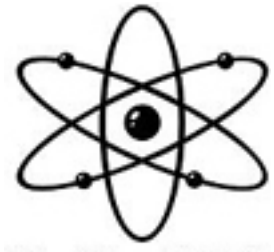


A BI-MONTHLY PUBLICATION FOR SFPA



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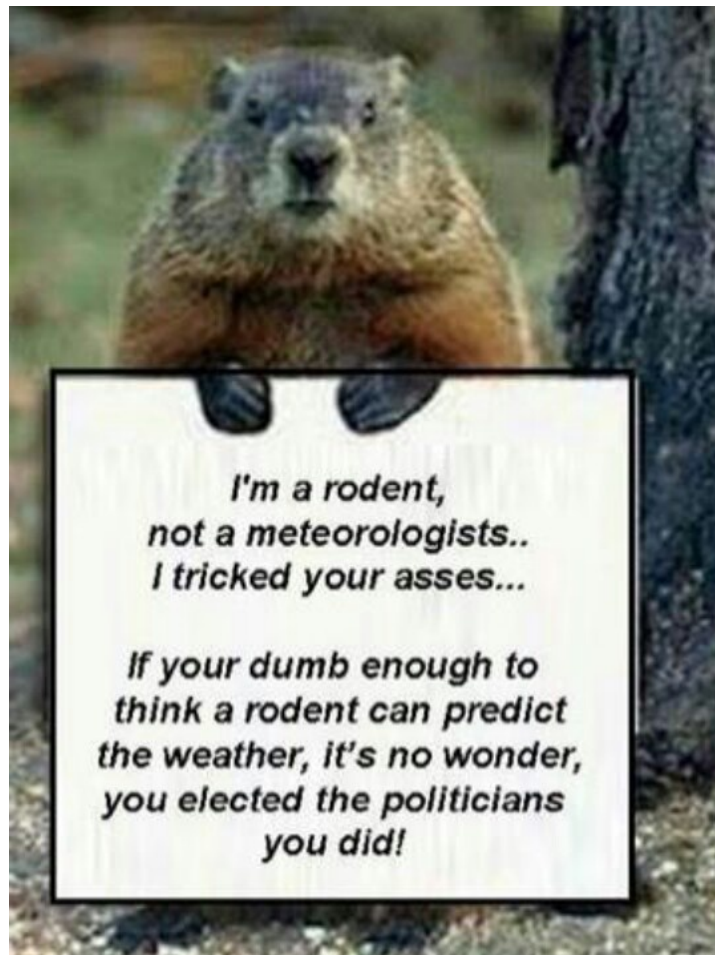
"There is one kind of prison where the man is behind bars, and everything that he desires is outside; and there is another kind where the things are behind the bars, and the man is outside."

---Upton Sinclair (1878-1968)

A PUBLICATION OF INTENSELY PERSONAL COMMENT AND OPINION

ROBERT JENNINGS; 29 WHITING RD.; OXFORD, MA 01540-2035 email: FABFICBKS@AOL.COM

This is the April-May 2025 Issue intended for distribution in SFPA Mailing #365





I'M STILL TRYING TO IGNORE POLITICS

mainly
because I'm

shell shocked. It appears that Caligula Trump is succeeding admirably in his efforts to destroy the US government and create economic chaos in this country. Thus far his only opposition has been the thousands of people who have filed lawsuits against his many imperial decrees. Unfortunately the courts are packed with Trump appointees, right up to and including the Supreme Court, so it is unclear whether those actions will be able to stop the man. Plus, he and his right hand enforcer J. D. Vance have implied that they will probably ignore any court decisions that go against them anyway.

Mass protests grow, but we haven't seen anything approaching the crowd actions that led to things like the Arab Spring a few decades ago. When the full impact of all those tariffs, cutting

vast numbers of essential government workers, and voiding regulations that protect citizen health and safety become known that might change. Or not. I don't know if barricades will go up in the streets of Washington and Palm Beach, FL, but time will tell. Until then the nation continues to disintegrate under his malevolent leadership.

I SINCERELY HOPE BY THE TIME YOU READ THIS

that winter will be over and I will be alive and
safe. This has been one of the worse winters

of my entire life. In addition to brutally cold weather, beginning in late January we got light snow which quickly turned to sheets of glazed ice. That cycle has been repeated on a regular basis.

I don't really mind the snow. Snow I can deal with. Shoveling is a pain, but snow can be handled. What I do not like is ice. Ice is a deadly hazard, especially for an old guy like me. If I slip and happen to fall on the hard ice I could easily break a lot of bones, plus being stranded out there with no easy way to get help.

As I type this right now, we got three inches of snow Saturday, followed by freezing rain, for an inch of ice on top of the snow, with temps in the single digits. I was trapped in my house for several days before deciding to take an ice breaker shovel and try to hammer thru the ice to get to my car. That took almost an hour and a half of hard work. I did get to the car, and managed to clear most of the ice off the vehicle, then drive down to the supermarket for some fresh veggies and milk, then over to the warehouse to pull three days worth of orders.

Getting back into the house making two inch steps was another thrill, and so was getting out the next morning to go to the post office to mail everything out.

Since then it has been a death dance trying to get down to the car and back up again without falling and breaking bones or worse. The ice is packed so deep around the mailbox that I can't get to it. The driveway including the area behind the car out into the street is like an ice rink. I fell once moving around the front of the car but luckily it was not a bad fall. I crawled around to the driver's side so I could use the door handle to pull myself upright.

It's not over yet. We have weeks of winter left to go, even if you happen to be reading this at the beginning of April. As I said, I sincerely hope I am alive and safe when that April day arrives.

TRACKING DOWN THE NEW STF

Truth to tell I have plenty of stuff to read, thousands of books in my inventory, stacks of books that I have been intending to read but haven't gotten around to yet here at the house, and a lot of titles I kinda want to reread at some point in the near future.

All well and good, but, I also want to keep abreast of the new novels coming out in the genre. I read reviews from people whose opinions I value, and they recommend a number of new books that look quite interesting. As I wrote in articles and past reviews, I truly think we are in the midst of a brand new golden age of science fiction and fantasy literature, and I'd like to keep up with the field.

This does not, however, mean that I want to buy a ton of new books. The retail price of new hardbacks keeps going up, which is a deterrent, but the main reason I don't want to buy a lot of new books is because my

house is already packed to the rafters with stuff, material that I have been slowly trying to prune down. I don't need a lot of new volumes filling in the space.

In the past what I have done has been to get books both old and new thru my local library. My town library is linked not only with all the other libraries in the state, but also with a vast network of libraries across the New England area, and even the whole nation thru an intra-library loan program.

This means that if I want a new title, or even an obscure out of print book, I can usually get it thru my local library.

This has worked very well, up until the present time. Things seem to have changed, as in the system seems to have completely ground to a halt as of the 2024 winter season.

From early October thru February I have requested maybe a dozen different books from the library, mostly new stf, and have only received one title back.

What is going on here? It seems remarkable to me that no libraries in the state, or even in the entire New England area have bothered to stock any of the newly released science fiction and fantasy books.

I can't figure it out. Either library budgets have suddenly gotten much tighter, or else the buyers at every single library in the entire region have suddenly decided not to bother with science fiction or fantasy any more.

If there was a huge influx of new, important mainstream titles being published all at once this might make sense, but I haven't noticed anything unusual or spectacular in the mundane world of literature making headlines, or anything else that might cause this kind of library drought of science fiction and fantasy material.

I don't know what gives. I am going to try it again this coming week. Maybe things will be better. I hope so. Updates on the situation next issue.

HELPFUL HINT: If you stir coconut oil into your kale, it makes it easier to scrape into the trash.





TRAILIN' starring Tom Mix, Fox 1921 feature film

My serious hearing loss is nudging me back into exploring the vanished world of silent movies again. These days silent movies are a niche category in the entertainment spectrum. The fans who enjoy them are very enthusiastic, but most modern movie buffs have no great interest in silent movies, or in the history of the format either. The fact that only about fourteen percent of all the American silent movies ever made have survived does not help that situation.

During the late 19teens and 19twenties one of the most popular movie stars was Tom Mix, undisputed king of silent western films. He got his start playing romantic leads in two reel shorts beginning about 1909, but gravitated to western films easily and early because he was an expert horseman and a crack shot who had actually worked on ranches and knew the cowboy life style.

The fact that he did almost all his own stunts and also wrote many of his movie scripts endeared him to studio heads. His handsome smiling features made him popular with the female audience, while his action oriented story plots made him a favorite

among western movie fans, especially younger movie goers

Trailin' is one of Tom Mix's films for the Fox studios. Based on a novelette by Max Brand, it is set in contemporary times and tells the story of a young man raised in wealth and society, who isn't particularly interested in wealth or high society. In a flashback to the days when the west was really wild, we witness a gang robbing a stagecoach and kidnapping two eastern investors. Kept captive for weeks, they finally manage to gain the advantage and kill all their captors in a violent battle. The daughter of the leader is attracted to both men, but a flip of the coin after the bloody confrontation decides who will win her.

Flash forward many years later and we see Tom Mix's character polo champ Anthony Woodbury witnessing a sudden meeting and a duel with a stranger who kills his father. A mysterious locked room with an old pistol and a photograph of a western homestead lead him on a trail of discovery and vengeance.

The plot becomes standard western fare as he reaches his destination, the exact location never being stated. The westerners he meets along the way take him for a tenderfoot, but Anthony is able to take care of himself and proves to be a two fisted fighter as well as a champion horseman.

He meets a beautiful young girl who runs a restaurant, currently being courted by a crude, very jealous cowboy. Naturally Anthony shows up the lout, which makes him Anthony's instant enemy.

The owner of a huge ranch that the audience immediately recognizes as the man who shot Anthony's father wants him taken alive for unknown reasons. A gang of outlaws becomes involved. Lots of action, hard riding, fast shooting and a hectic chase soon develop as Anthony and his new lady love try to escape being killed for a possible murder he was framed for.

Needless to say, after many unexpected events all turns out well in the end.

This was an enjoyable western yarn with a couple of twists along the way including a revelation at the end of the story that was overplayed, in my opinion. So far as I can tell, this film may have been the very first instance in which the villains, attacking the good guys in a cabin at the bottom of a hill, load dry hay into a wagon, set it afire, and roll the wagon down to crash into the cabin and set it afire in order to flush the heroes out. That particularly scenario became a frequently used sequence in a lot of western movies and a fair amount of movie serials in the days of talking pictures.

This was not a great Tom Mix flick, but I enjoyed the movie. The copy of the film I have is an Alpha Video DVD. The print is not terrific, but it is clear enuf, unlike the version that is posted on YouTube, which looks like a 16th generation dupe so blurry you can barely make out any of the figures let alone read the dialog cards. Alpha Video movies are regularly on sale for about five or six bucks a pop. Worth the time.

**THE SCORPIO ILLUSION by Robert Ludlum, 1993;
Bantam Books; paperback, 664 pages**

I have to admit that this is the very first Robert Ludlum novel I have ever read. I've seen some of the movies based on his books, including all of the Jason Borne films, all of which were enjoyable. I did take the precaution of waiting a month or more between views, since there are many background similarities in all those movies, and presumably also in the books the films were drawn from.

Ludlum stories usually feature a strong central character, or a small group of protagonists, who are faced with a problem involving some evil foe or foes who have connections with or are aided by cliques or powerful shadowy groups determined to thwart the hero(es) for evil greedy economic or political reasons.

And that's the basic setup with *The Scorpio Illusion*. Tyrell Hawthorne is a retired naval intelligence officer. He abruptly quit the cold war spy service because his wife was murdered in Amsterdam, possibly by the Soviets, or maybe by American agents because they suspected she might have been a double agent.

The US government wants him back, right now, because they have definite word that an extremely dangerous terrorist aligned with Moslem nationalists in the middle east is planning on assassinating the President of the United States in a protracted plan that also includes the murders of the leaders of the UK, France, and Israel.

Hawthorne absolutely refuses. He has a new life running charter boats for tourists in the Caribbean, and wants nothing to do with his old life. But he is finally recruited by old friends in Britain's MI6, who promise him serious money and a free hand in his operation.

The story bounces between Hawthorne, the two people who soon become part of his team, and Amaya Bajaratt, a beautiful, intelligent, highly resourceful and utterly ruthless terrorist traumatized by a horrific experience in her childhood that had led her to become a dedicated anarchist determined to destroy the powerful governments of those nations she believes are oppressing innocent peoples around the world. She was easily drawn to the cause of displaced Palestinians, and it is their funds that enable her scheme to progress.

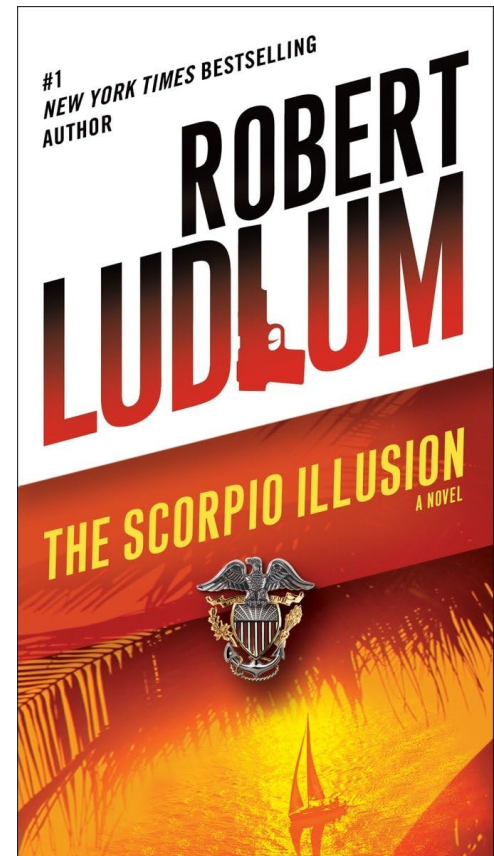
Once she manages to reach the United States she will be aided by the Scorpio organization, a super secret group of extremely powerful individuals, twenty-five in number, who exert enormous control over the actions of the US government and its purse strings in order to make themselves enormously wealthy.

The story is high tension suspense with lots of conversations among the various characters. The schemes of the terrorist group, Bajaratt, and Scorpio increasingly bring them into direct conflict with Hawthorne and his team of operatives. Those actions enable Hawthorne and the intelligence agencies in Washington and London to piece together parts of the puzzle. The web of deceit and violence is unremitting, as Bajaratt's plans become clearer to the reader, if not to the people who are trying to stop her.

The first three fourths of the book are excellent. The plot is fast moving, the characters well drawn, the backgrounds carefully filled in, and the story straight forward. There are some plot glitches, including one that I found unbelievable, but as we learn more about Scorpio and its mysterious backers the pace of the action keeps the reader completely involved.

The breakneck pace of the story does not slow down but the premise and rules of the plot began to run off the rails. Hawthorne is resilient and intelligent, able to draw on the vast powers of the US government to check facts and unearth obscure information rapidly, plus he has the help of Lt. Jackson Poole, an army super scientific computer whiz and martial arts expert who can hack thru computer files with ease, with some revelations bordering on being magical.

Investigating the connections between Bajaratt and Scorpio leads Hawthorne's team to uncover several of their deep placed agents inside the upper echelons of the government. Scorpio is willing to kill anybody



anywhere to protect itself, even members of their own organization who might be in danger of being exposed, and they do so rapidly in order to throw Hawthorne off their trail.

Unfortunately, to make all of the many pieces of the story work Ludlum resorts to plot cheating. For example, thruout the book we are told that Scorpio is made up of twenty-five powerful elite members, either working within or very closely tied to the upper echelons of the US government, but then we see that one of its members is a secretary in the Intelligence department, another is a limo driver, while yet another is the head of a local airport customs office. Not exactly a power elite, is it? If these people are needed to keep the plot rolling and to throw more problems into the path of Hawthorne and his team, why doesn't Scorpio just activate some of their many paid minions? To me this is clear evidence that the author is writing words without thinking thru the ramifications of his basic story line.

Anyhow, murder and mayhem ensue and it seems that nothing can stop Amaya Bajaratt from reaching the President as her plans succeed despite cracks and deaths within her own cadre of players.

Then, inexplicitly, with absolutely no justification at all, a high ranking Scorpio member tries to kill Bajaratt, declaring that the Scorpions never supported the mission to kill the President and throw the world into chaos. Gee, that wasn't what the reader saw in the first 500 pages of the book. This is a totally off the wall plot glitch that makes absolutely no sense at all.

And there is another serious plot flaw. Thruout the story we are told that the she-wolf is a blind fanatic who clearly expects to die triumphantly with her mission of assassination. We are told of her obtaining an Allah's Boot, a shoe filled with high explosives that can be activated with the kick of the toe against a hard surface, plus she has a handbag with sown in plastique that she can activate with a snap of the purse's clasp. But when she actually encounters the President, none of that comes into play. Instead she plants the bomb rigged handbag between sofa cushions, and decides to leave before triggering the bomb.

With Hawthorne right inside the White House, this change in plans, never explained, allows him to warn the Prez, after shooting it out with Scorpio agents along the way. The President's handlers whisk him out of the area, with the explosion demolishing some rooms and halls of the White House, but the blast also doesn't kill Bajaratt or her innocent dupe partner either. Huh! What the...

We then get to see the stalking and death battle between the fanatical Amaya Bajaratt and Hawthorne that results in her death and the final closure of the main plot. An epilog tells us what happens to the survivors, and wraps up the tale.

I will say that I enjoyed this book despite the plot glitches, including the major ones near the end of the story. Ludlum was a very compelling writer able to keep the adventure moving and to fill out his characters nicely. I personally thot the interjecting of background stories for many minor characters was unnecessary and slowed down the plot movement, I also felt some of the bantering and conversations between Hawthorne and his supporting players was overdone. What was needed here was an experienced editor, but by the time this book was produced, Ludlum, had already turned out twelve best selling novels and he was beyond the control, or even the influence of mere editors in the publishing world. Needless to say, *The Scorpio Illusion* also became a New York Times best selling title.

If you haven't read this one yet, it's worth your time, and it moves fast so you definitely will not be bored.



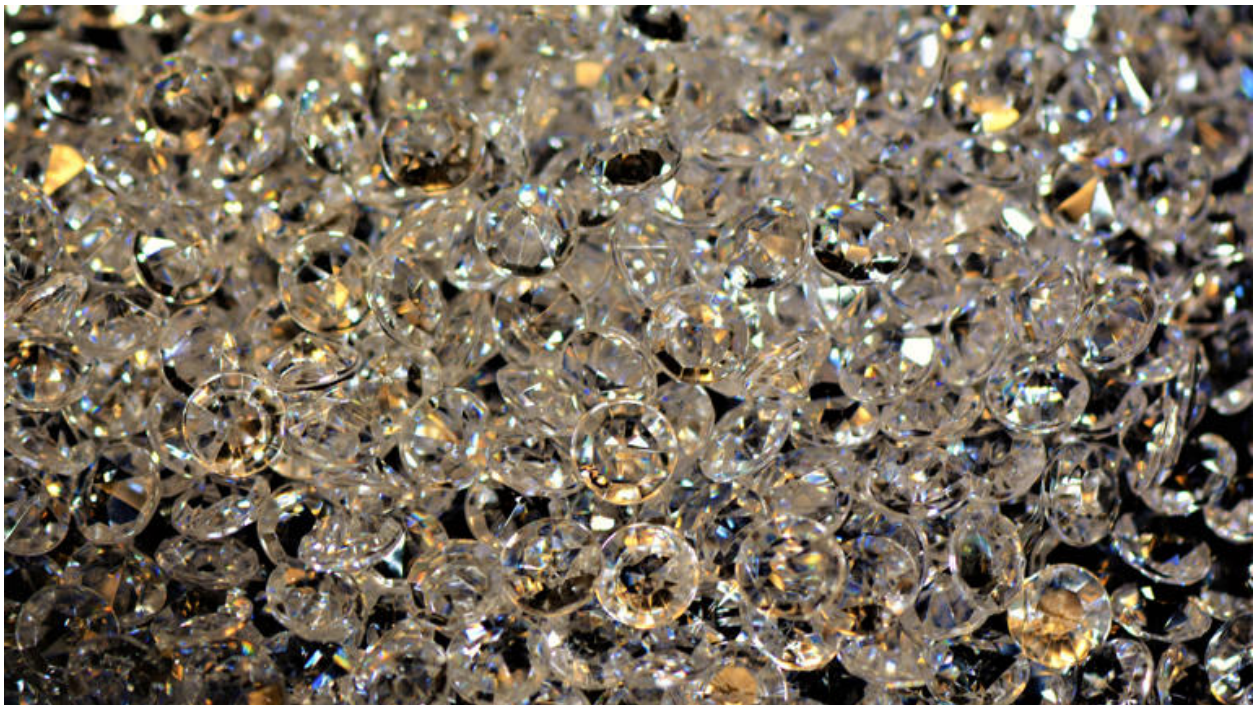
Scientists say sprinkling diamond dust into the sky could offset almost all of climate change so far — but it'll cost \$175 trillion

Story by Sascha Pare

Sprinkling diamond dust into the atmosphere could offset almost all the warming caused by humans since the industrial revolution and "buy us some time" with [climate change](#), scientists say.

New research indicates that shooting 5.5 million tons (5 million metric tons) of diamond dust into the stratosphere every year could cool the planet by 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit (1 degree Celsius) thanks to the gems' reflective properties. This extent of cooling would go a long way to limiting global warming that began in the second half of the 19th century and now amounts to about 2.45 F (1.36 C), [according to NASA](#).

The research contributes to a field of geoengineering that's looking for [ways to fight climate change](#) by reducing the amount of energy reaching Earth from the sun.



"It's a very controversial topic," study co-author [Sandro Vattioni](#), a researcher in experimental atmospheric physics at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich (ETH Zurich), told Live Science. "There are many scientists who want to forbid doing research — even research — on the topic."

Previous [research](#) has [explored the plausibility](#) of pumping sulfur dioxide into the stratosphere to combat climate change, but there are several undesirable side effects to

consider, Vattioni said. Sulfuric acid aerosols absorb a considerable amount of solar and terrestrial heat, meaning they could trigger warming in the stratosphere that may affect the winds that circulate within it. Any perturbations could then ripple through the troposphere — the layer of the atmosphere below the stratosphere and above Earth's surface — causing disruptions in global precipitation patterns and circulation, he said.

This is where diamonds could come in handy, Vattioni said. In a [modeling study](#) published in October, he and colleagues found that diamond particles would cause neither stratospheric warming nor any other notable disruptions. That's because diamond powder is extremely reflective and doesn't clump together, which is the reason why some other materials absorb heat instead of sending it back to space.

The new study did not estimate the cost of producing diamonds for geoengineering, but synthetic diamonds would likely be cheaper than mined diamonds, Vattioni said. (Image credit: Jim Lambert/Alamy)

A few hundred high-altitude aircraft would need to fly around Earth emitting particles constantly to reach the amount required for cooling, Vattioni said, but such considerations were beyond the scope of the study.

"We just looked at diamonds and we didn't think about costs or how these particles could be mined," he said. "But obviously these are also questions that need to be considered [to determine] if it's feasible or not to do something like this."

So many Americans died from COVID, it's boosting Social Security to the tune of \$205 billion

Story by Alicia Adamczyk

As the U.S. approaches the fifth anniversary of the official start of the COVID-19 pandemic, new research finds so many Americans died from the virus that the nation's Social Security trust fund will see a net increase of hundreds of billions of dollars as a result of retirement benefits that will not be paid out.

Of course, while excess death is one measure of how COVID continues to impact Social Security, there are other ways that the study notes it does not account for—long COVID survivors, for example, are more likely to drop out of the workforce, which could lead to paying less into Social Security over time and [possibly needing to tap the safety net's disability benefits](#).

"Our analysis suggests a slight improvement in Social Security's financial health due to excess deaths, driven primarily by the premature death of people who would have received retirement benefits," the report reads.

The authors—including research scientists from the University of Southern California and an economist from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign—note that the savings are "modest." Social Security is expected to pay out \$1.6 trillion in benefits this year, meaning \$205 billion is a couple months' worth of payments.

This story was originally featured on [Fortune.com](#)

READER REACTION



Lloyd Penney penneys@bell.net

Many thanks for The Typo King 95, and here is more Orange Monster to discuss. We're giving him exactly what he wants, more and more attention. If we were to simply ignore him, he'd be furious. Instead of the picture on the front, I'd prefer his prison mugshot.

No man is above the law...except for Donald John Trump, it seems. With his claims of anointment by God, most religious men rolled their eyes, and threw up a little in their mouths. Meanwhile, most televangelists

committed the sin of envy. The Teflon has to wear away at some point, and I am still hopeful that something terrible and disgusting will finally stick. I just wish the Cult of Trump would disappear, and give us some semblance of sanity back.

The more I study Trump's actions, the more I think his handlers are helping to sow chaos everywhere as a leverage tactic. Also, tariffs do not work the way he thinks. So much that needs his attention, but... Canada as the 51st state? Buy Greenland and Gaza? Gulf of America? Re name Greenland Red, White and Blue-land? C'mon now! He's the most spoiled child ever.

China may or may not have a quantum discovery in making supercapacitors, they lie as much as Trump does, but this is the kind of thing, a new innovation that we'd expect in the press here, not there. Three weeks of Trump, and we're fighting with each other, and so little is actually achieved. This seems to suit him.

Right now, there is more than a foot of snow on the ground, and more is coming. Our winters are cold, but this is more snow on the ground than we've had in several years. We've been inside all weekend, except for a trip out to go for a Valentine's dinner, but now, there's no incentive to go out at all.

Thanks for this issue, and I will try to do a little better for the next time. See you then.

///Thanks for your LOC. In truth I am almost afraid to check the news every morning and evening for fear of seeing what new outrage Caligula Trump has enacted. The efforts to strip the government of "excess" personnel is absolutely going to end badly, and probably very soon, but so far as I am concerned the clearest sign that the man has lost his marbles is his Feb 4 declaration that the US would take over and own the Gaza Strip, even if he has to use military force to seize it, after which all the Palestinians will be expelled and the whole area will be turned into a luxury resort enclave. Instead of calling out this insanity, his GOP syncopates are claiming this is a wonderful idea and are making plans on how to accomplish it.

I'm really too old to move out of the country, but much more of this and I may decide to do it anyway, warehouse full of books or not. To hell with the book biz if the whole nation disintegrates!

I wish we had just snowed down here. Unfortunately we just got hit with three inches of snow covered with an inch of ice. Nobody is going anywhere unless they are driving a heavy duty snow plow. I hope things will improve tomorrow, but it does not look great.///

Ken Bausert passscribe@aol.com

Sorry to take so long in responding to your most recent issue (which I have enjoyed, as usual). Between moving from New York to North Carolina in November, and traveling to Florida the first week of January for the winter, I've been pretty busy. I am also President of the HOA Board of Directors of our condo Association and produce their Newsletter.

I was sorry to hear of your hearing loss problems; as you might remember from my own Chronicles, I too have had to get hearing aids recently but my situation is not as serious as yours (although I do have problems understanding people with accents or who talk too fast).

I was particularly interested in your article about the Batman & Detective comics. I inherited a lot of old comics with those titles from the '40s and '50s because both my brothers were 13-15 years older than me and never threw them away. I used to enjoy reading them as a child in the 1950s as well but never got into the more recent issues. Most recently, however, I did sell most of them due to our impending relocation and necessary downsizing.

I wanted to tell you that I also found a lot of old VHS tapes when my brother, Richie, died in 2000, and I had to clean out our old family house where he was living before I put it up for sale. In that collection was a set of the Batman serials produced in 1949 (available now for viewing on YouTube) which he must have bought in the 1970s or '80s, I'm guessing. In sampling them, I was surprised to see Batman & Robin driving around in what was apparently their "Batmobile," but it was a 1949 Mercury. I thought that was hilarious! Of course,

compared to a lot of the other cars shown in those episodes (mostly 1930s and early 1940s) the 1949 Merc was futuristic by comparison. I wonder if you've ever watched those episodes.

Anyway, I just wanted to offer some feedback and thank you for keeping me on your (digital) mailing list. I'll have a new issue of my Ken Chronicles available after we return home from our snowbird condo in Florida around May.

Also thanks for sending along the latest Typo King (#95), another enjoyable read. I was especially enlightened by Doug Hopkinson's excellent article on Cecil & Sally, and all the related people and places. I at last know why the movie theater I attended often as a kid, The RKO Keiths, in Richmond Hill, Queens, was named as it was (the "K" in RKO belonging to Benjamin Keith). There was also an RKO Keith's in Flushing, Queens, further north from Richmond Hill. And, again, I now know where the RKO Albee (in Brooklyn) got its name (Keith and Edward Albee owned an entertainment chain together). *(Images attached)*

Very interesting issue overall!



///Thanks for your comments. As prez of a New England serial club (now on hiatus, alas), I have seen both of the Batman serials. I have always enjoyed the first one, from 1943, which despite unbelievably bizarre scientific devices and whacky cliffhangers, was a fast moving adventure that stuck to the story plot.

The second one, "Batman and Robin" from 1949 rates as one of the worst serials ever made, and that's saying a lot. Everything about it is cheap, from the crappy costumes, right thru a ridiculous plot that makes no sense at all, the extensive use of stock footage from old Columbia films, with cliffhangers that are mostly inept and uninteresting. Plus, it features the truly aggravating part of many Columbia serials, the announcer who speaks over the end of each chapter daring viewers to wonder whether the heroes will survive, while showing action shots from the next chapter, clearly demonstrating that the heroes certainly did survive. Really bad stuff.///

Former Intelligence Officer Claims KGB Recruited Trump

Story by Isabel van Brugen



Chris McGrath / Chris McGrath/Getty Images

A former Soviet intelligence officer has alleged that [Donald Trump](#) was recruited by the [KGB](#) in 1987 and given the codename “Krasnov.”

Alnur Mussayev, 71, a former Kazakh intelligence chief, made the explosive claim in a Facebook [post on Thursday](#). He claimed that he served in the 6th Directorate of the KGB in Moscow, which was responsible for counter-intelligence support within the economy. One of its key objectives, he claimed, was “recruiting businessmen from capitalist countries.”

Mussayev wrote that in 1987 “our directorate recruited Donald Trump, a 40-year-old American businessman, under the pseudonym Krasnov.”

He reiterated that the department specialized in recruiting spies and intelligence sources from the West, asserting once again that Trump had been brought into the fold.

“I hope I’ll survive a third assassination attempt,” he said in a comment below his post. He made another shocking allegation in another comment, saying: “Today, the personal file of resident ‘Krasnov’ has been removed from the FSB. It is being privately managed by one of Putin’s close associates.”

Mussayev’s allegations, while unfounded, add to ongoing speculation about Trump’s connections to [Russia](#). Trump’s first visit to Moscow as a real estate developer in 1987 drew intense scrutiny and speculation that the [trip was arranged by the KGB](#) for dubious reasons.

According to Politico, in 1985, the KGB updated a secret personality questionnaire distributed among the agency, advising case officers what to look for in a successful recruitment operation.

The document instructed agents to target “prominent figures in the West” with the goal of drawing them “into some form of collaboration with us... as an agent, or confidential or special or unofficial contact.”

Trump has denied any improper ties to Moscow or collusion with President [Vladimir Putin](#).

U.S. officials have also expressed concerns about [Trump’s relationship with Putin](#). [Anthony Scaramucci](#) who briefly served as Trump’s White House communications director in 2017, said during an episode of “[The Rest Is Politics: US](#)” podcast with co-host Katty Kay on Friday that he thinks there is a mysterious “hold” on the president.

Scaramucci did not elaborate on what he believes that “hold” might be, adding only: “I don’t know why it’s like this. [H.R.] McMaster couldn’t figure it out, [James] Mattis couldn’t figure it out, [John] Kelly couldn’t figure it out.”

The Daily Beast has reached out to the White House and Russia’s Foreign Ministry for comment.

[Read more at The Daily Beast.](#)

Gee, that would sure explain a lot, wouldn’t it?

What could possibly go wrong





**Illos this issue were taken from the following sources,
with grateful thanks—**

pg 3 Richard's Poor Almanac by Richard Thompson; pg 6 Garfield by Jim Davis; pg 14 Bob Gilmore from his collections as posted on the internet. All other 'toons & illos are uncredited and are taken from the internet.

***What an amazing time to be alive!
It's like the collapse of Rome, but with WIFI.***