my mistake. The 'reefs' are probably cloud shadows... The texture of the water where it is lit by the Sun is like a cheap kind of plastic skin, almost a snakeskin effect.... to gaze out over a sea of clouds all the way to the horizon. Paradise! And the things I'm going to see!... My God, yes! I am excited!...

Now we're flying above a vast sea of cotton cauliflowers! I do love clouds.... I see I'm wrong again. Some of the shadows on the water ARE reefs. Wasn't sure of the surf line at first, seemed too wide and fixed, but descent reveals a long and beautiful surf.... I can see Mazatlan, assorted islands, wide beaches.... The land outside town looks incredibly dry: red earth scars, tan fields, the occasional arroyos keeping a thin meandering course of bushes alive.... Making very steep turns close to the ground.... Is that the crumpled remains of a jetliner I see beside the runway? Hmm....

We've landed! "You may leave your valuables on board." No thanks! I can see the mass of khaki-uniformed baggage handlers ready to assault the cargo bay, and a crowd of 'officials' waiting to swarm into the aircraft. I don't trust anyone! All my possessions are in two small carry-on pieces of luggage which I carry into the terminal. Our tourist card is stamped and we are herded back on board. I have set foot on Mexican soil! Onward....

Marvin's Mighty Mayan Marathon – continued

My pen went crazy on the plane, leaked all over the place. Is now replaced with a spare.... We arrive over Mexico City amid threatening clouds. I am stunned by the size of the city below, mile upon mile of single story buildings that look like hovels, clumps of factories belching infernos of smoke, hardly anything that looks like parkland. Did Moctezuma ever dream of this post-Aztec future? He would be horrified....

It's 10.00 pm, and I'm sitting on the edge of a bathtub (a luxury!) scribbling away, hiding in the bathroom so as not to disturb Mark or Marvin who are both fast asleep. Will join them in utter exhaustion soon as I finish with these notes....

At the airport we experienced a frantic wait for the typical red VW camper taxis. Finally one raced us through the height of the infamous Mexico City rush hour. Our driver constantly honked his horn by pulling on a lanyard suspended from the ceiling of the van, narrowly avoided collision numerous times. We drove down Reforma Avenue, self gawking at the sights of this alien land, trying to take it all in. Amazed at the number of little kids selling newspapers, roses, anything, daring to run up to moving cars, taking their life in their hands for a few pesos. Looking at the buildings, it appears that paint peels rapidly in this climate, many shabby structures to be seen, paint flaking off right before my eyes I swear. Notice thousands of literal hole-in-the-wall shops. Just a few square feet, often serving fast food, carvings from a large haunch of pork, or boiled greens. Suspect these are places to avoid.

We were delivered to the Hotel Mario Angelo on Lerma 11, a block from the city's main drag, Paseo De La Reforma, and just North of the Zona Rosa district, so a classy location. The hotel is...adequate. At least the toilet is complete with toilet paper. (I brought two rolls in my luggage, you never know...) We get a suite with three beds and a bathroom for only \$7 a night. The decor is a bit tired, even grungy, but has a certain charm. At least bottled water is given away free, which is great. Just brushed my teeth using some. Trouble is, maybe they refill the bottles from a tap in the basement. I am determined not to come down with Moctezuma's revenge. Got my canteen and water purification tablets ready....

After we settled in most of us went for an evening walk. Rolling thunder. Spasmodic bursts of rain pouring down. Hmmm, getting close to the end of the dry season. But I'm delighted by the scene, especially by all the different sorts of faces. Definitely another reality here. Am astonished by the sheer volume of traffic noise. I purchase my supper for 18 pesos: a cup of yogurt and a round loaf of brown bread. I think I will learn to fear the occasional ringing of the bells in a church near the hotel, great clanking bits of sheet iron they must be from the sound of it.

First impressions. Too tired to take in any more. Hope to conserve strength and funds day by day, not overdo it....

One thing about the door to our room, it's impossible to lock it from the inside. I suggested we take a wooden chair and lean it against the bolt. I could have slept in the hall of our suite in a cubbyhole beneath a skylight, but moved my bed into the room with Mark and Marvin for safety's sake. And so to bed.

TO BE CONTINUED.....

War! What of It? – by Charles S. Cameron

Since this is MY perzine, I can put anything here that I want. History and SF go hand in hand. Many an SF author has ransacked history searching for useful backgrounds and 'alien' ideas. Different cultures think

War! What of It? -- continued

differently. Even different generations. Often, the contemporary viewpoint can only be ascertained by reading contemporary material.

Both my Grandfathers fought in World War One and came out of it hating all politicians and Generals. On my mother's side, John Alexander Crozier Stewart (1895-1965) served in the Princess Patricia Regiment (Cdn). He was buried alive when the ground beside him erupted with the impact of an exploding German shell. It took years in rehabilitation for him to recover. I remember him as a kindly old man who couldn't stand the sight of bare feet. He had once grasped the foot of a bloated corpse buried in the trench mud, only to have it come away in his hand. He never talked about the war.

On my father's side, Charles S. Cameron (1894-196?) served in the 16th Battalion (The Canadian Scottish). In 1922 he decided to write a short book detailing his experiences. It is the authentic voice of a World War One soldier and officer, capturing the mood and spirit of the day. It has never been read outside my family. Till now.

WAR! WHAT OF IT? By Charles S. Cameron

PREFACE

During the post war period there has been a plethora of books, sketches and plays portraying war in its grim and lighter phases, but we have yet to find an effort typifying the wonderful spirit and camaraderie of the Sons of Canada when at war. Looking back to the past which, in a sense is buried but yet most vivid, it is somewhat hard to define our code. We were irresponsible but still most steadfast when we deemed it necessary -- a law unto ourselves during those early days of the war. Our actions need no apologies now and less explanations. The following pages are a record of facts and the impressions are set out as they appeared to me then.

Whilst my association with the front line did not close in 1916 my song is that of the Ranks -- those carefree days of grouch and laughter when we lived for the day and thought little of the morrow.

CHAPTER 1: WAR! WHAT OF IT?

News of the outbreak of the war came to me in the Mountains of British Columbia when football to me, at least, was the staff of life and work a side issue. I had barely turned twenty years of age. War! What of it? I had read of war from time immemorial and one more did not excite me much. Later on that momentous day in August 1914 a friend of mine of quiet demeanor told me he was going to fight for his King and Country; I was astounded. What a thought! However, the local dentist who, I think, must have been a blacksmith in his early years was supplying me with my first and last bridgework and I had other things to think about besides some distant war for a few days.

Some of my friends immediately joined the first contingent and for some reason not explainable even yet I found myself a few weeks later in a battalion which was destined to provide the first reinforcements to the 1st Canadian Division. (Note: enlisted in the 30th Battalion November 11th, 1914.) On advising my mother of this I received the simple reply that she had expected me to join the first contingent -- the Scots are a hardy race.

My early associates were chiefly miners of the town where we had enlisted; we had played football with and against each other throughout the Kootenays and on arriving in Victoria we soon formed a football team in conjunction with some lads from Northern British Columbia. We were never licked and whilst we later joined various front line battalions to the best of my knowledge that football eleven only suffered one fatal casualty. We were fortunate at this time to have as our Company Commander a very gallant gentleman who later became

War! What of It? – continued

a world famed battalion leader. He was ever a source of inspiration to us even in those early days, but football in the daytime and skating at night were our main interests; the uniform, rifle and routine were taken as a matter of course.

Some two years previously I had suffered a swinging cartilage in one of my knees during a run up on the Rugby field and to my chagrin I found myself with a knee swollen with water immediately prior to receiving instructions to embark for points unknown. However, my friends wangled it and made arrangements for me to ride on the transport to the dock. The last minute requirements called for written permission from the parents of all other ranks who were under twenty-one years of age; this was easily manufactured but I had some misgivings when our Company Commander tersely remarked that the letter of permission was domiciled some thousand miles distant and yet the damned ink was scarcely dry. This was the extent of his observation.

Early spring found us in the South of England and whilst the trip had been uneventful my knee enjoyed inactivity. My first impressions whilst marching around rural England were fully encompassed in the words "Oh, to be in England now that spring is here." War was still in the background and it was only when I spent a few days leave up and down the country in a nation seething with war that I gained a hazy inkling of what it was all about. I journeyed as far as the Scottish Highlands where even in those early days the glens and hills were cleaned of their fighting men. During those few days I met veterans of Mons and other early engagements and once again I felt the boyhood thrill of gazing at pictures of the "Thin Red Line" and "The Scots Greys at Waterloo."

CHAPTER 2: WAR! YPRES APRIL 1915.

April 22nd. "A great day for Canada." What memories! Those immortal words of our brigade Padre which became a byword of the old Red Patch -- the 1st Canadian Division. The news soon spread round the barracks that the Canadians had taken part in their first major engagement. The standard of Canadian fighting efficiency was established that day and whilst we had our temporary set-backs the Ghosts of Ypres doubtless favoured us with their smile of fervour and satisfaction during the ensuing years.

Soon we were speeding across the channel (April 26th, 1915) and finally detrained at Poperinghe. Our battalion (30th) was split to the four winds and our company was assigned to one of the Highland battalions (16th -- The Canadian Scottish). Formerly we had belonged to a "pants" battalion and I relished the idea of the kilts. My mining friends who hailed mostly from Lancashire and Yorkshire were exceedingly proud.

Our march from Poperinghe to Vlamertinghe where we joined our new battalion was an eye-opener. The road was crammed with refugees pushing their all in wheel-barrels and primitive hand-carts intermixed with ambulances loaded with wounded and empty ammunition wagons rushing to the rail-head for more supplies. As we neared our destination the rumble of the guns grew louder and louder. We found a skeleton of a battalion and eagerly sought out old friends of British Columbia who regaled us with all the gruesome details of the gas attack and the Charge. Oh boy!

The next night we were on our way up to the line. Later as the years rolled on the troops were accustomed to proceeding to well defined positions all prepared with extra ammunition handy. But not so on our initiation night; we were loaded down like beasts of burden with extra bandoleers of ammunition and a shovel to dig your own home or grave.

War! What of It? – continued

After we had travelled along canal banks and traversed fields for what seemed untold ages we finally took up a position somewhere along a ditch and received the order "advance 100 yards and dig yourselves in." The moon was shining bright; the ground as flat as a pancake and we were in support position somewhere. Then came the shrapnel and whizz bangs with a few crumps. Did we dig? I received some lessons that night from my mining friends which stood me in good stead for evermore. Our casualties were comparatively light and our activities with the shovel kept our minds on very pressing necessities.

After the first flurry was over we proceeded to make burrows and such is the adaptability of the human animal to changing conditions, several of us all new to the life of living like rats and other underground animals, were foraging around a neighbouring farmhouse for any possible comforts. We wrenched a door off to make an overhead covering for our part of the trench, but in so doing stumbled over what proved to be rows and rows of dead. Further investigation showed that part of the farm was being used for an advanced dressing station by the French colonials. Cigarettes were promptly swapped for drinks of hot coffee and we returned well satisfied with our visit. The night was bitterly cold but we slept soundly in spite of it. Then came the dawn and our first issue of army rum. Throughout those years of filth, wet and bleak surroundings, the demon rum was one of our best friends.

We had with us in the ranks a lay preacher and on our first Sunday in the line our platoon commander thought it would be fitting to hold a small service. It was the first and last I ever attended in the trenches and candidly I only joined in because my immediate neighbours were proceeding thither. Returning to our part of the trench a short time afterwards we found our temporary home had been blown in by a shell. Such is fate!

Later on in the afternoon our attention was arrested by a terrible racket on our right front and to our amazement another German gas attack was on, but on a very restricted front and fortunately for us the wind carried the gas past our right; we got a slight whiff but nothing to worry about and as the enemy guns were not trained on ourselves we viewed the show with keen interest and equanimity. The wall of green and yellow gas seemed to silhouette the movement of the attacking and defending troops. The latter were evidently in sore straits but the rat-tat-tat of the "Vickers" could be heard above the din. There appeared to be a temporary retirement which was soon followed by a counter-attack and that was that.

A few nights later we pulled out and marched back in a drenching rain. Arriving at the transport lines at daybreak we received our tot of rum when fate played another queer trick in the shape of a sodden football. I took one kick and dropped with the old cartilage out of place; it's a painful business. The battalion pulled out on a trek South during the day leaving Bill, a husky Yorkshire miner, to look after me. By this time owing probably to the open air life I had developed and was officially recorded as six feet one inch and 190 pounds avoirdupois, but that was nothing to Bill who carried me around like a small sack of feathers. We took quarters in the stable of a nearby farmhouse. Came to us one day an Algerian who stayed with us one day. According to his story he had, in former days, been a barber on a boat plying between Liverpool and Algiers and as I hadn't had a shave for a week he volunteered to shave me. He was a merry fellow with an engaging smile and beautiful white teeth, but he was no barber -- he was a potato peeler.

Bill was very attentive and considerate in those days except that he would on occasion carry me to the latrine and then leave me there indefinitely whilst he paid attentions to the farmer's daughter.

As soon as I was able to hobble we started on a weary chase after the battalion and after riding all manner of vehicles we eventually found them at Steenwerck where someone threw me into hospital. Some there were sick but others were not so sick and when I found the battalion were again on the move I sneaked out and somehow with the assistance of motor transports and ration wagons arrived with them at Bethune. I was fast becoming a

War! What of It? – continued

nuisance and felt it and prior to the battalion going into the lines at Festubert the M.O. sent me to the transport lines.

CHAPTER 2: FESTUBERT.

How bitterly I felt and yet how ignorant of the Fates. Bereft of the associations of my own chums I felt very miserable. The lure and camaraderie of the ranks gave me a feeling akin to homesickness. It is now a matter of history how the Canadians captured the strategic position known as Festubert Orchard. My company were assigned to this particular task and once again the objective was reached. When they came out a few days later I suffered that sickening feeling of counting noses and looking for those who weren't there. The engagement had been very severe and the going very rough over ditches full of water. When I ventured the disconsolate remark that I should have been there Bill told me in no uncertain language that I was a damned fool and very probably he would have earned a wooden cross packing me around if I had been there.

My enforced rest and the battalion's stay in billets brought strength to the old knee and I joined in the next trip up the line. The time was chiefly taken up in repairing trenches, strengthening the wiring in front of the trenches, rifling the dead and burying them. Truth to tell I never took up rifling the dead as a pastime, by my blond-haired friend Harry created no end of excitement when his endeavours along this line produced a German Iron Cross. It was the first that had come into our possession and he was the recipient of many handsome offers -- even unto ten Francs. However, he refused to sell and it found its way back to Blighty.

Much to our amazement we found the Canadian Cavalry alongside in the line; their horses had been taken from them and for the time being, at least, they had joined the lowly infantry. Our battalion was badly in need of repairs; the strength of two companies combined was only equal to three quarters of an ordinary company, but such was the times we did not receive any reinforcements. For almost two months at this time I was keeping very quiet, not moving any more than was necessary, and it was only when we moved further South to Givenchy that I felt free and confident to participate in strenuous expeditions. During our stay in the Festubert area we were in close contact with the Imperial Guards and whilst we professed no enthusiasm over their smart and soldierly appearance around billets we admired and later emulated them.

FESTUBERT ACTION.

It had been my intention to simply record the events in sequence which passed around me during the war of wars, but a few nights ago a small band gathered together in my home; we had not met for some ten years or more. Three of us had been Company Sergeant-Majors together and one stretcher bearer Sergeant representing 75% of the battalion's senior N.Co.s at one stage. We fought the old battles over again in and out the line and I wish to place on record the hitherto unrecorded gallantry and devotion to duty of Sergeant-Major Bill -- a tall brawny raw-boned Scot was at that time a Sergeant and his company was detailed for support duty during the action. On the night previous to the attack Bill was ordered further up the line with a party of men to act as a covering party to one of our machine gun sections. We had the cumbersome 'Colt' in those days and it was customary to detail some of the troops to keep close to them in action in case of eventualities. Sergeant Bill wended his way up the line to the company front where he was to report and where he found a new company commander very much excited because German machine guns had been firing all day on his front from a farmhouse in No Man's Land. The company commander was endeavoring to organize a party to go and take the farm but there was considerable confusion and he wasn't meeting with much success. Sergeant Bill listened to the altercation for awhile but he soon got fed up listening and butted in to report as escort for a machine gun thereabouts.

War! What of It? – continued

The company commander did not know where the machine gun in his line was but told Bill there were two German machine guns in a farmhouse he could go after. Sergeant Bill selected six of his men and clambered over the top; there was a road in front of them and they sauntered along in single file with Bill in the lead. They had scarcely advanced a hundred yards when they were challenged; the men squatted but Bill merely took a tighter hold of his rifle and peered into the darkness. The man next to Bill pulled his kilt and hoarsely begged him to get down. Bill said, "What the hell will I get down for? I'm the O.C. of this party; stay here and I'll see who they are." Advancing another ten yards another sharp challenge rang out and he found three bayonets at his throat. It was a tense moment but fortunately to Bill's amazement the challengers turned out to be an advanced listening post of the Scots Guards. He advised the N.C.O. in charge of his mission and stayed with the post for about half an hour until word was passed along the Guards' front that a patrol of Canadian Jocks was out on the front on business bent.

Having roughly ascertained the location of the farmhouse, Bill led his men on and soon came to his objective. Prowling around for awhile he decided to enter and there he found two German machine guns, but no Germans. Whether they had noticed his approach and beat it or only occupied this position in daytime was never known. Bill immediately turned the guns around and sent back for some machine gunners and one of our own machine guns. With three machine guns spread out in No Man's Land he sat down to await further developments.

Next day a senior officer of our battalion crawled around No Man's Land on reconnaissance. Bill watched his approach with some amusement which was considerably augmented by the officer's amazement when he found such a strong force out in front. After he had grasped the situation he advised Bill that the battalion would attack the orchard at 7:15 P.M. (May 20, 1915) and that Bill had better sit tight and when the battalion came abreast to advance with them.

Promptly at the zero hour the Canadian Jocks leapt from their trenches and swept on to and through to the far side of the orchard which several Imperial regiments had already failed to capture. There is no doubt that if Sergeant Bill had not gone out the night before and taken possession of the German machine guns in the farmhouse our casualties would have been considerably increased and his action doubtless helped to turn the failure of other regiments into a successful attack by our battalion.

Arriving at the far side of the orchard which was marked by a hedge our troops dug in, some had shovels and others only entrenching tools. Meanwhile the Bosch was raking them with machine gun fire. Sergeant Bill who had a shovel on his back found himself with two others who hadn't, so he ordered them to lie down while he dug a hole. When he was tiring another man spelled him off, but when the third party took his place Bill only watched for a minute or two and then jumped into the hole again, grabbed the shovel, told the man he was picking like a hen on a midden-heap and to get the hell out and let somebody dig who can dig.

On the following Sunday when he was enjoying a quiet game of poker Sergeant Bill was ordered by his company commander to assemble the company for church service. Bill said, "Alright, but where's the preacher?" The company commander advised Bill of his name and where to find him. Bill paraded the company and then went in search of the preacher. His Presbyterian sense of the fitness and the general scheme of things was much upset on discovering that the preacher was the man whom he had blasphemed so profusely a few nights before in the orchard.

TO BE CONTINUED.....

Ed Wood's Flying Saucers! – by R. Graeme Cameron

If you have seen ED WOOD the movie, doubtless you enjoyed the scene where Johnny Depp as Ed Wood directs the 'flight' of paper plate flying saucers over a pathetic model of Hollywood. This is, of course, one of the many entertaining 'myths' about the making of that immortal classic PLAN NINE FROM OUTER SPACE.

Wherein lies the truth? Paper plates? Hubcaps? Commercial models? What were Ed Wood's Flying Saucers?

The subject hardly merits exhaustive research, but within the framework of the material I have on hand, I will endeavour to come up with the answer.



(Plate A – Lindberg Model Kit Box Art)

In the beginning was the Medved Brother's 1980 book THE GOLDEN TURKEY AWARDS, in which they give Edward D. Wood Jr. A 'life Achievement Worst Director of All Time' award. They make reference to "three hubcap flying saucers" and go on to quote an alleged production assistant: "The flying saucers? I know they looked like pie-tins, but they were actually paper plates. I mean, they were decorated and all, but basically they were paper plates. When we wanted to show the saucer blowing up at the end of the film, we soaked one of the plates in gasoline, lit it with a cigarette lighter, and then told someone to toss it toward the camera. It looked sensational." This account is highly suspect, if only because there is no such scene in the film!

In the ultimate source book on 1950's SF films, the 1986 two volume set KEEP WATCHING THE SKIES by Bill Warren, the author merely comments: "The flying saucers are merely paper plates, decorated with pointy things to be sure, but still paper plates, hanging on strings." I confess to being disappointed, but since PLAN NINE is so well known, Warren had little enthusiasm for the subject. (You should see the amount of detail he comes up with for the really obscure films!

More recently the October 1994 issue of CINEFANTASTIQUE magazine features extensive coverage of the making of ED WOOD, including a sidebar article by Mark Patrick Carducci (the director of the video FLYING SAUCERS OVER HOLLYWOOD: THE PLAN NINE COMPANION, a documentary on the making of PLAN NINE 32 minutes longer than the original movie)! Carducci states:

"Popular legend had it that they were, variously, paper plates, pie tins, or a Cadillac's hubcap. Wood himself promulgated the hubcap myth. Admittedly, it made for a funnier story." He then goes on to say: "Noted prop collector Bob Burns, also the former partner of '50s effects man Paul Blaisdell, is today the proud owner of the two remaining saucer miniatures from the original PLAN NINE FROM OUTER SPACE. A third model was set on fire and burned up during the shooting... he came into possession of the saucers in an unexpected manner, only eight years ago, in a lot of props bought from Ray Mercer Effects, which had done the optical work for the film."

Two photos, one of the miniature today (see photo C.), and one of the saucers in the film (see photo D.), indicate quite obviously that the Saucers were in fact a commercially available model (of which more later) of a flying saucer! Carducci mentions an interview in which Ed Wood revealed he had simply gone to a local hobby shop and purchased the models. Aha! The truth revealed. Or is it?

Ed Wood's Flying Saucers! – continued

Let us consider the interview in question, which is printed on page 83 of Rudolph Grey's 1992 book NIGHTMARE OF ECSTASY: THE LIFE AND ART OF EDWARD D. WOOD JR. Like all of Wood's pronouncements, it is far more confusing than at first glance, and raises more questions than it answers.

First Ed states: *"We shot the square flying saucers back in Karl Johnson's garden. I said, 'we're not going to see the round top of it. All we're going to see is a blimp.'" So, presumably, this saucer footage is scrapped, because Ed then "went down to the hobby store and purchased three model kits of flying saucers and they had these flat bottoms on them. That was why the bottom was square."*

Now, he's not talking about the 'square blimp' he'd previously used, but is making reference to a square block added to the bottom of these models (in some scenes) to jive with the footage already shot of actors in and about the square control room of the saucer, a shape determined by the 'squareness' of the initial saucer mockup (whatever it was) he'd intended to use. Everything clear so far?

Then Ed talks about filming saucers over a tabletop set of Hollywood (which isn't in the film either)! The gist of it seems to be that he ruined the store-bought saucer models and the set without producing any useful footage, but what he actually says is: *"We built again with cardboard houses and everything. We built an entire town on this long table and with piano wire we brought the round models" (the store-bought models? Or the 'square blimp' models with rounded tops?) "in over this make-believe town. They were made of balsa wood" (the saucers? Or the buildings? He said the latter were cardboard!) "And we put a little gasoline on them" (on the saucers? Or the buildings?) "to get some smoke coming out behind it. But every time that we lit the back of the saucer" (okay, he put the gasoline on the saucers, but in light of his previous comment, that implies the saucers were made of balsa wood! There never were any commercially available balsa flying saucers, only plastic ones! So does that mean he was still using the rounded square blimp models he'd first tried, and that they were made of balsa wood? HUH? Inquiring minds want to know!) "the damn piano wire would break and down went the flying saucer and every time that happened, we lost two or three little houses on the table."*

Now matters are clarified in a truly Edwardian Manner: *"We had to figure out something else. That ended the square gondola on the bottom of the round saucer" (seems to be talking about the plastic store-bought models here, and also seems to imply they were destroyed in the shooting) "even though I've already shot the film of the square gondola for the interior shots... I went to a special effects company, Ray Mercer's... he said, 'Well, if you want to shoot these same flying saucers, we can put them on piano wire and shoot them against black velvet and then superimpose them on footage of Hollywood.'" (Such scenes do appear in the film!) "I went to Reginald Denny's hobby shop and they didn't have any more models" (so it was the store-bought kits he was using, and destroyed. But they weren't made of balsa wood!) ... "kids were buying them up as if they were going out of style... Ray Mercer had another idea. He wanted to use old Cadillac hubcaps. And that was what turned out to be our flying saucer. They didn't have any gondola on the bottom of them, but it worked." The hubcaps were bright silver and "practically glowed on the screen but we didn't have the money to correct them in the labs."*

Now, to make sense of this:

First Ed Wood shot footage of a square blimp-like saucer with a rounded top, possibly made of balsa wood, which didn't work. No useful footage produced.

Then he filmed the store-bought models and ruined them in the process. When he attempted to acquire more, he couldn't get any. No useful footage produced. Finally he resorted to Cadillac hubcaps, which are what appears in the movie. So he says.

Ed Wood's Flying Saucers! – continued

But Larry Karaszewski, one of the screenplay authors of ED WOOD, in the December 1994 issue of CINEFANTASTIQUE says: “There are so many different versions. Some people say Cadillac hubcaps, others say Chevy. Mark Carducci claims he has discovered the actual Revell flying saucer model kit that was used. Whose version do you believe?”

Well, there's a very simple answer to that, LOOK AT THE FILM! Never mind what people say! What can you actually see on film?

The starting point is, of course, the store-bought models in question. The only model available at the time (1957) was the Lindberg model 'FLYING SAUCER' first released in 1952 (highly unlikely it was still selling like hot cakes five years later). It was a simple ten piece model complete with 'little green man' pilot. I had one as a kid. Used it as an early frisbee before frisbees were invented. It was in fact the first plastic SF kit. It was reissued by Lindberg in 1977, and more recently by Glencoe.

Take a good look at the photo reproductions:

- A) depicts the box cover art.
- B) depicts the actual model.
- C) shows the model Bob Burns acquired through Ray Mercer effects that was used in the film.
- D) is a shot of one of the saucers in the film.

(Plate B – Actual Lindberg Model)

They are all obviously the same model. The only apparent differences between the box kit and the version in the film are that the jet/rocket engines were left off, and the model (including clear bubble cockpit canopy) was painted all of one colour (with the canopy – just possibly – enlarged),



It's certain that the Lindberg Flying Saucer was Ed Wood's Flying Saucer. Ray Mercer did the saucer effects, and Bob Burns got his PLAN NINE saucers from Ray Mercer, and said saucers are obviously the Lindberg model, though slightly altered. Case closed.

Or is it? Are all shots of saucers in the movie shots of the Lindberg models? Might there not be hubcaps as well? Answer: LOOK AT THE FILM!

The Lindberg model has numerous unique details: a very flat disc-shaped profile, a prominent bubble canopy set within a ring-with-a-lip fairing with a tear-shaped rear projection, a pronounced rim to the disc edge, four triangular rocket ports on the edge of the rim, two 'machine gun' ridges on the upper hull, likewise two 'navigation light' bumps, square paneling on the upper hull, and on the bottom hull: distinctive triangular diaphragmatic striations culminating in a “flat bottom” with an extended socket into which fits the model's stand. All sorts of details! Question is, how often are they visible in the film?

Herein follows my analysis of the saucer footage in PLAN NINE FROM OUTER SPACE.

Ed Wood's Flying Saucers! – continued

I just spent five hours studying three different video releases of PLAN NINE, playing the saucer scenes over and over, some of them as many as twenty times.

The first surprise is the sheer number of saucer shots: 51 in all.

The second surprise is that the Cadillac hubcap story appears to be true! (Some kind of hubcap...) On the other hand, there is nothing – absolutely nothing – that looks like a paper plate.

Or to put it another way, Wood uses at least two saucer types, possibly three, with variations.

THE LINDBERG MODEL

The most common type is indeed the Lindberg Flying Saucer plastic model kit. It appears 29 times very clearly (if you know what to look for; see description above) as it's wobbling flight offers quick glimpses of telltale details. The Lindberg is employed in such scenes as the initial sighting from an aircraft, the army rocket fire sequence, and the burning saucer sequence (in which we do not observe a burning paper plate tossed toward the camera, but rather the Lindberg, upper hull aflame, bottom hull with its unique striations tilted toward the camera, superimposed over a scene of city lights).

LINDBERG MODEL

Number of shots: Background:

- (20) – moving or hovering against painted cloud cover.
- (03) – against 'Galaxy' star field.
- (03) – burning above city lights.
- (03) – passing through mist or smoke.



(Plate C -- Saucer model used in film)

THE HUBCAP

To my utter astonishment, no less than 11 shots (perhaps more) depicts saucers radically different in shape from the Lindberg model. The disc is flatter, the bottom concave except for a central bulge which protrudes below the level of the rim, and the upper dome is not so much a bubble canopy as a two-tiered cylinder with a slightly-rounded flattish top. The dome is also much higher and wider in proportion to the disc than in the Lindberg model. In addition, this saucer type appears to be shinier, as if made of metal. For want of a better word, I call this distinctively different type 'The Hubcap'.

THE HUBCAP

Number of shots: Background:

- (03) – painted backdrop of old mission and mountains.
- (01) – painted backdrop of trees.
- (04) – descending toward or taking off from graveyard.
- (02) – as seen from car on highway.

Ed Wood's Flying Saucers! – continued

(01) – space station.

UNKNOWN

Alas, no less than 11 shots were too brief, too blurry or too featureless to allow me to come to any conclusion regarding their nature no matter how often I viewed them. For example, the night shots of the saucers floppily gliding past the CBC, NBC and ABC buildings. In general, however, the outline shape of these trends more toward the 'Hubcap' type rather than the Lindberg.

Ed Wood's Flying Saucers! -- continued

On the other hand, given that the above lists indicate the two types do not overlap in terms of the backgrounds of their scenes, it may be possible to 'guess' the nature of the unknowns by noting the nature of their background.

UNKNOWN

Number of shots: Background:

(03) – painted backdrop of clouds (Lindberg model?).

(05) – Hollywood at night (?).

(02) – Space Station (Hubcap ?).

(01) – taking off from the graveyard (Hubcap?).

SQUARE VARIANT

When you see actors entering or exiting the saucer, you are looking at the CORNER of a SQUARE structure. This is an artifact of the shape of the first 'blimp' saucer filmed but never used. How to 'square' this with the circular shape of the saucers he actually employed? (As noted above, he'd already shot the interiors.) Ed Wood solves the problem in an almost subliminal fashion. In 6 of the 51 saucer scenes a small square structure is shown fixed to the bottom of the saucer. All 5 graveyard landings or takeoffs show this, as if to suggest the square cabin was normally within the hull, but extended as a kind of landing pad when resting on the ground (interesting concept: control cockpit as landing gear – very Edwoodian). These scenes show the 'Hubcap' saucer with a small, thin sheet of light-coloured (plastic? Metal?) dangling from the bottom. The sixth scene is a glorious shot of the Lindberg hovering against clouds and rotating to show off the dark square block affixed to its underside. Two methods of getting the idea across. Also very Edwoodian, redundancy being a major trait of his. But at least he tried.

CONCLUSION

The majority of saucers seen in the film are the Lindberg model, but the 'Hubcap' type was also used. The two types never overlap in terms of the backgrounds they are filmed against. This raises several very interesting questions:

Since two of the Lindberg models still exist (so the story of their being destroyed during filming is false), why did Wood resort to shooting the 'Hubcap' model?

Was he afraid that if he used the Lindberg exclusively the Lindberg company might come after him for using their models without permission?

Ed Wood's Flying Saucers! – continued

Or could it be that the 'Hubcap' scenes were in fact shot first? And that he switched to the plastic model kits because he thought they looked better?

Or was it simply that the Lindberg models were at one shooting location, the 'Hubcaps' at another, and Wood figured the audience would never know the difference?

Is there anyone – a crony of Wood's, or a former employee of Ray Mercer – who was present at the effects shootings and is still alive to talk about it?

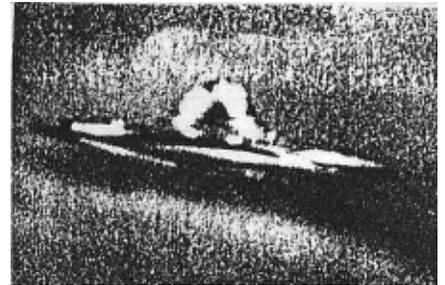
Will we ever learn the truth? Do we care? (I do!)

(Plate D -- Saucer as seen in film)

FURIOUS BACK PEDDLING

The above seems all very neat and tidy. However, you would be wrong to accept it as gospel truth.

Bear in mind that I watched these videos on a 14 inch TV, and that none of the three versions could be called crisp and sharp (though the Rhino release was the clearest of the lot). In addition, most of the saucer shots are only two or three seconds long (by the time I focused on the saucer it was gone). Further, there seem to be variants among the 'Hubcap' type, in that the dimensions of the dome appear to vary from one scene to the next, as does the thickness of the hull. I don't know if this is a trick of the lighting or the camera angle, or if it genuinely reflects the use of several different 'Hubcaps'.



Even worse, from the tidy perspective of the evidence presented above, some of the 'Hubcap' shots may simply be the Lindberg Model modified in curious ways (to bring them in line with the 'true' 'Hubcaps'? Now that would be VERY Edwoodian!). For instance, I remain unsure about the 'graveyard saucer' sequences. I classify them as 'Hubcaps', but my certainty is not absolute. Even worse, Photo D (taken from the film) is quite obviously the Lindberg model, and yet there is something odd about the dome, it seems much larger than it should be. Are most of my 'Hubcaps' really the Lindberg? Dare I consider the idea that ALL of the saucer shots are the Lindberg model?

No. Some of the 'Hubcap' shots are quite clearly NOT the Lindberg model, at least in my opinion.

On the other hand I remain adamant that at least 29 of the saucer shots ARE in fact the Lindberg model. I do not believe this can be disputed. It is the other 22 saucer scenes which are open to question.

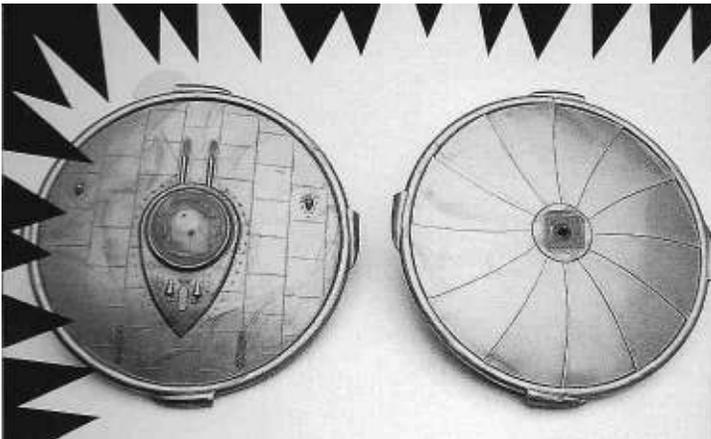
I have heard that PLAN NINE has been released on Laser Disc in a version taken from the master print, and the result is alleged to be brilliantly sharp and clear. Let someone with a widescreen TV and a good quality Disc Player follow in my footsteps and resolve this vital issue once and for all!

I have thrown down the gauntlet. It's your turn now. The world waits with baited breath...

Ed Wood's Flying Saucers! – continued

E Version Post Script:

I now – in 2008 -- own a DVD of Plan Nine From Outer Space. But, unless I experience a rainy day with nothing to do, I doubt I will ever sit down and examine it saucer scene by saucer scene. On the other hand, I also now own the book 'It Came From Bob's Basement: Exploring The Science Fiction And Monster Movie Archive Of Bob Burns'. As noted above, he owns two of the flying Saucer models that were actually used in the film. I now append a photo of both models, a photo which illustrates once and for all, and absolutely beyond doubt, that Ed Wood's Flying Saucers were store-bought Lindberg models, the very first plastic Science Fiction available on a commercial basis. Observe the rivets, the striations, the rim rockets and all the other details described above.



(Plate E – Ed Wood Saucers in Bob Burn's Collection)

Note the right hand model exhibiting its bottom side clearly shows “ *The remnants of a square piece Wood glued to the bottom of one model in an effort to crudely match his saucer exterior set...* ”

Letters of Comment

E Version Note: All addresses (both snail mail and E mail) are undoubtedly out of date but I include them as I am attempting to duplicate the original published version of this zine as closely as possible.

Date: Tue, 13 Sep 94 21:33:27 PDT
From: ug837@freenet.victoria.bc.ca (Karl F. Johanson)
To: god-ed@aroga.wimsey.com
Subject: Space Cadet Loc

This is, by the way, the first time I've located a zine before the first issue was produced. Bummer that your leaving the BCSFAzine editorship, but hurrays that you're on for another year and for your new zine.

So, are your B-movie reviews going to show up in Space Cadet? There was a weird movie I saw part of once. It had some bizarre scientist & some asteroid headed towards Earth. The scientist died at the end after laughing at the others who left the asteroid because he felt they were stupid for feeling that surviving was more important than figuring out the purpose of the asteroid (or something like that). The TV schedule didn't have it listed so I never found out the title. Oh well.

Anyway good luck with zine.

Letters of Comment – continued

(*Insert really cool quote here*)

Karl Johanson, Victoria B.C. Canada

The other Co-editor of “Under The Ozone Hole”

Please let me know if you didn’t get this.

THE GRAEME: *Sounds like the show you saw could be either the Twilight Zone episode “THE LITTLE PEOPLE” (1962) in which two astronauts discover an asteroid inhabited by a microscopic civilization and one of the astronauts stays behind in order to be their ‘God,’ or the 1961 movie “THE PHANTOM PLANET” in which two astronauts discover an asteroid inhabited by a microscopic civilization and, rather conveniently, shrink in size till they can join the locals in fighting off an evil monster played by Richard Kiel. But to judge from your brief description, it may be that the 1961 movie “BATTLE OF THE WORLDS” is the most likely possibility. It featured Claude Rains as a misfit scientist investigating a meteorite about to collide with the Earth. He stays aboard to explore the vast knowledge stored within an alien computer located on the meteorite, only to be killed when Earth defenses spring into action and obliterate the menace.*

As the above indicates, I do love genre films, so it’s quite likely I will review nifty films in SPACE CADET, especially after ceasing to be God-Editor of BCSFAzine (which is where I normally place my film reviews).

Hope you like my perzine....

From: JOSEPH T. MAJOR
4701 Taylor Boulevard #8

Louisville, KY 40215-2343 USA
September 20, 1994.

Well, I would like to get The Aging Old Fart Nostalgic Time Waster Gazette and if you are not going to use that title I may keep it in mind. I may even slip you a commentary on that other Heinlein title.

Namarie, Joseph T. Major

THE GRAEME: *As you can see from the cover, I decided to use both titles. But please do send me the commentary on Heinlein’s SPACE CADET anyway. I would love to publish it (in several parts if it’s anywhere near as comprehensive as your excellent Heinleinia published in FOSFAX).*

From: LLOYD PENNEY
412-4 Lisa Street.
Brampton, Ontario, L6T 4B6
October 16, 1994.

When you get the first issue of ‘SPACE CADET’ ready, please send me an issue. This country doesn’t have enough independently operated fanzines. ‘ZX,’ ‘UNDER THE OZONE HOLE,’ ‘OPUNTIA,’ and ‘THE FROZEN FROG’ are about it right now. My finances will have to improve a bit before I can do the fanzine I want to do.

Letters of Comment -- continued

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

THE GRAEME: *Another couple of perzines I'm aware of are 'SERCON POPCULT LITCRIT FANMAG' by Garth Spencer here in Vancouver, and — its first issue just recently published — 'THE ZERO - G LAVATORY' by Scott Patri out of Cumberland, B.C. (If I have room, I hope to review both either in this issue or the next.)*

From: ANDREW C. MURDOCH
2563 Heron Street,
Victoria, B.C. V8R 5Z9
October 25, 1994.

Dear Graeme,

Well, if it's any consolation, you're not the only one who's a little dejected after getting your hopes up for an Aurora Award. Personally, though, I'd have been surprised if ZX did so well as to get six votes as BCSFAzine once did.

I'm also greatly interested in receiving SPACE CADET GAZETTE when it comes out. I'd love to take a look.

Hail Centurian! Andrew.

THE GRAEME: *I have shamelessly taken advantage of my editorship of BCSFAzine to run half page ads for SPACE CADET. In two months I have received 2 four-month subscriptions, 2 five month subscriptions and 1 single-issue subscription, for a grand total of \$19 seed money for the first issue. This does not bode well for commercial success. But as you know, perzines are a labour of love, produced for the sheer fun of it, and I'm in the mood for some non-deadline fan writing fun. The example of ZX, along with OPUNTIA and UNDER THE OZONE HOLE, is what inspired me to launch SPACE CADET. In other words, you guys are to blame!*

To: god-ed
Subject: Space Cadet
From: lisa (Lisa) Cohen
Date: Wed, 31 Aug 94 13:31:00 PDT
Organization: The Aroga BBS - Vancouver Canada

Hi Graeme,

Put me on the list for SPACE CADET. I look forward to reading the unexpurgated God-Ed of BCSFA. I hope it will contain the occasional B movie review.

Cheers, Lisa

Letters of Comment – continued

From: MICHAEL W. WAITE
105 West Ainsworth
Yipsilanti MI 48197-5336 USA

Dear Graeme,

SPACE CADET GAZETTE sounds like an interesting zine. How about adding my name to your list of supporters. I've enclosed \$5 US, please let me know when you want more money.

I remember reading Robert A. Heinlein's SPACE CADET and watching TOM CORBETT, SPACE CADET, back in the early 50's. I also watched CAPTAIN VIDEO AND HIS VIDEO RANGERS and SPACE PATROL. Great programming for the younger set. Is your GAZETTE related to any of the above? I grew up on Heinlein Juveniles.

Thanks for sending me BCSFAzine #257. (Better late than never.) I enjoyed reading it but am not sure if I enjoyed it enough to part with \$24 for an annual subscription. I'll think about it. In the meantime, I'll be looking forward to reading SPACE CADET.

Pax, Michael

THE GRAEME: I too cherish the SF of the 50's and early 60's. SPACE CADET GAZETTE is not devoted to any particular author or TV show, but a nostalgia for the SF of that era is very much a theme of this zine. There was a time when I wanted to be a Space Cadet more than anything else in the world (not a fireman, nor a jet pilot, but a Space Cadet!) because of my exposure to the TOM CORBETT, SPACE CADET books, which were based on the show, which in turn was based on Heinlein's book. In a sense, without Heinlein, there would be no SPACE CADET GAZETTE.

Next Issue

More 'Confessions of an SF Addict'. Either on favourite SF books from the 60's or on my early writing experiments (I haven't made up my mind yet).

More 'War! What of it?'

More Marvin.

Maybe some perzine reviews.

Maybe contributions by others. Locs and essays?

E Version Afterwords

Well, this has been fun putting it together in a far more legible format than my paper published version. I remember Harry Warner Jr, used to complain of the small point size I used. At the time I didn't see much of a problem. Now that I'm 57 and wear bifocals, I can barely read back issues of Space Cadet. Just not comfortable. I much prefer this enlarged version. It ain't fancy, but it is easy to read. Cheers all! The Graeme