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*FADEAWAY #57* is a fanzine devoted to science fiction and related fields of interest, and is produced by **Robert Jennings, 29 Whiting Rd., Oxford, MA 01540-2035, email [fabficbks@aol.com](mailto:fabficbks@aol.com)**. Copies are available for a letter of comment, or a print fanzine in trade, or by subscription at a cost of \$25.00 for six issues. Letters of comment are much preferred. Any person who has not previously received a copy of this fanzine may receive a sample copy of the current issue for free by sending me your name and address. Publication is (in theory anyway) bi-monthly. This is the November-December 2018 issue

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**OUR COVER ILLO THIS ISSUE** is a full color painting by the ever versatile Dan Carroll, and is titled---“Bad Boy!” Naturally. What else could it be titled?

**AND SPEAKING OF ARTWORK** A tip of the editorial beanie to Marc Schirmeister who sent in a bunch of small illos. He objected to the use (and reuse) of all those little clip art pics in our letter columns, so he send along a bunch of art with instructions to use them as letter column art in upcoming issues. Will do.

**DISTRIBUTION ADJUSTMENTS** continue to be made. Several people have decided to switch from receiving this fanzine as a print copy, to an electronic digital format. The all pixel version arrives in your computer email box almost instantly, and all the color pics come thru in full color, a big advantage. Some people who were receiving digital copies will no longer be receiving them due to a lack of response. As mentioned several times in recent issues, I am in the process of pruning away the deadwood from the mailing list. This process will continue. Please refer to the info up there for the various ways you can get copies of *Fadeaway*. If you aren't doing any of those things, this could well be your last issue.

**LIVING ON THE EDGE—MY RECENT LIFE OF CRIME** Trash is a common problem in modern society.

The average person generates an average of 4.4 pounds of trash every single day, which adds up to almost 31 pounds of trash per week. That's a bunch.

I don't create that much trash. I'm single and I tend to eat a lot of fresh food rather than the pre-packaged or processed material most Americans scoff down. I also don't eat much meat, and I stopped subscribing to the daily newspaper a few years ago, for a variety of reasons.

On the other hand, I do operate a mail order book/comic/games biz, so I do generate a lot of scrap cardboard from packing those orders up, making them ready to mail out every day. In fact, the overwhelming bulk, volume wise, of my trash happens to be scrap cardboard.

Getting rid of the trash a family creates is as simple as shoving everything into trash bags, then putting those trash bags out on the curb for your local trash hauler to pick up. Trash disposal is free in many cities. I live in a mostly rural environment, but trash pickup is still easy; just call one of the many local trash haulers and arrange a schedule.

And there is the rub. Paying for the trash hauling service tends to be pricey, at least in my opinion. For one thing, the services of these outfits are primarily geared to the average family. That's the average American family which consists of a husband and wife and their 2.2 children, according to government statistics. That works out, roughly speaking, to about 118 pounds of trash per week. That volume of trash easily fills up several thirty-gallon trash bags.

I do not generate that much trash. I fill up one trash bag every three or four weeks. If I'm having a really good selling spurt I may fill a trash bag in two weeks. Paying for the weekly trash pickup service is ridiculously expensive. Paying for the bi-weekly pickup service is only slightly less expensive. Not a single one of these trash haulers has a monthly schedule, so it's either pay for their weekly or bi-weekly pickup service, at a very high price-to-trash ratio, or go without.

My solution for over twenty years was to make use of the urban trash pickup service proved by the nearby city of Worcester, MA. Worcester has worked out a very agreeable system to deal with the different levels of trash generated by different households. The city sells special heavy gauge trash bags colored bright yellow. Each bag currently costs about a buck seventy-five cents each. They also sell smaller kitchen trash size bags, a size that never concerned me. You fill up as many city trash bags as you need, then put the bags out on a set pickup day, the city garbage trucks come up and pick up however many yellow bags you have out there. Large families use up many city trash bags, small families or single people like me use far fewer city trash bags.

This system worked very well. A friend hosts a Sunday evening film group, in which very old films are shown, usually in 16mm format on a real movie screen. Every few weeks I would bring my trash bag(s) as they filled up to the Sunday film meet, leave the bag(s) by the light post in front of the house, and forget about it. Monday morning the city trash truck came by and picked up my bag and my friend's household's trash bags plus whatever recyclables were there, and all was well in the world.

There was a small cravat, that nobody paid any attention to for over twenty years. The city of Worcester actually requires that citizens put their trash out very early in the morning of the specific pick-up days, six o'clock in the morning or later, but you were not supposed to put your trash bags out the night before because, in theory anyway, rats and squirrels, roving dogs and other scavengers might get into the trash and rip it up, creating a horrible unsanitary mess. There was a provision in the city ordinances that called for a hundred dollar fine for anybody who put their trash bags out before six in the morning.

Well, you can guess what happened. After twenty plus years with no problems, suddenly a city snoop was cruising down the street late one Sunday night, and saw the house with my trash bag and the trash bags from my friend's household piled up at the light post and wrote out a warning citation. One free warning, but the next time, it would be a hundred dollar fine. Needless to say that ended my free ride with the city of Worcester trash bags dropped at my friend's house.

What to do?

Luckily the warehouse complex where I have my book biz located has many other tenants, and many of them have trash dumpsters. They don't pay for a garbage service, they just toss their waste into the dumpsters and when they are full, they call for a pickup and start over with a fresh empty. Hmmm.

So, for several years after the Great Worcester City Trash Crack Down I simply tossed my trash bags into one or another of the available dumpsters at the warehouse complex. But alas, times change, and so did the tenants at the warehouse. Some moved out, taking with them their generously large dumpsters. New tenants tended to have small dumpsters, and worse than that, the newbies tended to keep those midget dumpsters locked

as well. Horrors! Finally it was down to two dumpsters that I could use for my piddley trash bags every now and then.

Or it was, until this spring, when both of the two remaining big dumpster guys had their big dumpsters hauled away. One firm opted for a small container, with a built in snap lock closing lid, and the other company had such a tiny amount of trash that they decided to hire a local town trash hauler to come by every other week and pick up the few bags of waste paper they generated. No room for my stuff anywhere.

What to do?

I happened to notice that the neighbor diagonally across from my house puts his trash cart out on Wednesday nites for the early Thursday morning pickup. For those who might not know, a trash cart is a large plastic bin with two rear wheels and an attached hinged lid. The cart is big enuf to stuff four or five thirty-gallon trash bags into. The homeowner loads trash bags into the cart, then wheels it out to the roadside. The modern garbage truck is so equipped that by hooking onto the rear prongs, the entire contents can be lifted and dumped into the back of the truck is one easy move. Very efficient indeed.

One evening in early spring as I was thinking about my recently untenable trash situation and what to do about it, I decided to stroll over to the neighbor's trash cart and just glance inside, to see what volume of garbage his family generated. I might mention that the houses in my area are not close together, and my diagonally-across-the-street neighbor has a large luxurious home set way back from the road, well sheltered by lots of trees and a long winding gravel driveway. Out of sight, out of mind, to my way of thinking.

What luck, his cart was not full at all. Plenty of room for some of my stuff. He did use white trash bags, whereas I had a supply of black bags left, but thinking about the matter, I decided on an easier solution than buying a box of white trash bags.

Instead I recycled some of those white plastic bags the grocery stores provide to load out the stuff you buy. The days of the paper grocery sack are long gone, unless you specifically ask for it, and agree to pay a five to seven cent per bag charge. Rather than toss out all the white grocery bags from the week's marketing, I kept them and loaded them with my trash.

One bag was usually enuf for the cardboard scraps for the week, unless I was having a great week of sales, in which case it was two bags of cardboard/paper scraps. One bag for kitchen waste, food packaging, cans, paper towels, whatever, was always sufficient. Then, late each Wednesday nite, about eleven or twelve o'clock, just to be sure the working stiffs over there were all soundly asleep, I walked across and deposited my two, or sometimes three bags into their trash cart, closed down the lid, and early Thursday morning their trash and my trash would go away.

This summer things were more difficult. Apparently the neighbors in the big new house party-hearty and eat very well during the summer months. Most weeks the trash cart was full to the brim, sometimes full beyond the brim, so full that the top would not close at all. Difficult times for me, but I always managed to find a way to cram and stuff and squeeze things around so that my two or three bags were into the cart, at the back of the cart, and their white trash bags were visible at the front. Frankly I don't think the neighbors ever noticed. At least I don't think they ever did.

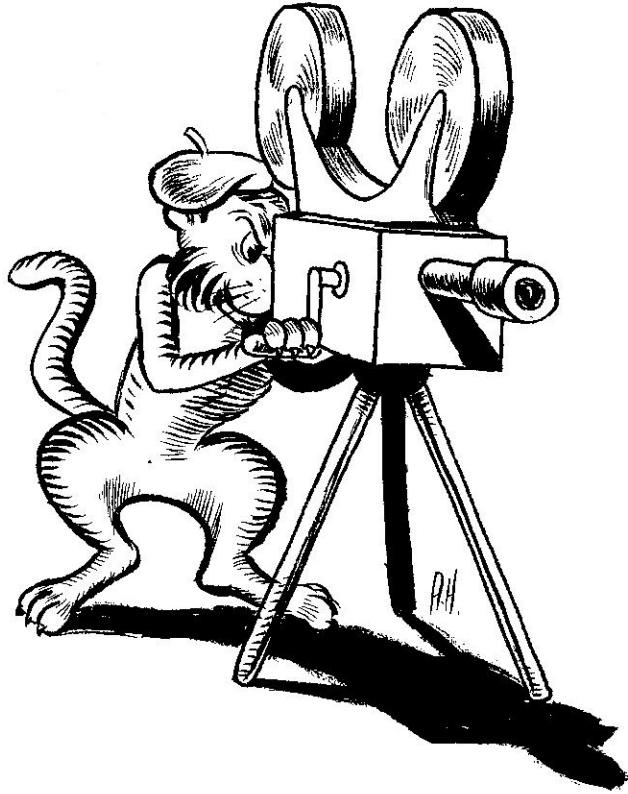
I am somewhat worried about what will happen when the winter snow and ice appears in a few more weeks. Drifting snow and black ice could make my nocturnal visits to the neighboring trash cart more than just hazardous---they might make it impossible to foist off my weekly accumulations. Unfortunately I have no fall back plan either.

I suppose I should feel guilty about all this, but somehow I can't seem to manage even a shred of remorse. No doubt my years of clandestine criminal behavior has permanently warped me. Who knows what this unbridled, long time illicit activity will do to my personality? Is it just a matter of time before I add even more nefarious activities to my list of crimes? I could be on the verge of major criminal activity. It may be just a matter of time before I'm ripping off the warning labels on mattresses or even parking in the handicap spaces at the local shopping centers.

Unfortunately I am in too deep to change my ways. Redemption is beyond me.

Another Wednesday nite approaches, and I have two bags crammed full and ready to go. It will only be a few more hours before I make my midnight run, trusty rechargeable flashlight in one hand and the bags of trash in the other, on my weekly mission to deposit my garbage in my neighbor's trash cart. And I don't even feel a shadow of shame.





# FLIX

By

**Bob Jennings**



**"Remember; no matter where you go, there you are."**

The feature film of the evening at the monthly serial club meeting was "The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8<sup>th</sup> Dimension". Remarkably, it turns out that I was the only person present who had ever seen this bizarre sci-fi spectacular before.

Trying to explain this movie is an effort in frustration. The lead character is Buckaroo Banzai, described as "A renaissance man, the character is a top neurosurgeon, particle physicist, race car driver, rock star and comic book hero, and probably the last hope of the human race."

Buckaroo has assembled The Hong Kong Cavaliers, a crew of guys to aid him in his many adventures. Each man is not only a specialist in a specific field of science and technology, but each is also an accomplished rock musician. Each member of his crew is also handy in martial arts and familiar with modern weaponry.

There is a back-story involving the hero, most of which is not explained in the movie. Buckaroo's parents died tragically when he was age five, while they were testing a device that would enable them to pass thru solid matter. The

test was sabotaged by an arch enemy, leaving the youngster to be raised by his parents' close friend and inventor of the original Oscillation Overthruster, Toichi Hikita.

There's a lot more background that goes along with this, only occasional small bits of which are dropped into the film at odd and unusual points in the story. Finding the full range of information about the character and his crew requires interested viewers to check the website or the books devoted to the character that have been created since the movie first appeared.

The very short/very abbreviated plot of this film is that Buckaroo and his mentor Dr. Hikita have finally perfected the Oscillation Overthruster. Banzai tests it by driving his Jet Car through a mountain. While passing through it, Banzai finds himself in another dimension, and on returning to his normal dimension, he discovers an alien organism has attached itself to his car.

News of Banzai's success reaches Dr. Emilio Lizardo, currently held at the Trenton Home for the Criminally Insane. In 1938, Lizardo and Hikita had built a prototype Overthruster, but Lizardo tested it before it was ready, and became stuck between dimensions. Though freed, it caused him to go insane. Aware that Banzai has succeeded, Lizardo breaks out.

Meanwhile, while planning what to do next, Banzai and the Cavaliers are met by John Parker, a messenger from John Emdall, the leader of the alien Black Lectroids of Planet 10, currently in Earth's orbit. Emdall explains that they have been at war with the hostile Red Lectroids for years, but had managed to banish them to the eighth dimension. Lizardo's failed test of the Overthruster in 1938 allowed the Red Lectroids' leader, John Whorfin, to take over Lizardo's mind and enabled several dozen others to escape. Now that Banzai has perfected the Overthruster, Emdall fears Whorfin and his allies will try to acquire it to free the other Red Lectroids. Emdall had shocked Banzai previously to allow him to see the Lectroids for who they are, and now tasks him with stopping Whorfin or otherwise the Black Lectroids will fake a nuclear explosion to start World War III that will annihilate the Earth and the Red Lectroids with it.

Got all that?

### **"There are times when verbal ingenuity is not enough."**

This is a very confused movie. Many things happen at once, and many things in the story plot do not make much sense. For reasons I have never been able to understand, this film has become a cult favorite in the years since its original 1984 release.

The movie was years in the making, about a dozen years over all. Originally conceived as a send-up of all those ridiculously stupid early 1970s kung-fu oriental martial arts movies, creators Earl Mac Rauch and W.D. Richter worked on several different screen plays for the character off and on, making changes, expanding the scope, adding alleged humor, and then abandoning the script forty or so pages in. Rauch said that a dozen or more scripts wound up that way.

By the 1980s Richter was a successful screenwriter on his own. He, Frank Marshall, and Frank Canton met and formed their own screen company with the express purpose of making a Buckaroo Banzai movie their first project. Rauch was to do the primary writing and plot to film.

### **"In my experience, nothing is ever what it seems to be, but everything is exactly what it is."**

Rauch's sixty-page plot overview was shopped around Hollywood, but nobody was interested because the subject matter was so bizarre. Canton and Richter took it to Sidney Begelman at MGM/UA who helped work up a deal with the studio. Characters were added from Rauch's previous screen play attempts, and the plot was expanded with significant changes. All the rewriting and editing took almost a year and a half. Then, a Writers Guild of America strike forced the project to be delayed for another year.

Begelman made some films that performed poorly, and was leaving MGM. He helped form Sherwood Productions with Frank Canton, exercised a buy-out option and bought back the Buckaroo film script from MGM which he then took to 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox. Fox agreed to make the movie with a projected budget of twelve million dollars. Rauch then wrote three more screen plays before he was satisfied with a final script.

## **"I speak Spanish to God, French to women, English to men, and Japanese to my horse."**

Casting the film was a rocky process. Bucking the studio desire for a name actor to play the part of Buckaroo Banzai, Richter and Canton wanted a relatively unknown New York stage actor for the lead because they believed an actor used to stage and small independent films would be able to work with and completely interact with the movie props. Peter Weller was reluctant to take on the part because he couldn't figure out whether the film was going to be high-camp, social satire, straight adventure, or a comic book cartoon story using real life people. Eventually Weller agreed to star in the picture.

The producers specifically sought out John Lithgow to play the part of Dr. Emilio Lizardo/John Whorfin, because Rauch had convinced Richter early on that Lithgow was the only possible choice to play the human villain, and that he had written the bad guy part specifically for him. Lithgow was apparently flattered, but he had some doubts about the production too. However he was well paid and was assured that his role would only take a couple of weeks to film. To get into the part he adapted a heavy fake Italian accent and a deliberate shambling crab walk, because there was an alien intelligence supposedly residing inside his body. In an interview years later, relating the over-the-top performance that was expected of him, he said that "Playing Lizardo felt like playing the madman in 'The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari'."

Ellen Barskin who played Penny Priddy, the off-kilter abrupt love interest of Buckaroo (the previously unknown twin sister of his assassinated first wife), described the film as, "if Terry Southern had written 'Star Wars'! None of the characters are quite what they should be---just my kind of thing."

Other actors also had considerable doubts about appearing in the movie, but a cast was finally assembled and production began using a 300 page long style-book bible called 'The Essential Buckaroo' that tried to explain how the characters and the story was supposed to be handled.

Set design and prop design took up more time and money than expected. A collection of 1930s era electrical movie props originally used in the Boris Karloff "Frankenstein" movie was rented for the ultra-modern high tech sci-fi gadgetry.

Eventually the movie was shot over a twelve week period with Richter as both producer and director, and edited down to 102 minutes at a total cost of seventeen million dollars, a massive cost overrun on the original budget, figures that seriously concerned the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox studio brass.

## **"A battle won is a battle which we will not acknowledge to be lost."**

Fox realized they were dealing with an unusual product. To promote the film they decided to focus their publicity and promotion campaign almost exclusively on what they perceived would be their core audience---Star Trek fans and sci-fi geeks. Fox hired a team of publicists to travel around the country to Trek and media conventions talking up the movie, showing brief film clips, and handing out free promo items such as Team Banzai headbands, all of which became highly collectable a few years later.

There was no effort to market the movie to a mainstream audience. Ads appeared in selected Marvel Comic book issues and in media-hype magazines like *Starlog*. In an interview many years later Fox Studio publicist Rosemary LaSalmandra said, "Nobody knew what to do with Buckaroo Banzai. There was no simple way to tell anyone what it was about—I'm not sure anybody knew".

## **"A fool can throw a stone into the water which ten wise men cannot recover."**

The film performed far worse than anyone had anticipated. Buckaroo Banzai cost seventeen million dollars to make, and the total theater box office both domestic and foreign was only 6.3 million, a massive loss. Virtually every critic, including those in the fan-boy nerd press, gave it negative reviews, blasting the production as off the wall weird with an unintelligible plot. A few newspaper movie critics did cite the strange convoluted humor as an interesting factor. Other reviewers specifically noted the film's attempt to portray a larger-than-life heroic adventure protagonist, while conveniently failing to provide any kind of background information or supporting evidence that would convince the audience that Buckaroo Banzai was indeed the kind of guy able to save the planet from an intergalactic menace.

Fox was less than thrilled, and tried to extract money contractually guaranteed by Sherwood Productions when they had originally hyped the project to Fox, but Begelman, who had a history of embezzling money and writing bad checks, immediately filed bankruptcy for Sherwood Productions. Stuck with a film hardly anybody liked, Fox decided to bite the bullet and exploit the audience they did have.

A paperback novelization of the movie was written by Earl Mac Rauch and released shortly after the movie hit the theaters. The book lasted longer than the movie, which sank like a rock at the box office. Of special interest to fans was the inclusion of eight pages of photos from the movie in the center of the paperback. People who have read the book say there are also differences between the novel and the movie, which naturally intrigued those who were helping to turn the film into a cult classic.

Meanwhile, Marvel Comics had signed an option to turn the movie into a two issue limited comic book adaptation, with an open option to produce an on-going Buckaroo Bonzai comic if sales warranted it. Sales did not warrant it, altho the two issues were subsequently collected into an oversized reprint magazine as part of Marvel's Super Special series. The magazine contained many photos from the movie, as well as a long interview with director/producer/co-creator W. D. Richter.

A couple of the media-hype sci-fi fan film magazines actually had kind words for the film, specifically *Starlog*. Fox fed *Starlog* a steady stream of star interviews, back stage photos, FX info, and anything else they could come up with to keep the film alive with the geek community.

All fan mail about the movie sent to Fox was passed on to a couple of local fans who organized a Buckaroo Bonzai fan club with Fox's full blessings. W. D. Richter was involved with these efforts and often wrote short comments and letters with background information.

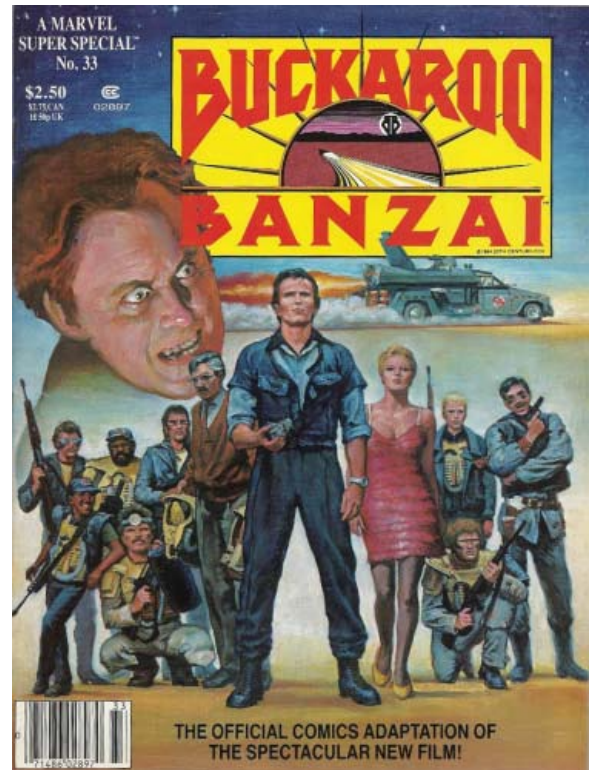
The fan club appropriated piles of left-over promotional material that Fox was about to toss out, including press kits, headbands, publicity stills, program books and more. Much of this was distributed thru the fan club newsletters which created more buzz and led to some hard feelings later on when a lot of the memorabilia became valuable.

Altho launched with great initial enthusiasm, the newsletters appeared on an increasingly erratic schedule. New editors came on board, the newsletters took on new directions, and sometimes years passed between issues, yet, ironically, all the original newsletters are now themselves valuable collector's items even tho scanned copies have been posted for free on the internet for many years.

Special showings of the movie at SF and media convention settings were arranged. Some selected merchandise was authorized, but none of this would have made a dent in the massive financial loss if those fans who actually did like the film hadn't started creating their own buzz about it, including creating bootleg sound tracks and creating their own T-shirts. Copies of the movie posters were soon selling for ridiculously expensive prices.

Fox did authorize the movie to be released on VHS and BETA tape and also as a C.E.D. disc in 1985 thru Cannon Video, and Vestron Video. Subsequently other copies on tape were released in Europe. Some versions have minor differences in running time. Sales were steady around the world, which helped cut the film's losses considerably. Additional releases of the movie on tape were made periodically thru the 1990s and up into the new century.

There was also a bootleg VHS tape obtained when a work print of the film was being shown at the 1988 San Jose BayCon science fiction convention. The print included extra scenes not in the original movie, but it also was missing some shots as well as most of the sound effects. The bootleg was 114 minutes long. Fox tried to crack down on sales of the bootleg tapes, with negligible results. Finally, in 2002 Fox released a Special



Edition DVD of the movie with all the missing footage included, which finally killed the market for the bootleg a mere fourteen years after it started circulating.

In 1986 Richter, Rauch and Twentieth Century Fox tried to get a Buckaroo Banzai TV series going. By this time the status of the movie as a minor-league cult film had been established, and with other science fiction films breaking all kinds of theater box office records, ABC was definitely interested in running something to tie in with what they perceived was a hot new sci-fi craze.

Perversely it turned out that David Begelman, head of the revitalized Sherwood Productions, controlled all rights to the character. Fan legend has it that and he felt Fox had botched the movie by allowing Richter to direct and Rauch to turn in a crappy movie script, so he killed the deal, even tho ABC was anxious to feature the character as a regular series. However it is more likely that Sherwood Productions and ABC couldn't agree on a price. Two scripts for the TV series were written by Rauch, for which he apparently received not a penny of payment. Begelman's suicide in 1994 after his many years of embezzlement and his latest criminal activities were widely exposed freed up the property rights again.

The TV series concept was reexamined in 1998, with Fox TV initially very interested in the concept, but with fifteen years between the original movie's release, and none of the original film's actors in a position to participate, the network decided to rethink the idea, and then cancelled it. At least one script was authorized and written by Rauch for this proposed series, for which he was fully paid by Fox TV.

### **"The only reason for time is so that everything doesn't happen at once."**

Numerous opportunities for licensing Buckaroo Banzai merchandise were never explored by Fox. Some merchandise tie-ins developed shortly after the movie bombed also fell flat, including the Viewmaster set devoted to the movie, the Atari Buckaroo video game, and a small toy model of the World Watch tour bus.

The film was eventually released to cable TV long after it had been originally shown in theaters, but it was not until the new century that promotional efforts really expanded. Richter and Rauch have created new novels, new comic book series, and new scripts for a possible TV series. A series of mini-series comic books were published by Moonstone Comics, most of which were also collected into graphic novels. Sales were initially good but faltered later on, and no new Buckaroo Banzai comics have been published since 2012.

Reproductions of the movie posters (all variations, including foreign posters) have been reprinted, while the movie itself is currently available for free viewing by Amazon Prime members or at a modest cost to anyone else. Authorized team patches, metal badges, insignia, logos and lots more merchandise have recouped the film's initial loss and have enabled it to actually show a profit, many long years after its original release.

A second movie, "Buckaroo Bonzai Against the World League of Crime" was originally hyped as coming in the very last scenes of the original picture, but despite persistent rumors, including one that claims big money investors were waiting in the wings to underwrite it, no sequel was ever made.

Then, in 2016 MGM made a public announcement that they were going to produce a Buckaroo Banzai TV series, which would also be distributed by Amazon.com to their Prime members. The original creators of the series were not contacted, and MGM assumed they had original ownership of the concept. W. D. Richter and Earl Mac Rauch begged to disagree. The resulting bad publicity and possible legal complications led Amazon to back out of their commitment to the project, and as of this date MGM claims they have every intention of going ahead with the TV show, but nothing has been done, while some of the creative people the studio originally lined up have backed out after being made aware of the controversy and the negative fan reaction.

### **"If all wishes were gratified, many dreams would be destroyed."**

In my opinion the movie is a hopelessly jumbled up mess of plot inconsistencies and inadequate characters meandering thru a fragmented story that does not ever come together, let alone make much sense.

My guess is that the plot was originally supposed to be some kind of perverse parody of all the pulp magazine/comic book/movie serial heroes of the past. The comparison to the concept of Doc Savage and his crew of comrades is immediately obvious, or it is to those who happen to know who Doc Savage was.



Unfortunately, most of the fans who saw the movie in 1984, and even fewer today have even a hint as to who Doc Savage, hero of a pulp magazine series that originally ran for more than sixteen years, happens to be.

But even as parody and satire I believe the movie fails. Very meager establishing background with very little information about what is actually going on is ever provided the viewer. The director/producer was W.T. Richter, co-creator of the concept. Over the course of more than fourteen years of development both he and screen writer Earl Mac Rauch obviously knew what the story was about, and they knew what the character was about. Unfortunately they failed to adequately pass along that information in the movie.

Instead, viewers are dropped in feet first and have to swim upstream all the way trying to figure out what might be part of an actual plot and what is supposed to be dark humor. The black Lechtoids, for example, look and speak like stereotypical Jamaican Negroes. This is supposed to be humorous. The evil Red Lectoids were designed to look like what might have evolved from a dinosaur-cold blooded lizard past. W.D. Richter was quoted as saying the concept was developed from a Canadian anthropologist's conjectural extrapolation, but the intent was really to create scary looking lizard-like humanoids dressed in frumpy loose suits designed to look like badly made Russian-era clothing.

The Red Lechtoids are supposed to have arrived on Halloween night, 1938, at Grover's Mill, New Jersey, as was related in the classic Orson Welles Mercury Theater "War of the Worlds" radio broadcast, a sly homage to the science fiction past. We are told that Welles was brain-washed by the bad aliens and forced to claim it was all a hoax, when in fact the alien invasion was real. The Red Lethtoids established Yoyodyne Propulsion Systems immediately (motto—"The Future Begins Tomorrow") with the goal of trying to invent a device that would cross over to the 8<sup>th</sup> dimension and rescue the rest of the Red Lechtoids.

Incongruous segments are attached to the ongoing plot for no good reason. For example, the bizarre romantic element is crammed in when Buckaroo and his rock band are playing a club in New Jersey. Penny Priddy is depressed and suicidal, and tries to blow her brains out right there in the rock club. (Really, no kidding! I guess I must have missed all the newspaper stories about beautiful, depressed chicks who decided to commit suicide with large handguns in the middle of rock and roll concerts.)

Buckaroo interrupts his hard metal rock set to speak with her and eventually gets her out of the local jail she he was tossed into when her suicide attempt was misinterpreted as an assassination attempt on Buckaroo. He then decides she will be his love interest. How/why/Huh! did that work out, you might ask. You might ask, but there are no answers in this movie---just oblique statements between the pair about the meaning of life and how important love and honest relationships are.

Penny Priddy becomes the damsel in distress when she is given the plans for the Overthruster (Huh again! Why?!?), then kidnapped by the Red Lechtoids, taken to their base at the Yoyodyne factory and tortured. Buckaroo and some of his team rush to the rescue, but he surrenders to save Penny and he also gets tortured (but he manfully resists shattering electronic impulses that would kill an ox or an army of lesser men).

Weapons are fired, chaos ensues, lots of loud music from the second half of the film onwards all but obliterates the words the characters are saying, so it is hard to figure out how any of this actually comes together. In the battle there is lots of destruction, bright explosions, and finally an air-to-air battle between exotic organic compound space ships piloted by Buckaroo and one of the Black Lechtoids in human form against Dr. Lizardo/Whorfin and his companions. In the end Buckaroo wins, while Dr. Lizardo presumably dies. The movie ends with Buckaroo and the members of Hong Kong Cavaliers marching off with the promise of a sequel soon to follow, a sequel that was never made.

Nothing makes much sense.

As I said, for reasons I have never been able to comprehend, this movie is now a cult classic. Why? You got me. It sure isn't because of the story. I think there was a strong demand for heroic action thrillers when the film was originally made, but there was also strong interest in oblique humor. Unfortunately this movie doesn't provide enuf of either of those qualities to redeem it.

Despite recent attempts to re-examine the movie and dissect its appeal (*Wired Magazine*, for example, gave it a glowing write-up in their March 25, 2013 issue), it is my belief that as time goes on the interest in this bizarre cinematic spectacle will fade. It is not a genuine classic; it is just a bizarre anomaly, a strange experimental quirk that briefly fascinated a segment of hard-core sci-fi fans from that golden age of science fiction films, the 1980s.

I think that in the long run what will survive from Buckaroo Banzai, besides the cultural blip it generated among the geek community, are some of the lines spoken by the hero and his friends. These slightly



# The Twisted Saga of The Grain & Salt Publishing Company

by Bob Jennings

This is the strange story of how a bit of humorous satire rapidly spun out of control and created big waves not only in a smallish hobby, but across a much wider industry as well.

In the spring of 1977 I published the first issue of my newest fanzine, titled *The Boy's Book Buff*, a publication specifically devoted to juvenile series books. This was a natural outgrowth of my long-time interest in dime novels and the story papers of yesteryear.

By the early years of the twentieth century the pulp magazines were rapidly wiping out the nickel weeklies and the dime novels, as well as the weekly story papers by the simple process of offering lots more fictional wordage per issue for a ten cent cover price. Many dime novel writers graduated over seamlessly to the pulp magazines, but many others also wrote juvenile adventure series books. Series of books headlined by heroes such as The Motor Boys, Tom Swift, the Airplane Boys, The Boy Scouts (many different series), the Moving Picture Boys and dozens of others essentially printed the same type of stories that had appeared in the nickel weeklies and dime novels, only in hardback format.

Parents who had never bothered to read a single copy of any of the nickel weeklies or dime novels were happy to condemn "dime novels" as trash, simply because young people loved them. But these same adults automatically assumed that any story appearing in hard cover format must be morally acceptable, and were happy to buy the hardback series books for their youngsters as gifts or incentives for good behavior. Had they opened the covers and read a few chapters of any of those volumes they would have discovered the same blend of fast action adventure, conflicts between the forces of good and evil, along with subtle lessons in morality and honesty that had been the hallmarks of the dime novels and character weeklies they so bitterly scorned.

Before starting the new fanzine I had sent out a batch of articles about various boys' book series heroes as part of the more or less bi-monthly lists of juvenile series books I had for sale. Response was very good, strong enuf to encourage me to go ahead to start a fanzine specifically for the collectors of juvenile series books.

All well and good, except that just before starting the new zine I sent out another price list with another essay to potential subscribers. The article was a short one, intentionally humorous, and propertied to be part of a new 'Forgotten Classics' series that was going to be devoted to exploring the obscure and forgotten parts of the juvenile series book field.

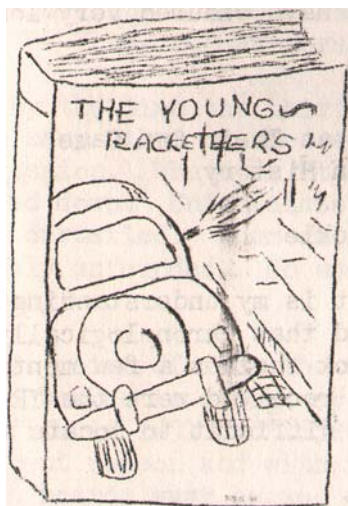
I discussed the very obscure publishing company known as Grain & Salt, and discussed their most popular series, The Young Racketeers. Herewith, a reprint of the heart of that essay—

The first entry in this new category (Forgotten Classics) is a series of books published by a relatively unknown company called the Grain & Salt Printing Company, a firm which apparently operated out of 900 Copley Square in Boston, Mass., back in the twenties and early thirties. I can find no current records about the

company or its activities at all, and in fact, very little is actually known about any of their publishing efforts. However, by a rare streak of luck I did manage to unearth one volume of the following series, and in hopes of encouraging the spread of information, I am reprinting the publicity page from the back of the book listing other volumes in the series, and the promotional blurb.

The writer is listed as Jesse Dellinger Schultz, which is probably a pseudonym. Apparently the company was attempting to create a bold new direction in boy's literature, using modern style stories and settings, along with the slang and vocabulary of the day. How successful they were in creating this new identification is hard to say. To say that the writing was curt, sharp, and filled with action is an understatement. Apparently, however, the idea did not catch the public fancy. These books seem as rare as hen's teeth, and, as I say, I have only one volume myself. In any event, here is the promotional sheet, and I hope those of you who have other titles in the series, or other information, or know of any other series or works from the Grain & Salt Printing firm will let me know so I can pass on the information.

Lads! Don't miss the exciting new adventures of two modern boys out to grab a chunk of the Great American Dream! Follow these practical, realistic young men as they set out to carve a niche in the competitive business community, bucking the odds in stories filled to the brim with action and adventure as up to date as today's newspaper headlines. You won't want to miss a single one of these thrilling stories as our heroes follow their dreams up the ladder of success rung by rung, on the long road to Fame and Fortune! Available at book sellers everywhere, each handsome volume is stamped in gold and features top quality, uniform binding.



1. The Young Racketeers; or, Two Punks On the Prowl
2. The YR Running the Numbers; or, Playing the Game For Name and Fame
3. The YR Among the Rum Runners; or, Quenching the Thirst of a Great City
4. The YR and the Big Payoff; or, Sharing the Wealth With the Boys In Blue
5. The YR Managing a Road House; or, Clipping the Rubes At Roulette
6. The YR Managing a Brothel; or, Teaching Young Cats Old Tricks
7. The YR and the Counterfeit Bonds; or, Throwing Wall Street For a Big Loss
8. The YR and the Big Gang War; or, Building Mutual Respect Through Aggressive Free Enterprise
9. The YR Winning the Waterfront; or, A Profitable Pact With Labor
10. The YR Dealing In Dope; or, Selling Smack In the Schoolyard

I thot the humor was pretty obvious. No legitimate book publisher would have issued a series of volumes aimed at a juvenile audience glorifying criminal enterprise. I thot the title of the "company", Grain and Salt would have been a sure giveaway, that readers should take the whole thing with a grain of salt. In addition, the firm's address: 900 Copley Square in Boston, has been the site of a major hotel for well over a century.

I decided to follow this up immediately with a longer article in that very first issue of BBB, in which I expanded on the original premise with more fictitious information about various book series that G&S had supposedly published.

Despite my declaration of righteous indignation at the beginning of the article, in actually only one person, Bob Chenu, recognized that the first essay had been humor. Instead I had received a lot of serious inquiries asking if I had been able to learn anything else about Grain and Salt or any other book series they had put out. I was happy to oblique, as you can see from my article, titled "The Grain And Salt Printing Company" reprinted here from that first issue —

Response to the Forgotten Classic column I distributed a couple of months ago has been, to say the least, mixed. The purpose of the Forgotten Classics column was to focus attention on obscure and little known examples from the boys' book field in an effort to broaden the general scope of knowledge about the hobby.

At that time I highlighted volumes published by the Grain & Salt Printing Company of Boston, Mass. Many interesting comments regarding the series were received from serious collectors, and much additional information concerning the company has been uncovered.

But I am shocked to report that some people believed the entire concept was a hoax, a flimsy attempt at humor perpetrated by your editor in a moment of devilment. To say that I am shocked, stunned, terribly upset, and deeply hurt by these accusations is a vast understatement. The very idea that I, a dedicated collector of boys' literature would attempt to perpetrate "humor" on the hordes of other strait-laced, dedicated boys' series book collectors is unthinkable. Why, over the years I have received countless numbers of letters from people who have declared that they've never been able to detect even the slightest trace of humor in anything I've ever written.

One person pointed out that the address I gave for the Grain & Salt Printing Company, 900 Copley Square, is the current location of a popular liquor lounge and disco dance spot. Another person also mentioned this fact, and even went so far as to suggest that I probably dreamed up the whole idea while mulling over a scotch and soda there late one Friday evening. I can only say that the whole idea is too preposterous for words. I, of course, have no control over the ownership of the old Grain & Salt publishing location, and since all the world knows I am a straight-forward beer drinker, I wouldn't be caught dead drinking either scotch or soda there or anywhere else.

Several people thought that the name listed as the author of the series bore a suspicious resemblance to the combination of several well established and infamous American criminals: Jesse (James), Dellinger (Dillinger), Schultz (Dutch Schultz). Again I have to remind everyone that I did not create that name; the editors at Grain & Salt did. Whatever their reasons for concocting such a name, I'm sure everyone will remember that I clearly stated that I believed the name to be a pseudonym.

The article was a straight forward piece of reporting on my part. How anyone could believe this was some sort of contrived attempt at humor is beyond me. Thankfully there are other collectors, serious dedicated fans who are interested in our hobby and are willing to help expand its boundaries. Many of these people have come forward with new information and research to throw some light on the activities of this little known firm. To those people, undaunted by slurs and suspicion, I offer my heartfelt thanks.

It is clear that Grain & Salt experimented with a number of different juvenile series books over the years of their existence. More information on the Young Racketeers comes from Bob Chenu of Merric, NY, who writes, "As to the Young Racketeers series, they were not very well written and I did not especially enjoy reading them. The one exception was 'Among the Rum Runners', whose Long Island setting interested me. 'Jesse Dellinger Schultz' is of course, a pseudonym; the books were written by John L. Diamond. You missed the 11<sup>th</sup> title, 'The YR and the Crater Caper; or, The Case of the Vanishing Judge'. There may be more titles, but as yet I have not run across them."

George Holmes of Milford, NH has also confirmed that Diamond was the writer of the series, his style being almost unmistakable throughout. Interestingly enough, altho it seems likely that the Young Racketeers books were the most popular of the Grain & Salt series, it was not their first. Shortly before the first appearance of the Young Racketeers, another series was published dealing with the college hi-jinks of a group known as the Roadhouse Ramblers.

The Roadhouse Ramblers were a group of six college chums, all well endowed with money and social influence, who were out to make their university stay as enjoyable as possible before the glamour of youth slipped away. Their adventures were sometimes humorous, but were always fast moving, and again, were written using the terse, heavy slang popular in the early 1920s. As a whole the Roadhouse Ramblers seem not to have lasted very long. The only titles our readers have been able to learn about are as follows:

1. The Roadhouse Ramblers; or, Cutting the Cards At College
2. The RR and the Bowery Beer Bust; or, Beating the Bootleggers At Their Own Game
3. The RR At the South Dorm; or, The Biggest Panty Raid in History
4. The RR Running the Odds; or, Faking the Final Exams
5. The RR and the Coke Bottle Fund; or, Fighting For Fatty Arbuckle

Altho there may have been additional volumes planned for this set, it seems pretty certain that "Coke Bottle Fund" marks the finish of the series. Other readers have suggested that the first Young Racketeers volume was rolling off the presses and onto book store shelves a few months before the initial distribution of "Coke Bottle Fund". The YR book was so well received that from that point onward none of the Roadhouse Rambler volumes were reprinted at all, making them even more difficult to locate than most of the other Grain & Salt titles.

Andy Zerbe of Montgomery, Alabama also sent in some valuable information on the firm, and mentioned another title I was completely unfamiliar with. "I found your article on the Grain & Salt Printing Company very interesting. I have not seen any of the Young Racketeer books you mentioned, but I do have one volume of a series of books intended for girls. The author is listed as Thedia Harlow. I enclose a list of the titles mentioned on the promotion page at the back of the volume.

1. The Harvey Town Hookers in High School; or, Fielding the Football Eleven.
2. The HTH Working Their Way Through College; or, Leading the League in the Clutches
3. The HTH in Business; or, Promoting Passion As a Paying Proposition
4. The HTH On Their Own; or, The Best Brothel On Broadway
5. The HTH and the Bar Room Brawl; or, Stopping the Salvation Army
6. The HTH Snuggling With the Sugar Daddies; or, Virtue Rewarded, And How

George Holmes reports that while he never owned a volume, he remembers seeing a couple of Boy Buccaneer books that bore the Grain & Salt spine imprint. I do not even have a tentative list of these titles. Anyone who has a copy or knows any of the titles to the Boy Buccaneer series, please let me know.

Information about another short lived series produced in the late twenties that seems not to have lasted long at all was provided by Dave Kanaar of Bellingham, Washington.

1. The Boy Anarchists at the League of Nations; or, Sowing the Seeds of Suspicion
2. The BA On Wall Street; or, Beating the Bear With the Bull
3. The BA Leading the Child Snatchers; or, Big Money For Little Murders

At approximately the same time another series was begun, but it apparently concluded within a few months of publication. The timing of these two series, coming out around the fall of 1929, may have had a great bearing on their lack of sales success. As we know, the stock market crashed and business opportunities could not have looked very bright for a small firm like Grain & Salt whose primary publishing efforts were in the field of juvenile literature. This very short series was titled the Young Gun Runners.

Dave said he saw a badly battered up copy of this series, and heard from an old-time book seller that the second volume of the series was a cross-over tie-in with the Young Anarchists titles. But considering how rare these titles are, it is apparently that few copies reached the shelves of book stores, and probably not many copies sold through either. In any event, the two titles are:

1. The Young Gun Runners in the Banana Republics; or, Reaping the Wealth of Revolution
2. The YGR Arming the Anarchists; or, Promoting Pillage For Profit

By the time the 1930s arrived it seems evident that Grain & Salt was feeling the full effects of the Depression, as was the case with many other businesses of the period. Whatever other printing activities the company had been engaged in must have slowed down considerably. Unfortunately it seems that the flow of juvenile series books was also cut back sharply. Rumors of a Boy Bandit series are, so far as I can determine, completely unfounded. The series may have been discussed, perhaps even planned, but no volumes were actually printed.

In point of fact, the Grain & Salt people seem to have gone into the printing of punch boards in a big way. There are at least two recorded complaints lodged against the firm in 1931 and 1932, both cases, however, being suddenly dropped later on for no apparent reason, and with no follow up by the authorities. I don't know if the making and distribution of punch boards ever became a major racket in the state or not, but in any case

evidence seems to support the belief that most of Gain & Salt's production of these illicit gaming gimmicks were shipped out to points in the mid west.

It was during this period, shortly before the demise of the company, that the final series of boys' books was launched. Apparently inspired by the rising tide of nationalism, along with the word-wide sense of renewed ancestral identity, and the desire to reinforce ageless ethnic group emotions which were finding such widespread popular support in Europe and the far east, the publishers decided to try just one more series to exploit this growing sense of group pride.

The title of the series was the American Aryans, and it seems to have had a rather short run. In fact, they may well be the very rarest of all the Gain & Salt books. I know of no collector who actually owns a copy of these books, however Dave Kanaar very kindly sent me a short promotional listing he had located that listed titles which were supposed to have been in print in 1933. Interestingly enough, no author is listed for this series at all. Herewith, the full promo announcement:

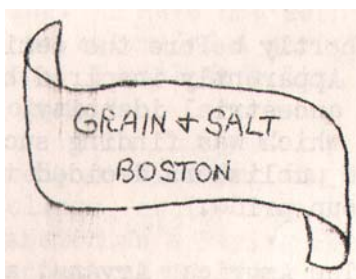
“Meet the American Aryans! Two bright, dedicated young men whose renewed knowledge of their proud racial and cultural heritage has propelled them into forceful action against the rising tide of alien contamination. All pure blooded Americans will thrill to the adventures of these dedicated youngsters, as they battle for their ideals, working ceaselessly to stem the decadent tide of racial pollution that is spreading over this land. Available at better book dealers everywhere, these volumes are handsomely bound in red, white, and blue stamped bindings, and will make an attractive addition to any library.

1. The American Aryans and the Silver Shirts; or, Waging a War For Racial Purity
2. The AA Burning Books For Liberty; or, Protecting the Protestant Ethic
3. The AA With the Klu Klux Klan; or, Hanging 'Em High Down in Dixie

That seems to have been the final swan song of the Gain & Salt Printing Company. Toward the beginning of 1934, shortly after the release of these books, there was a disastrous fire at the Grain & Salt printing and warehouse facility that completely wiped the company out.

Despite their desperate efforts in the early part of the Depression to survive by printing illegal gaming punchboards, on the whole the firm maintained its standards and integrity right up until the very end. In the annals of juvenile series book collecting, certainly there are fewer more obscure or unusual publishing firms than Grain & Salt. Altho they have disappeared from the publishing scene, I'm sure their work will not be soon forgotten. By their dedication to modern writing styles, and their steady insistence on using practical, everyday aspects of American life as the basic plots for all their books, they did succeed in opening doors that had formally been closed to writers in the boys' book field. I'm certain that the books and the series that Grain & Salt produced over the years will continue to be collected and discussed by fans for decades to come.

**Footnote:** I want to thank again all the collectors who helped in the preparation of this article. Altho there are still many gaps in the Gain & Salt story, without the efforts of fans such as Andy Zerbe, Bob Chenu, George Holmes, Dave Kanaar, and many others, the puzzle would still be so many scattered pieces. I ask that any other readers who have volumes published by Grain & Salt and who can provide additional information, either about the books or the company itself, including any titles not mentioned here, to please let me know and I'll report additional information as it becomes known.



The “addition information” supplied in the article was all concocted by me, using the names of friends and correspondents in the hobby. Bob Chenu and Andy Zerbe had already written articles for the zine, and George Holmes had promised a long one that unfortunately never materialized.

Imagine my shocked reaction when almost everybody took the whole thing seriously! Long time collectors, including serious researchers in the fields of boys’ series books and dime novels were enthusiastic about the article and wanted to learn more about the Grain and Salt company and why their books were so damned rare.

I received a batch of sales lists from collectors offering to trade generously for or buy the G&S titles. I even got a few ads for the fanzine seeking their books. I managed to forestall those, but on a visit to the home of my longtime friend Dave Bates down in Putnam, CT, he pulled out the most recent issue of *A.B. Bookman*, the magazine for sellers and dealers in books, particularly antique and rare books, and showed me page after page of ads from book dealers who were looking to buy any books published by Grain & Salt and offering serious money for the titles!

Fortunately, a few people recognized that it was all a hoax, specifically long time comic fan and book seller D. W. Howard, who leaped to his typewriter and turned out a great follow-up article detailing his own experiences uncovering the “history” of Grain & Salt—

# THE GRAIN AND SALT PRINTING COMPANY **UPDATE!**

by

**D. W. Howard**

Received BBB #1, and found it interesting and informative as I knew it would be. Regarding the Grain & Salt publications, I was really amazed to read the article, since I’d come in contact with those books before. I’m a dealer specializing in second hand paperbacks, magazines, and collectible comics. I run buying ads locally, offering to buy collections and dealer stock.

Well, over a year ago I got a call from a man who identified himself as Andrew Guthrie. Mr. Guthrie, who sounded to be in his mid forties, was a soft spoken man who told me he had a collection of Hardy Boys, Tom Swift, and Burroughs books, and a few comics. I told him I’d like to see the whole collection, and made an appointment to come to his house in Candler, NC.

Before going on, let me note that I wasn’t really interested in the boys’ books, since I have very little commercial activity in these. However, when someone offers me a collection, I try to buy the person out completely, as this usually gives me a better unit cost.

Mr. Guthrie, when I met him, turned out to be a well-preserved mid sixties, with ruddy cheeks and sparse gray hair. His home was modest, but well kept, furnished with good furniture—not veneer. Well, in short, Mr. G and his wife Betty, a thin gracious woman about her husband’s age, appeared to be a late-middle



aged couple who fit solidly into the middle class, with good clothing, surroundings, etc etc, but probably living on a fixed income. I got this last impression because he seemed embarrassed about selling out his stuff.

His books, even the comics, were neat and well preserved. The hardbacks all had the original djs, somewhat frayed around the edges, but still glossy. The comics and a few magazines---mostly *Argosy* and *Bluebook* with ERB stories---were stored in manila envelopes. He had a complete inventory of his collection on yellowed file cards.

Well, I was delighted to find the material in such good shape and we settled on a price without too much haggling. As we packed everything up, I noticed that the contents of one bookcase was not on my list, and I asked him about this. Mr. Guthrie told me the books were products of his father's company, and he couldn't bear to part with them. I said I understood, and gave a quick look to see if the books might be worth following up some time in the future. I caught a glimpse of "The Young Racketeers and the Big Payoff", and the Grain & Salt spine imprint, and, while it was intriguing, I forgot about them since I'd never heard of the title, and most of the things I've never heard of are junk.

So when I read your article the title clicked. I save notes on people I buy from, so I looked up Mr. Guthrie's phone number and called, making an appointment to go out and see him. Mr. Guthrie was a bit put out when I visited him, reiterating that he was not interested in selling. I insisted I had no commercial desires, only a scholarly interest.

Finally, Mr. Guthrie agreed to let me into his confidence, and gave me the run of his library. He does not have the complete output of the G&S company, but has most of their books, plus thousands of galley proof pages, and a considerably amount of the original G&S correspondence.

From the correspondence and Mr. Guthrie's testimony, I have put together the story of Grain & Salt Publishing.

Mr. Andrew Guthrie's father, Clarence J. Guthrie, was a World War I infantryman who served his country honorably and well in that conflict. C.J. Guthrie was a man of low antecedents and little education, but of great dreams. He became very good friends with one Isaac Samuelson, his platoon corporal, who happened to be Jewish. We can assume that C.J. Guthrie was a man of good will, since there was considerable prejudice against Jews at this time. Samuelson was of a good family. He had education, money, and manners, and no doubt the elder Guthrie saw him as a model for prosperity.

Andrew Guthrie has a letter written by his father to the latter's parents, regarding a serious ailment which he and Samuelson had contracted shortly after undertaking a special mission into the west bank section of Paris. The letter does not state the name of either this special mission or the ailment, however, since the letter was written during wartime, we can probably assume more exact information would have been classified.

At any rate, both men apparently recovered, and were very close friends. After the war ended, they went their separate ways, but swore to keep in touch.

C.J. Guthrie returned to an expanding America, but he lacked the skills to obtain a job that would put in Samuelson's financial bracket. Early in 1919, Guthrie



moved his family, Susan his wife (whom he had married in 1913, before the war), Andrew (who has been born that same year), and little Jennifer (who was exactly five years and three days younger than Andrew, having been born during the war), down to New York from the ancestral home in Maine. Incidentally, Andrew Guthrie offered no explanation of the fact that his younger sister had been born while their father was over in Europe, and I certainly did not ask for one.

In the Big Apple, C.J. Guthrie fell on hard times and sought to take a short cut to riches. He was convicted of larceny in 1920, and served two years in prison.

At this time prisoners were expected to be “penitent”; to concentrate on the folly of their crimes and how to avoid such behavior in the future, and how they could make themselves better citizens. It was in the New York State Penitentiary that Guthrie met John Diamond.

Diamond came from a family as poor as Guthrie’s own, but he had managed to graduate high school. He had been baptized with no middle name, and had taken the middle name Lewis, after Robert Lewis Stevenson, his favorite author. Diamond was in for assault on a law officer. He had a long history of petty crime, but desperately wanted to better himself, and confided that he hoped to become a successful writer.

Guthrie was electrified that another man, much like himself, could aspire to such a profession. Inspired, he promised Diamond that he would seek out a friend who might be able to help him when they were released.

In June of 1922 both men were freed, with Diamond returning to Rochester, NY, and Guthrie seeking his old friend Samuelson in Boston.

Guthrie told his old comrade the whole sordid story. Samuelson agreed to help Guthrie rehabilitate himself. Guthrie mentioned his friend John L. Diamond, and his desire to become a writer. Samuelson had read many of the Horatio Alger stories and probably (Andrew Guthrie thinks), some Nick Carter. But more importantly, he was presented with the opportunity to buy out a bankrupt printing firm in Boston at a very advantageous price, a setup complete with its own book binary, and apparently the most modern presses of the day.

The deal fell together easily. Samuelson agreed to finance a book and printing operation with Guthrie acting as editor and general business manager. Samuelson would use his business and family connections to help with the initial distribution of titles. Guthrie telegraphed Diamond, telling him to come to Boston to fulfill his ambition of becoming a writer.

In September 1922 Diamond arrived, bringing with him a young man he introduced as his nephew, a very polished artist whose talents were put to immediate use creating the striking cover stamps, front plates, and dust jackets so familiar to readers of the G&S books. I’m sure many readers will be surprised to learn that the young artist who signed his work “A. Collier” was actually named, or called at least, “Alice Collier”. This seems like a pretty improbable first name for a young man, but Andrew Guthrie is positive that Diamond and everyone else in the office always referred to him as “Alice”.

The decision was quickly made to concentrate on producing juvenile books for boys, since all concerned apparently felt this was where the quickest profits could be realized. Samuelson OKed the project, subject to approval of the first draft of Diamond’s story. The firm was organized as the Guthrie and Samuelson Publishing Company, with offices at 900 Copley Square. In November, Diamond completed the first story. Guthrie did a little editing and Samuelson gave it final approval.

“Ruddy-Cheeked Boys In King James’ Court” was on book sellers’ shelves in March of 1923, and did not go well. The story had heavy swipes from the works of R.L. Stevenson, and details of the fantastic adventures of a fourteen year old boy during the time before the Glorious Revolution. He is protected by a noble cavalier who keeps his charge out of harm’s way. The writing was not equal to Diamonds later work in

the Young Racketeers series, but the potential was there. Samuelson must have realized this, since he suggested Diamond write his second book in a twentieth century American setting, because seventeenth century England clearly had not worked.

Diamond wrote "Back Door to Adventure" in a spasm of activity, finishing the story in two weeks. This book dealt with a young man's adventures in the southwest, where he is captured and humiliated by Mexican bandits and is eventually rescued by a handsome U.S. Army officer.

"Back Door" did only slightly better than "Ruddy-Cheeked Boys", and apparently at this time some sort of row developed between Samuelson and Diamond with Guthrie acting as reluctant referee. Altho Andrew Guthrie remembers little of this, the difficulties ended with Diamond's nephew leaving Boston to carry on his art duties by mail service contact only, and Samuelson demanding immediate changes in the type of stories Diamond was doing.

Diamond replied with the Road House Ramblers, a radical departure from the type of story he had previously written. Samuelson and Guthrie were so enthused they decided to separate themselves entirely from the two earlier books, and it was at this point that the title of the company was changed to Grain and Salt. Why the name Grain and Salt? Andrew Guthrie is unclear, but apparently Diamond suggested a philosophical short poem as an inspiration of bright new beginnings. The words grain and salt were taken from the title of the poem and made the name of the "new" company, symbolizing a break and a completely new beginning from the two earlier titles. There is the faintest suspicion that a name change was effected at this time to avoid accepting return copies of those first two volumes which would have been charged to the Guthrie and Samuelson Publishing Company.

In any event, the Roadhouse Ramblers series proved to be fairly popular. In keeping with the practice of the day, and possibly to avoid any shadow of readers connecting a boys' book writer with a former prison inmate, pen names were used for all the firm's books. The first two Roadhouse Ramblers books were put out with the pen name 'Studs' Sullivan. Guthrie drew upon the newspaper headlines of the time to create Diamond's second penname, that of Jesse Dellinger Schultz.

Thereafter, Grain and Salt enjoyed some modest success. Diamond hammered out all the Roadhouse Ramblers and all the Young Racketeers series, which kept him so busy that he had no time for other stories. Clarence Guthrie himself wrote the Young Gunrunners stories, which went to six titles, while Mrs. Guthrie, drawing on pure imagination, wrote the Harvey Town Hookers series.

Incidentally, "The HTH Snuggling With the Sugar Daddies" exists only as a galley proof, having never been published for mass readership. Possibly the Harvey Town Hookers books were not as popular as the boys' books. "Snuggling With the Sugar Daddies" is listed in the G&S brochures, and in the title lists found in the back of many of their books, but it was not published. Andrew Guthrie has in his possession a memo to C.J. Guthrie signed by Samuelson which reads "Re: Snuggling. Abort."

It seems like the G&S titles were popular enough that during their heyday Samuelson was able to move to Miami, altho whether he was living on book profits, or money from his other investments is not known. However he obviously has enough confidence in the elder Guthrie to leave him in charge. This may have been an error in judgment, because with a year or so after Samuelson left Boston the company fell on hard time.

Sales of the established series begin to slip, and Guthrie decided they needed some fresh settings. Diamond and Guthrie pooled their talents to co-script the Boy Anarchists series in a futile attempt to capitalize on some headline publicity. It was during this period also that nine Boy Buccaneer books were written, of which the most popular were "The Boy Buccaneers on the China Seas; or, A New Slant On the Slave Trade", and "The Boy Buccaneers Hanging Together; or, Testing the Yardarm Swing".

Sales were still not satisfactory. While Samuelson was in Miami, Diamond recalled his nephew to work on an emergency cash raising project. "Alice" Collier drew a comic strip similar to the material found later in "Sweet Gwendolyn", using an all male cast. This material still exists in Andrew Guthrie's collection. It is frankly pornographic in the worst sense of the term, altho beautifully illustrated. The elder Guthrie appears to have thought the untitled work would perish from lack of interest. Only a few proofs exist beside the original artwork, and C.J. Guthrie seems to have ordered the plates destroyed.

The punch board incident is interesting. No records of the firm actually printing punch boards as such exist, however Andrew Guthrie possesses dozens of copies of orders, extremely *large* orders, for "four color cardboard letterheads", "full color brochures on sturdy stock", "calling cards, high gloss, in color", and so on from 1930 thru 1932. Most of these orders were paid for in cash, and recorded as across the counter cash sales. However an examination of the receipts and files of the company has turned up a few checks made out to the firm from such people as "Roger Smith". In fact, the "Smith" family seems to have ordered at least eighteen lots of "four color calling cards, large size" in lots great enough to cost in excess of a thousand dollars each purchase, with checks being signed by John Roger, Alfred, Tom, etc, thru twelve other common first names "Smith".

Apparently increased interest by the local authorities in their printing activities on the punch board gambling devices led to their abandoning this once lucrative source of income. There seems no doubt that the two indictments made against the company on charges of manufacturing punch boards were squashed by the payment of large bribes to the appropriate people.

The American Aryan series was a last ditch effort to capitalize on a growing popular cultural trend. Denied income from printing gambling devices and from porno artwork, Guthrie and Diamond attempted one final collaboration. The three American Aryan books were written, printed, and shipped out to book dealers in a white-hot fury of two desperate months.

The plan did not work. Liberal book sellers returned their copies almost as soon as they unpacked them, and there exist many indignant letters from book store managers postmarked early 1933, including several that appear to be written in Yiddish. I do not read or speak that language, but the writing appears erratic and hurried, so one can easily assumer the messages were not warmhearted congratulations.

One letter written in English came from the hand of Isaac Samuelson, which reads in part: "HOW COULD YOU DO THIS TO ME? I GAVE YOU EVERYTHING. I THOUGHT YOU WERE A GOOD BOY, NOW LOOK, EVEN MY MAMA IS UPSET AND CRYING. WHY HAVE YOU *DONE THIS THING CLARENCE?* YOU GET THOSE BOOKS BACK. GET *ALL* THOSE BOOKS BACK." The letter is undated.



A second undated letter, apparently written after the first and also signed by Samuelson (I say apparently written afterwards since it refers, in part, to the first latter), says: "Something must be done. We are being hounded by the paper mill, by the city tax people, and you have not a cent in the bank. The books are not selling, and look, we have bills to pay to everybody; telephone bills, gas bills, insurance bills, and all the rest. How are we going to pay these people?"

On June 8, 1933, a flash fire swept thru the G&S printing plant, completely destroying the plant and the binary. Fortunately much of the correspondence and paperwork which was at the editorial office at 900 Copley Square was saved. The final entry in the company records is a note—" \$10 to Negro man with cart to move out papers." And that was the end of the Grain and Salt Printing Company.

Isaac Samuelson lived to a ripe old age in St. Petersburg, Florida. Diamond and his nephew left Boston and were never heard from again. Clarence J. Guthrie became a

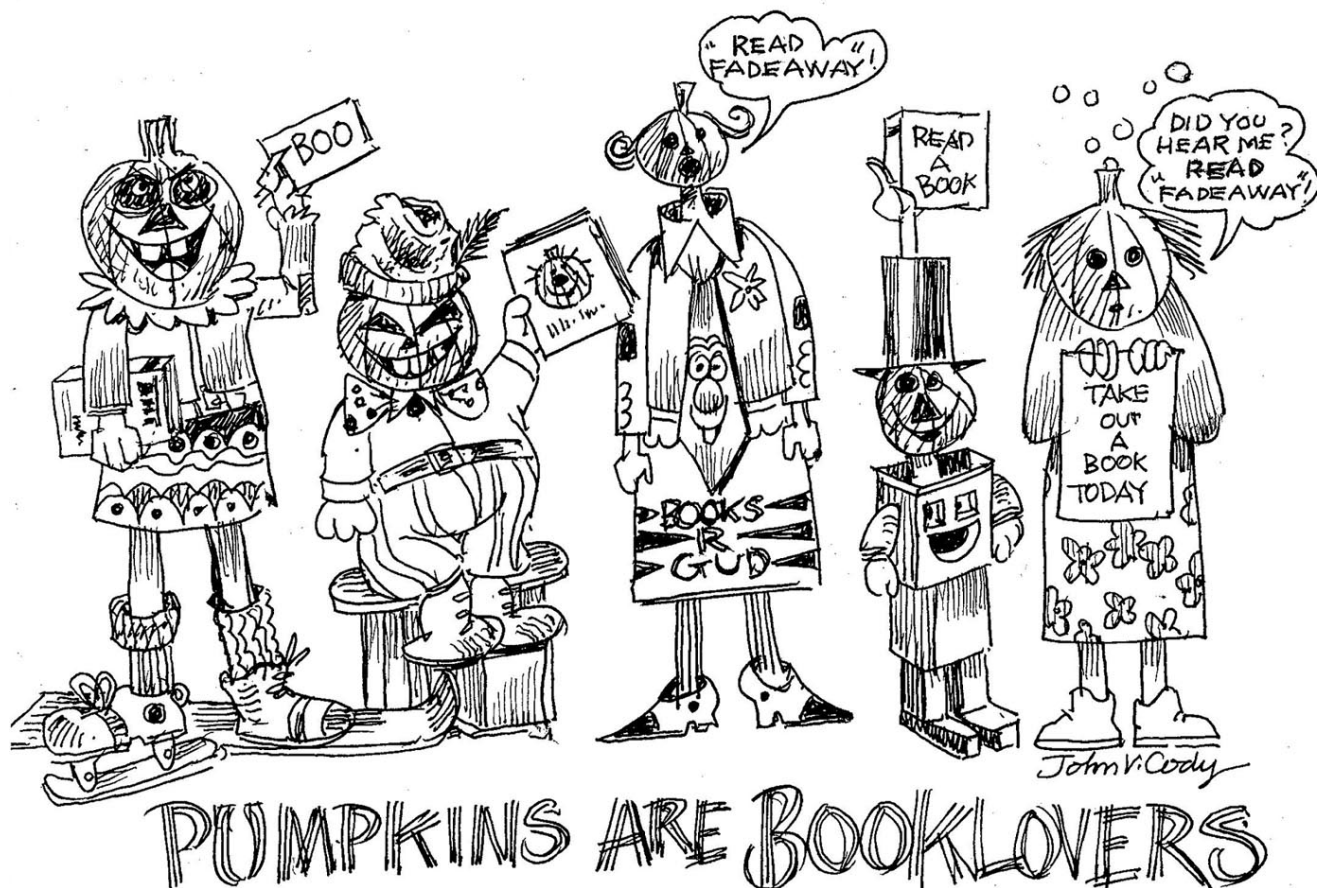
merchant seaman for a short time, and left America in 1935. He ended up in Ireland, where he scrapped up enough money to start a taxi service. "Black and Tan Taxis" went into business in the early spring of 1936. However C.J. Guthrie dropped out of sight in May of that same year and no light on his subsequent whereabouts has ever been shed. Mrs. Guthrie, who wrote the Harvey Town Hookers series as Thedia Harlow, operated a small hotel in Detroit for some years, and passed into the next world peacefully on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1947.

Andrew Guthrie remembers those hallowed years well. The golden days of Grain and Salt, the mid and late 1920s were wonderful years. And so now the story is told. To Isaac Samuelson, John L. Diamond, and his nephew "Alice" Collier we owe a debt. But our greatest debt is to Clarence J. Guthrie whose courage, ambition and drive gave us so many memorable characters, stories, and adventures.

The response to this article was even more enthusiastic than before, and ads asking for Grain & Salt books began to appear in antique journals and rare book seller lists all over the place. Altho some of the fanzine readers finally realized that it was all a hoax, I got many letters and telephone calls about the G&S books from a lot of people, including journalists who wanted to do their own write-up on this newly discovered batch of book rarities.

To one and all I tried to explain that it was all a joke, that there never was a Gain & Salt company. Some people accepted this with surprise and a minimum of resentment, others did not. Eventually the word finally got out to the collecting and the research community that the whole thing had been a hoax, you know, humor, Ha Ha; intended to be funny.

Even so I saw references to the non-existent G&S titles and the company well thru most of 1978. I've never had this kind of bizarre spin-off before or since to anything I ever wrote. I hope you enjoyed reading the material in this new century, and I sincerely hope that nobody reading any of this will actually believe that the Grain & Salt Printing Company or any of the books mentioned were ever real.



# READER REACTION



**Ken Faig, Jr.** carolfaig@comcast.net

Many thanks for the latest *Fadeaway*.

Interesting editorial on Judge Dredd. I used to tell myself I could live under the most totalitarian society & be content with thinking my own thoughts. But one still has to deal with victimhood--possibly one's own, but also one's neighbor's (e.g., a Jewish neighbor in Nazi Germany).

The article on this year's Hugo nominations makes me realize how much one must read to cast an informed vote. I don't think I am even well read enough in the narrower horror field to cast an informed vote on awards in that domain. (I know WFA is not by popular vote but by judges; I don't know how WHA works.)

Your cover made me think back to watching those little blue guys on TV when my children were small. I never learned much about them. I guess I could take a brief internet course.

Lots of good letters. I hate to see dumpsters filled with books. Fortunately, our local public library sells its discards to a northern Indiana firm which sells them through the internet. The library has its own book sale room, but doesn't sell its own discards. One never knows when a patron is going to take up the wasted tax dollars argument. Of course, the fact today is that public libraries, with their limited space, cannot afford to be indiscriminate book accumulators. Most little-used materials will eventually be discarded. Perhaps the library buys five copies of a current bestseller, but for the long term perhaps a single copy will suffice.

///The science fiction field has sprawled out so much it is almost impossible to keep up with all the new novels and stories that come out each year. I think recent WorldCons have done a great service by making the year's Hugo nominees available to individuals who buy a convention membership as pixel files. Considering the range of material, in many cases this freebee alone is worth the cost of the membership.

I personally was amazed that N.K. Jenson won her third Hugo in a row for the third novel in her Broken Earth series. I guess I must be really out of touch with the mainstream of modern science fiction literature, because I tried a couple of times to read the first book but I was never able to make it even thru a hundred pages.

The local libraries around here hold book sales several times a year, at which library discards are also sold, and then most of them also have free book racks, where a lot of library discards are given away free to anybody who wants them. My suspicion is that after a few weeks, if a title doesn't get taken it goes in the dumpster or gets handed over free to one of the library salvage services to get it off site.

As mentioned in a couple of past *Fadeaway* issues, a considerably amount of library discards actually wind up being shipped to China. For reasons of their own China accepts all US library book discards and is in the process of scanning every title into a massive computer base. I have no idea if the material is ever translated into the Chinese language, but they have been processing multi-

thousands of books round the clock for over a dozen years now, without bothering to explain exactly what the purpose of the project actually is.

In the distant past when library budgets were tight, and the buildings had more space, most books stayed on the shelves until they wore out, with books that were seldom checked out rotating to storage stacks where they could be pulled if someone ever wanted them, but those days are long gone. Now libraries can barely keep up with the flow of new material, let alone holding onto stuff that doesn't fill some specific niche in their system. It's definitely a strange new world out there these days.///

AND THEN KEN WROTE---

I must have missed the reference to China's buying library discards. Very interesting. Some of the most cumbersome stored items in days or yore were often newspapers. I remember the Providence Journal taking a whole half floor at the Rockefeller Library at Brown in days of yore. I know there is a fellow who has been trying to rescue discarded bound newspapers.

Since I've begun working one afternoon per week as a genealogy volunteer at my local public library, I've gained a greater appreciation for the sensitive subject of discards. I suppose it would be possible to build a local public library as a "tower of books," but the reality would probably be it would have to be closed stacks since there probably wouldn't be enough staff to ensure safety with open stacks. Of course, so many university libraries have gone to off-site storage that a large part of the collection can't be open stacks anyhow. At some universities, the stacks are only open to grad students and faculty. One of the great joys of my experience as an undergrad was the open stacks at the Northwestern University Library.

**Rich Dengrove; 2651 Arlington Drive, #302;  
Alexandria, VA 22306**

Bob, I'm working on an article for *Fadeaway* so I'm not going to do as much commenting here as I usually do. It is the one I have threatened to do on Alien Greys. How the idea arose long before flying saucers; and how there is a connection between them and pulp literature. Only, in the late '60s, did the Grey become a fave of the flying saucer set.

Now, however, I want to write about Brad Foster, whom you interviewed. Among other things, I wish to thank him for all the years he was commenting on my zine and sending me cartoons. Also, I see that, at his website, is a reference to a publication of mine with one of his cartoons, JOMP 38 (2014), p19. While I did more issues with Brad's cartoons, I feel flattered.

As well as commenting on myself, I wish to do some commenting on your interview. I want to talk about Brad's wisdom. He has a lot of it. For instance, during the interview, Brad talks about criticism. About honest criticism from someone who might hire you rather than flattery from those who have no intention of hiring you. A fellow called Don gave honest criticism. That somehow reminds me of Toastmasters. I don't know what Brad thinks of Toastmasters in general. What I will talk about is Toastmasters in particular. More precisely, each speech has to be given an evaluation. Each evaluation is required to give some criticism of a speech. While there continue to be quite a number of bad evaluations in Toastmasters, requiring that there be at least one criticism has improved evaluations. They aren't just flattery. .

Another great point Brad made was that his art is an extension of remaining a kid. Kids are very creative. I had a lot of creative ideas when I was a kid. The 'disease' that made you a superman or immortal, for example. Its microbes did the opposite of the usual microbes. Also, at one point, during my childhood, I believed I would live 187,000 years. I used to think about what things would be like in 187,000 years..



Of course, kids don't actually create things that an adult would recognize as new and different because they don't have enough discipline and don't know enough. Unfortunately, as adults, we know more, but we become less creative. However, in Brad's case, it looks like he has retained his childhood creativity while he is more disciplined and has learned sophisticated artistic techniques. Fortunately, society didn't kill Brad's creativity; and make him, as an adult, boring.

In addition, Brad says sometimes he is even more creative when he draws anything that comes to his mind. You can do the same thing with writing. In fact, some have done something similar when they wanted to solve management problems. That has been the idea behind brain storming. While self-declared 'practical' people consider the solutions produced that way weird and, perforce, of no 'practical' use, I have also found that, by just doing something with no plan in mind, I come up with ideas. And many ideas arrived at that way are good. Many others are better than good.

On the other hand, my best ideas seem to come out of the blue when I don't think I'm thinking about the subject at hand.

In short, I admire Brad's recipes for creativity and sorting out ideas. I'm sure he has had a lot more practice than I have. And a lot more practice in making money out of such ideas. Of course, since I spent most of my career as a reference librarian, I didn't have to do much of that sort of thing in the arts. Or did I? Come to think of it, being a reference librarian is an art.

///I don't know if kids have so much creativity as they have unbridled enthusiasm. Young children in particular think they can do anything. Ask a kid if s/he can dance or sing, or act in a play, and they will say sure, even if they have no idea how to do any kind of dance, or singing, or acting. Same with almost any kind of activity; youngsters are almost always up for any new thing whether they have any knowledge or experience in that area or not.

Education fills in positive knowledge of how the world works, but it also fills in the information about how much knowledge and experience most of us lack. Children learn soon enuf that maybe they can't do everything they envisioned because they don't know how. I don't think that stops their dreams or stifles their imagination, but realism creates limits that adults often reinforce unintentionally.

I recall an interview with Harry Castleman, famous author of boy's adventure books in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in which he once told his mother he wanted to write books. His mother was astonished and horrified, according to the interview she asked him "what on earth ever gave you the idea you could do such a thing?" For most kids that kind of doubt/condemnation would be enuf to kill the creative impulse. For Castleman it was just an extra inducement for him to make good as an author, which he did at a relatively young age, selling his first stories at age eighteen.

I think a lot of adults unknowingly and without deliberate malice thwart the creative impulses of their children. Kids that rise above that follow thru on their interests and often have interesting careers following their dreams.///



**Tom McGovern; 1418 Macopin Rd.; West Milford, NJ 07480**

I am in receipt of *Fadeaway* issues #55 and #56. I apologize for not offering any reactions to them before this, but dang, it's been a busy summer! The following comments will randomly swerve back and forth from one issue to the other because, why not?

I feel your pain with regard to lack of reaction to issues you send out, though I think you may be a bit overzealous in refusing to make them available via the internet through, for example, the eFanzines site. If you're looking for reader reaction, then that strikes me as a way to get your fanzine seen by readers who have never encountered it before. You never know who might see it there and become a follower or a contributor. It's your



zine, of course, so you can distribute it as you see fit, but it seems to me that overly restricting availability to potentially interested readers could just lead to a spiral at the bottom of which there will be too few readers to make it worth the effort of publishing at all.

You make some interesting points about the Judge Dredd series. I haven't followed it in quite a few years now, so I was unaware that Mega City One had devolved into an utter police state. To be honest, though, it was never far from that. Judge Dredd's famous quote, "I am the Law," pretty much summarized the state of things. The judges always served as juries and executioners, but they were (presumably) executing the laws as written. The government that you describe sounds like a rule by fiat – whatever a judge happens to think at the moment is the law. To be honest, I always found the series to be spotty. There were some stories that I really liked, and others I found boring or, in some cases, overbearing. From what you describe, it doesn't sound as if I'd want to get back into it at this point.

In your reply to Franz Zruch, you lament the loss of magazine racks in newsstands and stores these days. I haven't seen one in quite some time that I can think of, except for minimal displays in chain drug stores and grocery stores. In those places, there is almost never anything I'm even vaguely interested in reading. The only place I know that carries any significant selection of magazines these days – and the only place that I ever see copies of the traditional SF magazines for sale – is Barnes and Noble, and even there, I rarely make a purchase. One exception that I always buy here in New Jersey is a semi-annual magazine called *Weird NJ*, which focuses on oddities and paranormal phenomena here in the Garden State. A lot of it is overblown, but it's still fun to flip through an issue (even when you know that most of the "true stories" are hogwash people made up to get published). But print magazines in general seem to be on the decline, especially in a time when there is almost unlimited content to read on the internet. The situation is even worse with comic books, since practically the only place to get them anymore is at comic book stores, but that's another whole rant.

Speaking of comics, you mention in your comment to me that comics are a poor investment. Don't I know it. Unfortunately, I haven't had the room, the time or, in recent years, the energy to properly maintain my comic "collection." It's really more an accumulation at this point; I have boxes and boxes of unsorted comics, and no practical way of getting them sorted out. Besides that, I have no doubt that many of them are deteriorating in condition because of the poor way I have them stored. And collectors today seem almost obsessive about condition; much more so, I think, than when I was young. I blame the Overstreet Price Guide for leading them in that direction; in the old days there were a handful of classifications of condition: mint, near-mint, fine, good, fair, poor. That was pretty much it. Now they are graded with decimal point scores, and Overstreet lists huge value gaps between the lower and higher scores. Where a "fair" comic used to be listed at about half the cost of near-mint, now a similar comic would probably be a tenth of the value. I do still have a few gems in my collection, though, and I'd like to think I will be leaving something of value to my heirs when the time comes.

You mention in your response to my letter how easy it is to get self-published these days, particularly in electronic format. Agreed; when I was a young-un, authors were a mysterious breed. They lived somewhere and wrote their stuff, and you might meet one at some sort of event like a bookstore signing or a fair (I never did attend SF cons, though I went to a few comic shows and met some writers and artists back in the day), but by and large, they were like movie stars and high government officials: not people you were likely to rub elbows with. I guess there are still some like that – I doubt you'll run into Stephen King down at the local market. But nowadays, I have quite a few friends who have published books, many even in "dead tree" format through print-on-demand. It's no big deal. Unfortunately, in opening up the opportunity for more people to get published, quality has also suffered in some cases. A young man of my acquaintance had a rather interesting life story involving exiting his cult membership. He self-published his autobiography, and I was eager to read his experiences, but I gave up after a chapter or two because I couldn't get past the awkward wording, bad grammar, poor punctuation etc. Apparently proofreading isn't a prerequisite for self-publishing.

RE; Jefferson Swycaffer's comment: Hopalong Cassidy may have been my second favorite TV show as a kid, right after the Adventures of Superman! Plugged nickel indeed!

In closing, I was a bit saddened that you gave up editing *Tightbeam* for the N3F. I think you were doing an excellent job with it, and I looked forward to seeing new issues. I haven't heard than anyone else has taken the reins yet, so it will be missed for the time being. I understand your feelings as you expressed them, but I think that might be the hazard of editing a clubzine like that. People feel as if they are paying for the zine

through their membership, and that there's no need to actually contribute to it. I was happy to provide my reviews, but I'll admit that I never really got around to responding apart from that. Mea Culpa.

///You may be correct that limiting the distribution of the fanzine may result in a downward spiral, but I tend to doubt that. The problem is that I have been sending out a lot of copies, print and pixel form, to a lot of people who very rarely, or never, bother to respond in any way at all. I realize this is the all new "Fuck-You!" century, but it seems that even if people want to ignore the traditions of fandom and don't want to be bothered with writing a decent LOC, that they would at least acknowledge the zine with a yes, I like it, or no, please stop sending this because I don't care for it.

From time to time I get fanzines in the mail or the email box that I have absolutely no interest in. Often these are poetry fanzines, or publications devoted to political commentary, or sometimes they deal with subjects such as collecting action figures, or building models of science fiction ships and machines, or espousing some quasi-mystical religious philosophy. Whatever the case, when I find something I know I am not going to like, I always send along an email or a postcard thanking them for sending me the sample issue, but letting them know that I do not care for their zine and they should take me off their mailing list immediately.

How hard is it to do something like that? It takes almost no time, and lets the person at the other end better manage his resources so his zine will go to people who are interested in his creative efforts. Yet many people getting *Fadeaway* won't even follow thru with this simple courtesy. Since they won't, I will. I have chopped away a lot of deadwood from the mailing list, and I expect to do more with the upcoming issues.

You are certainly correct that comic collectors these days are generally obsessed with condition. Comics in less than VFine condition go begging even at very low prices. And you are correct that the Overstreet Price Guide is to blame for all that. I vividly recall a conversation between Bob Overstreet, Harry Thomas and myself many years ago when Harry was talking about buying comics in better condition. He remarked that since the prices for Near Mint golden age comics was almost always the same as for copies in VG, he would only be buying Near Mint condition comics from that point onward, because the material he wanted was (then) plentiful and there were plenty of sellers to choose from. Bob Overstreet remarked that there should be a price difference between comics in top condition and stuff that was in Good or VG. I agreed, and said that since I only wanted to read the old comics, that Very Good comics were just fine with me, and I would be happy if the prices on VG golden age and early 1950s comics were lower, because then I could afford to buy more stuff.

When Bob Overstreet issued his first price guide, he created an artificial tier system for condition with different price levels. By the early 1970s he had decided that Near Mint material, new or old, ought to be worth a hell of a lot more than comics in VG or Good condition, and his subsequent Price Guides reflected his thinking. Comic sellers were happy to fall into line, because better quality books now were listed at a handsome premium above VG, i.e.—more buckos for them.

To clarify my resignation as editor of *Tightbeam*...I thot long and hard about *Tightbeam*. It is not merely a matter of people not writing LOCs, and it's certainly not a matter of egoboo. As I mentioned before, I don't believe very many N3F members are even reading the fanzine, at all. I am fully aware that this is a catch-22 type situation: nobody is reading *Tightbeam*, but if *Tightbeam* disappears, then nobody will ever have a chance to read it, and thus, whatever potential for developing a readership the fanzine ever had will automatically disappear.

But at the same time, altho it may look effortless, as a matter of fact a lot of time and work went into creating those issues. As disturbing as the fact that almost nobody in the club was reading the fanzine, was the fact that almost nobody in the club had any interest in writing for the fanzine, or doing art for the fanzine. I was leaning on the same very small core of people to do the book and movie reviews, and meanwhile I had to search far and wide to find people to do articles. In many cases this meant unearthing something that impressed me in the past and then getting permission to reprint the article in *Tightbeam*. I was running out of sources and friends to tap for previously published material.

Then there's the matter of the fiction run each issue. A lot of my time was spent checking generations old magazines and anthologies looking for classic pieces that are copyright free and worth reprinting in this modern age (and that also run less than twenty thousand words long--for example: I found plenty of great fantasy by Oliver Onions, but all of it is very long). Why bother, you might ask? Because for the people who *are* reading *Tightbeam*; the people who downloaded/read it when it was posted on Bill Burns' efanazines.com web site, most of the very brief comments I received mentioned how much they liked the short fiction. I hated to disappoint the ONLY segment of the fan population who was not only reading the zine, but was also taking the twenty or thirty seconds to shoot off a few brief words of thanks and appreciation.

Meanwhile, I've got plenty of other things going on in my life. In addition to running my mail order book/comics/games business, I'm the president and secretary of the local serial collector's club, I'm the librarian and occasional secretary for the Radio Collectors of America, I am an active member of SFPA the print apa, I do research and contribute to the dime novel collecting community, I produce my own genzine *Fadeaway*, and I also try to write letters of comment to many of the fanzines I receive, plus I am part of a weekly classic film viewing group.

In my spare time, I have a house and property to maintain, including mowing the stupid lawn. Have I ever told you how much I dislike mowing the lawn? Let me take a few hours and explain exactly how much I absolutely loathe the task of mowing lawns.

All of this added up to me officially dropping the editor's role for *Tightbeam*. I don't know if a new editor has stepped forward, but George Phillies says a new issue will be out in a couple of weeks, so we shall see.///

### **Fred Lerner; 81 Worcester Avenue; White River Junction, Vermont 05001**

Many thanks for FADEAWAY #56. I had never heard of the Frank Capra film "American Madness", but there was something familiar about its plot. A few minutes' reflection led me to "It's A Wonderful Life", which seems to sound some of the themes of the earlier picture. A run on a small bank managed by a man who likes to back underdogs, with ruin averted by friends and customers coming to the rescue at the last minute — it almost makes "American Madness" sound like a first draft of "Wonderful Life". It seems strange that you didn't mention the later film in your piece.

Thanks for publishing Tom Feller's reviews of the Hugo Award finalists. With only one exception ("Wind Will Rove") I've seen, none of these — which is why I didn't vote this year. Tom's article gives me enough information to decide which of these stories I'll want to read, while revealing enough about his own tastes to give me a good idea of how much I'd be able to rely upon his recommendations.

Even when you write about things I'm not generally interested in, you (and your contributors) help me to understand their attraction and their role in shaping the science fiction field. That's why I particularly appreciate receiving FADEAWAY.

///I think there are several Frank Capra films that peach the underdog benefactor of the average guy who wins out over the big heartless opponent. Capra may have reused some of the framework from "American Madness" in "It's a Wonderful Life", but the films are really very different from each other, altho I suppose I could have added a line or two about "Wonderful Life" when I wrote the review of "Madness".

I also have to confess that I have read almost none of the stories in this year's Hugo nomination list. There is so much stuff out there these days that I can't even keep up with the material



that I am committed to reading. I think the recent WorldCons have come up with a great idea—namely, anybody that buys a convention membership gets emailed a ebook copy of all the stories nominated for the Hugo Awards that year. It seems to me that this is not only very convenient, but that the value of the fiction received far exceeds the cost of a convention membership (uh, in most cases, that is). I plan to sign up for the next WorldCon specifically to get the pixel package and read the material.///

**Joy V. Smith** [pagadan@aol.com](mailto:pagadan@aol.com)

Thanks for all the reviews! Tom Feller did a fantastic job. I don't think I could read all those even if they were part of a package. I'd be tempted to not finish some of them. (If I have to review them, I feel I must finish the book. I confess there were two books I needed to review that I could not finish!)

I have never read all--nor even half--of the Hugo nominees. However, I did happen to read *All Systems Red* --didn't even know it was a nominee--and enjoyed it and want to read more if they're out there. (I gave it 5 stars in my review somewhere.)

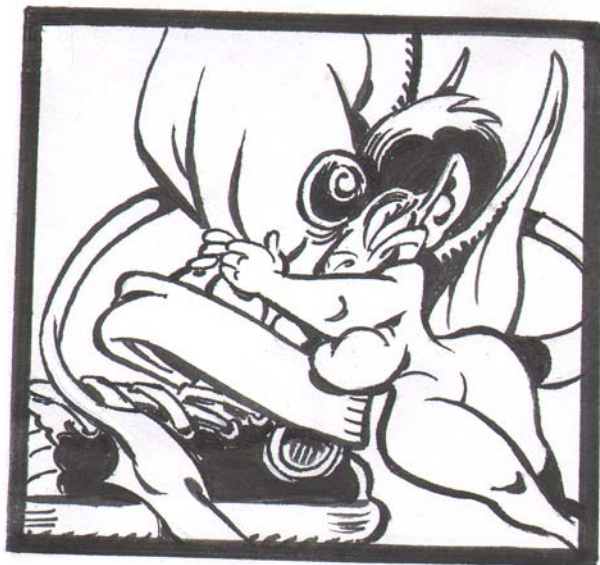
Pity about the *Judge Dredd* series. I've never watched the movie(s) though I've come across it in channel listings. So many series peter out, but this one sounds as if it were really flushed down the drain.

Speaking of down the drain, I'm sorry about all the good books that libraries have to dispose of, though I've gotten some of my favorite books--that I recognized from prior reading of them--from their discards. (My local library does sell old books and magazines, and I've certainly dumped my share of them there when culling.)

I do enjoy all the illos and pixels in your digital edition, and I was glad to see the cover of “*Against Three Lands*” that you described; it looks like a collection of art from various sources. I would never guess what it was about. And thanks for everyone's recommendations.

///The libraries around here try to sell their hardback and trade paperback discards, usually at a buck a copy, which is often too much considering the ratty condition of some of the volumes they are dumping. On the other hand, they also give away a lot of books on racks at the front of the lobby between book sales. Unfortunately where they cleared out all their magazines, they tossed them right into dumpsters. I would have been happy to have bought bound volumes of a number of periodicals, but the library brass figured nobody would ever want them, so out they went.

I'm hoping George Phillies will actually look around for a better artist to do the cover work on his upcoming novels, preferably something that actually has a connection to the story itself.///



**George Phillies; 48 Hancock Hill Dr.; Worcester, MA 01609**

Thanks for sending me the latest issue of *Fadeaway*. Your review of “*Against Three Lands*” was of course most appreciated. Your reviews of 1930s films that I have never heard of and will likely never see were most interesting. It seems to me that I have seen a 30's film with a bank run, but it is not the one you reviewed. A bank run featured significantly, of course, in “*Tom Swift and his Electric Runabout*”.

I am happy to see that *Amazing* actually published an issue. We had tried to take ad space in it for the National Fantasy Fan Federation, and could never get a response through any of the contact channels we tried. I had started to wonder if they were real, or if they just were having launch challenges.

Glad to see that you are reviewing the Hugo

nominees. Tom Feller writes interesting reviews. *Tightbeam* is now doing reviews of the Dragon

Novel nominees, one novel category at a time. They have a bunch of different categories, each with a half dozen nominees, so this will go on for a while. Your letter column is also impressive, as always. If that's the sort of letter column you want, *Tightbeam* was not the best fit for you.

///It will be interesting to see if *Amazing Stories* can continue with their new print publishing policy. They raised enuf money for the relaunch thru their Kickstarter campaign due to a couple of big money last minute emergency contributions. In theory they have sufficient buckos now to produce several more issues, but clearly they need a steady stream of interested subscribers and advertisers to keep the mag going. The only reason I can imagine for not accepting an ad from the N3F is that they were unwilling to accept paying ads unless and until they actually had funding on hand to make sure that the relaunch would really take place. Now that they are up and running I suspect they will be much more amenable to accepting paid ads.///

**Lloyd Penney; 24 Eva Rd.; Etobicoke, ON CANADA M9C 2B2**

Thanks muchly for *Fadeaway 56*. The cover sure caught my eye here...we used to try to insert Smurfs into the titles of other SF books...Smurfs of Dune, and Smurfette of Gor, for example. It did get a little dull after a while. With current politics, it makes me wonder if the Judge Corps have some undue influence as to what's going on these days.

I have difficulty with reading or reviewing books written by friends, too. However, I have two books that need to be read and reviewed, so I'd better get with it. I plan to submit them to the *Amazing Stories* website.

And, there's the first 2018 print version of *Amazing* on page 19. To go with the premiere of the magazine at the Finnish Worldcon, a similar launch was held in Toronto last month at the Merrill Collection downtown. Editor-in-Chief Ira Nayman is a local fan and writer, so he's perfect for the editorial job, and some local authors like Shirley Meier and Drew Taylor have their writings inside. I have offered my services as a proofreader/copy editor, so I hope to have my name in there some time. I hope you have sent this review to *Amazing* itself, so they can consider some changes in the layout for next time. I think Ira would like the feedback, as long as it is constructive criticism.

Jefferson Swycaffer offers a perfect description of Brad Foster's work...it's fractal in its detail. I couldn't agree more. Intense is also a good word. (And Charles Rector isn't making friends quickly. He snarked at me a number of times, which makes his zine one of the few I don't bother with.)

I am sometimes in Salvation Army stores, or Value Village, or Goodwill, or any of the other second-hand stores in the area, often looking for vintage clothes. There's a lot of furniture there, but I can imagine that there's only so much floor space for so much furniture, like couches or rocking chairs. Once this stuff goes into the dumpster, where does it go from there? There are thousands of pickers out there getting the good stuff out of the trash, but where does it go from them? Thousands of tons of our old clothes wind up in Africa, where the best is picked out, and the rest is burned.

I will wind it up...I'm trying to cook up more comments, and I am failing miserably. Perhaps I just need to have some lunch, or a good jolt of coffee to get the leetle grey cells going. Many thanks, and see you with another issue to enjoy.

///I don't have any problem reading or reviewing books by friends, but the results of my reviews is sometimes not what the friend was expecting. Writers automatically want everything to declare that their latest written tale is wonderful in every way, and are often not thrilled when someone points out flaws or short comings. I can understand the need for egoboo, but at the same time, a writer (or an artist, or actor, or sculptor, or musician) who cannot be objective about his work is doomed to failure. Practice makes perfect only if the creator is willing to listen to legitimate critiques and is trying to improve the quality of the material being turned out. Legitimate reviews that stress the good points and also note the flaws do more good in the long run than fawning rants by friends trying to avoid bruising the author's tender ego.

There seems to be a glut of used furniture of every kind in my part of the world. Or maybe it's just that so many people are upgrading their household stuff. The community news shopper and Craig's List are brimming with ads offering sofas, rockers, recliners, mattresses and everything else

for free, but apparently there aren't many takers, because I see a steady stream of furniture, particularly sofas, parked on curbs with a FREE sign on them sitting there for weeks on end.

My suspicion is that the recent return of bed bugs to home environments is the main reason people don't want to take on used furniture any more. Now that DDT is outlawed in the US it is very difficult to get rid of a bed bug infestation, and taking in somebody else's old furniture is perceived as a dangerous practice unless you happen to know the family personally.

I hope the launch of the print version of *Amazing Stories* went over well. I think the appearance of a second issue will tell us more about how the venture is firming up and establish the overall tone and direction of the fiction. I assume the next issue will be out Real Soon Now, but the publisher/editors seem deliberately vague about that. I believe their original Kickstarter campaign raised enough money so they can put out two more issues beyond the big initial relaunch, but time will tell.///

## **Sheryl Birkhead; 25509 Jonnie Court; Gaithersburg, MD 20882**

This letter will be a heck of a lot shorter than it ought to be as a very poor thank-you for keeping me on the mailing list. I've had a lot of difficult medical condition, with plenty of accompanying pain, which has really limited my output, and has also made sitting at a computer for more than a few minutes all but impossible.

Fade #53 I see Rich Dengrove's name and think I have one or two of his zines in those piles I need to get to. I have never heard of "Johnny Jupiter", but my dad refused to get a TV for a long time, until the kids chipped in, and so... Nope, seeing the photos does not remind me of any memories at all.

#54 Because I can never count on a reliable computer or a reliable internet connection I rarely look at ezines---I appreciate the feel of a real zine, on real paper. On the other hand, as a fanartist, I appreciate the use of color, especially if I am the one providing the color piece. I lean more toward wanting a paperzine, but I can understand financial considerations.

Ah, just the mention of a Swiss cheese sandwich reminds me how much (as a vegan) I miss the taste of ghood sandwich cheese. I admit that some of the new versions are not truly bad (and they do melt, and stretch), just not really close to the real thing.

Yeah, it really hurts to see any books go out in the trash from the library, but one can only tote home so many to use as ballast. The public library here seems to be thriving, altho I note some side interests—season dvds of popular TV shows and so on. I stumbled on "The Handmaiden's Tale Season 1", after giving up on being able to watch the show. I have lately used the ILL services to locate audio books so I can look at the ceiling while I "read".

As an aside about Fu Manchu—I use a veterinary de-wormer named Drabtal (the cat product), and I make a determined effort to warn foster owners (these are all MCSPCA foster cats) that if the cat actually manages to taste the pill...well the copious drool will look like a Fu Manchu. So far no one had admitted they have any idea what I mean. At some point there won't be any (sigh!) readers or old film buffs...

Reader Reaction---gotta admit you *do* get the best cover art!

#55 Oooohhh—don't need to look for a signature credit to know who is responsible for the feline-y cover! *Brad!* Thanks!

Nothing I can add to your comment on assault guns. Except, my inability to grasp why this issue even still exists....I suspect no one will vote for an option.

Ah, more full page Foster art, and a long Foster interview! Thank you, Thank You, THANK YOU for running the interview with all the lovely Foster art!!! And, yet another incredibly produced Foster image on the back cover—Ghreat, just GHREAT! Should have written glowing comments on the interview, but this says it all.

#56 My first entry into fandom was 'The Clubhouse' list of fanzines, then on the N3F...who kindly published my first doodle-cover, I think, for TNFF. Somewhere along the line I also won the Kaymar Award. I forget why I dropped out of the club; obviously nothing catastrophic. I always appreciate knowing fans from the written word that I could then say hello to at a con. For me, that is few and far between.

Sorry, real sorry for the very brief comments, but I really have to stop and haul out the ice pack. This is waaay overdue, waaay too short for a zine greatly enjoyed.

# OUR ESTEEMED ART STAFF & WHERE THEIR WORK MAY BE FOUND HEREIN:

**DAN CARROLL**---Front cover  
John V. Cody---21  
Alan Hutchinson---4, 17, 23  
Marc Schirmeister---23, 24, 27, 28  
Clip Art From The Internet---3, 20, 22, 30

