

THE STF AMATEUR



22
JULY 2025

The Stf Amateur 22

July 2025

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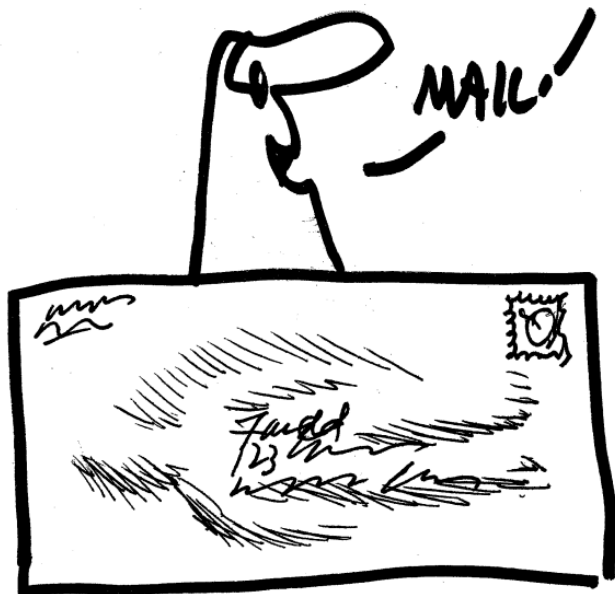
You can learn more about cover artist John Muller at <https://solo.to/mostlyretro>.

The Stf Amateur is a bundlezine published by Blasted Heath Row, P.O. Box 259240, Madison, WI 53725; kalel@well.com; 718-755-9840 mobile; 323-916-0367 fax. It is prepared for members of the United Fanzine Organization and select others, and is available via *eFanzines* (<https://efanzines.com>) and the Fanac Fan History Project (<https://fanac.org>)—as well as for the Usual. Letters of comment, cover art, and spot illustrations are welcome and desired—as are other contributions. A member of the Fan Writers Association (fwa). This is a Karma Lapel publication.

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* This film was in fact screened at the Lucerne, for those of you keeping track of my whereabouts.



—William Rotsler

Joe Pearson

Thanks again for the issue [of *The Stf Amateur*]. It's an enjoyable read and a real fanzine to look forward to. Although it's digital and I do miss the old thrill of ripping open an envelope to see the treasures within.

[While I used to produce a small print run for members of the United Fanzine Organization, I'm currently unable to print even for that group because I sold the printer while preparing to leave the Los Angeles area. At some point, I'll have a printer again and might return to a similarly small print run.

Otherwise, I find commercial printing prohibitively expensive. I might consider print-on-demand services such as those offered by Amazon and Lulu in the future. Fanzines such as *Idea*, *Outworlds*, *Portable Storage*, and *Taciturn* work pretty well with POD. Although I've heard that at least one such instance caused some controversy.

Mostly, I don't really want to be in the business of maintaining a stock of back issues or printing one-offs in response to mail order requests. (Which I've done; it's a hassle.) Printing at home helped me keep the per-fanzine cost down. Whatever I do, I need to at least break even. Not accounting for my time, that is.—HR]

Some general comments:

Happy to see you're en route to Portugal. Lisa and I considered a move there back in 2019 when we sold our Venice Beach home but ended up in Long Beach, which we love. But watching the ICE pig invasion of

LA (now with the fracking Marines) makes us reconsider our decision. We are out on the streets protesting MAGA fuckery pretty much every week now. Well, so much for a peaceful and calm retirement. But it has its moments. Today (June 14) we were out on the magnificent Ocean Boulevard in Long Beach and part of a crowd of at least 10,000 fellow LBC residents as a part of the "No Kings" nationwide protests.

[We participated in the No Kings march in Madison. It was a joyous affair.—HR]

You mentioned Fred Patten in passing. I first met Fred at a LASFS meeting way back in '69, and he remained one of my favorite fans from that time and place. He was a generous and kind mind—and a real bibliophile. I remember doing a Hollywood book crawl with him way back in the day and visiting his small apartment in Culver City. The walls were covered in bookshelves with neatly organized books two deep on the shelves. We reconnected 20 years later while I was developing some animation intellectual properties with Carl Macek at his Streamline Pictures. Fred was working as an archivist in the group. When he had to retire to a nursing facility, it was Carl and his wife, Svea, who packed up and disbursed his estate.

Ah, Andre Norton. Back in junior high I went on a reading binge of everything I could find by Ray Bradbury, Robert A. Heinlein, and Norton. Loved them all. Norton's *Witch World* series resonated the most for me, although the *Beastmaster* series has a place in my memory banks. Unlike the first two writers, I haven't been back to reread much Norton. I did take a whack at *Three Against the Witch World*. It held up but didn't inspire me to reread more of Ms. Andre.

Fantasy's rural settings are indeed the norm for the genre. It's been interesting to see how all of the recent slate of epic fantasy movies and series have been tapping into some stunning natural landscapes, and in the case of the ones shot in Europe, some really stunning medieval towns, castles, and cities. *Game of Thrones*, of course, mined a lot of Croatia and the medieval gem Dubrovnik. The excellent *The Wheel of Time* was shot heavily in some amazing Czech and Central Europe locales—and elsewhere, including one perfect Spanish castle. The surprisingly good but short-lived *Shadow and Bone* series made use of perfect Hungarian settings, and Portugal's own Douro Valley was the gorgeous setting of a fantasy world in the enjoyable *Damsel* movie. I saw that one just after

returning from a long trip to Portugal and was delighted to see the valley used in such a good way.

[I've been meaning to see *Damsel*. I was unaware that it'd been filmed in Portugal!—HR]

Vegas... I think it's a truly bizarre "folly" (in the classic English use of the term), a grotesque and monstrous creation of greed and hubris built in the freaking desert like some kind of titanic Kitsch of the Gods. At least that's the way I looked at it for many decades. In the last 20 years, I've been to visit my cousin who relocated to North Las Vegas numerous times and have come to appreciate the awesome amount of artistic effort spent crafting the giant mega theme casinos and hotels that line the Strip. Until Covid-19, Lisa and I would come out to visit my cousin and spend a couple of days each time, touring around and digging the level of craftsmanship in three or four casinos each trip. I think Caesar's Palace still holds the record for the best of the bunch, and Circus Circus is the most horrifically grotesque and dodgy. It seems like the perfect place for a Stephen King novel.

[Have you read King's *The Stand*? Las Vegas is one of its locations. Funnily enough, the good people who survive the plague in that novel are drawn to Boulder, Colo., while the evil people are drawn to Vegas, which serves as Randall Flagg's headquarters.

While we're on the topic of *The Stand*, the song "Among the Living" by the musical group Anthrax was inspired by the novel, specifically the character of Flagg.—HR]

And there's Fremont Street which breaks all records in terms of American Felliniesque Bizarro. A great place to have a couple of strong drinks and then wander out into the steamy unreality of Big Ass Amerika. Some time I have to go back and drag Alan White out of his cozy compound and onto Fremont.

Your review of the *Renaissance Faire* anthology drew my attention. I was a regular at the Faire beginning in 1970 in the wild (and they were wild) and woolly hippie early days and then in the late '70s and early '80s as a worker at one of the booths. Man, the stories I could tell... Sadly, I stopped going in the mid-'80s and haven't been back. Perhaps the book will reawaken the desire in me.

[You should definitely go back, at least once, to see how they've evolved. I look forward to exploring Portugal's medieval markets, fairs, and festivals.—HR]

Your comments on the calling out of sexist and toxic behavior and grooming in fandom and professional SF were similar to what I saw in my own career in the LA animation industry. To its credit, that kind of activity was very limited, but I personally worked with, knew, and liked a couple of fellow artists who turned out to be real groomer swine. And there was a Fox TV animation exec who was notorious—and as far as I know never paid a price for his behavior.

So much more to comment on: your Star Wars musings, growing up in church, *Europa Report*, Phil Dick, Bruce Pelz, downsizing and packing and more, but time's running short for me. I do want to comment on your stay in Playa del Rey. That area is really only easily accessed by traveling a few miles to the coast through the Ballona Wetlands or from the south up the coast highway, so it always felt weirdly like an isolated community at the Edge of the World, despite being in the LA megalopolis. An "island," if you will. A place stuck in a mid-'60s time warp.

Lisa and I love the place and would often ride our bikes over from our home in Venice Beach to The Shack for a burger and beer and then wander south through the aptly named "The Jungle" of '40s-, '50s-, and '60s-era duplexes running down to the beach. Especially on the beach, the Jungle felt like a place out of time, lost in a mid-'60s Cali Beach Dream. The worn-down vintage duplexes front out onto the sand with no sidewalk, and the dwellers would simply put out old couches, chairs, and barbecue pits right onto the sand in front of their property. When we were looking for a home in 1996, we were originally hoping to get one of those beachfront duplexes, but alas, nothing was available or on the market at that time.

[I feel much the same way about that part of town. We'd sometimes catch the scent of ocean air at our home in Culver City five miles away, but I used to imagine what it'd be like to live on or near the water—there. The ocean mist would envelop your home. It'd pour down the streets and alleyways, reaching out with creeping, seeking tendrils. It'd rise from Del Rey Lagoon and Ballona Creek. You wouldn't be able to see out of your own windows—or in front of you if walking outside.

There's also the now-abandoned neighborhood between Vista del Mar and South Pershing Drive adjacent to Trask Triangle Park. Once a neighborhood developed in the 1920s and named Palisades del Rey, it featured custom-built homes occupied by Cecil B. DeMille and others. Not far down the coast, adjacent to Dockweiler Beach, was Surfridge. (Some online resources suggest they're the same neighborhood;

others separate them. Long-time residents likely remember.)

Palisades del Rey, at least, is now fenced in, but still accessible, home to the endangered El Segundo blue butterfly and rare burrowing owls. (<https://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-ln-lax-ghost-town-preserve-20190218-story.html>) It's also choked with iceplant, and our Scout troop used to participate in volunteer work projects to keep the iceplant from overwhelming the place. Developers or homeowners had used it, a hardy invasive species, as a ground cover. That area is now called the LAX Dunes. (<https://www.lawa.org/media/29382>) If you volunteer there, you can still walk down the vacant streets and see the remains of house foundations.

It's not as otherworldly as, say, Dogtown in Gloucester, Mass., but it's neat to visit.—HR]

That's it for now. Best of luck on your big move. Portugal is a world of its own, as you well know.

Lloyd Penney

Greetings, and thank you for *The Stf Amateur* #21. (I did get issue #20 but have not had the time to respond to it, my apologies.) Comments to come!

The local... Phoenix Alexander is mentioned here, and I have been in touch with Phoenix... I will be reorganizing my fanzine collection and then seeing what Phoenix might be interested in. I have also read about other fanzine collections at universities, and I will probably get in touch with them. I have to lighten my load without going to the extreme of the dumpster.

[I can understand! I donate materials to several different universities. If you'd like points of contact at any of them, let me know, and I can help make introductions.

My mundane zines and related materials have traditionally gone to the Heath Row Zine Collection (<https://archives.depaul.edu/repositories/2/resources/9>) at DePaul University. I spoke at the university-hosted Underground Press Conference in 1995 and have been donating materials ever since.

In the last year, DePaul has more strongly focused its attention on zines published in states adjacent to the Great Lakes (it was always so, but previous curators made an exception for me) and shown less interest in zine-related correspondence. So I've started donating materials to the Gerth Archives and Special Collections at California State University, Dominguez Hills. Their Holt Labor Library Collection (<https://libguides.csudh.edu/Holt-Labor-Library>) offered an appealing option to accommodate labor organizing-related materials from my time as a

member of the Industrial Workers of the World. And because of a connection with the L.A. Zine Fest, they also archive mundane zines..

My apae-related materials—mundane and fannish—go to the Heath Row Amateur Press Association Collection (<https://aspace.lib.uiowa.edu/repositories/2/resources/361>) at the University of Iowa. Their fanzine and apae holdings (<https://www.lib.uiowa.edu/sc/resources/zineresources>) are impressive. I've also helped broker donations of materials from other people's apae collections over the years.

Recently, I've started donating sf-related materials to the Eaton Collection of Science Fiction & Fantasy at the University of California, Riverside. (<https://library.ucr.edu/collections/eaton-collection-of-science-fiction-fantasy>)—HR]

Telegraph and Tar Pits #162... Your move to Portugal has already started. You're somewhere in Wisconsin? I hope that article mentioning a Canadian family living in Portugal has helped with what to expect.

[We've been living in Madison, Wis., since early June. Thank you very much for sending that article—I was pleased that you thought of me!—HR]

#163... I had read through the [National Fantasy Fan Federation] publications that Alarums & Excursions, the role-playing apa, is folding after 593 issues.

[It's true. Lee Gold ceased publication of A&E—and *Xenofilkia*, the filk fanzine—earlier this year. Two A&E successors have already launched: George Phillis's *A Gentle Walk* and Jim Vassilakos's *Ever & Anon*. In addition, Lisa Padol is organizing a tribute one-shot to celebrate Gold and her tenure with A&E. You'll see in this issue that I now participate in E&A now that A&E is no more.—HR]

I am still working on *Amazing Stories* and its assorted novels, including *The Cadaver Princess* by Chuck Rothman and *Tales of Galactic Pest Control* edited by David Gerrold and Tom Easton. I edited the first book, but not the second. More books are due out soon.

I had my weekly day of work yesterday, and there are times I think my fellow subway riders are terribly short in the brain cell department. Who dresses these people in the mornings? Still, I have lived on the west coast, in small towns and villages, and I would trade it all for the variety of things to do in the big city. I just have to find some work I could do at home.

Best of fortune in the move to Portugal... does this

mean suspending these apazine collections until you get settled?

[I don't think so. I was able to continue publishing the *Amateur*—and its individual parts—during our preparation to move, sale of the house, cross-country road trip, and relocation to Wisconsin. In fact, I think I only missed one monthly eAPA deadline and one or two weekly APA-L deadlines through all of that. I expect to continue publishing through our immigration to Portugal when that occurs later this year.

The actual challenge during this transition, as discussed with Joe Pearson above, has been printing. I'd like to resume printing a small run for the United Fanzine Organization members, but not at commercial photocopy or printing prices. Before moving, we sold our printer, and I donated my paper stock to Barbara Gratz Harmon, my successor as APA-L's Official Collator.

Longer term, the question is: What will I publish? As much as I love apae and the motivation provided by their weekly, monthly, and quarterly deadlines, I'm thinking that 2026 might be when I try my hand at publishing a genzine instead of this bundlezine. Maybe I'll take a hybrid approach: scale back the number of apae in which I participate (one focusing on sf, one on comics, and one on roleplaying games to scratch my itches) and launch a genzine. We shall see.

I also like the idea of taking a year off from publishing apazines and fanzines, and only writing letters of comment in a concerted, consistent manner. I'd consider that practice a distributed form of correspondenzine (as opposed to a letterzine, which compiles letters from multiple contributors). Each letter would be considered an issue of the overall whole. Working title: *WAHF*. That appears not to have been used as a fanzine title previously, though Jack Herman published a fanzine titled *WAHF-full*. Another working title, then: *Wahflestomper*. Or, *WART*, for We Also Rote To. Hmm: *The Wart*. (I might like this idea better than a genzine!)

One challenge I've identified for that idea is that not every letter of comment would be published, and those could effectively become "lost issues." For example, in *Comics Interview* #24 (1985), Canadian comic book letterhack extraordinaire T.M. Maple (eventually revealed to be Jim Burke) indicated that of 2,045 letters written over the course of seven years, only more than 500 were published. Faneds might be more likely to publish a loc than a comic lettercol, but a 25 percent publication rate would frustrate me if I decide to pursue the idea of a distributed correspondenzine.

A possible solution would be to write locs as

described above—and collect them monthly regardless of publication status for circulation more broadly as a fanzine—or correspondenzine.

The problem with that idea—collected locs as fanzine—might be that people would just consider the correspondenzine a perzine. (Gasp! Horror!) In any event, I have until the end of the year to figure this out. But I'll be publishing something different in 2026, I think. Whatever that is, it'll be fun.—HR]

I am scrambling to find other comments to make, and I am finally learning that that's the signal that I am done. Let us all know about the continuing preparations, and when you make that final move.

Cy Chauvin

William Breiding's feeling that your cover art for *The Stf Amateur* #20 reminded him of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, when that indeed was the model for your 1986 linocut, is quite amazing! I always thought William had some form of psychic powers, and here is proof. I wonder if *Animal Farm* (or at least its cover) made some deep impression on him? We can pick up things on very brief exposures. I thought I saw a friend at a Worldcon who zipped past me, just a glance that could not have lasted more than a second or two, and I wasn't really "looking" for anyone (but I had been told he was at the con). I called out, and it was him!

[I've had an experience similar to that twice since moving to Madison. One of the first people we met upon arrival was Diana Popowycz, a music educator who works with the Bach Dancing & Dynamite Society. A couple of days after we first met her at the Madison Night Market, we ran into her at the No Kings march. There were thousands of people there, and we bumped into one of the two people we've met since relocating.

And at the end of June, I went to see Fishbone perform at the Majestic Theatre. As I left the venue before the encore, a woman by the merch tables stopped me; it was a friend from high school. We'd been messaging, so she knew I was in town, but we hadn't yet made plans to hang out. Neither of us knew the other would be at the concert. "I knew I'd know someone here," she said.—HR]

Another friend, John R. Benson, does artwork prints using linoleum blocks, so I'm quite familiar with the process you describe. (He even used to make linoleum block name badges for a small one-day con we had at Wayne State University.) The texture the ink makes adds to the physical artwork.

I just finished reading Frank Herbert's

“Greenslaves” after your recommendation; I found it in *On Our Way to the Future*, edited by Terry Carr. Somewhere, I have the original 1965 *Amazing Stories*, which has a startling green cover, since “Greenslaves” is the cover story. A very ardent piece of environmental sf—and also very creepy! While I enjoy watching my butterflies, fireflies, and bees outside, the idea of insects en masse, swarming to form human-like constructs hits too close to personal phobias. It does make the short story more hard hitting perhaps, since I feel divided by the horror of the solution presented. I don’t think I could have read the complete novel, *The Green Brain*. As it was, I had to set the short story down halfway.

[I saw fireflies for the first time in decades in late June before driving home after dinner at a friend’s house. They are absolutely beautiful.—HR]

Re: “Fantastic Ruralism”—there does seem to be a connection between the high fantasy inspired by William Morris and J.R.R. Tolkien. Morris’s medieval-inspired fantasies were part of his utopian and socialist ideas. He thought people could have better lives if they weren’t shoved together in the smoke-filled, grimy Victorian-era cities like London and Manchester. I don’t know about this making science fiction especially urban. Think of Clifford D. Simak and all the authors that write about a destroyed Earth, reverted back to nature: John Crowley, Edgar Pangborn, George R. Stewart (*Earth Abides*), Brian Aldiss (*Greybeard*), Walter M. Miller Jr., etc.

I must try reading Frank Herbert’s *Under Pressure* /*The Dragon in the Sea* again; you’re not the only person to recommend it. Dean McLaughlin’s *Dome World* is another quite decent sf novel set underwater; part of it appeared in *Astounding/Analog*, and it has a very matter-of-fact style and a decent attempt at characterization. He lived in Ann Arbor, Mich., where he ran a bookstore—and used to come to ConFusion, the local sf convention, quite regularly. I wish I had tried to read his stories back then.

I’m glad you weren’t too disappointed that WisCon was entirely virtual, after moving (albeit temporarily) to Madison. While WisCon was quite serious—and panel items perhaps more faithfully attended than at other conventions—it seems a shame to be in Madison and not meet the actual people involved. Perhaps you did at some later SF3 or other group event, I hope.

[I was glad WisCon was online this year, in part because we hadn’t yet left the Los Angeles area when it occurred. (It took place during our last full weekend there, before moving.) While I haven’t reached out to

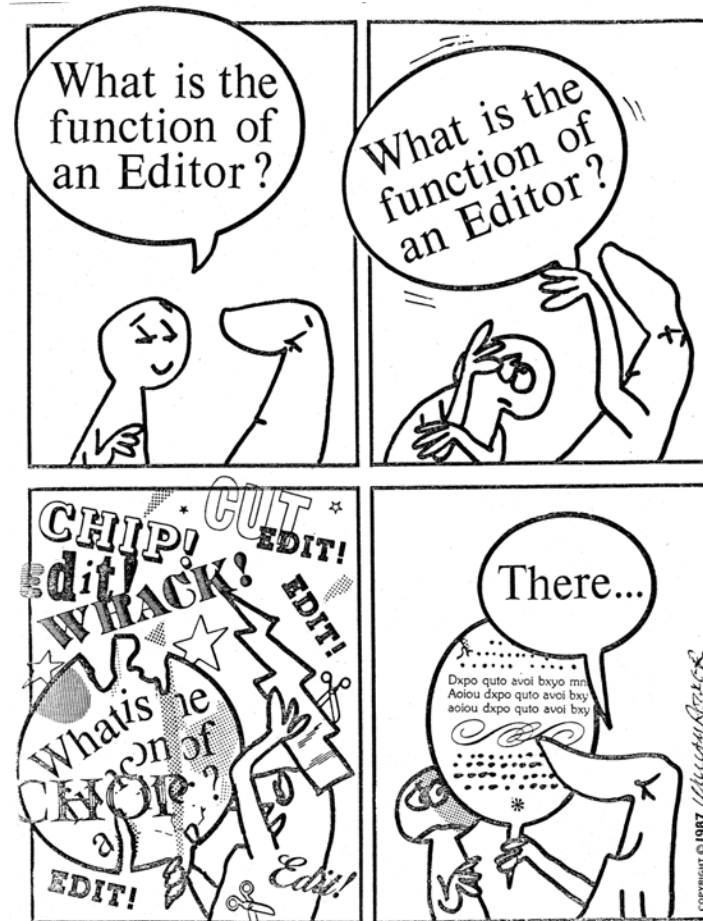
the Society for the Furtherance & Study of Fantasy & Science Fiction as such yet, I’ve connected with some of the folks involved in the Madison Science Fiction Group, or Madstf. It’s all swimming in the same water.

Eventually, I’ll return to Hank Luttrell’s 20th Century Books—it’s near the post office where my P.O. Box is located—and have coffee with Jae Leslie. I’m looking forward to learning more about Wisconsin fandom. The Madstf group on the Facebook has been quite friendly and welcoming. As Andy Hooper said, “You’re now the most active fan publisher in southern Wisconsin.”

Hmm. Who’s in northern Wisconsin?—HR]

We also heard from: William Breiding, Perry Middlemiss, and R-Laurraine Tutihasi.

Call for Submissions



—William Rotsler

Do you write or draw? As *The Stf Amateur* continues to evolve from an interconnected assortment of standalone apazines to its current bundlezine format, it's only natural that it eventually becomes a proper genzine. Effective immediately, *The Stf Amateur* is open to submissions of all kinds.

The Stf Amateur is hereby requesting the following:

- sf, fantasy, and horror news
- fanart, illos, and fillos
- cover art
- poetry
- filk songs and lyrics
- short fiction
- articles and essays
- fanzine, book, movie, television, and other reviews
- con reports
- jokes
- letters of comment
- ... and other material

If selected for publication, material will initially be included in one of my apazines, as well as a monthly issue of *The Stf Amateur*. Cover art will be considered solely for *The Stf Amateur*. Contributors will receive the issue in which their material appears.

Send your contributions to Heath Row, 4367 Globe Ave., Culver City, CA 90230; kalel@well.com; or via fax to 323-916-0367.

Telegraphs & Tar Pits #166

June 10, 2025

Telegraphs & Tar Pits is an apazine published by Blasted Heath Row from an Undisclosed Location, kalel@well.com, 718-755-9840 mobile, 323-916-0367 fax. It is prepared for contributors to APA-L, members of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, and select others. A recent copy can be requested for the Usual. A member of the Fan Writers Association (fwa). This is a Karma Lapel publication.

Natter: Preparing to Move

Thursday, May 29, was my last day working out of the Los Angeles-area office of my employer. It was a hectic work week—trying to accomplish as much as possible before last week's drive to the Midwest—and it was a somewhat anticlimactic final day. I was just moving to another office in another state, but it still felt like a goodbye. I had lunch with a co-worker, my manager surprised me with a thoughtful greeting card, I swung by the mailroom to say goodbye to the fellow working there (he and his compatriots play *Dungeons & Dragons*, read fantasy novels—Brandon Sanderson—and watch *Doctor Who*), returned a slender book about Futurism to the office library instead of absconding with it, and indulged in an ice cream sandwich. It's probably good I didn't eat more ice cream sandwiches at work over the years.

Midday that day, Dave Pifer from Secret Headquarters (<https://www.thesearethedarkquarters.com>) in Atwater Village stopped by the house to pick up 14 bankers boxes of APA-L and LASFAPA back issues dating back almost to their beginnings. I'd held back the first box of each for myself but hadn't been able to find a home for the others. James Van Hise, who sells such things on eBay, didn't want them because he has Forrest J Ackerman's personal copies. The libraries I usually donate fannish materials to didn't want them because we've scanned them and soft copies are available. And I couldn't bring myself to just recycle them. That would have been criminal.

In late March, I went to a Jordan Crane book release gathering at Secret Headquarters and was surprised to see an issue of APA-L from the 1980s for sale among the magazine back issues next to the checkout. So I reached out to the store to see if they might have a use for them. Calling, emailing, and texting with the shop staff and owner, we arranged for them to pick up the boxes, and they are now in safe hands for redistribution—rather than recycling.

I took the day off Friday, May 30, to finish our preparations to vacate our house—which we've now sold (escrow closed in early June, and the proceeds

have hit our bank account)—and the Airbnb in which we'd been living for a month. I made my ultimate visit to the Culver City post office, closed my P.O. Box there, and stopped by Village Well Books & Coffee one last time to pick up a special order and use the remainder of my store credit.

During the preceding weeks, we'd dispensed of our belongings to the point that we were down to items that went with us in the car to Wisconsin, were picked up by a woman who distributes items to Goodwill and similar organizations, or went into the garbage. (We surrounded our garbage can with bags that didn't fit in, but we fell far short of requiring a dumpster of our own.) We were able to keep much of what we decided not to take with us from going into the trash. That was important to us, and the effort to donate and sell so many items finally took its toll late that evening. By the end of Friday, we were sorely ready to be done.

We'd initially planned to depart Saturday morning, but after some last-minute packing that morning—and one more visit to the UPS Store—we hit the road midday, pulling out of the driveway with bicycles on the back of the Honda Fit around noon.



Wisconsin State Journal, Jan. 7, 1955

Trip Report: California to Wisconsin

As above, we backed out of the driveway in Culver City just after noon Saturday, May 31. After some final packing and a trip to the UPS Store to ship several boxes, we loaded the car at the Airbnb, did a final walk-through, and checked out before returning to the house for one last time. There, I installed the bicycle rack (a Yakima HangOut 2 trunk-mount bike rack with adjustable arms) on the back of the Honda Fit and said our goodbyes to several neighbors before I put the bikes on the rack. We did a final walk-through of the house and gave a set of keys to a neighbor to hold on to until escrow closed and the Globe's new owners moved in.

That first day, our goal was Seligman, Ariz., a drive of almost 410 miles and more than seven hours. The route retraced much of our 2015 Route 66 family

vacation, though along Interstate 40. Highlights along the way—seen on signs but largely not stopping except for rest breaks and truck stop lunches of Uncrustables, string cheese, and the rare banana—included California cities such as Hesperia and Victorville, Needles (where we offered cheery greetings to Spike, Snoopy’s brother), and after leaving our home state since 2009, Kingman, Ariz.

That last stretch toward Seligman took us near Oatman, Ariz., where wild burros roam freely. When we visited there in 2015, several burros approached our car, one leaving a good amount of muzzle dust, which remained on the car door until it faded. I never cleaned it off, however, in order to sustain the memory and experience. I thought of those burros every time I drove the car.



Chicago Tribune, Jan. 7, 1955

We’d never traveled with our cat Spooner in an automobile before, so we were curious how he’d take to it. We were quite pleased that he was able to refrain from relieving himself until the end of each day, once we were safely ensconced in a hotel room for the night and his litterbox, food, and water were set up again. But for the most part, he didn’t like it one bit, and the first driving day was quite stressful for him. Spooner exhibited wide eyes and panting, an indicator of feline stress, meowing persistently. During rest stops, he was largely uninterested in leaving his travel carrier or walking around with his harness and leash. That changed slightly as the trip progressed.

At one point, we had a brief scare with the bike rack when it dropped dangerously low, its top crossbar pads sliding roughly halfway down the rear windshield. We pulled off the highway to adjust the tightness of its straps, but the metal rack and bikes in the hot sun of the desert made that quite challenging. Further down the road, I bought two pairs of work

gloves at a truck stop so our hands wouldn’t smart similarly in the future if that happened again. Luckily, the rack didn’t fall so low that the bike wheels hit the pavement. That probably would have bent the rims.

Given our late departure, we reached Seligman after 8 p.m. or so, to check into Supai Motel, a wonderful Route 66 lodging option that’s pet friendly. We deposited Spooner and his accoutrements in the room and unloaded what we’d need overnight. The manager, Kim, let me store our bikes in the motel office because the room was quite small.

We hurried to Westside Lilo’s Cafe (<https://westsideliloscafe.com>) for a late dinner before the restaurant closed for the night. Caitlin’s Caesar salad was very dressing heavy (“Would you like some salad with your dressing?”) but my Reuben sandwich and fries were good enough that we intended to return for breakfast the next morning.

Sleeping and waking, we did so. After a morning meal of a breakfast burrito, Smashed Avocado Toast (a nod to California!), and coffee, we loaded the car and checked out of the motel to continue our journey east.

Alarums & Excursions’ Heir Apparent?

In mid-May, George Phillies, a long-time subscriber and former contributor to *Alarums & Excursions* (T&T #163), circulated a proposal for a new amateur press association to fill the void left by A&E’s closure. “Lee Gold has ended *Alarums & Excursions*, but surely there is some interest in continuing with some rolegaming APA,” he wrote. “We would readily be able to publish a new rolegaming APA, under some title such as *The Gentle Promenade*. . . . Lee Gold is retaining *Alarums & Excursions* as a title for her own use.” The proposed title is an homage to another defunct roleplaying game apa, the *Wild Hunt*, which was active between 1975 and 1995.

In early June, Phillies circulated the first distribution of *A Gentle Walk*. At 17 pages, it’s a slim affair, but I’m glad to see someone step up so quickly after the end of A&E. The first edition features four contributors, at least one of whom was contributing to A&E when it folded. Participants currently include Phillies, Jim Eckman (who participated in A&E from #6 into the 200s), Dr. Rich Staats (who contributed to the now-defunct apa *Interregnum*), and Jim Vassilakos (who continues his play-by-email game reports as seen in the pages of A&E).

Phillies intends the new apa to be an activity of the National Fantasy Fan Federation (<https://tnfff.org>), so people interested in participating will need to join the N3F. (That is inexpensive at \$6 or \$18 annually.) If you’d like to learn more, reach out to Phillies—and if

you don't have his contact information, I can connect you.



—William Rotsler

Screened at the Globe: Movie Reviews *The Color Out of Space*

After assessing the state of genre-friendly specialty streaming services (*Snow Poster Township* #21), I watched this 2010 adaptation of the H.P. Lovecraft short story on Screambbox, primarily on my mobile phone while in our very small Airbnb with my wife. Directed by Vu Huân, the German black-and-white film—originally titled *Die Farbe*—is an excellent adaptation. It might be a better adaptation than the 2019 movie starring Nicolas Cage. (In fact, no less than S.T. Joshi described the movie as “the best Lovecraft film adaptation ever made.”)

For the most part, the flick, the result of an Indiegogo campaign, is a faithful retelling of the Lovecraft tale, with a couple of notable exceptions. While the protagonist of sorts has a connection to Miskatonic University in Arkham, Mass., the movie—set in 1975—takes place in Germany. The son of a World War II veteran travels to the Swabian-Franconian Forest in search of his father, who's gone

missing after returning to where he was stationed after the war.

Much of the story is told in flashback, with a neighbor of a farm family sharing his memories with the young man who's looking for his father. (The neighbor had met his father immediately after the war and knew exactly why he'd returned.) The flashback is mostly what you'd expect—the plotline of “The Colour Out of Space,” from the point of view of the neighbor, who also experiences the meteorite's landing and witnesses its effects on the farm family.

It's a gentle, slow-paced adaptation, and the black-and-white atmosphere lends itself well to the unfolding narrative. I'm not entirely sure what was gained by setting the movie in Germany—other than being able to employ a local cast and crew—but the end result indicates the flexibility of Lovecraft's writing. That is not dead which can eternal lie, and with strange aeons even death may die—anywhere around the world, not just in Massachusetts. Or Brooklyn, for that matter.

The movie also ends in a way that suggests the danger posed by the alien visitor(s) might not be over. Highly recommended. Incidentally, “The Colour Out of Space” is the source of the fan name in my fanzine *indicia*. While the phrase “blasted heath” was used by William Shakespeare and John Milton before him, Lovecraft's use of the phrase has always been a source of enjoyment for me. As was this movie.

Comments on APA-L #3118 (cont.)

Since my partial mailing comments in *T&T* #162—and before leaving the Los Angeles area—I received APA-L #3118-3119 in the mail from Barbara Gratz Harmon. That enables me to finish commenting on #3118, which was incomplete in the email attachment I had received.

I encourage our new OC to update the Welcome to APA-L material so it reflects her role as OC and includes her contact information rather than mine. Regardless, if I receive anything pertaining to APA-L, I'll pass it on to Harmon for consideration and response as OC.

In *Toony Loons* #796, Joe Zeff informed *ellers* of some then-recent weight-loss woes. Your report that your step counter occasionally measured “exactly zero steps” reminded me of my wife's Fitbit, which has begun to work erratically. Yours measured low step counts because of inactivity, while hers now fails to record even intense activity. In Caitlin's case, it's time to get a new Fitbit. In your case, I hope your bout with the runs has eased.

Following our ~2,000-mile road trip, I was amused early this week that my Google Maps Timeline has

returned to delineating a much smaller world. Since my return to work, I'm back to a worldview with roughly a 15-minute walk radius: from the apartment to the office and home again. I kind of appreciated the wider skies and distant horizons experienced during our road trip!

Your mention of the Love's Travel Stop inspired fond memories of our recent road trip. As soon as we started seeing Love's, I tried to frequent them. A little bit of gas, a little bit of love. Upon reaching Wisconsin, it was welcoming to see gas stations and convenience stores such as Amoco and Kwik Trip again. There's a Citgo across the street from the office, and at some point I'll have to replace the Kwik Trip travel mug I bought when I was a reporter for the *Milton Courier* and *Janesville Gazette* in the mid-1990s. (I hope your appetite has returned, as well!)

Barbara Gratz Harmon's *Reflections from a Fish Bowl* #78 informed participants of the printer woes she faced upon becoming OC. The printer I was going to give you—and which we subsequently sold—was similar to the Canon you featured on the cover of this distribution. It was a different model, however. With your MF652Cdw rating the label of “a lemon,” perhaps mine wouldn't have worked any better for you. I was impressed that you tried so many printers unsuccessfully: two Brothers, an Epson, and a Canon. Hopefully, you're well past the printing challenges at this point in time.

I am glad that your new cat, Laurel, has warmed up to you. Now that we're not traveling any more and have safely arrived at the apartment, Spooner has returned to many of his usual ways. He's even found a preferred spot in which to sit that offers the best of two worlds: a cool flat surface and a view outside through a window.

Administrivia

As you might have noticed, I'm considering changing the newspaper source for the movie advertisements I use as illustrations. I'm not sure I'll be able to do much better than the *Los Angeles Times*, but I'd like to explore whether I can find a consistent source among the Midwestern newspapers. (Ideally, one from Wisconsin!) My illustration sources might vary until I find a worthwhile replacement—or decide to resume drawing on the *LA Times*. Regardless, I am currently focusing on the year 1955 and intend to feature relevant movies from that time period.



Chicago Tribune, Jan. 7, 1955

Faculae & Filigree #43

June 13, 2025

Faculae & Filigree is an apazine published by Blasted Heath Row from an Undisclosed Location, kalel@well.com, 718-755-9840 mobile, 323-916-0367 fax. It is prepared for contributors to LASFAPA, members of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, and select others. A recent copy can be requested for the Usual. A member of the Fan Writers Association (fwa). This is a Karma Lapel publication.

Trip Report: California to Wisconsin

In late May, we left our home of 14 years in Culver City, Calif., to drive to the Midwest, where we've secured a furnished apartment in Madison, Wis., for a couple of months. After an occasionally unnerving but successful first day on the road (*T&T* #166), on Sunday, June 1, we continued from Seligman, Ariz., to Albuquerque, N.M.—still largely following the path of our 2015 Route 66 vacation.

Following a filling breakfast at Westside Lilo's Cafe (<https://westsideliloscafe.com>), we drove almost 400 miles over the course of more than five hours. Along the way, we drove through Flagstaff, south of the Hopi Reservation and Navajo Nation, north of the Zuni Reservation, and through several pueblos once we entered New Mexico. In 2015, we'd taken about two weeks to cover the miles we accomplished in two days, stopping much more frequently to see various sites and sights—and trying to see (and drive on) as much old, original pavement as we could. This time we stuck to Interstate 40.

Stopping only to refill the fuel tank, empty our bladders, tighten the bicycle rack straps, and procure a light lunch we could eat while in the car, at one gas station near the reservations, I picked up copies of the *Navajo Times* (<https://navajotimes.com>) and *Navajo-Hopi Observer* (<https://www.nhnews.com>). While Spooner had been relatively distressed during the first travel day, by midday Sunday, he'd calmed somewhat. He still didn't like being in his travel carrier or in the car—but he also didn't like being outside in his harness on a leash. It was a catch-22 for the cat!

Arriving at our destination for the night, we checked in at the Red Roof Inn Albuquerque—Midtown. I made our reservation using *BringFido* (<https://www.bringfido.com>), and the Red Roof Inn is reputed to be a pet-friendly hotel chain generally. This location wasn't that great. Even though the room I'd reserved was a nonsmoking room, someone had evidently smoked in it at some point in the recent past, and we weren't that comfortable with the neighborhood, primarily the rear of the hotel's

location along the edge of a little-trafficked industrial section. So we parked within view of the lobby and covered what we left in the car overnight with a blanket. (Everything turned out okeh, but the smoke scent in the room was strong enough that my eyes watered.)

Our real goal that evening, however, was dinner with William Breiding and his wife, Gail. (A recent letter of comment to *The Stf Amateur* reminded me that he lived in Albuquerque.) Most recently editor of the hefty fanzine *Portable Storage* (<https://efanzines.com/PortableStorage>), Breiding retired to New Mexico after working as a groundskeeper for the University of Arizona in Tucson. He and Gail picked us up at the hotel and took us to one of their favorite New Mexican restaurants, Los Cuates. There are several locations in Albuquerque, and we ate at the Los Cuates on Lomas Boulevard.



William Breiding at Los Cuates

I ordered the Combination de Frank, but our waiter—who was quite ~~irritating~~ enthusiastic and dramatic—couldn't tell me who Frank was. "I am not a first-generation employee," he said. Our waiter did, however, bring up the idea of alternate dimensions and parallel planes when he almost dropped a margarita at our table. On a parallel plane, he was sure he'd dropped his tray, he said, but in this one, he regained his balance just in time. Every Beverage Everywhere All at Once.

Conversation flowed free and easy, and we effortlessly spent a couple of hours with each other. We even talked about more than science fiction and fanzines, discussing travel plans, retirement, camping, acequias, the value of "fucking off," and the importance of non-commercial creativity. Though our hotel in Albuquerque wasn't great, our dinner companions and conversation certainly were, and I look forward to spending more time with the

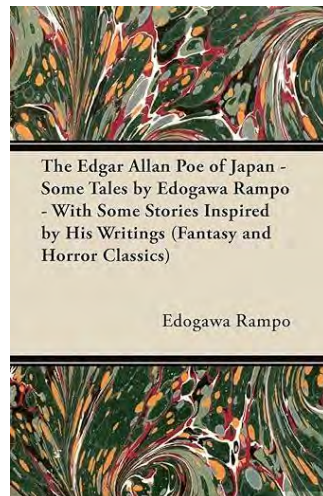
Destination: Dodge City, Kan.



From the Reading Pile: Book Reviews

The Edgar Allan Poe of Japan by Edogawa Rampo
and Lafcadio Hearn (Read Books, 2011)

Inspired by watching the movies *A Certain Killer* and *A Killer's Key*, I started trying to track down the novel on which the first film was based: Fujiwara Shinji's *Zenya*. Asking for guidance from a friend in Japan led me to the crime fiction of Seicho Matsumoto, whose *Inspector Imanishi Investigates* I subsequently read—and the writing of Edogawa Rampo, which was entirely new to me. The pearly practitioner and pro and thriller fiction, Edogawa's transliteration of sorts of



This anthology collects “some tales” by Rampo along with “some stories inspired by his writings.” The book features Lafcadio Hearn’s “The Boy Who Drew Cats,” Bram Stoker’s “The Red Stockade” (oddly uncredited in this volume), and several stories by Rampo. The Hearn and Stoker pieces—the latter “a story told by the old coast-guard”—are enjoyable bits of weird and adventure fiction, but the Rampo pieces are the main attraction.

Rampo's "The Hell of Mirrors" concentrates on an

amateur scientist who focuses his attention on optical instruments that involve mirrors. His home laboratory experiments progress over the years until he encloses himself in a globe with a mirrored interior. That way lies madness!

“The Caterpillar” tells the tale of an ill-fated couple. A young woman takes care of her limbless deaf mute husband, injured in a war. The uneven power dynamics, spousal jealousy, and a general inability to communicate leads to a tragic ending.

And Rampo's "The Human Chair" offers another oddity: A story about a craftsman who constructs furniture he can inhabit. Framed by sections addressing the writing of magazine fiction and correspondence, the piece comes closest to what is termed *ero guro*, or erotic horror.

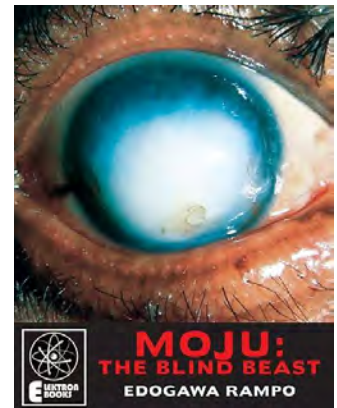
Rampo is clearly inspired and informed by the writings of Poe, and his work resonates with that of H.P. Lovecraft and similar writers. I might also suggest that the manga of Junji Ito (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #111 and #139) is a direct descendent of Rampo's fiction. The stories included in this anthology tend more toward weird horror than the erotic, but Rampo—and similar authors—bear further investigation.

Moju: The Blind Beast by Edogawa Rampo
(Elektron, 2013)

The Foreword to this e-book contends that *Moju: The Blind Beast* is the most “firmly planted in the underbelly of perverse sexual violence” of Rampo’s work. Don’t let that deter you. Or, do.

The book is definitely perverse, providing a solid example of eroguro, combining the erotic and the grotesque. Even though the story delves progressively deeper into depravity and the search for new, forbidden sensations, it's actually not that transgressive or distasteful—perhaps because of its own repetition. Originally published in 1932, the novel was most likely received quite differently then. The book was adapted to film in 1968.

Consider it body horror or biological horror. A disfigured, blind sculptor obsesses over a number of women, imprisoning them in his secretive studio. (Similar, in a way, to “The Hell of Mirrors” above.) Having learned to sculpt his subjects solely by touch, there, he introduces them to his collection of



masterpieces, all female body parts, surprisingly lifelike at various scales and sizes, and made of a number of materials and media. Trapped in the darkness, they are also introduced to solely tactile sensations and pleasures. A haptic corruption.

“It is precisely the loss of sight that can actually make you understand for the first time what touch really is,” Rampo writes. “Only then is it possible to savour fully all the pleasures arising from an extremely subtle sense of touch.” He continues later in the work: “A shape seen with the eyes is nothing more than a meaningless bulk. Yet when one caresses the surface with the eyes closed, a new world reveals itself, one that is completely different from the visual world so familiar to us.”

Dismembering at least one of his victims and working as a masseur, the sculptor distributes severed body parts throughout the city, inciting public concern. The chapter titled “Ouchi Reiko” adds another layer of decadence: the isolated or elevated immoral pleasures of the rich. Idle widows, bored, seek new sensations, falling prey themselves to the blind sculptor.

Over the course of the book, the theme plays out several times, leading to a welcome bit of humorous self-awareness: “[I]t already is redundant. I have had enough. I think that you too are close to being disgusted.”

While not disgusting, the story is provocative, and perhaps an acquired taste. While I enjoyed it, I don’t know that I’d immediately seek similar fare. Regardless, that the book was written in 1932 is intriguing to me. Rampo remains influential, and his weird fiction continues to scintillate.



—William Rotsler

Screened at the Wilson: Movie Reviews

Aelita, the Queen of Mars

On our third night in Madison, early this week, my wife and I watched this 1924 Soviet silent science fiction film directed by Yakov Protazanov. The movie is available streaming on Klassiki (*Snow Poster Township* #21)—supported by Roku—which concentrates on Eastern European cinema. The movie is based on Alexei Tolstoy’s 1923 novel *Aelita, or The Decline of Mars*.

It’s a beautiful movie, and the actors’ eye makeup is impressively evocative. Two storylines converge. In one, an engineer designs and constructs a rocket ship while involved in several largely dissatisfying relationships with his friends and neighbors in post-civil war Russia. His wife draws the attention of a minor official known for his bourgeois tastes and dishonesty. (That dalliance leads to an unfortunate murder—or does it?)

In a parallel storyline, on Mars, Queen Aelita spies the engineer through a viewing device. Aided and encouraged by her servant—who is delightfully playful and wears the most fascinating trousers—Aelita strives to learn as much as she can about society on Earth, including the art and science of kissing. Though queen, Aelita doesn’t actually rule, serving as a figurehead for the Elders, who oversee enslaved laborers who are put into cold storage when they’re not needed. The scenes in which the bodies of laborers tumble down a conveyor belt in order to be stacked like cordwood rank among the more notable visuals. (Along with those trousers!)

Eventually, the engineer travels to Mars, where he meets Aelita and falls in love before helping to lead a working-class revolution. But it was all a dream, an imaginary story. Though I’ve only read the introduction to Natalija Majsova’s *Soviet Science Fiction Cinema and the Space Age* (Lexington, 2021), the book already includes multiple references to *Aelita*. I look forward to exploring other Russian sf flicks—and novels.

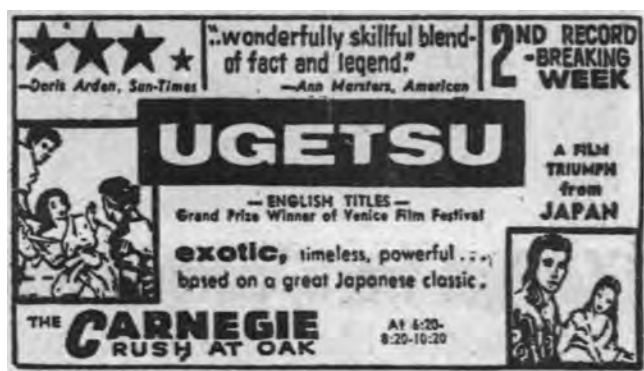
As one of the earliest full-length movies focusing on space travel, *Aelita*’s visuals—including constructivist Martian sets and innovative costuming—are breathtaking. The movie reminded me of Art Deco and German expressionism throughout. Very much worth watching. I strongly recommend it.

Game Bored

With the recent demise of *Alarums & Excursions* (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #163) and the recent launch of *A Gentle Walk* (*T&T* #166), at some point I’ll have to figure out whether I pursue a new outlet for roleplaying game-related writing. While traveling to

the Midwest, I played a few solo sessions of *Downcrawl* (<https://aareed.itch.io/downcrawl>) and *Brambletrek* (<https://crossedpaths.itch.io/brambletrek>), and upon my introduction to the Madison office of my employer, I was pleased to see a small but respectable game library.

In addition to classics including *Clue*, *Jenga*, and *Scrabble*, and more recent known entities such as *Pandemic* and *The Settlers of Catan*, there are a number of intriguing games that seem promising. Options include *Boss Monster*, a dungeon-building card game (<https://www.brotherwisegames.com/bossmonster>); the *Mafia*- and *Werewolf*-inspired *The Resistance* (<https://indieboardsandcards.com/our-games/the-resistance>)—which might pair well with *Codenames* (<https://www.czechgames.com/games/codenames>)—*Copper Country* (<https://www.cmxgames.com/copper-country>); the supernatural *Mysterium* (<https://www.libellud.com/en/our-games/mysterium>); and three editions of *Dominion*, including *Dark Ages* and *Intrigue*.



Chicago Tribune, Jan. 21, 1955

At one colleagues' desk, there's an unopened edition of *Gloomhaven* (<https://cephalofair.com/products/gloomhaven>), which also looks fun. Before moving, we weeded out many of our board games, and now that we're living in a small furnished apartment, I certainly can't acquire new games, so the game library at work will offer a welcome diversion. All I brought in the suitcase was a deck for *Uno*.

I have, however, already made a pilgrimage to Pegasus Games (<https://pegasusgames.com>), which was the closest roleplaying game store when I was growing up. I bought most of my 1980s *Dungeons & Dragons* material at Waldenbooks. Our first weekend here, we went to a nearby UPS Store to transact some visa-related business, and I stopped in at Pegasus to buy a set of polyhedral dice. Now I'm not limited to using the RPG Simple Dice app on my mobile.

Event Report: Madison Night Market

In mid-June, Caitlin and I experienced our first Madison Night Market (<https://visitdowntownmadison.com/events/madison-night-market>), a monthly event designed to attract people downtown during the summer. Stretching between the State Street side of the Wisconsin State Capitol down State Street toward the Library Mall, it's a combination arts and crafts fair, farmers market, convergence of food trucks, and street fair.

Walking up and down the length of State Street, with which I was enamored as a teenager, we met Diana Popowczyk, co-founder and director of Suzuki Strings of Madison (<https://suzukistringsofmadison.org>), and Samantha Crownover, executive director of the Bach Dancing and Dynamite Society (<https://bachdancing.org>), who easily persuaded us to buy balcony tickets for a performance tonight of Robert Schumann's *Adagio and Allegro*, Op. 70, and Rebecca Clarke's *Sonata for viola and piano*. Featuring Ara Gregorian on viola and Jeffrey Sykes on piano, the concert—not yet experienced at the time of this writing—was part of the society's festival season.

Initially, we were attracted to the concert because we both enjoy Gregorian chants (the title of the event), but the performance might be more in line with classical music concerts Caitlin and I enjoyed in the Los Angeles area, specifically the Baroque Music Festival in Corona del Mar. (<https://bmf-cdm.org>) I'm looking forward to the music this evening and appreciate Popowczyk and Crownover helping us navigate the online ticket purchase process.

I stopped by the sidewalk display of Fontana Sports (<https://www.fontanasports.com>) and ventured into the store to procure a pair of shorts, swim trunks, a T-shirt, and socks in which to exercise. And we both enjoyed eating dinner on the lawn surrounding the Capitol. Caitlin chose chicken and greens from Melly Mell's Soul Food, and I selected chickpeas and rice from an Afghan eatery, Kabul Restaurant.

Among the food stands, arts and crafts, and other vendors, there were several fannish options available. Dapper Cadaver (<https://www.dappercadaver.com>) specializes in corpse props and dummies, fake body parts, haunted house and escape room props, practical effects, and eerie home decor. Amy Allworden (<https://www.amyallworden.com>), author of the *Raven Vs Crow* series, was tabling for her publishing efforts and Hyperbaby Games (<https://thehyperbaby.com>). The card games *Her Majesty's Airships: The Aerosphere* and the forthcoming *Blood Moon Rising* will definitely tempt my wallet.

Finally, though I didn't visit the booth, the display

offered by artist T.L. Luke (<https://tl-luke.com>) caught my eye, and I'll make a point to stop by next month. I might even see whether she's interested in contributing a fanzine cover at some point.

Comments on LASFAPA #580

In *It's Still Rock and Roll to Me* #12, **Rich Lynch** remarked that he will never swim in the ocean. How come? I quite like the idea of an "un-bucket" list—experiences one doesn't ever want to have—even though I think you should swim in at least one ocean at least once.

Your reprinted piece, "Won't You Give a Poor Boy a Ride?", reminded me of my one experience hitchhiking, though I was younger than you—in high school—and didn't cover as much ground. The family of a childhood friend of mine vacationed in northern Wisconsin, like my family did, only in a different area. A few summers, I joined them for a few days where they stayed, and Brett and I enjoyed the long car rides listening to cassettes on our Walkmans. His older sister listened to more interesting music than mine did, and I appreciated it when he let me borrow tapes.

Both Boy Scouts, one such summer, we decided that we wanted to go camping. We'd backpack along the roads from where his family vacationed to nearby lakeside campgrounds, spending several nights in a tent along the way, to be picked up at the end of our trip by his parents. We planned a route—spending several nights at various nearby lakes—planned a menu (what I remember consisted of apples, Wheatsworth crackers, and Easy Cheese), and secured the permission of our parents.

We woefully underestimated our hike times, however, and once we'd embarked, it soon became clear that we wouldn't make even the first campground by nightfall. We identified what we thought was a shortcut through a forest and deposited our bags under some brush, to forge ahead and determine whether the logging roads would take us to our destination. They would not.

Returning to our hidden backpacks, we encountered a vanload of young men—probably college age, as you were—who agreed to drive us to our first stop. They had a cooler full of beer in the van and offered us refreshing beverages, but we declined. When we arrived at the campsite late that afternoon, we soaked our sore feet in the lake and retired early, well fed—well, fed—on crackers and Easy Cheese.

The next day, we realized we'd underestimated our hike time again, this time earlier in the day, with fewer unsuccessful attempts to troubleshoot cross country. We engaged a young forest ranger in conversation, and, surprised by how far we'd planned to hike that

day, he offered to drive us to the next stop in the back of his pickup. That was safer than backpacking along the backwoods roads—or hitchhiking—he said. It must have been a short camp and hike plan because I don't remember anything beyond that, just relief when his parents picked us up the next day to return to their cabin.

As we approached turning 50 a few years ago, Brett and I discussed planning a canoe trip down a river to the coast of Washington—in part to make good on the unsuccessful and near-aborted backpacking trip. He and I experienced a falling out, and those plans never came to fruition. I like to think that our planning would have been better as adults, but I'm not sure it would have been. Precedent had been set. I am confident, however, that our meals would have consisted of more than Wheatsworth and Easy Cheese.



Chicago Tribune, Jan. 21, 1955

David Schlosser's *Fool's Mate* #583 commented on the oddity of the name of the United Fanzine Organization's (<https://unitedfanzineorganization.weebly.com>) newsletter, *Tetragrammaton Fragments*. I didn't actually know why it's called that, so I inquired. Rob Imes responded thusly:

The newsletter had previously been called *The UFO Newsletter* (and before that, *The BPP Newsletter*). In 1975, UFO member Rod Snyder suggested in his column a few names for the newsletter, including *Tetragrammaton Fragments*. The title was adopted with the next issue. Note that Rod had misspelled the word as "Tetragrammaton" ("gamma" instead of "gramma") and so that's how the title was spelled for several months until UFO Chairman Kurt Erichsen corrected it in 1976. But I don't know the specific meaning that Rod had in mind when he proposed that phrase for the title.

In *That Flagon Last Night* #264, **Alva Svoboda's** discussion of the audiobook of James Joyce's *Ulysses* reminded me of my recent old-time radio experiences. I've been listening to *The Shadow* on the OTR Shows app on my mobile and have listened to 10 episodes from 1937-1941 in recent weeks. I've also listened to a couple of episodes of *Dark Fantasy* recently, and

during our recent road trip (see above), Caitlin and I listened to an episode of *The New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. At some point, I'll attempt a more detailed report on such listening.

Your description of Jeremias Gotthelf's novella *The Black Spider* intrigues me—and resonates with my recent reading of Edogawa Rampo (see above). The NYRB Classics edition looks appealing. While in our liminal state between residences—with my library all packed up for storage and eventual shipping to Portugal—I've largely been reading e-books because of their portability.

Earlier this week, I did pick up a couple of books at a Walgreens of all places: Anna Lardinois's *Madison Ghosts and Legends* and Noah Voss's *Mysterious Madison: Unsolved Crimes, Strange Creatures & Bizarre Happenstance*, both published by Arcadia. I'm a couple of chapters into the Lardinois text and will enjoy stomping around our new city looking for supernatural, outre, and antiquarian sites and sights. Already ~~on the wish list~~ ordered: the Sarah Davis McBride-edited *History Just Ahead: Guide To Wisconsin's Historical Markers*.

Your remark that e-books don't always render poetry well also resonated with me. While reading Agatha Christie's *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* recently, I was disappointed that the illustrations and figures referred to in the narrative weren't included in the epub file I'd procured. (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #165)

Nick Smith's *Labyrinthine Lines* dated May 2025 described the recent controversy surrounding the Worldcon Programming staff's use of ChatGPT to do background checks on potential panelists. There are certainly better ways to accomplish that goal, but the goal itself seems somewhat questionable to me. Have we reached a point in time where we need to vet everyone as anodyne, lest we upset someone somewhere sometime? Should Worldcon be entirely free of provocative voices or challenging ideas?

I also enjoyed Smith's exploration of another kind of problematic potential panelist: the entitled self-inflater. That came up—at least partially—last year, when George R.R. Martin wasn't included on the program for the Worldcon in Scotland because he hadn't filled out the application. I wouldn't say that Martin is a self-inflater, but I do think that he could have filled out the form he was sent. Yes, we all know who Martin is. Yes, his books are notable, perhaps important. But no one should expect to be on any panel—or con program—if they don't take the requested steps to do so. Any other approach, as Smith says, "makes our jobs harder." Would Worldcon's use of ChatGPT now flag Martin as having been involved

in a crime or scandal? Hmm...

Your explanation of your *The Three-Body Problem* problem (a fun phrasing!) intrigued me. Novels that blend sf and fantasy aren't common. I'd imagine that writing that blends sf and magical realism is even less so. While I haven't yet read Cixin Liu's book, I encourage you to give the author another chance. More often than not, writers get better, so you might find Liu's next book less frustrating.

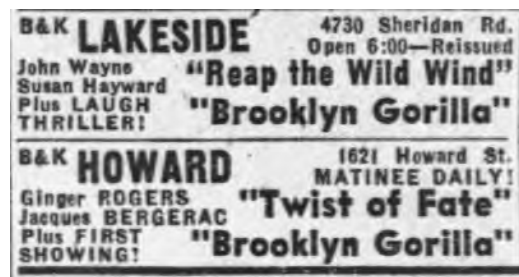
J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Story of Kullervo* was unfamiliar to me, so thank you for bringing it to my attention. I'm intrigued by the book's inclusion of transcripts of talks Tolkien gave. I would read almost any speech, lecture, or essay by Tolkien. My wife and I continue to look forward to seeing *Sinners*.

In *Uneasy Continents* dated May 9, 2025, Alan Winston described a "very eventful month." I've recently experienced one myself, so I can empathize—and I haven't even read the details yet! Healthcare, performing arts, dance classes, travel, and a new mobile... that certainly is a lot.

I've been using the fan name "Blasted Heath Row" in apazines and fanzines since August 2024—*F&F* #34 might have been the first such instance—so it's fun that you're just now noticing. I understand and appreciate your response to the evolution of one of our fellow fen. I also don't always agree, pick up on the irritation, and feel slightly sad and puzzled, as well.

Your saying "I like your scrupulous open-mindedness even on stuff I reflexively consider, uh, bad," is a feather in my cap. I tend to avoid reading, listening to, or watching cultural artifacts I consider to be bad, but how can I possibly know if I haven't taken at least one little taste? That said, I also have a pretty giving threshold for "quality" and can often recognize and appreciate at least some semblance of value in productions that others might dismiss out of hand.

"Mention My Name in Sheboygan"? Having almost completed my first week back in Wisconsin, thank you, oh, so very much for turning me on to that song. Also, John Jakes's *Mention My Name in Atlantis*, which I'll also have to check out at some point. Tell me more about the Marty Cantor snow-porch prank!



Chicago Tribune, Jan. 14, 1955

Telegraphs & Tar Pits #167

June 19, 2025

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Trip Report: California to Wisconsin

On Monday, June 2, having had dinner with William Breiding and his wife, Gail, the previous evening (*Faculae & Filigree* #43), Caitlin and I left Albuquerque, N.M., to continue our drive east. With plans to visit friends in Kansas City, Kan., for a couple of days midweek, we diverged from our travel parallel to Route 66 to head toward Dodge City, Kan., our destination for the evening.

Our itinerary that day covered more than 450 miles in about seven hours, taking us across the panhandles of Texas and Oklahoma, which was unexpected. (Had I looked more closely at the map before setting out, I wouldn't have been surprised!) The change from desert to grassy plains was notable and pleasant, and our drive took us through Texhoma on the Texas-Oklahoma border—where we stopped for gas and to stretch our legs—and Liberal, Kan.

Spooner continued to be well behaved in his soft-sided carrier while we drove, and periodically, we'd take him out at a rest stop, as well: for water, to relieve himself if needed (He seemed to prefer waiting until we'd reached our hotel or motel for the night.), or to stretch his legs. At first, our cat was unsettled by the open skies and hot weather, and sometimes he wouldn't even venture out of his carrier. He'd either stand up to look around or stay hunkered down in the carrier. Eventually, Spooner became comfortable enough in his harness and on a leash that he'd step out of the carrier, nose around a little, and return to his carrier to let us know he was ready to go. On the hottest days, the car was preferable to being outside. In the car, if the road wasn't too bumpy, he'd sleep.

Early that evening, we reached the Regency Inn and Suites on E. Wyatt Earp Boulevard in Dodge City. Dodge City is a fascinating town, known historically as a wild west cow town. In fact, three things helped build Dodge City: buffalo, the railroad, and cattle. The city's cowboy history is worth researching. I started reading Tom Clavin's *Dodge City: Wyatt Earp, Bat Masterson, and the Wickedest Town in the American West* while there and look forward to learning more

about the area—as well as returning, because the length of our stay didn't do the town justice. When leaving the next morning, I almost forgot to say, “We've got to get out of Dodge!”



Dodge City, Kan.

Our radius was relatively small during our stay. We ordered dinner via DoorDash, a turkey sandwich for me and a salmon salad for Caitlin from the Cowboy Capital Saloon and Grill, because we were tired of driving. The next morning, we ate breakfast at Miss Kitty's Cafe next door. Named after the character on *Gunsmoke*, the restaurant is decorated with photographs from the television program—and serves an excellent breakfast. I watched the first episode of *Gunsmoke*, which is set in Dodge City, while in Kansas. Miss Kitty appears in the very first episode!



Otherwise, we stayed in the room, reading, watching an episode of *Agatha Christie's Poirot*, and recuperating from one of our longer driving days. While walking around the property to take pictures of what I could see of Dodge City (the railroad and meat

wholesalers), I talked with the proprietor a little bit. Originally from India, he's owned and managed the hotel for about eight years. He spends the winter months visiting family in India and has planted several garden plots to grow mint, several varieties of chile peppers, Indian bananas, medicinal herbs such as tulsi, and other produce he can't obtain locally.

Given the history of the area, Dodge City is worth returning to. We didn't even venture downtown, and I'd welcome an opportunity to visit highlights such as the Boot Hill Museum, the Gunfighters Wax Museum, and the Home of Stone museum, which features original 1881 furnishings. Get out of Dodge? Nay. Go back to Dodge!

That evening, it started raining, and it continued to rain for most of Tuesday, June 3—sometimes quite hard. While driving from Dodge City to the Kansas City area (almost 350 miles and more than five hours) on Tuesday, we crossed counties in which thunderstorm watches and warnings, and tornado watches—perhaps even warnings—had been declared. We tuned into local radio stations to hear what news we could as we drove. I paid attention to the signs as we crossed county lines so we knew where we were. Visibility was challenging at times, though we were relieved that the route along the interstates and highways was raised and not in low-lying areas in which flash flooding would have been more of a concern.

Even though Tuesday was a shorter driving day, it was the most stressful because of the storms and general weather uncertainty. Regardless, we arrived safely in Fairway, Kan., just outside of Kansas City, to spend the next two days with our friends in their home. That evening, we rested, ate a healthy grain salad for dinner—welcome after our few days of road food—and played a short game of *Monopoly* with our hosts and their 7-year-old son before bed.

Con Report: Madison Comic Book Convention

While messaging with Hank Luttrell of 20th Century Books (<https://www.southparkbooks.com>) late last week, he mentioned that he'd be going to a "comic book show" that weekend—so I looked into what comic book conventions might be happening in the Madison area. Indeed, the Madison Comic Book Convention (<https://www.epguides.com/comics>) was scheduled to occur at the MainStay Suites Fitchburg. The event even rated a notice on the *Isthmus* Web site.

Organized by a man named Alan who might be Alan Morton, author of *The Golden Age of Telefantasy* (*Brass Hat Mind* #6), the Madison event last Saturday ranks among others largely scheduled in the Quad Cities located on the Iowa-Illinois border. After

having some documents notarized at a nearby credit union Saturday morning, Caitlin ventured out to explore the Dane County Farmers' Market, and I drove to the hotel—planning to meet back up for the No Kings march midday.



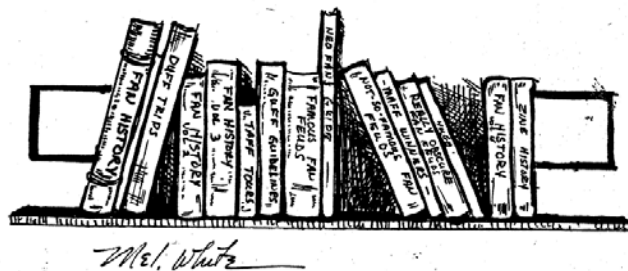
It was a small show—more a sale or dealers' room than a full convention—but the kind of comic show I miss (and enjoy thoroughly). As comic book conventions such as the San Diego Comic-Con and L.A. Comic Con become more infused with pop culture, more real estate is given to movies and television programs, anime, and cosplay—and back issues can be challenging to find. This event reminded me of the comic book vendors I encountered as a child at the antique fairs that would sometimes be held at the Janesville mall (now Uptown Janesville).

Madison also hosts MadEx, the Madison Comic & Pop Culture Expo, (<https://madisoncomicexpo.com>) in August, and the Madison Comic Con (<https://mcconventions.com/the-madison-comic-con>) in November, so I'll have to check those out, as well, if we're in town.



The Madison Comic Book Convention is definitely a worthwhile market for buyers and readers, and the show is 100 percent comics. Even though I need to read and release more than acquire additional comics at this point, I'll return in the future. The next such event is scheduled for Sept. 27.

E&A will be distributed as a PDF, freely available to non-participants, and published using a Creative Commons license. It'll offer a welcome option to A Gentle Walk. (*T&T* #166)



T&T 167-3

spaceship without any memory of his identity or background. He pilots the craft to rescue another humanoid figure drifting in space and experiences a form of psychic connection in which he experiences the stranger's dreams. The stranger is a Mue, or mutant.

The result of genetic manipulation intended to create psionic soldiers, mutants are largely ostracized—and account for 8 percent of the population, or 14 million people. The protagonist soon experiences several bouts of some form of posthypnotic suggestion, indicating that he might be an assassin, shades of *The Manchurian Candidate*. “He seems to be a tool to overthrow the current order of things,” Koontz writes.



After our hero meets the poet Gnosnos Mikos, author of “The Savagery of Old,” the storyline connects with that of Alexander Breadloaf III, who maintains the Shield, which seems to contain an extra-dimensional portal or creature. (This portion of the book might be drawn from “In the Shield.”) When the characters encounter a Christian, Koontz’s commentary on organized religion is intriguing:

[O]ne cannot limit another man’s beliefs under a system of complete freedom. ... Christians ... would always have children to indoctrinate, to warp. ... Prejudice ... is part of the dogma of every religion—sometimes heavily disguised but always there. ... There’s no church until man decides he needs a means of social climbing, something to make him superior to his neighbors. So he forms a church, a religion. By forming it, he can say that he knows what and why God is. He can say he knows the purpose of all things and can, therefore, be a cut above other men.

Other concepts present in the novel include the Unnaturals, people who still seek to satisfy their desire for violence, greed, and need for self-gratification; and the Sensitives, who feel the pain of those they hurt, only tenfold. (There’s also a Sensitive Unnatural, a masochist, who plays an important role in the book.) Over the course of the novel, the protagonist’s newfound friends help him figure out who he is, where he came from, and why he’s undertaken his

current course of action.

But the crux of the novel is what happens when you kill God—or a god. The second section of the book, perhaps drawing from “Where the Beast Runs,” introduces several new characters—and giant mutated spiders. The two groups of characters eventually meet and go up against the alien crew of *Raceship*, the vanguard of an invasion.

For the most part, the fix-up works pretty well. The story is compelling, the ideas thought provoking, and the characters interesting, if a bit thin. The idea of multidimensional gods jockeying for position when one is killed—and dimensions collapse—is quite intriguing, and the alien invasion portion of the book continues the theme strongly.



—William Rotsler

Screened at the Wilson: Movie Reviews

The Curse of the Aztec Mummy

Before watching a movie with a friend in Los Angeles last week—we’ve returned to our pandemic approach to weekly screenings: streaming the same movie individually while texting each other throughout—I watched this relatively short 1957 Mexican horror flick on YouTube. Directed by Rafael Portillo, it’s the

second film in the Aztec Mummy series, the sequel to *The Aztec Mummy*.

I haven't seen the first movie, and this is apparently a direct continuation of its predecessor. A villain known as the Bat, escaping from the police (who probably caught him at the end of the first movie), strives to obtain the valuable accoutrements of an Aztec princess. The movie is primarily an action adventure flick—kind of a noir crime film—in which a group of academics, anthropologists, or archaeologists try to keep the Bat from succeeding. They are aided by a masked hero called the Angel.

While the Angel is dressed like a professional wrestler, the actor is not actually a luchador, so, though similar, this movie doesn't qualify as a luchador or masked wrestler film like those featuring El Santo, Mil Máscaras, or Blue Demon. Regardless, it'll scratch that itch, for sure.

There are a couple of supernatural elements present in the movie. A woman abducted by the Bat is supposedly the reincarnation of the Aztec princess. And there is indeed an Aztec mummy. It doesn't show up until near the end of the movie, and it's not on screen for long, but it's present. The mummy is pretty cool and worth the wait. And, just as *The Aztec Mummy* led into this movie, this film leads into its sequel, *The Robot vs. The Aztec Mummy*.

Now, that I've got to see!



Chicago Tribune, Jan. 14, 1955

Comments on APA-L #3119

I've got to say, it felt good to receive APA-L in the mail before I departed the Los Angeles area. Our illustrious OC Barbara Gratz Harmon sent me two distributions, the most recent of which was this edition.

The cover, a reproduction of the cover to *Amazing Stories*' September 1930 issue, was fun to see. Edward E. Smith, Ph.D.'s *Skylark Three* was serialized in the August, September, and October issues that year. The cover image by Leo Morey illustrates Isaac R. Nathanson's short story "The Passing Star."

In *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #105, **Matthew Mitchell** reported on his experience producing his first issue of *De Profundis*. You know, I never thought to draw on the National Fantasy Fan

Federation's *FanActivity Gazette* for the *De Prof* con calendar—if that's the fanzine you utilized. I always cobbled it together myself using a number of online con calendars, each focusing on either sf, fantasy, horror, comics, anime, or gaming. If you'd like, I could send you the online calendars I tapped monthly.

Compiling the con calendar and the listing of upcoming local screenings, readings, and other events was always the most intense aspect of editing *De Prof*. The rest usually fell into place pretty easily, and when I was less pressed for time, I was always proud of the calendars. They're a very useful resource. Hopefully, they inspire people to go out and do things! I'm glad you've continued that feature.

I'm also glad that you've already received feedback and advice from other LASFS members—as well as the other clubs with which we've arranged exchanges. I never put such clubzines I received anywhere (online or offline) for people to access—when the club met more frequently in a clubhouse, Marty Cantor would leave them in a mail sorter for people to borrow and return—and no one ever asked for them, so I never emailed them to anyone. Your mileage might vary.

When I used to drink a daily cup of superfood iced tea—Noonbrew—in the afternoon, I used one of those electric whisk mixing wands to blend the drinks. I can see how it'd be useful for frothing milk, as well. Like Quentin, I'm not a fan of Keurig's single-serving coffee makers. There's one made by Chefman in our furnished apartment, but I either make instant coffee for a single serving or use a French press I bought at a nearby Target to make several cups. My parents swear by their Keurig. The company Medelco manufactures a Recycle a Cup K-Cup Pod Recycling Tool that at least enables you to recycle some of the pod materials instead of throwing the whole thing away.

Moving is indeed a "pain in the patoot." I recommend moving from point to point rather than lingering in a liminal state in between homes for too long. Not having a local residence lined up can make things such as changes of address, registering to vote, and so forth more challenging. We seem to be able to make do so far.

John Hertz's *Vanamonde* #1642 remarked on the relative recency of the widespread use of electrical energy, as well as NASA battery developments. Our furnished apartment is located in a recent addition to an older structure that used to house a saddlery. Located at 313-317 E. Wilson St., the Madison Saddlery Company constructed the building in 1907 to serve as its manufacturing, warehouse, and sales facilities. The company, a regional distributor of leather goods, was the only saddlery in the city at the

time. Challenged by the growing adoption of the automobile, the death of the company's founder, and the Great Depression, the company ceased operations in 1929. Over the years, the building was also occupied by grocers, hardware wholesalers, and a furniture store.

On my daily walk to work, I pass by the former site of the Wisconsin Wagon Company factory at the corner of Railroad Street and S. Blair Street. Built in 1903, the structure housed a manufacturer of horse-drawn buggies. Following the advent of the automobile, the facility switched to manufacturing auto bodies and tops in 1917.

The main reason I'm more interested in public space exploration than private space exploration is that I think space should be a public good rather than private property. While public space exploration (say, that engaged in by NASA) often involves commercial enterprises (for example, Boeing), purely private space exploration is likely intended to benefit the companies involved financially—rather than society as a whole. One could argue whether extractive capitalism benefits society.

I gave the remaining APA-L and LASFAPA back issues to Dave Pifer, owner of the Secret Headquarters, a comic shop in Atwater Village. (*T&T* #164-166) That way, they'll stay in circulation, even if sold. I'm relieved I was able to find a home for them. I would have been pained severely if I'd had to put them in the recycling.

In *Toony Loons* #797, **Joe Zeff** updated ellers on the weather, his mobile phone case, and healthcare appointments. I don't remember which flavor of Boost I bought for Marty Cantor. Such arrangements don't seem to have been made via email, so I don't have a record. When I was spending time with him at his apartment in North Hollywood, we'd usually talk on the phone before I headed over. I'm glad your energy level and weight are improving.

Your mention of the elevation of Colorado inspired me to look up Madison's elevation. During our drive across the country, I remember seeing elevation signs for 4,000 feet above sea level, and during dinner with William Breiding (*Faculae & Filigree* #43), he mentioned that Albuquerque, N.M., is a mile high. I've always considered Denver the Mile High City—it is, exactly so—but with an elevation of 5,312 feet, Albuquerque is the highest metropolitan city in the country. Madison's elevation, however, is 873 feet above sea level.

Barbara Gratz Harmon's *Reflections from a Fish Bowl* #80 shared more stories about her transition to serving as OC—and the resulting printing woes. “[A] printer that won't print has no value.” That sentence

made me chuckle. The way you described your efforts to print APA-L, balanced with your family obligations and other activities, resonated with me. We certainly fit such activities in between the rest of life. Nook and cranny stuff, this.

Your discussion of your orchestras and cello lessons reminded me of a recent concert put on by the Bach Dancing & Dynamite Society. (<https://bachdancing.org>) Despite the organization's name, it focuses on chamber music generally more than Baroque music specifically. The music, however, is definitely explosive. Last weekend, Caitlin and I went to a performance featuring Ara Gregorian on viola and Jeffrey Sykes on piano. They performed Robert Schumann's *Adagio and Allegro, Op. 70*, and Rebecca Clarke's *Sonata*. As part of the society's Incendiary Artist Spotlight programming, such concerts focus on a particular musician rather than the society's usual small group settings.

This weekend—Saturday night—my parents and I will attend another performance while Caitlin is in Michigan visiting her family. That program is more in line with general chamber music.



Chicago Tribune, Jan. 14, 1955

Engines & Emulators #1

June 20, 2025

Engines & Emulators is an apazine published by Blasted Heath Row, P.O. Box 259240, Madison, WI 53725; kalel@well.com; 718-755-9840 mobile; 323-916-0367 fax. It is prepared for contributors to Ever & Anon and select others. A recent copy can be requested for the Usual. A member of the Fan Writers Association (fwa). This is a Karma Lapel publication.

Save vs. Death Ray

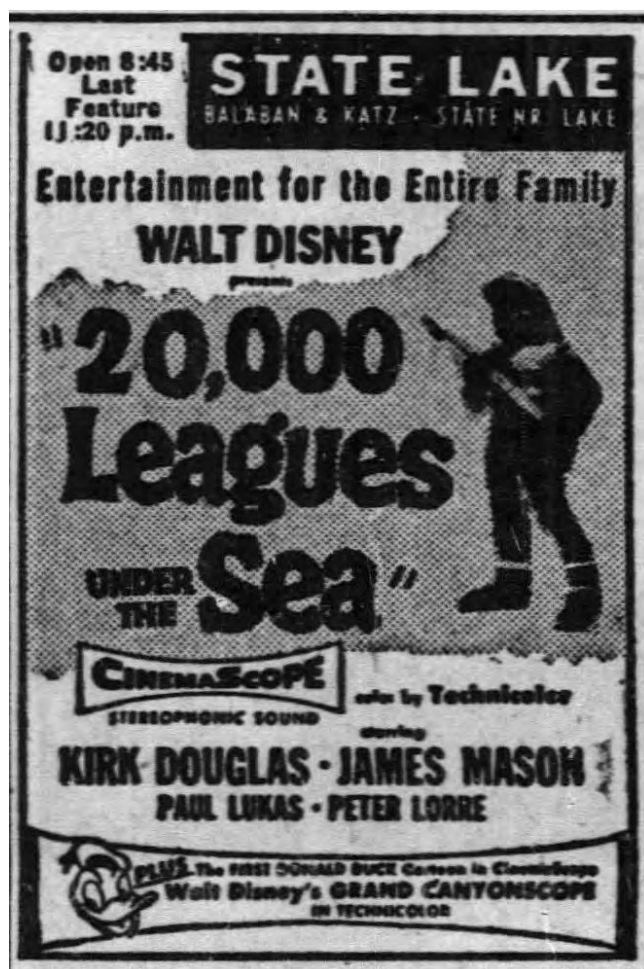
Jim Vassilakos emailed me three times to let me know he was trying to rally the forces for a new roleplaying game-related amateur press association to succeed Alarums & Excursions after its untimely end. Three times! And I saw nary an email. I received, did not see, and unfortunately ignored all of the emails he sent me on May 17 and 20 (twice on that day!)—and only learned about the efforts after Mark Rein-Hagen posted to the Facebook about Lisa Padol's tribute one-shot *Something Completely Different*. (To which I shall also contribute.)

Gabriel Roark, John Redden, and I exchanged emails in late April when Lee Gold refunded the money in our accounts and distributed A&E #593, and I corresponded briefly with Jerry Stratton in early May when he sent me that PDF distribution and an "A&E final comment." But the only A&E successor I was aware of was George Phillies's A Gentle Walk by way of the National Fantasy Fan Federation. (<https://tnfff.org>)

My reply to Rein-Hagen's post on the Facebook prompted Spike Jones to message me: "Are you also aware of Jim Vassilakos and some others efforts to create a new follow-up APA to A&E called E&A?" I was not! To my email I flew to search for Vassilakos's surname, and there were those three thankfully persistent emails. Unseen, unread. And, oh, so welcome. (A belated expression of gratitude for including me in the relaunch outreach, Jim!)

So here I am. The first edition of A Gentle Walk, dated June 2025, looks promising. It's slim, and it seems to be more of a successor to The Wild Hunt and Interregnum than A&E, so I'm curious and enthusiastic about Ever & Anon. This feels like more of a grassroots effort: A&E participants continuing our conversation under our own flag.

Rather than introduce myself, I'll merely continue as though A&E had never ended. Because our new E&A is a transposition of A&E, I'll transpose my fanzine title and restart the numbering. Fare thee well, *Emulators & Engines*. Hail and well met, *Engines & Emulators*!



Chicago Tribune, Jan. 28, 1955

Scoping Out the Game Stores

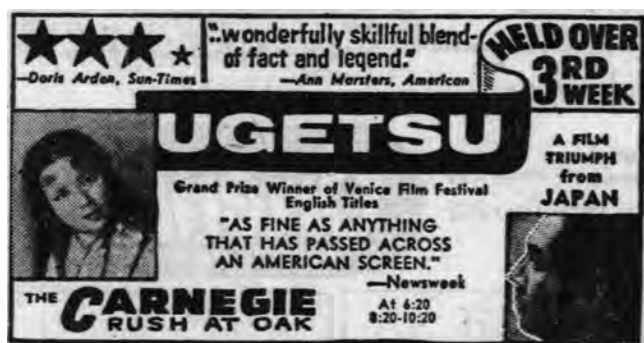
In late May and early June, my wife and I sold our house in Culver City, Calif., loaded up the car and cat, and took a week to drive from California to Wisconsin, where we'll live for a while in Madison. We arrived Saturday, June 7, and I returned to work in the Madison office that Monday. That Sunday, however, after we procured new sets of fingerprints at the UPS Store for another FBI background check, I stopped by Pegasus Games (<https://pegasusgames.com>) to procure a set of polyhedral dice. While in between homes and traveling, I've been using the RPG Simple Dice app on my mobile for my solo game endeavors (see below), and I was sorely yearning for some actual dice. I already have plenty of dice, perhaps too many, but they've been packed up and are in storage as we continue to prepare to move to Portugal later this year.

When I was growing up, Pegasus Games was the nearest game store that sold roleplaying games. I was aware of it, considered it a roleplaying game store, but hardly ever visited. Madison was 45 minutes away from my hometown, while Janesville, its mall, and its

Waldenbooks was only 30 minutes away. So almost all of my roleplaying game understanding was informed by Waldenbooks and *Dragon* magazine. (My first non-*D&D* roleplaying games were *Champions*, *James Bond 007*, *Star Frontiers*, and *DragonQuest*, which, oddly, was available at the local library. I likely picked up *Star Frontiers* at Waldenbooks because of its TSR stock; I'm not sure where I got *Champions* or *James Bond 007*.) Lake Geneva was 50 minutes away, so I never made it to the Dungeon Hobby Shop, though I was aware of it—and took pride that TSR was based in Wisconsin.

Since returning to Wisconsin and the Madison area, I've found that there are game stores galore. Along State Street, I've walked by Gamer's Library Madison (<https://www.facebook.com/GamersLibraryMadison>) several times but have yet to venture inside. There's a Warhammer store (<https://www.facebook.com/WarhammerFitchburg>) near where my sister lives. And the Valhalla of game stores, Noble Knight Games (<https://www.nobleknight.com>) is also located in Fitchburg. I visited Noble Knight almost every time I visited my parents after they moved to Fitchburg.

And that's just what I know about upon arrival. The Madison area seems to offer a healthy assortment of game stores in general. Consider this a brief, likely incomplete directory. I'll try to report on the individual stores as I visit and explore them.



Chicago Tribune, Jan. 28, 1955

Flipped Table Games, 2125 McComb Road #109, Stoughton, WI 53589; <https://flippedtablegames.crystalcommerce.com>

Game Haven, 229 S. Century Ave., Waunakee, WI 53597; <https://gamehavenstore.com>

Gamer's Library, 449 State St. #C/D, Madison, WI 53703; <https://www.facebook.com/GamersLibraryMadison>

Gemini Games, 193 W. Main St., Stoughton, WI 53589; <https://www.facebook.com/geminigamingstoughton>

Go! Toys, Games & Calendars, West Towne Mall, 15 W. Towne Mall, Space C14, Madison, WI 53719; <https://www.gotoysandgames.com>

Guildpact Games, 1308 Hamilton St., Stoughton, WI 53589; <https://guildpactgames.com>

I'm Board! Games & Family Fun, 1839 Monroe St., Madison, WI 53711; 6917 University Ave., Middleton, WI 53562; 2816 Prairie Lakes Drive, Sun Prairie, WI 53590; <https://imboardgames.com>

Isthmian Gaming Lounge, 2500 Rimrock Road, Madison, WI 53713; <https://isthmiangaming.com>

The Last Square, 3893 Garfoot Road, Mount Horeb, WI 53572; <https://www.lastsquare.com/zen-cart>

Misty Mountain Games, 4672 Cottage Grove Road, Madison, WI 53716; <https://www.mistymountaingames.com>

Mox Mania, 410 D'Onofrio Drive, Madison, WI 53719; <https://www.moxmania.com>

Noble Knight Games, 2835 Commerce Park Drive, Fitchburg, WI 53719; <https://www.nobleknight.com>

Pegasus Games, 6640 Odana Road, Madison, WI 53719; <https://pegasusgames.com>

Warhammer, 2990 Cahill Main Suite 110, Fitchburg, WI 53711; <https://www.warhammer.com>

If you know about any other shops in southern Wisconsin that I should check out, let me know. (Heck, Wisconsin in general!) The above list isn't bad for a city with a population of 280,000—and its surrounding environs.

Solo Game Report: *Downcrawl*

The only roleplaying game I didn't pack to ship in a container to Portugal when we immigrate later this year was *Downcrawl*, Aaron A. Reed's game of "adventures in a curious underworld." (<https://aaronareed.net/downcrawl-game>) The second edition was published earlier this year and, while the game can be played with a GM or collaboratively with other players, utilizing the "small core system" Sliver of Fate or another system, it can also be played solo.

I did so in mid-May, while living in an Airbnb until we sold our house. A party of surface dwellers fell

into a bottomless chasm on the lowest level of a dungeon while exploring the Dread Halls of the Vampire Countess. (I might have to back up a little to flesh that out!) Two of the party members died. Four survived.

The survivors include:

Fulcrux Coyle, rustic fighter. Forceful +, Flashy -. A miner, guide, and expert on miasma. He is driven to learn the truth.

Valhein Greenbottle, rough fighter. Forceful +, Flashy -. A bold and lucky thug. His wandering heart leads him.

Diesa Brownanvil, a female rogue. Forceful -, Focused +. A expert on traps, she is a merciless assassin who utilizes a dart gun and secret daggers. She seeks legendary treasure.

Alberich Ambershard, a druid. Focused +, Flashy -. An addict, the druid is waterborn. He, too, is led by a wandering heart.

After a long fall, the four find themselves in the Stinking Fields. Greenbottle thinks it smells bad and is boring. Waking first, he doesn't like spending so much time near their dead comrades. Brownanvil thinks there's got to be something valuable somewhere. Fulcrum also thinks the fields smell bad. An expert on miasma, he is concerned about the potential effects of the fumes. Ambershard is sure there's more pleasant lands beyond.

In the fall, Greenbottle was not at all injured. He was knocked unconscious but was the first to wake. (He's lucky!) He's also bold, so he explored the immediate area before checking on the others—seeking the source of the horrible odors but not wandering too far because of the muted light caused by the noxious vapors.

Brownanvil regained consciousness next. She is merciless, so she assessed the belongings of the dead. Greenbottle returns as she does so and wants in on the action. Brownanvil takes Anklos Irongull's secret daggers. The dead rogue has no use for them. Greenbottle claims Ziedinghal Hackshield's ax and small shield. They can no longer benefit the dead barbarian. (I rolled up six characters initially, and determined that two died in the fall.)

Coyle wakes next. He is fascinated by the noxious odors given his expertise. It is unclear whether they're dangerous. Tolerance is abundant, so the effect might be delayed—it smells bad but isn't immediately deadly or otherwise effective. Breathing the vapors, he finds that his vision sharpens. (They will eventually lose that sense if exposed for four hours in one day.)

The area is marked by low-lying scrub grass with small sand dunes, the source of the fumes. The gas obscures whatever light source is present, making for a hazy view, despite sharpened vision. The blades of grass look like slender daggers. It's the most clearly they've ever seen.

Finally, Ambershard comes to. The three are waiting for him. As a druid, he recognizes the type of grass, but not the gas. The grass isn't good for anything but scratching one's exposed skin.

Once all four are conscious and deciding in which direction to head, they encounter some kind of flickering, wispy flame creature (Greedy Flames). The creature is biological—and is power hungry! However, they are unable to communicate.

The party chooses not to approach the creature but can tell that it is aware of and considering them. Seeing the wispy flames engulf some dry grass, flaring larger and seemingly enervated, the group hastens their exit.

Finding a somewhat well-traveled path, they head away from the Stinking Fields (toward the Sleeping Trees). Along the way, they encounter Jagged Chasms, finding empty, crushed potion vials that still emit a foul odor. Their path is challenging, and they are forced to backtrack through the convoluted labyrinth.



Chicago Tribune, Jan. 28, 1955

I quite like *Downcrawl*'s approach to world creation and exploration. Locations are called Volumes and are detailed randomly. Once in a Volume, players Set the Scene, seek News, and undertake Ventures. Moving from Volume to Volume, it is necessary to Plan Your Journey. The game's tables for journeys, encounters, folk, volumes, ventures, and other elements seem fun and functional so far. Even though I didn't return to

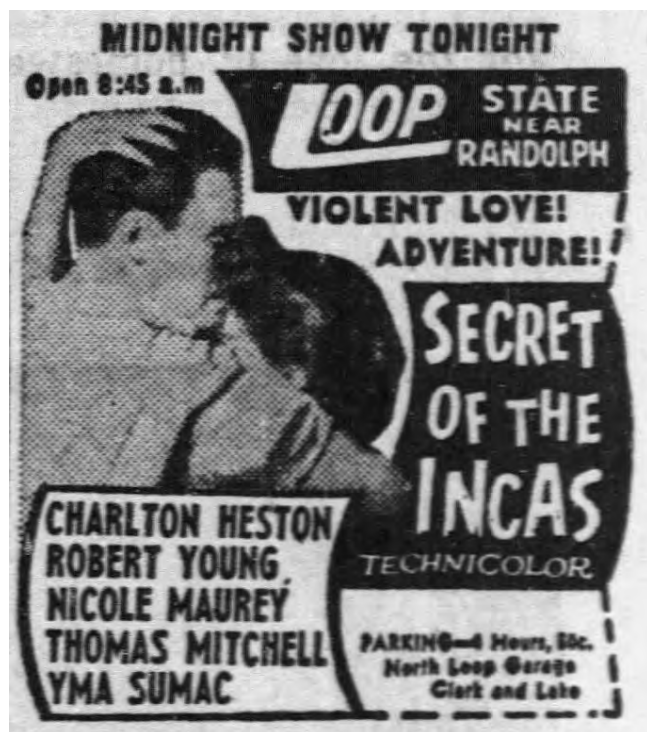
Downcrawl immediately—I was sidetracked by *Brambletrek* (below)—I’ll definitely do so.

One aspect I might change at some point is what system I use in the background. Sliver of Fate’s gently Fate-like approach (it is but a sliver, after all) has worked well so far, but I might enjoy more detailed characters.

Solo Game Report: *Brambletrek*

Just before we left on our cross-country drive from California to Wisconsin, I received *Brambletrek* (<https://crossedpaths.itch.io/brambletrek>) in the mail. A.R. Swain’s “GM-less RPG adventure” is a card-driven journaling game that reminds me thematically (not mechanically) of *Mouse Guard* or *Mausritter*.

Roleplaying a Gnawborn from a small village, you journey through the verdant lands of Akeroth, including the forests of Hyhill. In late May, with the assistance of my wife, I created Sebastian Brumble, a Storyteller. (Health 17, Morale 24, Supplies 12)



Chicago Tribune, Feb. 4, 1955

The sudden disappearance of fireflies plunged Brumble’s home into darkness. Everyone’s on edge. He decides to delve deeper into the forest to uncover the cause of their departure and hopefully bring them—and their light—back.

Our hero’s parents were part of a traveling troupe that would regale their fellow villagers with tales of distant lands and legendary heroes. As a child,

Brumble soaked in the stories and songs, dreaming of a life of adventure. Now, he wishes to gather and tell new stories of his own, to inspire others.

Possessing a number of abilities determined by his Legacy as a Storyteller (Inspiring Tale, Song of Rest, Distract, Ageless Fables, and Overcome the Odds), Brumble also owns a Trinket. It is a wooden carving of a wolf, masterfully crafted by his father. The wolf’s eyes are made of small green gems, its posture alert and regal. The Trinket symbolizes his family’s respect for the wild and its creatures. Brumble does not yet know the story behind the treasured item.

Drawing playing cards and referring to tables, players determine each day’s events. You Overcome the Odds, combat opponents, and find Loot and Rewards. Without reporting on the cards drawn and steps taken to resolve the combat event, here is the journal entry for my May 29 play session:

Inspired by the stories and songs of my parents, and concerned about the mysterious loss of the fireflies of Brambletrek, I ventured forth into the forests of Hyhill in search of adventure and a solution to our plight. Shortly after leaving the cheery confines of my home village, I met a merry group of Gnawborn who shared their fire and stories, invigorating me. One of them gave me a silk thread amulet that I will wear around my neck as a good luck charm.

Early that afternoon, there was a brief but intense thunderstorm. (Just like our drive across Kansas!) The rainbow afterward was beautiful, and I followed it for some time, wondering whether all of the old stories are true. The rainbow led me to a hidden underground stash of forgotten supplies. Among them, I found a map of hidden trails—and an entrance to the Aldwund, the caves beneath Hyhill.

As I made my way underground, silhouettes hinted at lurking threats, and I encountered a wolf, which attacked me. It was joined by a member of its pack, and I felt lucky that more didn’t join the fray. I am unused to fighting, and the battle was hard won. I was relieved to escape with my life.

Continuing on after defeating the wolves, I encountered a rabbit that had been caught in a roughly made snare. I did my best to soothe it as I worked to free it from the trap. To express its gratitude, it told me that there is a nearby underground river that flows to a secret cave. In the last few weeks, there’s been a mysterious glow in the vicinity of that cave. Does that hidden knowledge have anything to do with the fireflies? I must find out.

Before the rabbit and I parted company, I sang a Song of Rest to ease our pain and concern. Then I bedded down for the night—or what felt like night

after my day of travel and the wolves. I wasn't too far from home but had already become wiser about the underworld. I intend to head deeper into the Aldwund to find our unfortunately lost fireflies.

I found the gameplay experience relatively straightforward, though I'm sure I didn't optimize the use of my character's abilities during the combat encounter with the wolves. (Bumble's Health was halved, though his Morale and Supplies increased.) Red playing cards bring good effects, and black cards bring challenges. There are different tables for aboveground and the Aldwund, and the cards you draw eventually determine your exit to return to the world above.

Even though I haven't played many—any—journaling games before this, I'll return to *Brambletrek*. The documentation of one's game sessions sure makes writing game reports easier!

Pinball Wizardry

Since early June, I've been working out of my employer's Madison office, a 15-minute walk from our short-term furnished apartment. On the fifth floor of the building, in what is termed the Library, there is what might be one of the best employee perks I've encountered in my more than 17 years working here. While walking around the space to become acquainted with it, I spotted an unexpected pinball machine: Stern Pinball's *Dungeons & Dragons: The Tyrant's Eye*. (<https://sternpinball.com/game/dungeons-dragons>)



Released this year to recognize the 50th anniversary of *D&D*, to honor the game's original release in 1974, the Limited Edition model was limited to 740 machines around the world. We don't have the Limited Edition, but we do have the Premium model. During my second week working here, I took to playing at least one game whenever I found myself on the fifth floor. If a meeting is scheduled in a fifth floor video conference room, I finish the meeting and then stop by the Library to play pinball. I will do so every time I'm on the fifth floor, and eventually, I imagine I'll walk down the two flights of stairs just to play a game or two. Or five.

I'm not very good at pinball, so I don't really care about the score, but I've been figuring out what aspects of *D&D* are present in the game. In addition to an animatronic red dragon and a gelatinous cube, there's a disappearing playfield trap door that grants access to lower levels of the dungeon. Dungeon Crawl! In that mode, you can choose what direction you go as you explore the dungeon and encounter creatures.

A video display screen—this is where modern pinball machines lose me; I want to play pinball, not pinball and a video game, or to watch videos—lets you select which adventurer you're "playing" and what narrative paths you follow. I'm not sure how such choices affect gameplay yet.

Several well-known *Forgotten Realms* locales are invoked: Dragonspear Castle, Greenest, and Westgate. I was unfamiliar with Kobold Town, though I suspect it's populated by kobolds. Characters include a rogue, a magic user, a dwarf, and a dragonborn fighter. Fandom's *Forgotten Realms Wiki* (<https://tinyurl.com/DnD-Pinball>) details other roleplaying game-related aspects of the pinball machine.

It's a fun game, a nice parallel to the tabletop roleplaying game—some of the videos feature the turning pages of rule books!—and a welcome workday diversion. Has anyone else seen this pinball machine in the wild?

Thrift Score!

On my day off work to recognize Juneteenth, I walked around the area near our apartment and the office, northeast along E. Washington Avenue to the Yahara River and then southwest along Williamson Street, or Willy Street. Having walked right by MadCat (<https://www.facebook.com/felineunderground>), a planned stop for cat food, while returning to the pet store, I stopped in at the Willy Street St. Vincent de Paul Store location to see what books and other items were available at the thrift shop.

In addition to an aisle dedicated to used board games, I was surprised to see multiple bookshelves dedicated to new, unopened copies of two games: Rio Grande Games' *Temporum* (<https://www.riograndegames.com/games/temporum>) and the game's *Alternate Realities* expansion (<https://www.riograndegames.com/games/temporum-alternate-realities>). Usually selling for about \$50 and \$30 respectively, St. Vincent de Paul was selling them for \$1.20 and \$0.90.



At the checkout counter, I asked the store clerk why they had so many copies of the game. She didn't know, but she said that whoever donated them had so many that the store asked them to distribute the games to multiple locations throughout the Madison area so the Willy Street shop didn't have to handle them all. She also indicated that there are likely more games coming.



On the Facebook, I reported the find in the Wisconsin Area Tabletop Gamers group, and one participant indicated that "Rio Grande dumping their excess stock at thrift stores in SE WI and Northern IL

used to be a regular occurrence for whatever reason." Another said, "I remember when former TSR/WotC employees would unload 2e product at 1/2 price books." (My parents frequent the Half Price Books West Madison location.)

Organizers of the Phoenix Con game convention in Appleton this August (<https://www.phoenixgamecon.com>) expressed interest in obtaining copies of the games for the con's "play to win," and a couple of people—including myself—volunteered to swing by, if time was available.

Comments on Alarums & Excursions #593

Lee Gold didn't include me in the email distribution of A&E's ultimate issue, but Jerry Stratton hooked me up! I usually received my A&E mailings underneath Gold's doormat, and I'd stop by every month or so—sometimes every two or three months—to pick them up. As we prepared to sell our house and move away from the Los Angeles area, I switched to email distribution, but it hadn't become a habit yet. Regardless, I was pleased to receive the unexpectedly final issue.

In *Tantivy* dated March 4, 2025, **Lee Gold** announced the end of A&E—and the sale of back issue PDFs. At some point, it might behoove us to consolidate any PDFs we have on hand, so we can recreate as close to a full run as possible for future reference. I have access to A&E #1-31 and #399-593, which represents the range of time I've participated and a back issue purchase. Many of the back issues I have are folders of individual contributions, not complete issues as mailed.

Gold's mention of the poet Michael Drayton and "Nimphidia, the Court of Faery" will inspire me to explore Tudor poetry. Given that you and Barry were both born in Los Angeles, your memories and stories of the area must be wide ranging—and wonderful. At some point, I'll take you up on your offer and email you some questions. Hopefully, that invitation still stands despite the vision challenges that led to A&E's closure. (Sometimes, I have to remind myself that even though I might miss A&E, I don't have to miss you. In fact, I'm writing these comments as though you're here, too.)

Joshua Kronengold's *Random Access* #306 mentioned watching Cathy Gale-era episodes of *The Avengers*. I've never watched a single episode of *The Avengers* and need to remedy that situation. A 2021 thread in the RPGnet Forums titled "Mrs. Peel, We're Needed" features a discussion of "running a game based on old British SF shows like *The Avengers*, Quatermass, *The Prisoner*, and so on with more than a bit of Kim Newman's Diogenes Club stories, and the

likes of John Wyndham's novels" using FATE or Gumshoe. People also recommended *Agents of S.W.I.N.G.*, *Savage Worlds*, and GURPS. (I kind of love how every discussion about flexible game systems usually devolves to an ardent recommendation of GURPS.)

Like you, when my friends and I played *D&D* in the 1980s, we didn't use battlemats. We didn't even use figures. Just graph paper. Even though I've used figures and mats for 3/3.5E, 4E, and 5E, Pathfinder, and other games, I much prefer hand-drawn maps and graph paper. When solo gaming, that's the order of the day.

I appreciate your consideration of *D&D*'s Portuguese translation—or lack thereof. I haven't seen the sales numbers either, but more than 200 million people speak Brazilian Portuguese. Almost 260 million people speak one form of Portuguese or another around the world. That's only 3 percent of the world's population (based on my potentially sloppy math), but Portuguese is still in the top 10 list of languages used globally, according to Berlitz. Given how active the Brazilian *Savage Worlds* community is, it seems that there's a hunger for roleplaying games in Portuguese. Your distinction of ending licensing translation vs. in-house translation is valid, though the end result is the same.

In *QUA AE7KL* #115, **Clark B. Timmins** considered the importance and benefits of amulets and talismans—or trick bags. As I read your ish, I couldn't help but think of magic users'... component pouches. Trick bags, indeed!

Attronarch's *Overlord's Annals* Vol. 4 #4 reported on two sessions of the Conquering the Barbarian Altanis *Dungeons & Dragons* campaign. I enjoyed the illustrations by IdleDoodler and kickmaniac.

I also enjoyed Part VII of *Back to Brazilian Gamebooks*, in which **Pedro Panhoca da Silva** and **Maira Zucolotto** focused on *O porão*. That the gamebook was inspired by the 1964-1985 Brazilian military dictatorship interested me. The book's setting of the "the labyrinthine old DEOPS building in the center of São Paulo" reminded me slightly of *Castle Wolfenstein*, and I imagine a similar approach could be taken to focus on Portugal's Carnation Revolution. I found some illustrations from the book online (<https://tinyurl.com/Oporao-illos>), as well as the article. (<https://tinyurl.com/livros-jogos-BR>) Newspaper coverage of gamebooks certainly suggests that they're a mainstream occurrence!

Perhaps Jim Vassilakos and Timothy Collinson will also reply, but RYQT stands for "in regards to your question to." It's an acronym similar to RYCT as listed in "A Brief Guide to Some Abbreviations Used

in A&E" included in most issues.

Speaking of **Jim Vassilakos** and **Timothy Collinson**, their *Traveller Play-By-Email* containing the 45th chapter of their Plankwell Campaign report referenced Immanuel Kant! I ~~can't~~ can't believe it. In the comments, Vassilakos remarked that "the only good thing about convention games is that you might learn something, such as getting a feel for an unfamiliar RPG or getting some insights into the art of GMing by experiencing (from the player perspective) either good or bad GMing." What about just enjoying the game session? I tease.



Chicago Tribune, Feb. 4, 1955

I might suggest another benefit, however: Meeting other people who might be interested in playing that game or another outside the con on an ongoing basis, or online. Or, meeting people with whom you'd play any game without hesitation. For example, I'm friends on the Facebook with someone who played at my table for an *Old School Essentials* session at the 2023 OrcCon. (*Emulators & Engines* #3) He seems to work in the game industry, often knows about smaller-scale independent game cons, and has similar tastes: largely indy games, largely OSR. I would not have met him if I hadn't shared time and table with him at a con. If we ever run into each other again offline, I'll be pleased mightily, and I think pretty much any game would be fun with him seated at the table.

Your comment to Spike Jones about roleplaying games and board games resonated with me. I tend to like the idea of board games more than I enjoy learning or playing board games, while I'll give a go to pretty much any roleplaying game. Even though I have amassed a sizable RPG library or collection, I'd

hesitate to dive as deeply into board games. They take up too much room! For example, the *Temporum* and expansion discussed above can both easily fit into the *Temporum* box, with room to spare. With board games, I also enjoy playing more than I try to win—kind of like fishing without catching fish—and that doesn't always make for a fun game experience.

In *The Silent Temple* #42, **Dylan Capel** remarked on the state of the world before commenting on *Mickey 17* (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #157) and *Hundreds of Beavers* (*Faculae & Filigree* #42). If you haven't seen *Hundreds of Beavers* yet, hop to it (or, slap a tail, already!). The movie is wonderful. Did anyone else think about *Paranoia* while watching *Mickey 17*?

Your description of *The Wrenchies* is intriguing. Have you read Jay Stephens's *Dwellings*? I quite like the idea of retooling horror comic book stories from the 1950s to the 1970s for roleplaying game session ideas, perhaps using *Chill*. (Generally, I'm often tempted to retool superhero comic stories for *Mutants & Mastermind* or *Champions*. Marvel- and DC-related games are interesting but overly depend on existing characters.) *The Wrenchies* might lend itself well to *Kids on Bikes*.



Chicago Tribune, Feb. 4, 1955

Lisa Padol's *This Isn't the Zine You're Looking For* #402 reported on Intercon W. I enjoyed the alternating con report and game report matter. "He was talking with 6 of the 8 players 20 minutes after the game had ended, which meant folks enjoyed it a great deal," you wrote. Hanging out after a game session at a con is high praise!

Your comment to Michael Cule about one-shots vs. campaigns made me think about miniseries, perhaps inspired by my discussion of comic books above. One-shots are appealing, one and done, but not all storylines can be addressed in a one-shot. I've occasionally experienced what I thought would be a four-hour one-shot being better handled in six or eight hours. As a solo player, I've been looking for ways to play for 30, 60, or 90 minutes, kind of like a television viewer choosing between a cartoon or situation comedy, an hour-long drama, or a movie. Too many game sessions are four-plus hours long, which can be challenging to schedule and manage time for. I want to

be able to fit games into my day more easily, which is why I've been pursuing solo play and, in the past, asynchronous play-by-post games.

Considering comic book storylines, some issues feature a complete story (a one-shot). There are also multi-issue storylines, which might be stand-alone, self-contained miniseries or a story arc in a longer ongoing series (perhaps the traditional campaign). Ongoing campaigns can take years or decades if the characters survive and players at the table remain stable. I'm curious about the middle way: shorter campaigns intended to be resolved in a handful of game sessions rather than a longer commitment. A shorter story arc without a longer umbrella story arc.

Clearly, this is based on my own gaming experience, but I've played in more ongoing campaigns than one-shots, and very few miniseries or shorter campaigns. *D&D* Adventurers League and con play are notable exceptions. Those would qualify as either a miniseries or a one-shot, depending on the module. My friend John intended *Kerzmielzorg* to be a shorter campaign—expecting to finish it in June when his son would finish college for the summer—but I had to drop out because of preparing to move and our relocation.

As I explore the writing of Lois McMaster Bujold, I'll have to prioritize her Vorkosigan books. I also made note of Katherine Addison's *The Goblin Emperor*, Ellen Kushner's Riverside books (the cover art I've seen is beautiful), and Phyllis Ann Karr's *Idylls of the Queen*.

In *PumSpeak* #131, **Paul Holman** mentioned *GURPS Monster Hunters*, which might also work well to adapt horror comics. **Brian Christopher Misiaszek's** *Age of Menace* #237 reported on musical performances, 3D printing, and *El Ángel Oscuro*—which seems very promising. Very promising.

In the April 2025 issue of *Craig Cornered*, **Craig Kamber** commented on the health of his spouse, the closure of a local game store, and his upcoming relocation. Having recently moved, I empathize with you in all the ways.

Gabriel Roark's *Bugbears & Ballyhoo* #39 indicated that his mother would soon return home from the skilled nursing facility. I hope that transition went smoothly. With your recent court hearings, it must have been a relief when you learned you didn't have to also serve on a jury. That might have been too much of the same all at once! Melsonian Arts Council's new subscription service will tempt me sorely, but I remain resolute to use the materials I've already obtained from them before I acquire more. Their materials are absolutely beautiful.

In *Mundus Vult Decepi*, **Michael Cule** commented

on local cons and mentioned *GURPS Monster Hunters* (like Paul Holman above!). I wonder what the Mack Reynolds short story you described is! **Patrick Zoch's** *The Dragon's Beard* dated April 2025 expressed concern about the decimation of government agencies. May the rate of change you experience at work decrease and diminish! May you be affected as little as possible. Your recent spring break experience sounds glorious. Our son remained in Tokyo for his spring break, interning with a local ward office, his first internship. The summer term has now started, and he remains on track to graduate in mid-2026.

The indicia of **Spike Y Jones's** *Mermecolion at a Picnic* #463 continues to delight me. "Wouldn't be the first time that an outside article writer was confused by the multi-author concept of an APA," you wrote. I started reading Hillary Chute's book *Why Comics?* this week. One of the portions I highlighted so far states, "'Graphic novel' was coined in a 1964 newsletter circulated at the Amateur Press Association, but had never before been used in a commercial context." That made me chuckle. Fan historian Richard Kyle coined the phrase "graphic novel" in the November 1964 mailing of Capa-Alpha. I wonder if he went to the Amateur Press Association. We should all go. They circulate newsletters there!

In *Ronin Engineer*, **Jim Eckman** reintroduced himself. Welcome back! I hope you find your way to E&A, too. Your use of the phrase Cthulhu in Chief does the Great Old One a disservice. And **Mark Nemeth's** *The Seedling* #47 informed fellow apans of his retirement of sorts. I'm sorry you had to experience that period of uncertainty—and that your next phase of life brings only the best and brightest.



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Telegraphs & Tar Pits #168

June 24, 2025

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Trip Report: California to Wisconsin

In early June, while driving cross country, my wife and I spent a couple of free days with friends in Kansas City, Kan. We stayed with them in their home, ate numerous home-cooked meals, and appreciated the respite from our road trip from the Los Angeles area to Madison, Wis. Our cat, Spooner, in particular, benefited from the time not spent in the car.

Upon arrival, I was pleased to see that the husband of my wife's friend from college had recently obtained several prozines from the 1950s to the 1970s. I'd been unaware he was an sf reader, and he'd bought the magazines at a bookstore in Manhattan, Kan., the Dusty Bookshelf. (<https://www.dustybookshelf.com>) Reportedly purchased for about \$5, the handful of issues included the November 1954 issue of *Imagination*, the November 1956 *Other Worlds*, the November 1956 *Science Stories*, the July 1970 *Analog Science Fiction/Science Fact*, the November 1976 *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, and the August 1977 *Galaxy Science Fiction*. I had no idea that Russ had such good taste! (And, the Dusty Bookshelf might be another reason to return to Kansas.)

Wednesday, June 4, we visited the National Museum of Toys and Miniatures on the campus of the University of Missouri Kansas City. (<https://toyandminiaturemuseum.org>) Home to the world's largest collection of fine-scale miniatures—functional diminutive replicas of items and objects—and one of the largest collections of historic toys, the museum is well worth a visit. I especially enjoyed the miniature rooms, and after asking staff members at the registration counter, I was even able to locate a dollhouse that... contained a miniature dollhouse.

In addition to a display case featuring old-time radio premiums and toys such as a Buck Rogers Rocket Space Pistol, there were multiple exhibits of sf-related items, including a Meccano engineering set; mid-century robot, spacecraft, and UFO toys; and other objects of interest.



There was also an exhibit titled *The Nostalgia Awakens*, which showcased “retro Kenner Star Wars action figure toys.” That installation was quite impressive and featured a wide array of Star Wars toys, including premiums and items sold only outside the United States. A legal disclaimer and copyright notice posted by the entrance to the exhibit stated that the “exhibition is a fan-created enterprise and not endorsed by Lucasfilm Ltd., Disney, or Twentieth Century Fox...” The Star Wars exhibit will be accessible until Jan. 26, 2026, so make your travel plans accordingly. (Or, tell your local friends!)

On Thursday, June 5, we went to the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. (<https://www.nelson-atkins.org>) An excellent art museum, it offers a little bit of almost everything, balancing fine and pop art, older work and contemporary pieces. The lawn surrounding the museum features sculptures by Claes Oldenburg and Alexander Calder.

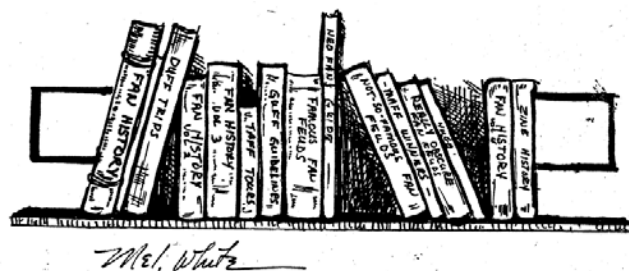


Claes Oldenburg, *Shuttlecocks*

The museum’s *Mapping the Heavens: Art, Astronomy, and Exchange between the Islamic Lands and Europe* exhibit might be of special interest to amateur astronomers in the Kansas City area. In addition to an assortment of astronomical texts and an assessment of the relationship between astronomy and religious faith, the exhibit also features an astrolabe dating back to 1236-7.

After visiting the toy museum, I posted several photographs on the Kansas City Science Fiction & Fantasy Society group on the Facebook so local fans were aware of the exhibits. I was unaware, however, that I was in town during the 2025 SFWA Nebula Conference, which took place June 5-8.

Following our days of rest, exploration, and camaraderie, we continued our road trip east on June 6. Destination: Iowa City, Iowa.

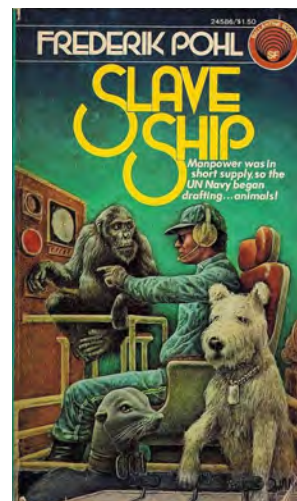


From the Reading Pile: Book Reviews

Slave Ship by Frederik Pohl (Ballantine, 1975)

First published in 1957, this novel was originally serialized in the March and April 1956 issues of *Galaxy Science Fiction*. It was an interesting book to read so soon after Frank Herbert’s *The Dragon in the Sea* (T&T #165) because both are borderline military sf that focus on the navy.

The armed forces are engaged in a war with the Caodai, a Vietnamese religious cult that has already taken over “most of three continents.” That provides an interesting perspective on the challenges faced during military action that engages distributed or networked armed forces or terrorist groups.



It was a confederation—the United Nations—against a Church Militant—the Caodais. They were a religion, not a nation; they happened to be a religion with troops and battle-wagons and fusion bombs, but a religion all the same. And how can you declare war on a religion?

American telepaths involved in espionage and covert activities are falling prey to a mysterious force called the glotch, which seems to be some sort of deadly satellite heat ray, or perhaps a Caodai bio-weapon. Pohl spends some time focusing on speculative ideas about the language of animals, suggesting that crows, cats, and other creatures possess languages of their own. Some animal languages incorporate elements such as sound, scent, body posture, and bodily functions. The author differentiates between learning or skills acquisition and mimicry. He also concentrates on telepathy, and the sections that focus on a Western Union-like telepathic communication service prove quite

enjoyable—and important.

In “A Note About This Book” at the end of the text, Pohl more fully explores some of the scientific underpinnings of the narrative. Researchers such as Dr. Konrad V. Lorentz, Ernest Thompson Seton, George Schwidetzky, and others experimented with the languages of jackdaws, ducks, geese, crows, roosters, and other non-avian fauna.

The book makes for a good read. It incorporates several interesting ideas, and I appreciated the discussion of the scientific background that informed part of the story.

The Employees by Olga Ravn (New Directions, 2023)

I picked up this slim novel at Lake City Books last Saturday and read it that afternoon while sheltering inside to take advantage of the air conditioning. An English translation of Ravn’s 2018 book published as *De ansatte* in Denmark, this “workplace novel of the 22nd century” is an explicitly science fictional novel published by an imprint that doesn’t usually traffic in such fare. New

Directions is one of my favorite imprints, and I’ll read pretty much anything they publish. This novel—which received a promotional blurb from Jeff VanderMeer—is a book that you absolutely must read.

The story is told through a series of first-person statements, transcripts of interviews conducted with the crew of the Six Thousand Ship, which has traveled from Earth to the planet New Discovery. There, they find 19 objects, which the crew brings on board for examination and investigation. Granted various names such as the Diamond Egg, the Reverse Strap-On, the Gift, the Dog, and the Half-Naked Bean, the objects seem to affect crew members in various ways, altering their perception and causing them to experience a wide range of emotions.

Crew members, which include humans and humanoids—who/which are able to be uploaded and regenerated—respond to the objects and the feelings they elicit in different ways. Some humans seek comfort in holograms of their children. Others wallow in nostalgia for the Earth that they remember and the lives they left behind. “Those of us from Earth, we can hardly talk to each other,” Ravn writes. “We’re



weighed down with memories of where we came from and what we left behind.” One character, for example, “understood impending events through shopping.”

Various sections of the Six Thousand Ship are mentioned in the text. Human crew members suffer from eczema and an outbreak of warts. And tensions between the humans and humanoids reach a critical point. The novel addresses themes of individuality and collective identity, what it means to be human (or living), whether one can develop empathy, the loyalty employees owe an employer—and an employer owes its employees—what remains once we’ve gone away, freewill, regret, forgiveness, and the psychological and physical effects of being so very far from home.

Ravn’s writing is also occasionally quite beautiful, if sparse, especially the portions detailing the crew’s experiences on the surface of New Discovery and in the valley where the objects were discovered. In the end, the story balances detachment and engagement, as well as resignation and hope. *The Employees* is a very, very good book.

From the Reading Pile: Short Stories

Inspired by our Kansas City host’s copy of the November 1954 issue of *Imagination* (Vol. 5 #11), I obtained a PDF of that edition and read it, in part while in our friends’ home. In addition to other editorial features, the issue includes four short stories, a novelette, and a “complete novel.”

Alan J. Ramm’s short story “Trouble Near the Sun” is set on the Inner Planet Fleet’s *Cerebus III*, a salvage vessel on a mission to locate another spacecraft, the *Regis*, and rescue its crew. The *Regis*—and an inspector on board—became endangered while investigating whether nuclei were being illegally dredged from a sunspot.

Navigating through the corona of Sol into the chromosphere, the *Cerebus III* encounters challenges of its own. Navigation in the sun is tricky business generally, but when crew members aren’t cooperating—instead, competing—with each other, it becomes downright dangerous.

In “Eight Million Dollars from Mars!”, Winston Marks tells the tale of a smuggler who tries to evade detection. Having betrayed his accomplices, he rushes to board a ship scheduled to depart for Mars. Bypassing one of the preparatory steps for his voyage, he unwittingly guarantees a very uncomfortable trip. (Very uncomfortable indeed!)

Richard Maples’s short story, “The Frightful Ones,” focuses on a child forced to face alien invaders. The identity of the child—and the invaders—might surprise you. And in “The Missing Disclaimer,” Sam Sackett offers a story in which a

writer for the fictional *Atomic Science Stories* unwittingly fends off an alien invasion because of an editorial error.

In S.M. Tenneshaw's novelette, "Let Space Be Your Coffin," a man who suspects his girlfriend of disloyalty plots the death of a mutual friend and colleague. His plan gangs agley—as they apt do—and the fate he intended for his rival falls, instead, to him. Finally, Geoff St. Reynard's (a pen name of Robert W. Krepps) novel, "Don't Panic!", is a very fun piece focusing on humanity's response to an alien invasion. Shades of *Starship Troopers*, *V*, and *The War of the Worlds*, there's a wide range of emotions and responses experienced and exhibited by the survivors. One man decides to stand up to the invaders, enlisting the aid of other surviving humans. Krepps's portrayal of the developing romance between the hero and a compatriot was particularly affectionate.

An editorial sheds some light on *Madge's* decision to feature "calendar type pinup[s]" on its covers. Henry Bott offers reviews of then-current books. But Mari Wolf's column "Fandora's Box" is the real treat of the issue. Wolf considers some of the different approaches to reviewing fanzines and whether rating them is a worthy endeavor. A Los Angeles-area fan, she reviews several National Fantasy Fan Federation clubzines, Richard E. Geis's *Psychotic*, Walt Willis's *Hyphen*, Terry Carr's *Vulcan*, and other items. The column, occasionally written by Robert Bloch, ran from 1951-1958 and provides a treasure trove for fanzine fen and fandom historians alike. I need to learn more about Wolf, who was a member of the LASFS.

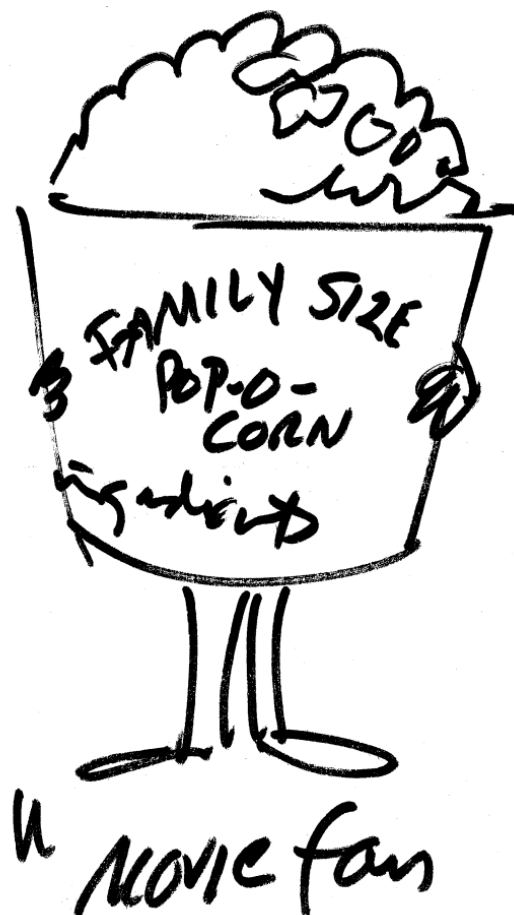
In the letter column, a correspondent proposes three distinct types of prozines: the waste of money type, pleasant reading, and true science fiction. Other topics include whether sf fen are prone to communist sympathies (a pink outlook) and misleading anthologies. But why letter writer Jimmy Walker, then of Amarillo, Tex., doesn't like the "Fandora's Box" column, I do not know. It might be the best thing in *Madge*!

Because otherwise, *Imagination* sits squarely in the "pleasant reading" category as far as I'm concerned. It's not a waste of money, but its stories—at least in this issue—don't seem to deserve the laurels of "true science fiction." (I hesitate to say that because I don't actually think I'd take a position on what true science fiction is. There's enough different kinds of sf to satisfy all fen.)

Of the stories in this, I enjoyed them all. There wasn't a stinker in the bunch! In honor of Wolf, I'll rank the pieces from best to least best—and rate them totally subjectively and somewhat arbitrarily: Ramm

(Rating: 9), Tenneshaw (8), Marks (7), Sackett (7), Reynard (6), and Maples (4).

"Fandora's Box"? A perfect 10.



—William Rotsler

Screened at the Wilson: Movie Reviews

The House

Last week, a friend in Los Angeles and I continued our weekly movie series, streaming the same movie at the same time, and texting throughout. His selection was Enda Walsh's 2022 stop-motion animated anthology, which was originally aired as a television special in the United Kingdom—and is now streaming on Netflix.

When the film was first released, it bypassed my attention entirely. And *The House* should be widely appreciated. It's absolutely beautiful, a wonderful example of what can be accomplished with stop-motion animation—apparently largely incorporating fabrics—and it's deliciously creepy. I commented that it's what might have happened were Wes Anderson a monster kid: a *Phantasmagorical Mr. Fox*, if you will.

The anthology comprises three stories, two of which are more horror-oriented, and one that is fantastic in the way that *Flow* (T&T #155) is. All three

pieces center on a house and the role it plays in the characters' lives. It might be the same house. It might be a different house. That is unclear.

In the first section, which reminded me of the Winchester Mystery House and Stephen King's *Rose Red*, the new caretakers of a mysterious benefactor's newly constructed home become enveloped by their adopted abode. The second story concentrates on an underfinanced anthropomorphic rodent who's working on improving a house for sale. During one of the showings, he meets two unsettling individuals who are "very interested" in the house—and proceed to move in. This segment resonates with *Creepshow*'s "They're Creeping Up on You!" portion.

And in the third part of *The House*, a feline landlord navigates challenging relationships with her tenants, home improvements, and a newcomer who offers her an intriguing alternative path to follow. While less spooky, that storyline includes an element of the fantastic.

I've heard and read very little about this movie, and it's excellent. Highly recommended.

Comments on APA-L #3120

The .docx version of APA-L I received via email displays contributors' fanzines formatted strangely, including my own. I'm sure the printed version looks better, and ideally, I'd like to receive a PDF of distributions when receiving soft copies. Luckily, the distribution was still legible.

In *The Form Letter of Things Unknown* #106, Matthew Mitchell commented on recent temperatures in his neck of the woods. In Madison, it's been quite warm, so much so that we've experienced several days with heat advisories. With temperatures in the low 90s last weekend, it felt like it was in the low 100s, and I'm appreciating the slightly cooler weather early this week, in part due to light rain. It's in the 70s! (Like I understand it to be in the Los Angeles area.)

Locals seem to be wearing mostly shorts and short-sleeved shirts while out and about, but I continue to layer, wearing slacks. I remove my flannel as needed and unzip my hoodie for ventilation. So my intent to spend much of last weekend walking around was frustrated, and I did my best to stick to the air conditioning with the cat.

I can understand not wanting to cook when it's hot outside. Last Saturday, while walking to meet my parents for the Bach Dancing & Dynamite Society (<https://bachdancing.org>) performance, I stopped at a restaurant for a bit to eat—but didn't order hot or warm food. Instead, I opted for Forage's (<https://www.eatforage.com>) Power Bowl, a combination of black rice, lentils, sweet potatoes, and other ingredients. I'll

eat there again.

The performance was wonderful. The ensemble, in various settings, played Henriëtte Bosmans's *Impressions* for cello and piano, Paul Wiancko's *Cities of Air*, and Moritz Moszkowski's Suite for two violins and piano, Op. 71. I chose this concert because of the Wiancko piece. I knew he was a younger composer—born in 1983—but I didn't know he's played cello with the Kronos Quartet since 2022. His composition was a highlight of the evening.

After an intermission, Stas Venglevski and the Houston Accordion Orchestra took the stage. The orchestra focused on pieces composed by musicians in the ensemble, and it was a wonderful performance, even if it went a little long. We thought they'd perform for perhaps 30 minutes, the concert ending at 9:30 p.m., but they played for almost an hour. At the end, one of the creative directors practically snatched the microphone out of Venglevski's hand.

I've been enjoying the ice cream of Wisconsin quite a bit since our arrival, from the Chocolate Shoppe (<https://chocolateshoppeicecream.com>), Good News Café & Ice Cream (<https://www.goodnews-icecream.com>)—both near our furnished apartment—and last weekend, the Sassy Cow Creamery Store outside Sun Prairie. (<https://sassycowcreamery.com>) Before our ice cream Sunday, we ate lunch, fresh grilled cheddar cheese sandwiches with kettle chips and a glass of fresh 2 percent milk for me.

At the creamery store, I was surprised to spot two small crates of comic book back issues. Priced at \$1.50 a piece, they had been placed there by Captain Ace Comics (<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100040534965961>), which also sells comics at the Columbus Antique Mall. (<https://columbusantiquemall.wixsite.com/columbusantiquemall>) There's not much activity on that page on the Facebook, but it appears that the vendor places back issues at various locations in the area, including the now-closed Good Vibes Cafe & Candy in Columbus.



To support the ongoing presence and sale of such comics in random retail locations, I bought a few: *Elfquest: Stargazer's Hunt* #2 and *Starman* #2-3. I have since read them and will pass them on to a friend at some point in the future.

Caitlin and I recently decided that we could afford to subscribe to Disney+ again. Since doing so, we've watched two *Doctor Who* episodes: "The Church on Ruby Road," the 2023 Christmas special, which I'd already seen, and "Space Babies," which originally aired May 11, 2024. Even though I have the Ncuti Gatwa series, Series 14, on Region 2 DVD in Portugal, it's nice to be able to watch relatively recent episodes of *Doctor Who* again.

I've also missed Disney+'s Marvel and Star Wars programming and have watched two episodes of the 2015 *Daredevil* series, first available on Netflix on April 10 that year. Once I watch more of *Daredevil*, I'll return to making my way through the Marvel Cinematic Universe movies in order. *Andor* can wait a little while longer. One can only watch so much television. If I, by my very nature, salt the Earth, my somewhat recent fan name Blasted Heath seems even more appropriate.

John Hertz's *Vanamonde* #1644 remarked on the new Pope, Leo XIV. I appreciated your mention of Bronzeville, an early 20th-century African-American business and cultural hotbed in Chicago. By the time the 21st century rolled around, Bronzeville's population had fallen by three quarters—and it'd lost most of its commercial activity. Thousands of vacant homes were torn down, and its once proud retail districts became crime-ridden neighborhoods.

While Bronzeville didn't have a formal mayor, per se, the phrase "mayors of Bronzeville" was applied to influential Black leaders who fought against discrimination and segregation. Apparently, I was involved in a short-lived music project called the Mayors of Bronzeville ("political rants galore," one Web page says). I'd forgotten that! I don't think we ever got beyond the idea phase. I used the phrase "mayors of Bronzeville" in the spoken-word introduction to the Anchormen song "Unsung Heroes." (<https://theanchormenpunk.bandcamp.com/track/unsung-heroes>)

Rest assured, when I say "stop working" I mean "working for others" or "working for a salary or wages"—what I would consider pursuing vocational labors. I will certainly not stop doing things. In fact, I look forward to having more time and opportunities to pursue my avocational labors, which are occasionally superseded by my vocational labors. I will definitely not stop "making and maintaining successful connections."

And in *Reflections from a Fish Bowl* #81, **Barbara Gratz Harmon** detailed a serious sequence of technological hurdles. Whatever happened to "plug and play"? In addition to the challenges with your printer(s) and computer, you also experienced plumbing woes? Geez, when it rains, it pours. That you got a distribution out at all is inspiring. Like Matthew Mitchell said in his fanzine this dist'n, lesser mortals would have hied to the hinterlands.

Nola Frame-Gray, your bacover cartoon made me grin. Inspiration sure struck. And what inspiration!



Chicago Tribune, Feb. 11, 1955

The Explosion Containment Umbrella #31

June 25, 2025

The Explosion Containment Umbrella is an apazine published by Blasted Heath Row, P.O. Box 259240, Madison, WI 53725; kalel@well.com; 718-755-9840 mobile, 323-916-0367 fax. It is prepared for contributors to eAPA and select others. A recent copy can be requested for the Usual. A member of the Fan Writers Association (fwa). This is a Karma Lapel publication.

Trip Report: California to Wisconsin

My apologies for missing last month's distribution. My wife and I sold our house and moved away from the Los Angeles area, leaving California on Saturday, May 31. Because we were preparing to drive cross country—and driving so—I wasn't able to submit a fanzine before the deadline.

After several days driving east and a couple of free days spent with friends in Kansas City, Kan., (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #168), we continued heading toward Wisconsin on Friday, June 6. That day, we drove more than 300 miles and for about five hours from Kansas City to Iowa City, Iowa.

That Friday was one of our shorter driving days, and we followed interstates 35 and 80 to a Quality Inn in Coralville, Iowa. Luckily, the rains we'd experienced in Kansas (*T&T* #167) didn't continue to follow us. While in Kansas a few days earlier, I picked up an issue of the *Great Bend Tribune* (<https://www.gbtribune.com>) and the *Tri-County Tribune*. (<https://www.tricountytribune.news>)

Arriving in Coralville early that afternoon, I reached out to Peter Balestrieri, curator of popular culture and associate curator of the Iowa Archives of the Avant-Garde in the special collections and archives of the University of Iowa Libraries. I've been donating apae materials to the University of Iowa for a handful of years, and we'd made tentative plans to meet while I was in Iowa City.

Unfortunately, that was not to be. Balestrieri's availability waxed and waned as his work day progressed, and in the end, we decided we'd try again in the future. I've appreciated his assistance with and support of my donations to the university, and I look forward to meeting him. After all, we both play the saxophone!

No longer needing to secure a Lyft into Iowa City, I was freed to hang out in the hotel with my wife and our cat. That evening, we went for a walk to explore the area. Walking toward the Iowa River, we passed the Xstream Arena while going through the Iowa River Landing area. We didn't make it all the way to the

Iowa River Landing Wetland Park or Iowa River Trail, but if I return to Coralville, I'll explore further. At a nearby gas station, I picked up several local newspapers, including the Des Moines Register (<https://www.desmoinesregister.com>) and Iowa City Press-Citizen (<https://www.press-citizen.com>). We ate dinner in our hotel room. Our meal delivered from Iowa Pho was surprisingly good. I usually don't equate Iowa with Vietnamese food!

The next day was our last driving day on the road trip to Madison, Wis. Our destination: a furnished apartment in an old saddlery building (*T&T* #167) between the Wisconsin State Capitol and the shores of Lake Monona.



—William Rotsler

Screened at the Wilson: Movie Reviews *The Bloodhound*

On Arrow Player (*Snow Poster Township* #21), I recently watched this 2020 mystery thriller directed by Patrick Picard, in part to take advantage of the

furnished apartment's air conditioning on a very hot day in Madison. Inspired by Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Fall of the House of Usher," the movie was intended to be released at the Emergence Films Festival, which was canceled that year because of the pandemic. Regardless, Arrow Films and Video picked up *The Bloodhound* for distribution.

While very slow paced, atmospheric, and creepy—Joe Adler is particularly unsettling as Jean Paul Luret, the movie's Roderick Usher—the film eschews the air of the fantastic present in Poe's 1839 story. Otherwise, it follows the tale almost note for note. Luret is ailing. His visiting friend, Francis, feels oppressed in Luret's luxurious though claustrophobic home. And Luret's sister, Vivian, is a strongly felt absence.

In the end, the fate of the Luret siblings resonates with that of the Ushers, but the movie leaves out two key aspects of the Poe inspiration. It's still a fun ride getting there, and the mysterious, crawling, hooded figure who hides in the wardrobe—mirrored by the wrestling match while encased in sleeping bags—reminded me of the writing of Edogawa Rampo. (*Faculae & Filigree* #43) Rampo had also been inspired by Poe.

Fair to middling, though *Paste* magazine listed *The Bloodhound* film as one of the "13 Best Edgar Allan Poe Adaptations." Hmm.

Comments on eAPA #254

José Sanchez's 1998 illustration provided an excellent cover image for the June 2025 edition of eAPA. The black-and-white piece of art is one I'd be prone to choose for an APA-L cover, were I still serving as that amateur press association's Official Collator. Kudos to the artist and Official Editor alike!

It was slightly unnerving to see my email to Garth Spencer quoted in the Official Organ, though it's entirely kosher that he did so. I've been trying to remember where I'd used the "N. Mex." state abbreviation for New Mexico. The Associated Press abbreviation—which I tend to use—is actually "N.M." I appreciate you noting the reason for my absence.

Let me go straight to the eAPA Preferential Opinion Poll, Plebiscite, and Voting ~~Form~~ Form. Mr. Spencer, I have emailed my input to you! (I'm not sure if responding to something received June 9 almost 20 days later is going "straight" to it, but such are things. Time be fluid in the apaverse.)

In the spirit of full disclosure, I voted for lowering the minimum activity requirements of eAPA to one page per every three mailings and sending the mailings directly to all members rather than providing the eFanzines link once Bill Burns posts the most recent edition. I did not vote in favor of the other

changes proposed.

Easing the minac requirement feels like a step that might make more people inclined to participate in eAPA—and help current participants feel better when they're not able to participate as actively. (Don't worry; we're not going to kick you out!) With a headcount as small as we currently experience, we can pretty much wave our hands at minac requirements, anyway, in order to keep them what are around, well, around.

I think it makes a lot of sense to email eAPA as PDF attachments (zipped or compressed) rather than wait for Burns to post eAPA to eFanzines. That way, we can receive it sooner than we might otherwise, or than we have been. (When Garth emails eAPA, he could bcc Bill, and everyone receives it at the same time, as soon as it's ready.)

The passwords should remain, I think. Every month, they're fun.

William McCabe's *In the Meantime* Part 12 reported on a new pair of glasses! Congratulations. Even though they were more expensive than previous pairs, I hope that they're comfortable and work well—and that you look marvelous. My prescription hasn't changed much the last few years, so I've chosen not to update my glasses recently.

If American countries want to participate in the Eurovision Song Contest, they'd have to rename it to something like the Earth-O-Vision Song Contest. But because the contest is run by the European Broadcasting Union, which serves countries in the European Broadcasting Area (or members of the Council of Europe), its continued focus on European countries is probably a fair bet.

That said, I wonder if the inclusion of Israel and Australia is because they're in the European Broadcasting Area or members of the Council of Europe—or another reason. If for another reason, my speculation might be unsound.

I'm sorry to hear that the bin strike continues. Now that we've moved into a furnished apartment, I no longer need to take our three bins (garbage, recycling, and food/yard waste) to the curb every Wednesday. The building we're living in has a trash and recycling room in the basement—the Lower Level—that contains a couple of dumpsters each for garbage and recycling. The apartment came equipped with a couple of small garbage cans in the kitchen and bathroom, so we've augmented those with a large paint bucket of my parents for the recycling. I'm not sure when the trash collection occurs, but we've taken ours to the basement room the last couple of Mondays (last week) or Tuesdays (this week). It's by the bicycle racks, where we've locked up our bikes, so I pass through

the area daily.

Which book review are you commenting on: David Drake's *Surface Action*? (*ECU* #30) That was, in fact, the first book by Drake I've ever read. My remarks on *Cross the Stars*, *Dagger*, *The Sea Hag*, and *Northworld* were made in response to *Surface Action*'s Afterword, which discusses them as examples of other works inspired by other forms of literature. And the "bits he's cadged" weren't cadged, but were poems that he quoted at the start of each chapter. (I very much enjoyed tracking down the poems from which he'd drawn.) I'm sorry I wasn't more clear in my writing. I'm not sure what you took umbrage at, but I assure you that I write all of my fanzines myself. (Perhaps unfortunately.) I'm certainly not some sort of surreptitious Drake publicist.

Though... I kind of like the idea of such controversy roiling the otherwise calm waters of eAPA. What if Heath Row doesn't exist? What if I do, but I don't actually write any of this stuff? What if I've been involved in zines since 1988 and fanzines since 2009 only to emerge as a sleeper David Drake salesman in 2025? Perhaps I revealed my true nature too soon. I'll try again in 2041.

I was unaware of the Official Monster Raving Loony Party, though I am somewhat familiar with the music of Screaming Lord Sutch. (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #137) Thank you for bringing the "odd party" to my attention—as well as reminding me to listen to Lord Sutch's music!

In regards to *Snowpiercer*, seeing the movie led me immediately to the bandes dessinées, neither of which I'd experienced before. I'd been unaware of the comics until I saw the reference or credit at the beginning of the movie. Perhaps I should have placed the movie reviews before the BD reviews, but I tend to prioritize books in my fanzines, so the book and other reading-oriented reviews take precedence in terms of placement.

The challenge we're facing might be that I write the different sections of *ECU* at different points in time over the course of the month. They're not necessarily sequenced linearly, though I do try to normalize any time references when editing the ish before submitting it. (As I said above, time be fluid in the apaverse.) Again, I apologize for any confusion.

What book is the image you included at the end of your ish the cover artwork for? Searching for the phrase "an apocalyptic entertainment," I find references to Tom Robbins's *Another Roadside Attraction*, but I haven't yet seen an edition with that cover. It's a wonderful piece of art.

In *Wild Ideas* #60, **Henry Grynsten** explored human-animal metamorphosis. L.D. Broyle's 1961

Who's Who in Science Fiction Fandom lists one fan then living in Afghanistan:

Selch, Jean Harper, Columbia University Team, American Embassy, Kabul, Afghanistan; 1903; teacher of English in Afghan Schools. 38- . Collects magazines (*Analog*, *Galaxy*, *F&SF*—since 1938.) "We (my family) all read sf."

A letter from Selch was published in the May 1961 issue of *Analog Science Fact & Fiction*:

Dear John Campbell:

Since I have to spend the ten afs any way, I may as well add the letter which I have always been going to write, but never got around to.

1. And did you really expect to get a letter from Afghanistan?/ and how did you expect to know who it was from if you asked neither name nor address? We have an unorganized Sf group here. It means that we all meet at my house for supper, swap magazines and talk science fiction. We are an assorted group, naturally all college people since we are here either under Columbia (Teachers College) or Wyoming U. (They teach the science.) At the last meeting we had Dr. Garland Cannon, head of the English language section of Columbia, Hubbard Groodrich with MA's in both English as a second language and in Archeology, Richard and Jean Chisholm, newly married and both with their Ma's, and Charles

"Rejecting the 'scientific adventure' storytelling of the celebrated French sci-fi writer Jules Verne ... the *merveilleux-scientifique* genre was grounded in plausibility and the scientific method. ... [O]nly one physical, chemical or biological law may be altered when telling a story."—Fleur Hopkins-Loféron, *Aeon*

and Lee Goetz, Ma's and English Teachers, and Mr. Hayes, English teacher with the British Council. We would have more of the British Embassy and Council if there had not been sickness. My copies go the rounds, but they are marked to come back to me, because I keep them.

Our job here is not merely teaching English, but setting up the system and training enough teachers of English so that we can go home. They speak fourteen languages, three major ones here—no group is larger than thirty per cent—and need English for intra- as well as international communication.

2. I have been reading the magazine for sixteen years, and find you have stimulated much thinking and anticipated much. Now in linguistics I find all the problems people are getting excited about have already been discussed in your magazine. I like your editorials. They have some of the clearest and most pertinent thinking I have found lately. Of course, I enjoy those stories which deal with social experiments. The only answer to the Marshal Plan that I ever saw was in one of your serials. Also the answer to the need for diversity. Lately you have been leaving this field to *Galaxy*, but I like your other problems, too.—Mrs. Jean Harper Selch, Columbia University Team, c/o American Embassy, Kabul, Afghanistan.

Good luck and we all enjoy the magazine.

Of course, one fan in 1961 doesn't indicate sf publishing or an active fandom in 2025. Besides, an American in Afghanistan might publish a fanzine very different from that of a native Afghan. The editorial response to that letter made me chuckle: "Now—anyone from Zanzibar?"

Meanwhile, the podcast *My Dark Path* dedicated an episode to North Korean science fiction. (<https://www.mydarkpath.com/59-untold-stories-of-north-korean-science-fiction>) I haven't listened to it yet, but multiple articles are referenced, and the existence of North Korean science fiction might indicate a local fandom. In 2023, *Ars Technica* also considered North Korean sf. (<https://arstechnica.com/culture/2023/08/the-strange-secretive-world-of-north-korean-science-fiction>) For us to directly experience North Korean fanzines or fen, the country might need to... host a Worldcon. Just like China.

As far as Vatican City goes, I haven't been able to find any references to fen in the Vatican, but there are several books that address the ecclesiastical state. They include the David V. Barrett-edited anthology *Tales from the Vatican Vaults*, Roger Zelazny's novel *The Dead Man's Brother*, and two novels by Mary Doria Russell, *The Sparrow* and *Children of God*. Pope Francis, apparently, was a fan! (https://www.salon.com/2015/03/14/pope_francis_science_fiction_lover_partner) That might be overstating the case.

Grynnsten's main essay, then, considers anthropomorphism and related topics. The piece resonates gently with Frederik Pohl's *Slave Ship* (*Telegraphs & Tar Pits* #168) and its focus on animal languages. Grynnsten's categorization of the different types of animal-human combinations is interesting, as is his suggestion that as the human experience increases its distance from animal life, human-animal transformations have transitioned from practices such as shamanism to media representation.

The reference to Lara Shannon's article "Do dogs feel guilt?" brought to mind a canine accident at work before we moved—in which the dog's facial expression and body posture appeared to strongly signal guilt or shame. It had shat wetly on the floor.

Ahrvid Engholm's *Intermission* #155 claimed to be an "explosive rag." We shall what's in the ish! I disagree with much in your editorial but don't feel the need to discuss it or debate it in this forum. We do, however, agree on this: "There are so many reasons to dump Trump!" And this: "If we never hear different opinions, we never need to worry about anything. But how can we grow if opposing views aren't allowed to clash?" We might not agree, but I'll continue to read you with interest and attention.

Your coverage of the Eurovision Song Contest was

welcome and informative. I particularly appreciated the discussion of Finland's history as part of Sweden. Why the 2025 Seattle Worldcon didn't continue using the Seacon name baffles me. There's been a Worldcon in Seattle previously: Seacon in 1961. Why not call it Seacon II? Heck, Robert A. Heinlein was the guest of honor and Harlan Ellison was the toastmaster. That's not a history the concon wants to draw a straight line to? At that Seacon, Hugos were awarded to *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, *The Twilight Zone*, and Ed Emshwiller. It's been 64 years since the last Worldcon in Seattle. Distancing from the previous such Worldcon is perplexing. Even if no one on the concon was involved in fandom then, I'd expect more pride in Worldcon's return to the city. (Or, maybe they're embarrassed it took so long to bring it back.) They could still use the tagline, which seems to be where they put the most effort.

I think the 1979 Worldcon was called Seacon '79 because its location, Brighton, is a seaside resort on the English Channel. In that case, they might have added the '79 to distinguish it from its predecessor. The 2025 Worldcon could still be Seacon II.

Given my recent relocation to Wisconsin, the photographs of Robert Bloch and the Milwaukee Fictioneers were fun to see. I'll have to learn more about the Fictioneers, which apparently wasn't an sf group but a general writing group. Fredric Brown, one of my favorite writers, was a member! (I didn't know Brown had a Wisconsin connection. Something else to learn about!) The Fictioneers merged with Allied Authors of Wisconsin (<https://allied-authors.org>) in the 1990s, and the surviving organization remains "[o]ne of Wisconsin's oldest writing collectives."

Your mention of Percy Greg's *Across the Zodiac: The Story of a Wrecked Record* in the History Corner intrigued me. Your consideration of language- and linguistics-oriented literature reminded me of movie makers who employ such specialists. For example, the involvement of Jessica Coon, a McGill University associate professor in syntax and indigenous languages, in the production of *Arrival*. (<https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/movies/la-et-mn-arrival-movie-linguist-20161125-story.html>) James Cameron also brought in language specialists when producing *Avatar* so the Na'vi language was more fleshed out. Maybe we can blame it all on Marc Okrand, who reportedly invented the Klingon language in 1984. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/06/magazine/06FOB-onlanguage-t.html>) Before that, spoken Klingon was effectively gibberish.

In response to Garth Spencer, you mentioned a hibachi on a balcony. That reminded me of one of my favorite jokes. One telling has it thusly: "One 6-year-

old says to another, 'I found a condom on the patio.' To which the other responds, 'What's a patio?'" In this case, hibachi:condom::balcony:patio, and away we go!

Speaking of **Garth Spencer**, in *I Never Got the Hang of Thursdays* #234, he listed the apae in which he participates: eAPA, N'APA, APA-V, Stipple-Apa, and Apaplexy. You're a man after my own heart, and I'm pleased that we don't overlap more. Us multiapans gotta spread ourselves out! Donald Franson's 1962 *A Key to the Terminology of Science-Fiction Fandom* also includes the term "omniapan" to describe someone who's a member of all the apae. I shudder to think.

I'm glad you've taken to gardening and recently went camping. How was the campout? It's probably reasonable to confuse David Drake with David Weber. As far as I know, I've not yet read anything by Weber. By the way, congratulations on your recent promotion in the Royal Swiss Navy. We should schedule a reception during UrfCon!

If the Vancouver sf club had to teach a member not to submit to the clubzine, it must have already had quite a lively clubzine. When I edited *De Profundis*, I'd have happily published television program rumors—if not just to demonstrate member contributions. Your statement "so many dullards think practical jokes are merely stupid abuses of other people" made me chuckle. I'm a dullard! Aww, thanks.

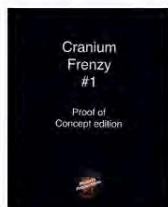
Your initial question to Ahrvid Engholm made me think about Omar El Akkad's book *One Day, Everyone Will Have Always Been Against This*. That title could be applied to any number of things: Donald Trump's presidency, the Russo-Ukrainian War, the Gaza war. I've yet to read the book, which is about something else entirely, but it looks thought provoking.



Chicago Tribune, Feb. 18, 1955

The UFO Checklist

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