



# *Tightbeam*

# 200

*Diane's final issue*

*Wedding issue*



*Announcing new editor*

*Janine Stinson*

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*33043-0314*



*For Members of  
The National Fantasy Fan Federation*

*July 1996*

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Artists, in order of appearance are:

Front cover.....	Angela K. Scott
Front cover.....	photo of Bill and Michelle Center
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Page 10.....	Teddy Haryia*
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Page 21.....	photo of Amy Sisson and Paul Abell's wedding cake
Page 25.....	Robert Miller III
Back cover.....	Linda Hardy

\* artwork appeared in previous fanzines.

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My Final Issue of *Tightbeam* as editor. I will miss the feeling of accomplishment of putting together these issues, but my current job is just too demanding of my time for me to be able to continue this commitment. Fortunately, we have a new and capable editor ready to step in and take the reigns: Janine Stinson is taking over with issue #201 and is eagerly looking forward to receiving your letters of comment. Send them to:

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Don't worry, I promised Janine that I would still write con reports for *Tightbeam*, so you won't miss out on my Finnish exploits, or the wonderful foods I'm ruining my "girlish" figure with. (Oh no, a dangling participle, don't tell Dr. Bob <grin>).

Now onward with this month's editorial. This is the wedding issue because I have lots of pictures to share with you: Pictures of our illustrious leaders, Bill and Michelle Center, from their wedding last August '95; pictures of Amy Sisson and Paul Abell's wedding this April; and the engagement announcement photo of Bob and me. Also, there is a photo of the wedding cake that I made for Paul and Amy's wedding following the report of their wedding — a media fan's delight.

After this editorial, there are also a couple of photos of me and other's at the SFRA conference this past June in Eau Claire WS. I would have loved to have attended WisCon with Emily Alward. Her con report appears in this issue. I've heard such wonderful things about WisCons.

The Science Fiction Research Association conference was held this year in Eau Claire Wisconsin at the Campus Holiday Inn, June 20-23, with eighty-two in attendance. The guests of honor were author/editor George Zebrowski and author Pamela Sargent.

Since Eau Claire is about halfway in between Chicago and Grand Forks, Bob and I both drove and met at the conference.

I particularly enjoyed the panel on web browsers and postings. There is a Virginia Tech project to scan and post copyright expired SF material called the Virginia Tech On-line Speculative Fiction Project. If you have web access check out <http://athena.english.vt.edu/vtsfpilot/sf-project.html>. I managed to stay awake during the business meeting.

On Saturday, I moderated a panel on Fandom with Jim Frenkel, an editor at Tor and spouse of Joan Vinge; Eric Heidelman, founder of a Minneapolis sercon; author Eleanor Arnason; and editor and SFRA president, Joe Sanders. The room was packed, and about half way through the panel, Jim Frenkel and I demanded that David Hartwell join us at the head table since he has written a book about the Science Fiction milieu, *Age of Wonder* (1984). After the panel, I stopped and talked with David about his book which I quote extensively in my thesis and he offered to buy Bob and me a drink. I had a "berrywels" beer by Leinenkugel. Doesn't taste much like beer at all which is a good thing since I don't like beer. David told me about his background and we discussed academic endeavors. I promised to send David a copy of my thesis which, BTW, I am scheduled to defend on August 13th (FINALLY!).

At the banquet on Saturday night, Frederik

Pohl received the Thomas D. Clareson Award for distinguished service in science fiction scholarship, presented by Alice Clareson, widow of former SFRA president and Fred Pohl's biographer, Tom Clareson. Fred's wife and Illinois Democratic Congressional candidate, Betty Hull was there to further congratulate Fred on his achievements.

David Ketterer received the Pilgrim Award for his lifetime of critical endeavors. I have read his work *New Worlds for Old: the Apocalyptic Imagination, Science Fiction, and American Literature* (1974).

Brian Stableford won the Pioneer Award for his critical essay "How Should a Science Fiction Story End?" David Hartwell, publisher of *The New York Review of Science Fiction* in which Stableford's essay appeared, accepted the award for Stableford and read the British author's thoroughly entertaining acceptance speech. Having met Stableford in Scotland, I thought the speech both appropo and clever.

The following photos were taken by Bob at the SFRA conference. The first one is of the

panel on Fandom and the second is a photo of David Hartwell and me at the hotel bar.

Later, Jim Frenkel gave me a stack of books to mail to Amy Sisson for the SFRA review, and we sat around in the hotel lobby looking at a picture book of SF authors and talking with Lois Bujold. When Lois sat down next to me, she asked if we had been introduced. I said, that no, we hadn't, but that of course I knew who she was. Jim Frenkel then introduced me as last year's SFRA convention chair. A fun conference.

July has been nothing but work, work, work at the post office. But I did get my kitchen floor tile finished and my new counter top on. Almost ready to put the house on the market so that I don't have any encumbrances when jobwise I can move to Chicago.

Everyone pitch in and give Janine lots of help and lots of articles and artwork to pick and choose from. Make her job as new editor of *Tightbeam* fun and easy that way. And join me in wishing her the best in her important new position in the NSF!

Clear skies,

*Diane*



Diane Miller, Jim Frenkel, Eric Heidelman, Eleanor Arneson, and Joe Sanders at SFRA panel on Fandom.

photo by Bob Blackwood



Diane Miller and David Hartwell at the hotel bar at SFRA 1996.  
photo by Bob Blackwood

The History of Tightbeam.

In the beginning, N3F did not have a letterzine. The fledgling club could hardly afford to publish one zine, let alone two; and letters, if any, appeared in Bonfire, or The National Fantasy Fan, its successor.

In 1949, Art Rapp, the editor of Spacewarp, a popular fanzine, decided to put out a letterzine for the N3F, calling it Postwarp. This was available on subscription, at 10¢ a copy (the usual price in those days) which paid for itself. It contained letters on all subjects, but mainly discussed the N3F, and not being official, could be free to criticize (as continues to this day, even when edited by a President). When Art left, others took up Postwarp, with varying success, continuing to 1960, when Alan J. Lewis (not to be confused with Albert J. Lewis) had problems, and Postwarp did not appear regularly or on time.

By now the zine was financed by the N3F, and the officers, understandably, wanted it to appear before they paid for it. Lewis, on the other hand, could not promise anything and claimed he needed the money in advance. This impasse went on for some time, and caused various new rules to be made, to no avail, so they decided to go around the delinquent editor by doing another letterzine, letting him delay Postwarp as long as he pleased. So, in a sense, Postwarp and Tightbeam (which was not quite the name of the new zine) were not related.

Walter ... appeared to do the first issue, and named it

Hyperspace Tightbeam. Another reliable, Art Hayes, did the next, and Marion Zimmer Bradley (no less) edited the third issue, and promptly renamed it Tightbeam, a more sensible name which described the activity, that of serving as a medium for inter-member communication. So the first few editors rotated, setting a precedent, though it sometimes was more efficient to have a semi-permanent editor, who could control the contents of the issue to fit the pages allowed.

But, as you know, no job in N3F is permanently occupied, so we have alternated between longtime and one-issue editors. It always works out, somehow, and Tightbeam has gotten to its 700th issue without a break or great changes in content. With that number, I can't even begin to summarize the editors we have had, you will have to wait for the complete checklist of N3F publications I will finish Real Soon Now. Suffice it to say that Tightbeam is always enjoyable, at least from my viewpoint, one whose favorite reading matter is letters, whether in fanzines or in prozines.

Now we are about to lose our current editor, and a replacement must be found. (Note the neutrality of that word, "replacement". A "pinch-hitter" is better, and a "substitute" not as good.) If you think you can do an issue or so, why not volunteer? Just think, you can have your own fanzine, without paying for it! Where is there an opportunity like this? Doing a letterzine, with other material to stimulate the letters, can be easy or hard. And it can be fun!

DF.





Patricia King  
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Laurence Gray: Hi there, I haven't heard from you since a RockCon some years ago that I attended with my then husband-to-be Jay King. I got rid of him thank the Goddess. Am back in school now, with a totally different group of friends, and totally different life. Are you still attending fiiks? Have you seen Bill and Brenda Sutton at any of them? or maybe Bob Asprin?

Roy R. Wood: My favorite computer line is: "To err is human, but to really screw up you need a computer." Nonetheless... I'm studying in the computer lab at school and am enjoying it quite a bit.

Eugene Austin: Interesting speculations, but if the geneticists could do what they say they can, we wouldn't have AIDS and cancer, or different varieties of the flu every winter would we? I want to see some real results and not just talk from them.

Fred H. Schütz: Witches you say? Certainly there are women and men who call themselves Wiccans and some of them are here in the N3F. Basically Wicca, or/and Paganism is a real religion in which the practitioners believe in the Goddess and the God, or in many Goddesses and Gods of various names. They believe in reincarnation and karma, but do NOT believe in a Christian devil or in a Christian Hell. I think what you're really asking us is, "What about magic? Are Witches who work magic real?" And that depends on your definition of magic. If ones definition of magic is arranging things so that life works out for you. I'd say yess... if ones definition of magic is flying on broomsticks and turning children into mice.. I'd say no. Some paranormal abilities seem to work however... at least some of the time for some people. Things such as psychic healing and premonitions of the future.

Barbara Brown: YES, I'd like to hear about Kail and Shiva. Or anything else you might

want to write about the Old Religion. I agree, I don't want to get religious tracts either or chain letters... if anyone sends me either, they go right into the trash or the cat box.

Rick Brooks: Nice joke about Rush Limbaugh, one that the conservative members of the N3F won't appreciate I guess. What will take the place of conservative/liberal politics you mention. What I wish might take the place of them is STAR TREK's philosophy of life. Although it may sound old fashion and pretentious to some of us. It states that we should explore the universe, discover new knowledge, treat everyone with equality and dignity, even women, aliens, and Gays. What better worldview to usher us all into the future spaceage?

Carol Klees-Starks: I think most children that are abducted are abducted by the noncustodial parent, or someone from their family. What facts do you have that say 3500 of them are kidnapped by strangers? (That sounds like a very large number.)

Jannik Anderson: So why are people jumping on you? I can't remember anything you've done that I would consider unfanish, or tacky. So what is all the complaining about Jannik for folks? Are you jealous that she got elected?

Taras Wolansky: It's letters like yours that make me hesitate to loc the *Tightbeam*, for I'm controversial, opinionated, and I tend to get yelled at in zines (that certainly happened when I was in the N3F before back in the eighties) But you make several comments here that I find really offensive. Why trash feminist because some women believe that way back in pre-history human beings were able to relate to each other with more intuition, and a sharing of power that today we label "The Matriarchy?" A social organization more effective than the Patriarchal civilizations of modern times I believe. Also this comment you make to Elizabeth (a friend of mine, by the way) that there are no homosexuals on

TREK... That's funny, but I seem to remember a whole planet full of them. The people were called Gini, I can't recall what the planet was called. It was a TNG episode, where Riker tries unsuccessfully to romance one of them. There are few continuing Gay characters alright, although one might count Dax of DS9 and a few other Trill characters as possibly bi. You are referring to the research on the so called "Gay-gene" I presume when you state that there won't be homosexuals in the future. Although it escapes me why you or anyone else would want to live in a world like this... to me it would be drab, colorless, cold and unspeakably conformist. Just as it would be drab, cold and unspeakably conformist should some over zealous researcher decide that SF fan would be better off gene spliced and turned into mundanes. Think about it. [Actually, I thought that was the true point of the movie, *The Crying Game*, that love and caring for other human beings transcends gender. - DM]

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Harry Andruschak  
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Dear Editor: Tightbeam #198 arrived yesterday. Obviously, I once again have an e-mail address, although I am not sure for how long. I am using AOL of course, but having problems with reading internet newsgroups off-line. Tsk tsk on your medical problems. My biggest problem is high blood pressure, and my doctor put me on some new stuff to get it under control. She seems to be happy with the results, so I guess I am going to live a while longer. Been some time since I last attended a con, the 1993 COFFLU. I might be able to get to this year's DITTO in El Paso, but not really sure. For reading, I am now going through Gibbon's DECLINE AND FALL, reading it at work during lunch and coffee breaks. Not SF or fantasy, of course, but still a good read. The plot is totally unbelievable, and some of the characters larger than life, but there is certainly enough action and bloodshed to keep the story interesting.

I seemed to have missed reading the previous TIGHTBEAM, probably because of my vacation in Italy last February and my attending school in Norman, Oklahoma last month. In any case, I see Barbara Brown is being harassed because she admits to being a witch. Hmm...getting religious tracts too.

OK, let's see if this helps... Hey, all you christian arseholes, I AM AN ATHEIST!! Quit pestering Barbara and see what you can do against me. Send all the religious tracts you want in my direction, as long as you affix the correct postage so the Post Office makes money off of it. This helps pay my salary, of course.

I am not sure if I really need a computer, but I do love being able to play computer games like SimFarm, Simtower, and so on. By the way, if you know of any other fans who like playing these software toys from Maxis, have them subscribe to a mailing list. Send the message "Subscribe Simlist" to majordomo@cisco.com Not too sure what else to write at the moment, and I do want to see if this mail gets through. E-mail addresses have a habit of being changed, or mis-written, as I found out when trying to LOC BCSFazine last week. Yours Aye...

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Subject: Sci Fi Channel

The Sci Fi Channel just arrived in Evansville, kicking E off the collection. I am very disappointed in how it is structured, given all the hype in various fanzines about how we were going to get something great. People who want something need to do a better job of communicating what it is they want. E was hollywood shorts for folks with zero attention span, like snippets out of People Magazine, nothing of substance. Sci Fi Channel is not much better than what it replaced here. Old SF serials (like X-files, Beauty & the Beast, Million Dollar Man, The Dark Side, Twilight Zone episodes that were forgotten because no one in their right mind would want to buy them, and many others) are chopped up so heavily (with commercials, Sci Fi promos, and random comments from video artists that are too brief to have any meaningful content — Harlan Ellison & Ray Bradbury on Politically Incorrect were far superior) so as to render the plot almost impossible to follow. If I did not already have some inkling about what a show was all about, I could not get it from this mess. There are some very clever commercials, deliberately constructed for a science fandom audience, but essentially this is a low budget kiddy channel for youngsters who were



not alive when these shows were popular. If you want serious SF, watch regular channels like Disney, Family, USA, Fox, and various movie channels. UPN is ten times as good as the Sci Fi channel from the perspective of SF entertainment.

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Riyn Corin Gray  
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To all the people who have been getting so wired over the article on *Star Trek* and Rock-N-Roll! Get A Grip! We're talking about a TV show here! It isn't real! It isn't even a blueprint for reality! And I would submit to you that if people are going to fight like this over what kind of music fictional characters might, or might not listen to, it will be nothing short of a miracle if the world still exists 500 years from now! However, if the human race is still around in five or six hundred years, I would be surprised if they, like us, don't enjoy a very wide variety of music, from five days old to 500 - maybe even 1000 - years old. Why should they be any more limited than we are? Hopefully our race will become more open minded, not less! If we don't, we won't be around to worry about it! So lighten up already! Personally, I do like rock-n-roll, as well as may other kinds of music, many of which date before I was born. I don't believe that any kind of music is better than any other - only different. In the end, it's all a matter of taste.

Taras Wolansky: If you really think that the reason there are no homosexuals in *Star Trek* is because there are no homosexuals in the future, you are as out of touch as the people who write the storylines! The powers-that-be have been trying to kill off anyone that they didn't approve of since time began. You will notice that most of are still here. (I am bisexual - just for the record.) As Carol Klees-Starks pointed out, the *Star Trek* people are, as she puts it, "culturally neutral" on just about everything, music and sexual orientation included. And, as she pointed out, it all come down to money.

Jannik Anderson: Just a note of support: I read the original article on ST music, and I saw nothing that was offensive, much less anything that you should have apologized for. Unless I am missing something, the entire purpose of this publication is so that anyone who is a member of NFF can express their

opinion on whatever they want to. So far, the only thing I have found offensive is the condescending attitude of some people.

Barbara Brown: Did you really get religious tracts saying you would burn in hell?! WOW! Now I am offended! I never get crank mail... I never even get crank phone calls! I am 33 years old, bisexual, and also a witch. And I run a vampire fan club! So just what do I have to do to be noticed - dance The Time Warp while stripping in the middle of Sunset Blvd?! Jeeze...

But seriously, know that if you ever need a friend or someone to talk to, I'm here. And don't let the bone-heads of this world get you down; as someone once said, never let the bastards win. Who knows - maybe they'll find someone else to pick on.

On another note, I have had two very real dreams about Kai, though I have only very general information on her. Shiva I know less about, but it seems that something I dread about him suggested he might be a sort of "vampire god," yet he is still a creator. They are hard to find good information on.

Fred Schütz: I find your discussion on witchcraft interesting. I would say that the reason that healers and wise people came to be synonymous with witches - or people practicing the old Religion - is that these people were the ones who refused to give us their beliefs. The only real religion of Wicca that I know of is a belief in a god and goddess and the sacredness of all living things, including the Earth and her seasons. The obvious difference between this and other pagan religions is where Wicca is based on a God and Goddess, the Greek and Roman belief systems are based on a hierarchy of Gods and Goddesses. So yes, I would say that there is a real religion of Wicca. As to whether there is any real magic or not, I would say that depends on what you consider magic to be.

Diane: So sorry to hear about your CTS! I have known others with this and would support the surgery. whatever you do, I wish you speedy healing!

Anyone who would be interested in a RR on gay/lesbian/bisexual topics in SF & fantasy, or a Wiccan RR, please write and let Susan know. Also, anyone interested in trying to set up a RPG we could play through the mail, please drop me a note. (Anyone Play "Vampire: The Masquerade"?)

Is anyone else reading Stephen King's *The*

Green Mile series? Is anyone else entering The Green Mile contest? I don't have a computer, but you can "visit The Green Mile on the internet." Address is: <http://www.greenmile.com> — If you do, let me know what it was about, ok?

\* \* \*

Michael O'Brien  
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Diane: Sorry to hear that you're having to give up editing TB. Hope this letter reaches you before your final issue.

We are all alive and well (if a little sad) here in Tasmania. As far as I know, no fans were injured in the shooting at Port Arthur, but it has shattered our comfortable illusion that we are isolated by sheer distance from the insanities of the late Twentieth Century.

Jim Styles: I don't know we should expect members of Starfleet to venerate rock & roll. The problem with popular music is that it's popular with a mass audience; later this same audience will move on to the popular music of following decades (or centuries), which is why we're not still listening to Ray Noble and Peter Dawson today. It seems likely that there will still be a loyal following for classical music and for jazz in centuries to come, because these attract devoted minority audiences. Whether the superstars of the current generation will do the same is open to debate. On the other hand, I never thought I would hear the words "Abba" and "very cool" used in the same sentence in the Nineties!

Ross Pavliac: I wasn't surprised that Crichton called his new novel The Last World because I remembered that he is a great admirer of Conan Doyle; I think he once said that he learned how to put information into his dialogue from reading Doyle. It's a little surprising that I didn't notice any acknowledgment on the book that the title has previously been used, but as A. Bertram Chandler once said to me (after someone wrote a novel with the word "Rim" in its title) there doesn't seem to be any copyright on titles.

Allen Autopsy: This was shown on Australian television too, but I didn't find it very convincing. I kept wondering if it was an April 1st joke that was being screened on the wrong day.

Star Trek: Voyager has started screening in Australia but has run into problems. Both

Next Generation and Deep Space 9 (plus Baby/on 5) ran on late-night slots here, but the Nine Network decided to take a chance on programming the new series in prime-time. Last week it was replaced (temporarily?) by a string of specials. I suspect a that it may be too cerebral to capture a mass audience in today's market place — maybe those NBC executive knew what they were doing when they turned down Roddenberry's first Star Trek plot! But I'm hoping it will surface in a new time slot soon.

And remember — it's AUSTRALIA IN '99!

\* \* \*

Fred H. Schütz  
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Aloha to all denizens of Nefferland, Diane Miller: Whenever I hear the word 'syndrome' I suspect yet another expert confronted by his own limitations. A doctor's professional ethics do not permit him to confess ignorance, least of all to a patient. Having once been prey to tendonitis (which makes the wrist hurt from fingertips to elbow) I can appreciate what you're going through.

Laurence Gray: The Greek guards wear kilts, too, although theirs are white. About your ancestry being part Indian, have you ever wondered, what if the Indians had won? You'd now be living in the United States of Native America!

Roy R. Wood: The Catholic church isn't that intolerant. It does recognize the antecedence of Oriental churches dubbed Orthodox (never mind the national denominations; they have to do with languages mostly). Protestantism is that branch of Christian beliefs which arose in consequence of Martin Luther's highly personal split with the Roman church. Thusly, spinoffs like Lutheranism, Presbyterianism and such are Protestant; Nestorians, Mazdanians and the rest of the Oriental (Middle East) churches are not.

Ed Meskys: I wonder if your Waldonites could be related to the Valdenses, a Protestant sect hailing from the Valdois, a region in the Jurassic Alps? Having had to flee the persecution of Protestants in France in the sixteenth century. They scattered all over the world and gave rise to the name "Waldorf." Judaism could hardly have become possible had Zoroastrianism not gone before.

There must have been something curious going on in the seventh century BC; Lao-tzu in China, Prince Gautama in India, Zarathustra in Iran and finally Abraham in Mesopotamia all lived in that age. It would be interesting to compare the timetables of native American mythologies.

Dr. Bob Blackwood: What makes you fear Basques and Hungarians besides their food?

Susan Zuege: Your comments are well met. You erred only in some inconsequential details: 'Sabbat' is Hebrew, not a Celtic word, 'witches' were never honored but feared from the dawn of time and the early church had more pressing matters to attend to than the prosecution of vagrants.

Charles Broerman: Welcome as Fellow of the 3L Society (and thanks for reminding me). Whoever said Ismail (from Hebrew Yishma'el, God hears) was mythical? He figures as the narrator in Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, doesn't he? The peculiarities of the Arabic language and the paucity of vowels in their writing as Arabs see Ismail (A-S-M-L) the principle of Islam (A-S-L-M: submission, meaning submission to God's will). I am also with you in decrying those 1000 page novels. Tucholsky said if it's too long to fit on a piece of toilet tissue it isn't well written. Barbara Brown: Don't let everyone walk all over you because of your faith. Besides, witchcraft has nothing to do with religion: either one is a witch or one isn't -- it isn't even up to you to make up your mind whether you want to be one. Fourteen generations come to roughly 420 years.

Charles Brown: Austria was first mentioned as 'Ostarici' (Eastern Kingdom), 1000 years ago this year. Since then, its Latinized form, Austria, has been interpreted as 'soughland' in consequence whereof linguistic rules had to be bent a little when Australia (also 'southland') became a nation. Only fragments remain of the Zend (commentaries) and Avesta (laws), the Parsi in India and some Yesidi in Iran being last survivors of the Zoroastrian religion. Liberalism is bad medicine no matter what you call it. It doesn't allow for what it says it stands for: freedom.

Gene Austin: It's Hadji (meaning he had absolved the prescribed pilgrimage to Mecca). Neither van Rosenberg, the only Jew in Hitler's sacred inner circle; just think of loudmouth Goebell's Jewish wife -- and there was a certain Jewish actress whom Hitler was

very much taken with. Whatever, anti-Semitism was certainly not directed against Jews alone but only they of all Semites were at hand for the slaughter. No doubt that Hitler was mad, but he was not alone; atrocities he may not even have been aware of were committed in his name by other Nazis.

Carol Klees-Starks: You are very kind, dear, thank you. Actually, my feeling regarding our probably future were of the darkest kind, and looking back over what I just said above I don't think I've recovered yet. But your article struck an answering cord in my soul for which allow me to echo you; Let there be music!

Taras Wolansky: If anything, that three feet wide Indian design on the Peruvian altiplano is I don't now how many miles across, as documented by that German scientist who spent the last fifty years cartographing it. She even went up in a hot air balloon to be high enough for taking overall pictures. At that altitude this is a big feat for anyone, not just a seventy year-old lady.

All: Take good care, take it easy and have a good time. Aloha.

\* \* \*

Eugene Austin

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Diane: There is no agitator letter this time because my totally disabled wife has been hospitalized for seven weeks (As of July 13th) and has at least two or three more to go.

She fell out of bed about midnight and bruised a foot. By 9:00 AM, there was a dime-sized red spot. By the time we got to our family doctor at 2:00 PM, the red spot covered the central part of her foot and was turning black in the middle. By the time we got to the regional hospital at 4:00 PM, the black spot had doubled in size and was crusting. They operated at 8:00 PM and cut out a hole an inch deep and several inches in diameter.

It was a new type of explosive Staph that has already killed several people in the Farm Belt. In her case, we lucked out and got the top surgeon in our area. He saved the foot in the face of medical pressure to amputate it. He told me that another few hours would have lost the foot and her with it. The stuff had already spread all through her blood stream. You wouldn't believe the intravenous antibiotics they pumped into her

— literally. They actually used a pump instead of drip bags.

They're growing her a new foot! I don't know what to make of it, but the hole is over half filled and new skin is growing over it at one centimeter a week. Y'cain't lose 'em all.

We were pressured to "Stick 'er in a home, stick 'er in a home!": She's terrified of geriatric warehouses, causing depression that had her crying every time the doctor left the room and was interfering with the healing.

My daughter and I raised hell in the hospital corridor and her room. When they learned that I have the backing of the Nebraska Agency for Aging and League of Human Decency, they backed off fast and Mama came out of her depression. Since then, most of my time and borrowed money have gone into wheelchair remodeling. She will be part-time wheelchair, slowly going back to walking like she used to.

Needless to say, all else is on hold till she's home.

N3F ought to be interested in a family project. My son, Terry Austin, is starting an Internet book store. Hyper Books Online Book Store. The operation is adapted from Barnes & Noble, Strand and other print book stores.

He's soliciting SF and will pay on a per-copy-sold basis. His E-Mail address is taustin@n1.net. Mailing address is 401 E SHASTA, ANAHEIM CA 92807. He is equipped to read most discs and can convert hard copy to computer text with an Optical Character Recognition program. He prefers E-Mail submissions and queries.

He wants submission in HTML. Hyper Text Markup Language. Not a programming language, but an in-text command system that is becoming popular. Nearly all Web Browsers accept it.

I'll send a copy of this to NAPA and, of course, Terry.

I am not yet on Internet because of redlining. It would cost me \$100 a month more to get on than it costs you city dudes. That is about to change to a system that gives unlimited access for \$25.00 a month.

In preparation, I recently registered a business name, "Terrorist Publication." "The governments of the world have made the word 'Terrorist' into a badge of honor." Having been called "a terrorist" by a prosecutor in a case that I won big time, I can make

honorable claim to the name.

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Antone Ogzewalla  
5433 MOELLER RD  
NORWOOD OH 45212

I am a N3F member, and also the coordinator of a small group of horror fans who call ourselves *Night Writers*. Each member writes a letter and mails it to me along with a nominal fee to cover postage and such, then I make copies and mail a packet of letters, which we call the *ShadowGram* back out to each person in the group. We also critique each other's work and we've just published the first issue of a horror-zine we call *Nocturnal Mutterings*.

In addition to seeking new members, we are trying to do all that we can to spread the word about *Nocturnal Mutterings*. In the past I've noticed that *Tightbeam* has done reviews of zines — I am interested in finding out if this is a possibility. I've written to several bureaus and such, including TNFF, and publicity — but I'm not really sure who can help me with what. Anything that you could do to help me in these regards would be appreciated. Please let me know if you have any comments or suggestions; or if you need me to do anything to get the ball rolling — like sending you or someone else a copy of the zine.

[Send a copy of your zine to Don Franson, 6543 BABCOCK AVE, NORTH HOLLYWOOD CA 91606-2308, who writes the "Trash Barrel" column for *Tightbeam*. — DM]

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# "HEAVENLY BODIES"

by Diane Miller and Ray Payne

B	W	B	A	K	S	Q	M	J	Z	U	F	C	V	G
T	C	Q	P	G	S	T	R	A	Y	P	A	Y	N	E
I	Q	X	O	O	J	L	M	Y	W	L	S	S	W	Y
D	Y	L	S	R	L	S	A	T	U	R	N	U	S	C
Y	G	R	G	O	I	W	C	B	E	X	F	N	U	J
O	X	A	I	Z	Y	O	E	N	U	T	P	E	N	U
V	R	B	L	K	D	N	N	W	R	M	O	V	A	P
G	T	B	L	A	C	K	H	O	L	E	T	L	R	I
J	W	I	T	T	X	M	N	T	V	H	U	O	U	T
C	M	K	E	L	E	Y	Z	T	E	T	L	S	C	E
I	S	M	S	R	A	M	D	D	Z	R	P	O	K	R
E	O	M	C	N	P	E	J	G	K	A	F	V	I	M
C	O	U	F	P	Q	P	Q	P	Z	E	Z	K	H	J
R	R	M	C	D	K	P	M	C	C	Y	J	O	F	E
Y	P	J	C	B	I	D	A	D	W	B	V	H	Y	T

BLACKHOLE  
COMET  
EARTH  
GALAXY  
JUPITER  
MARS  
MERCURY  
MILKYWAY  
NEBULA  
NEPTUNE  
ORION  
PLUTO  
RAYPAYNE 😊  
SATURN  
SOL  
URANUS  
VENUS

I had a great time. Despite going alone, and having to drive 400 miles each way [I didn't realize it was that far, beforehand!], I'm glad I did it. Two-three years of total con deprivation is cruel and unusual punishment!

There were some 15 to 20 dealers, an ideal number for this size (800) con. About half were book dealers. It turned out the only people I knew at all were other dealers: Dusty (Williams?) of Traditional Facets and Buck and Juanita Coulson, all of whom are also Indiana residents. My sales were good, especially in view of being low on stock. Didn't sell nearly as many books as I'd hoped, but the small and medium-sized stuffed critters kept walking off the table to go to new homes, and a fair number of crystals and earrings sold as well. All this means I have to restock before I go out to sell again--just what I need when I'm trying to get a novel printed out and submitted, huh? Anyhow, I figure the sales about paid for my expenses. If I hadn't had to pay single-room prices for a motel room I'd have actually come out ahead!

(BTW, Buck Coulson said their sales at Marcon were fantastic. About 3000 attended--many media fans apparently lured in by advertising--and there was hardly any break in the flow of people and sales in the dealers' room. My first reaction was "Oh, darn, I missed out!"--I'd written for info. on Marcon but passed it up in favor of WisCon. But actually I wouldn't have had enough stock for that kind of traffic flow, anyway.)

WisCon had a stellar cast of guests and attendees. It was almost like a WorldCon, insofar as writers whose work one knows and likes were everywhere. It had several program tracks, and everyone remarked on how good the panels etc. were. Being 'chained to the huckster's table,' I didn't get to hear very many. But of the sample I attended, I'd say the quality of the presentations was better, on average, than those at ChiCon in 91 (my only experience at a Worldcon.) Briefly, they were:

MYTH AND RELIGION IN SPECULATIVE FICTION with Joan Vinge, Eleanor Arnason, Kathleen Massie-Perch, and Nancy Springer. An interesting overview, with the panel unable to 'pin down' the distinction between myth and religion unless one uses a working definition: "What I have is religion; what those strange people over there have is myth." Panelists generally include religion in the worlds they build because they believe religion is mythintegral to society. Arnason said she doesn't 'mess around with' or change existing religions much, but generally creates new ones for her fictional cultures. Springer is just the opposite; she doesn't make up new religions (she said SF had some bad examples of this, e.g. Ron Hubbard; she also included MZB in this category--hmm!) but she plays a lot with existing religious myth. One of her current books, METAL ANGEL, is about an angel who wishes he was human; the book is concerned with



the relationship between humanity and God. Vinge talked about the ways one can draw from myth for plot and worldbuilding elements. The book she's now working on deals with prehistoric Europe; she's including Gimbutas's material in her background reading--sounds like it'll be good! Massie-Ferch functioned mostly as moderator, but she did point out that "What do you believe?" is not the central question for all religions. Outside Christianity, religious adherence is often defined by participating in certain rites, or following an ethical system or pattern of life. (This in response to an insistent questioner who demanded to know the panelists' own religious affiliations and beliefs.) Some other interesting sidelights here: Nancy Springer's experience of writing about pagan fantasy worlds while married to a Lutheran minister; Eleanor Arnason's remarks on the grail legend and her Great Fish miracle story; Joan Vinge's observations on being a convert to Judaism.

After this panel I finally had the chance I'd been waiting three years for: I gave Joan Vinge a copy of the QUAW that has my long glowing review of SUMMER QUEEN. She very graciously accepted it and we had a short conversation about the novel.

FEMINIST THEMES IN THE WORKS OF LOIS McMASTER BUJOLD. This was given by a panel of reader/critics; the only one whom I'd heard of was Martha Bartter, an academic feminist and SF person. Lois sat in the audience and seemed to thoroughly enjoy the whole discussion. Miles as a character whose disabilities have a lot in common with women's situation was discussed at length. The panel also talked about the different ways that Cordelia and Aral nurture those they are responsible for; the masculinist technology that produced the quaddies, and various aspects of Athos. (I put in my two cents worth and pointed out that unlike the all-male worlds created by male authors, which usually turn out to be horrible places--see Joanna Russ's famous article--here we have a female author whose all-male world isn't a horrible place.) Lastly, they looked at many aspects of Cordelia's decision to bring Miles to term in the uterine replicator. The consensus was that Cordelia had her own, understandable reasons; that this should not be viewed as a "prolife" statement in our own society's debate (that it was in fact more a pro-choice decision, as Cordelia decided in the face of strong societal forces urging her the other way), but that nevertheless in the books as a whole, there's a strong bias 'for life' in the best sense of the term.

Lois didn't show her hand on this issue. The only time she gave any insights into 'author's intentions' was when a question arose about what would have been expected of a Vorkosigan daughter. She said that in the first draft Miles had a sister. She (the sister) disappeared as Elena came to fill that slot in the story.

And after this panel, I gave Lois Bujold a copy of the same zine because it also has Alicia's review of SHARDS OF HONOR and BARRAYAR.

FEMINIST AND ANTI-WOMAN PRESSURES ACTING ON EDITORS, WRITERS, AND PUBLISHERS: THE BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE. Lucy Sussex, Suzette Haden Elgin, Patrick Nielsen Hayden, Pamela Sargent. This started out with each panelist asked to tell of the worst experience they'd had with such pressures. Sargent talked about the disbelief some people showed when she was putting together the first WOMEN OF WONDER anthology: "What? You're doing an all-woman-author anthology?", but admitted some of the disbelief may have just been due to her effrontery in putting together an anthology when she was a scarcely-published newcomer to the field. Elgin said she'd taken a lot of flak for not putting a lesbian love scene in THE JUDAS ROSE. 'Being of my generation, I didn't know I was supposed to, and besides I wouldn't know how to write one anyway.' Lucy Sussex, an Australian writer/editor, said the whole feminist SF scene is on a much smaller scale in her country; in view of this it's remarkable the anthologies that exist there have been published.

The most extended--and thought-provoking--parts of this panel, IMO, were Hayden's comments. He said a lot about what's going on in publishing now, including the distributor consolidation that's happened in the past 18 months which is squeezing out the mass market paperbacks of mid-list authors. He thinks the most promising news is the rise of superstore booksellers, because they stock in depth, attempt to keep backlist titles on hand, and are actively stocking trade paperbacks. He also said that there's more chance of selling a new feminist SF novel than a SF novel written from any other definable political perspective, because 'feminist SF' is now a category that publishers recognize and know how to market. There hasn't been a real high-selling feminist SF novel yet, however. He doesn't know what ingredients it would take to make one, and apparently nobody else does, either. [I asked.] Altogether he was pretty upbeat, and he seems to have a vast knowledge about the way the publishing world works.

SPIRITUALITY/RELIGION AS A PLOT ELEMENT IN SPECULATIVE FICTION, with Emmie Harrison, Maya Kaathryn Bohnhoff, Sarah Goodman, Mary Ellen Testen. Apparently these are all writers who have done so. I didn't recognize any of their names beforehand except Bohnhoff's, whose THE SPIRIT GATE is one of the novels I'm reading now. They didn't talk about "How to do it" exactly, but mentioned such variations as a hero struggling against a religious establishment that has become corrupt, a protagonist on a quest that's religious in nature (or import), the clash of two opposing religious faiths or factions, etc. There was also some discussion of the difference between spirituality and religion.

One of the most interesting things about this session was the make-up of the panel. It included a Bahai, a Reform Jew, a former nun who is now a pagan priestess. (Don't know about the fourth; I don't think she explained herself this way, maybe because she was distracted trying to keep her little daughter from interrupting the proceedings.)

A SMALL QUALITY FEMINIST SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY PRESS  
--WOULD IT WORK? Susanna Sturgis, Jim Frenkel, Suzette Haden  
Elgin, Deb Notkin, Lucy Sussex. The upshot here is: there's  
a felt need for such a press; but we don't know if it would  
work. Financing is always the number #1 problem with small  
presses (don't we know!) Various ways tried in three countries  
were examined. The Australians are apparently sometimes able  
to get funding for such projects from their equivalent of the  
National Endowment for the Arts. (Imagine ours even deigning  
to look at a SF project!) Canadian publishers' market  
--and market share--is so small that they always consider what  
an author can do to promote her own book when making the decision  
on whether to publish. [The person who described the Canadian  
press also said that the standard advance for a novel brought  
out by a Canadian publisher is \$300. Geez, I was pretty lucky  
to get \$150 for a short story! Course I think the U. of British  
Columbia's magazine that published it is subsidized. I'm also  
pretty sure these figures don't apply to Harlequin's Canadian-  
-based operation.]

I think this panel covered all the ideas we've considered  
at WorldEdge. One thing they didn't talk about (and we haven't  
either) is getting financing from some person or outfit that  
needs a tax loss. I understand that this was/is the case with  
both the former Meteor, and with MZB's Fantasy Magazine.  
Only conclusion was: this is probably a bad time to be starting  
such a new project, because in five years the Internet may have  
changed distribution enormously, essentially by-passing the  
middlemen who now take such a cut from book industry revenues.

AGEISM IN SPECULATIVE FICTION. Ursula Le Guin, Lois Bujold,  
Katherine MacLean. I stayed after the dealers' room closed  
to hear this, mostly because I missed her formal addresses and  
didn't want to leave without hearing Le Guin talk somewhere.  
What she said was interesting and mostly wise, and so were the  
other panelists' remarks, but overall I felt this was the most  
disappointing of all the panels I heard.

This was because it tried to cover: 1) the plight of  
older people in our present society 2) demographic and medical  
change in the near future, and 3) the actual topic. Because  
of scheduling problems the time allotted was only 45 minutes.  
Obviously it was an impossible task. There were a number of  
impassioned audience testimonials about age discrimination.  
The only SF work brought into the discussion much was Kim  
Stanley Robinson's Mars books; LeGuin said she found their  
picture of exceptionally long-lived adults who hardly change  
as they age (except to forget Earth) rather disappointing.  
One of the most unforgettable moments was when an audience member  
pled with her to read these parts again, saying she found them  
very moving and plausible, and quoting a stunning passage from  
memory. I won't say that 'nowhere but in science fiction' would  
this happen. But there aren't too many forums where an ordinary  
person could, respectfully but passionately, urge a Grand Old  
Woman of the field to consider another reading--and have her  
listen respectfully, too. It made me proud of all of us.

LeGuin also admitted to having trouble selling her stories that have old women as protagonists, even as she urged that we not confine ourselves to protagonists between the ages of 22 and 35. She's right on both counts, of course. (And it made me want to take another look at that idea of putting together an anthology proposal for Papier-Mache Press, of SF & fantasy stories about older women. Maybe I could get a LeGuin story and a Norton story: Wouldn't that be great!!!!)

#### MISCELLANEOUS HAPPENINGS AND INSIGHTS.

I didn't get a chance to buttonhole anyone on some of the things that have come up at WorldEdge, either; it just wasn't the time or place to do it. The person I spent the most time talking with at a party was, strangely enough, Suzette Haden Elgin. She seems to feel that she knows me. I dunno if she remembers me from our brief conversations at a couple of St. Louis cons 5 or 6 years ago, if Pat Mathews has mentioned me to her, or she just catches vibrations that identify me as another quasi-counterculture person in the 60s (although in my case it was mostly a vicarious experience.) Anyhow, we talked about sexism & ageism and how they combine. She feels that very little has changed on either front: nurses still abjectly defer to doctors and even to male nurses; most older women are so frantic about trying to keep their youthful looks that they neither 'follow their star' nor concern themselves with bigger issues; little girls are preoccupied with Barbie dolls and with winning the "Little Miss" beauty pageants. And indeed this may be the case, especially where Suzette lives. (I ran into the last two things when I lived in Kentucky, too, although a lot of it is deceptive--there really is a Steel Magnolia syndrome.)

But I had to argue that unlike the nurses, there isn't much sorting-out by gender in the library world anymore. Plenty of deadly in-fighting and office politics, yeah. But since academic and large public libraries decided it's more important for the Director to be a PhD than to be a male, it's pretty much equal opportunity as far as I can see (and no deferring.)

Along with other partyers we agreed that we're willing to grant Clinton a fair amount of leeway to do what's necessary to win the election. Hoping, of course, that afterwards, aware of the judgment of history, he'll feel free to do some things that need to be done because they're right.

And guess what else? Jean Lamb was right!

My table was adjacent to David Hartwell's--he's the publisher of THE NEW YORK REVIEW OF SCIENCE FICTION, among other things. Lots of well-known people stopped by to talk to him.

I didn't get to the Tiptree Award ceremonies. Didn't get to hear Judith Merril speak either, unfortunately, although since I'd heard her at a Pop Culture Assoc. meeting at Toronto back in the 80's I didn't push quite so hard for an opportunity.



Engagement announcement photo:  
Dr. Bob Blackwood and E. Diane Miller  
(no date has been set for the wedding  
due to the bride-to-be's promotion in  
Grand Forks ND)



Wedding photo:  
Amy Sisson and Paul Abell



Wedding photo:  
Bill Center and Michelle Nowak Center



## B5 and Star Trek Fans Sign Treaty

(Or the Wedding of Amy Sisson and Paul Abell)

by Diane Miller

Neffler, Amy Sisson, and her longtime fiance' Paul Abell were married April 13th in Grand Forks North Dakota. Amy's family flew in from New Jersey and Paul's family drove down from the Winnipeg, Canada area for the wedding.

Amy and Paul met in the Space Studies master's program at the University of North Dakota and figured that Grand Forks was a suitable central location to celebrate their nuptials. Besides, North Dakota has no length of residency, waiting period, or blood tests required to tie the knot. The bride and groom honeymooned at Disneyworld.

Paul and Amy have been roommates for about four years now, but recently Canadian and US customs have been hassling Paul when he visited his parents home near Winnipeg, so instead of the eight to ten year engagement they'd originally planned (graduate school can take a long time), they decided to prevent further accusations of Paul being an illegal alien. The couple now reside together in New York where Paul will be pursuing his doctorate in geology. They moved from Oakland, California, in June.

The wedding began the usual ten minutes late, at 6:40 pm, with George, their electronically ordained minister leading the processional with a candle that he placed on the table between Amy's stuffed Eeyore (from Winnie The Pooh) and Eeyore's little brother, the couple's surrogate children. On the table were two scrolls and a ceramic dish.

The four bridesmaids wore black cocktail dresses and carried bouquets with white asters and mums, purple stasis and pink lilies. The groomsmen were Paul's brothers and dressed all in tuxedos. The bride's original plan was to have the groomsmen just wear suits until she found out that the Abells all had tuxedos but didn't have suits. The groom was escorted in by his parents, all looking proud and happy. His mother later stated that she had told Paul that had he NOT married Amy that he was NOT allowed back in the house.

The bride was escorted down the isle by her parents, all excited and happy about the event. Amy carried a bouquet similar to her bridesmaids but with larger pink lilies. She wore a cream colored satin mid-thigh length sleeveless cocktail dress with a T-strap back. Her long gloves matched the dress. She was unable to wear her mother's wedding garter since it showed through



the dress, but with Amy's gorgeous figure and long legs I don't think the males in the audience were complaining.

The ceremony was going along beautifully and most of the audience was starting to sniffle over the lovely sentiments of friendship and love being expressed when George the minister paused for dramatic effect. Beginning again with "Mahwidge," from Princess Bride, it took another minute for the bride and bridesmaids to quit giggling and the ceremony to continue. When it came to the part where Paul was to repeat the phrase "With this ring I thee wed," we couldn't tell whether he was following the minister's example or if he was just nervous when he said, "With this 'whing' I thee wed." Following the exchange of rings, the couple burned scrolls in the ceramic dish on the table. The scrolls had their wishes and hopes for the future written on them, an idea inspired by Babylon 5. There was so much smoke we were afraid it was going to set off the fire alarm. The ceremony ended as intended with the bride and groom kissing and the building did not burn down, which was a good thing since after the recessional, we formed a reception line into the next room to sign the guest book and greet the newlyweds.

Directly from the receiving line, we entered the line for hors d'oeuvres and began a night of celebration, wining, dining and dancing. Cheese and crackers, fruit, bacon wrapped scallops, very large shrimp and cocktail sauce, mini-quiche, and chicken wings. I could have made a meal from the appetizers alone.

The line by the appetizers lead by the wedding cake; a story in itself - and I should know - I made the cake.

Paul and Amy had not particularly wanted a traditional wedding cake and when they selected Kim Poor's "Halley's Over Antarctica" as the cover for their wedding invitation, that inspired the cake the guests saw as they entered the reception area. The cake was devil's food chocolate with chocolate filling and buttercreme frosting. It was a large layered rectangle frosted to match the wedding invitation (and dyed everyone's tongue's blue) with a snow field and mountain covered landscape in front of a starfield with a comet streaking toward the horizon. Then a replica of the starship Enterprise C made out of white chocolate was suspended on an acrylic base off to the right edge of the cake. On the snow field sat the shuttle "Hawkings" and two figures, one male, one female, in Star Trek uniform explored the landscape. Chocolate covered mints, wrapped in gold foil, in the shape of the Star Trek emblem were scattered about the table, and on a plate near by. Off to the left of the rectangular cake sat a round cake decorated like a moon. A black monolith sat on this cake, inspired by Arthur C. Clarke's 2001.

During the time I was setting up the cake and before the reception, the hotel staff kept sneaking in to peek at the cake, often making comments like "Gee, that's really different," or "I've never seen anything like that before."

Shortly after the appetizers, the buffet line opened with salad, au gratin potatoes, green beans almandine, baron of beef, swedish meatballs, roast chicken and sliced ham. If anyone left this reception hungry it was because they were anorexic.

The staff came around and made sure we had champagne to toast the bride and groom and we were also offered our choice of wines with dinner. Paul's three brothers (all younger) got up to offer the toast. His brother Nick spoke of how happy everyone was that Amy was a member of the family. He also told the story of how, when Paul was born, his maternal grandmother when she came to see Paul and his mother at the hospital had commented, "nine months and two days, thank God." Paul's youngest brother Alister, who is an actor spoke next and was expected to joke around since he is the most boisterous of a very boisterous group of four brothers, but instead he spoke of how Paul had helped him with laundry and talked him through homesickness when they were in private school and Paul was 15 and Al was 9.

Bruce, the third brother, spoke last and said that when they began telling people that Paul was getting married, that they would be asked, "What's Amy like?" "In fact," he said, "When Paul first told me that he and Amy were moving in together, I asked him, what's she like? And Paul said, 'She is the most intelligent woman I've ever met, and she's extremely articulate, and she's beautiful, and uh, and she likes Star Trek too!'" "That's great, I replied, and what else can you tell me about her? Paul said, 'Well, she's a nymphomaniac.' To which I replied, THEN MARRY HER!"

The disk-jockey played a waltz for the newlyweds to start the dancing, then followed with rock-n-roll for the next hour. At ten pm, we heard the Star Trek theme, and saw Amy and Paul being lead to chairs near the bar on the dance floor. After they were seated, a friend in a Star Trek engineering uniform appeared and proclaimed that the Federation was very pleased to announce the joining by treaty of two alien races, the Sissons and the Abells.

Then, Paul's brother Bruce rushed in with a friend, both dressed in commanduniform. He claimed to be Captain Kirk and appropriately kept playing with his hair. He explained that the Klingon's were against this treaty and had declared war. He introduced his companion as McCoy.

A Klingon rushed in with phaser firing and held them all at phaser point. He forced Paul to drink a "truth serum" from the bar and asked him why he had entered into this treaty. Before Paul

could answer, Kirk turned to McCoy and asked him how long Paul could hold out against the truth serum, to which McCoy answered, "I'm a Farmer, not a Doctor, I plow, I combine, I plant, I harvest, I don't know truth serum."

Scotty, played by the youngest brother, Alistair, rushed in to save the day at this point, firing on the Klingon from the Enterprise and speaking with such a thick Scottish brogue that he was almost impossible to understand. He then beamed the Klingon aboard the ship. They did have to tell the Klingon, Paul's brother Nick, to "lie down, you're dead."

The brothers and friends congratulated the Sissons and the Abells on this merger and took their bows after which Paul and Amy went to cut the cake. Amy's mother had been afraid that there would not be enough cake to go around, so desserts were served also at this time: chocolate pudding, fruit cups, and cheese cake.

A few more dances, and next thing I knew it was midnight. Since I'd been up since five in the morning putting finishing touches on the cake, I was afraid that I would turn into a pumpkin, so I said my good-byes and left just as the hotel staff was bringing in a second round of hors d'oeuvres. I have never had this much fun at a wedding before.

###



You may recall that some while ago I hit you with a set of clichés dressed in question form to which I appended later a brief overview of the witch hunts perpetrated by church and magistrate. And now this silly question. What am I up to, then? I mean to throw some light on the subject. So let's first take a look at what the term "witch" stands for.

We have not the room for discussing the ethymologies of words like witch or bruja, or stregħa, hexe, drabarni, or any other term the legends, fairy tales and folklores of virtually every culture once or still existing on this planet did or do apply to the figure; let's instead simply look at the picture they present us.

It's a mirror held to our faces: the dark side of human nature. Whether in fairy tales such as Hansel and Gretel or the annals of the Inquisition, the witch is shown as a creature bent on doing harm: the very embodiment of evil. Now, to early man, to the blighted people beguiled by the medieval church, or to simple souls even today, this picture of demented phantasy may have or still does appear truthful. But is it?

No, we all know that. No creature is evil of itself. True, could a gazelle reason it might consider the lion evil because lions slay gazelles; it's not difficult to discern the fault in such reasoning. Surely, Hitler did not consider his deeds evil, nor did the fathers of Inquisition theirs and least of all those they condemned to the stake. Am I evil if I can't perceive the evil of my deeds. What, then, connects witchcraft to Satanism?

Nothing, really. Of course, the concept of evil spirits, be they demons, devils or Satan himself, is as old as humanity. In fact, the first monotheistic religion ever, Zoroastrianism, had the contrast of personified good (Ormuzd) and evil (Ahriman) built into the very foundation of its faith. But not until the church in its fervent effort to blackpaint heretics introduced the idea of "having intercourse with the Devil" did the notion of Satan worship enter into the picture of the witch. It could have dwindled away, possibly, once the church's purpose had been fulfilled, had it not taken root in the perverted minds of certain bored individuals at the French king's court and, across the channel, among English country rakes who dubbed themselves the "Hellfire Club", to plagiarize the idea of Satanism and make it notorious. But what about the witchcult?

What witchcult? Granted, there have been secret societies galore in human history, such as the Oriental cult of Cybeles, the cult of Osiris in ancient Egypt, the Hellenic cult of Dionysius, the Roman Maenads. The secret lore of those cults was lost through violent disruption, through attrition or simple disuse, and what little knowledge of them reached outsiders, not really understood and badly recorded even then, has lost all meaning. As for modern occult societies, such as the Order of the Golden Dawn in turn-of-the-century England; the Rosicrucians; today's successors to the Knights Templar, there's nothing in their books that we know of to connect them with witchcraft. So what

about witches' sabbats like Samhain, Yule and Lammas?

Celtic folklore. The tottering Christian faith made no real headway until the Inquisition finally broke all opposition (i.e. the "heretic" Germanic and Celtic religions of Europe) in the fifteenth century, but Pagan traditions lingered. For instance, going "skylad" was the expression of fertility rites celebrated in the springtime. In some areas even today, a farmer may go onto his land to test the ground with his naked butt if it is warm enough for sowing, or he will ejaculate on the ground to "fertilize Mother Nature". The church, always eager to supplant Pagan tradition with ceremonies of its own, perverted those rites and made them its own as is readily observable in Catholic areas where priests lead Sunday processions to the countryside and the bishop blesses all farm animals at Pentecost. But why would witchcraft be a woman's domain?

There's no reason to believe that it was. There are no records other than the Inquisition's annals, but even they show us the mix of genders in the prosecution of "witches". If there is a predominance of females convicted the reason must be sought in the twisted minds of the inquisitors who regarded and opposed all forms of eroticism as the "work of the Devil" and in the allure presented by naked women's flesh on the rack. We must, however, consider another aspect for which the church had no use: the role of women in Shamanism and in healing: Woman, warden of the hearth, bonded to the moon by her periodical bleeding and often possessing a "Soul Window to the Other Side", gifted with the ability of caring for the weak and the sick. Which brings us to the Cardinal Question:

What does it all mean to us?

Plenty. Modern theory isn't altogether off the mark if it ascribes healingcraft and magic to what the Inquisition confused with the witch concept. Gerald Gardner's silly idea of a "Wiccan religion" aside, why shouldn't we continue to see individuals engaged in such practice as "witches". We could, I suppose, call them "wise women" as Gypsies do. But what about the men in the tradition?

Let's take a look at our origins. From the dawn of human existence, the Paleolithic, shamans have been the spiritual guardians of people. It were they who traversed the gates to the spiritual world, who conversed with spirits, who brought guidance and knowledge of healing. A shaman could be man or woman and frequently thought of himself as being both, although that did not necessarily entail bi- or homosexual activity. We can still observe that in whatever tiny pockets of natural cultures are left in this world.

The idyll was disrupted some ten thousand years ago when nomadic man gave up matriarchy<sup>?</sup> and settled down to agriculture. His conversion to sedentary life may have brought an end to his naive belief in spirits of nature, who can say that. It did carry with it a new element: civilization, an indiscernible



but steady shift away from nature. Denaturalization brought more elaborate sets of beliefs and, along with those, priests, kings, frontiers and politics. Here is where we must seek the roots of the secret cults I mentioned earlier, for to some the ease of life didn't appear so easy after all. For all we know those cults may have laid the groundwork for the ritual magic of later times.

Having progressed, man turned to new and ostentatiously greater deities and, eventually, the one and only true god; one, in fact, who would not tolerate other divinities beside him. When the church of Christ endeavored to spread it found itself opposed by firmly established life-embracing Pagan faiths; hence the Inquisition of the Middle Ages. But what has this got to do with magic, and with magicians?

Nothing, the church left magicians largely alone as had Jehova's religion before it. In fact, the latter gave the magician a tool in hand to use for elevating his status in society: the Cabbala. Cabbalistic ritual magic, a heavily demanding though likewise highly educating device, made its man; the magician was much sought after, his art coveted, until his own progress brought his demise through the science of modern times. But where does that leave the breed of "wise persons" we are agreed to call witches?

Witches, I would say, should be seen as the rural counterpoint to the urban magician. Magicians, seeking knowledge, had no scruples adapting to new religions while witches, like the people among whom they lived, held fast to the "old faith". Where magicians were erudite, witches had no writing (hence no "book of shadows", sorry). Where the magician evolved elaborate conjurations which he recorded in his grimoires, the witch had nothing but plantlore and a gate - through hallucinogenics - to the other world. This spooky talent may have aroused the churchfathers' wrath; in any case, it made witches perfect scapegoats. It gained them also another enemy in the upstart medical profession, for suddenly all references to psychotropic plants were wiped from the fifteenth century pharmacopoeiae.

Today's "witches", naively playing their games of "symbolic magic", possess not even a shade of the old powers. For magic, an extremely difficult and trying - if not downright dangerous - system, was functional. You know, Larry Hiven was right: Magic did go away; it fled from the perverse and cutting sneer of disbelief of the denizens of this modern age. We have no hope of luring it back unless we drop our arrogance and concede that science is not all we need after all.

If the above review appears confusing to you, and full of logical lapses, please keep in mind that I was forced to brevity. You are welcome to present your own views, concerns and opinions, or corrections if you feel they are in order. I shall endeavor to reply to the best of my ability and as exhaustively as space permits.



\*Matriarchy, meaning "mother's rule", is a term coined by a guy named Bachofen at a time when it was thought one knew all about prehistory for having read Aristophanes and Herodot. It is incorrect insofar as it refers to a system where lineage was counted through the women since no one had yet guessed that men were involved in the conception of children.



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