



FADEAWAY #60 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**. 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 May-June 2019 issue

RE-SET REVIEWS With the last few issues of this publications a few people (not many, I will grant you, but a few), have asked why this fanzine runs reviews of books, comic strip reprints, graphic novels and the like, especially when there are so many other zines, including semi-professional ones that do the same thing.

My answer to this is that we are living in the golden age of science fiction/fantasy literature. Never has there been so much material in the genre being produced before. There is more stuff coming out in the average two month period than even a determined fan could read in a whole year. It is a genuine embarrassment of riches, more than even the most dedicated fan could possible hope for.

To be honest this is not an entirely new situation. Since sometime in the early 1960s there has been more new stuff coming out in the magazines and from the publishers of paperback and hardback books than any normal fan could realistically keep up with. The condition has only grown more extensive with the passing of the years, to the point now where there are multiple thousands of new books and stories produced on a constant basis.

There is certainly way more than I can keep up with, and I read a lot these days. The final ballot form for the upcoming SF Worldcon was just issued, and I have to admit that I was unfamiliar with almost all of the stories and novels on that list. In fact I was unfamiliar with more than half of the magazines some of the stories had been drawn from. I suspect that I am not alone in this situation.

Clearly, we all need some way to separate the wheat from the chaff. Honest reviews can help. If somebody whose opinion I respect, or at least someone whose concepts of what constitutes a good and a bad

story I am familiar with, writes an honest review of a book, then I have a much better guide to how I should direct my reading time, and which titles to investigate, and which ones to leave alone.

The problem with a lot of book reviews is that the person doing the review is often very happy to tell you when s/he finds a work that is excellent, something they are happy to recommend. Unfortunately only a small minority of people are willing to give a book a bad review, to suggest that the work has serious flaws and is probably not worth anyone else spending a second of their life reading the thing.

The reviews run here in this zine will always strive for honesty. There is a difference between honesty and being malicious. Reviewers need to let the audience know their particular prejudices in advance. For example, I will never, ever, be comfortable with any kind of fiction featuring the current embodiment of the zombie trope, the rotting, brain eating, malicious shambling undead creatures that so many people in the visual media seem to find fascinating. Not me. I ain't gonna read/view/listen to stories that feature those creatures, not now, not ever. On the other hand, somebody else may like that stuff, and might be able to provide some incitement judgments on stories that feature the creatures.

So, *Fadeaway* will continue to run reviews and make recommendations about new stuff both good and bad. Mostly we'll be covering new releases, but we also will look at some older titles, some classics, and some that definitely were not classics. It is hoped that these reviews both long and short will help you better allocate your time and financial resources to enhance your reading pleasure.

Toward that end, refer to the Books section farther on over in this issue, and also let me call your attention to *Monstress*, a comic book series whose issues are regularly collected in graphic novels. Volume 3 of the collected series came out last year, and let me say up front that I recommend this latest volume without hesitation.

In my opinion *Monstress* is easily the best science-fantasy comic being published anywhere. I use the

term science-fantasy because altho there are strong science fiction underpinnings to the ongoing story, there are stronger fantasy elements, including what appears to be magic, what appears to be demons, what appears to be magical transformations, and what appears to be magic summoning powers that might be able to breach reality. I use the words "what appears to be magic" because the world of *Monstress* operations on its own internal but strict logic, so what appears to be magic may just be a different kind of science, and some of the people using this stuff may be science-fiction style mutants.

The story is set in a universe generally lacking in much modern technology. Think of the world of the mid 1700s. That appears to be the level of civilization in this series. This world is peopled by normal human beings, and Arcanics.

The Arcanics are mutants, some of whom possess special powers that humans tend to regard as magic, most with obvious animal features. After a deadly war between the normals and the Arcanics an uneasy truce exists with territories roughly assigned to each species. Upsetting matters is The Cumea, a quasi-religious order of sorceresses that wants to rekindle the war between the species in order to expand and further consolidate their political and economic power.

The Cumea are the bad guys. Some Arcanics can pass for human, but most have mixed human and animal features. The Cumea cult traps Arcanics and experiments on them performing live vivisection for reasons that are not made clear until way over in the run of the series.

The heroine is Maika Halfwolf, a teenaged Arcanic who appears human, but she has a withered left arm from shoulder to elbow, and nothing below that. Maika is determined to learn more about her mother, who had many secrets and apparently also had strange powers, and then she plans to avenge her mother's death.

Toward that end Maika allows herself to be captured by the Cumea and taken to their citadel, where instead of being carved up on a Cumea lab table, some of her own unique powers are revealed and she escapes, after taking partial revenge on one of the Cumea priestesses who killed her mother. It turns out Maika has a mysterious psychic link with a magical monster of enormous power, and when she activates her powers her



missing arm section becomes a monster's claw. These unique powers make her dangerous to humans and Arcanic alike.

The societies here are mostly matriarchal. The implication is that there are not that many men around due to the carnage of the past human/Arcanics war. All of the characters, including the heroine, are flawed individuals with desires, weaknesses, and hidden strengths that make this one of the most realistic and intriguing comic series I have encountered in a long time. The plot and story is developed like a novel, except it is a comic with beautiful, fully detailed artwork adding a vivid visual dimension to the story. The art is provided by Sana Takeda, with a richness of depth and detail that is all too rare in comics these days.

Response to *Monstress* has been very good. Early issues now sell for serious money, but luckily the early issues have been reprinted in three graphic novels. Volume 1 reprints issues 1-6, volume 2 reprints issues 6-12. These graphic novels have a retail price of \$9.99 for volume one, and \$16.99 for volume two; but luckily again, they are heavily discounted at most internet book selling sites. Amazon, for example, offers Volume 1 for a mere \$7.65.

I cannot recommend this series too highly. It is one of the best comic series I have encountered in years, and I am certainly not alone in my appreciation of this series. This should be an easy sell, because, as many fans know, Volume 1 won the Hugo Award for best graphic series in 2017, and Volume 2 won the Hugo in 2018. Yet, for some reason lots of people are not familiar with the title, or haven't bothered to actually take the time to read it. Don't be among that group. Buy this series. Start with the three graphic novels, and then pick up the regular issues. You will not be disappointed.



THE ILLO UP THERE

is of the Lockheed-Martin hybrid airship, an ambitious project that has reached its final stages of completion. Known as the LMH-1, this is a hybrid aircraft that has a tri-hull shape, with disc shaped cushions on the bottom for landing. As a hybrid airship, part of the weight of the craft and its payload are supported by aerostatic (buoyant) lift and the

remainder is supported by aerodynamic lift. The combination of aerodynamic and aerostatic lift is an attempt to benefit from both the high speed of aerodynamic craft and the lifting capacity of aerostatic craft. Originally developed for the army's long endurance multi-intelligence aerial vehicle, Lockheed-Martin lost out to a trimmer, more mission specific design from Northrop Grumman. At that point the company decided to redesign the concept into a cargo and passenger craft suitable for deliveries into difficult locations.

Rather than summarizing the situation, let me copy the information that Lockheed-Martin provides about the ship---

Hybrid Airships make it possible to affordably deliver heavy cargo and personnel to remote locations around the world. Burning less than one tenth the fuel of a helicopter per ton, the Hybrid Airship will redefine sustainability for the future.

With unlimited access to isolated locations around the globe, Hybrid Airships safely and sustainably support a wide range of activities in areas with little to no infrastructure. The airship offers the simplicity of a pickup truck by carrying cargo loads and personnel in and out of remote areas daily, not just certain seasons or only after major road, rail or airport infrastructure is developed.

Lockheed Martin has invested more than 20 years to develop the Hybrid Airship's technology, prove its performance and ensure there are compelling economics for various markets who would benefit from using this platform. More than 10 years ago, the team built and flew the technology demonstrator known as the [P-791](#), which successfully demonstrated all the technologies needed to make this real. Since then, the team has completed all required FAA certification planning steps for a new class of aircraft and they are ready to begin construction of the first commercial model and the completion of the FAA Type certification process.

From carrying heavy equipment to isolated regions of Alaska, to serving as a flying clinic for disaster-relief efforts, there is almost no cargo mission this ship can't perform. This is due to the fact that the airship can land nearly anywhere. What gives the Hybrid Airship this capability? The air cushion landing system (ACLS).



The ACLS looks like giant inflatable doughnuts on the bottom of a large blimp, and it makes the challenge of accessing remote regions around the globe a thing of the past. Lockheed Martin Skunk Works® developed an ACLS that blends hovercraft technology with our airship design.

“One of the biggest challenges to traditional cargo airship operations is how and where you park the airship,” said hybrid design program manager, Dr. Bob Boyd. “It’s very expensive and time consuming to develop infrastructure in remote areas around the world. The ACLS allows the Hybrid Airship to access these isolated regions without needing to build any runway or roads.”

The ACLS system consists of three underbody hoverpads. These hoverpads create a cushion of air that allows the airship to float along the ground nearly friction free. The system gives the Hybrid Airship a unique capability to hover over water – a capability unmatched by any other cargo-hauling air vehicle.

If the Hybrid Airship needs to park on land, that’s not a problem either. As the airship taxis, the hoverpads ‘grip’ to the ground with light suction pressure to keep the airship from moving in variable winds.

‘Fingers’ hang below the pads to create a seal with the ground. These fingers allow the airship to taxi over obstacles, such as tree stumps or rocks, so extensive site preparation is not needed for a high volume cargo operation. These ‘fingers’ also make the hovercraft a sustainable solution because there is no long-term impact to the ground site.

With this innovative system, the Hybrid Airship is able to travel virtually anywhere and affordably stay there. More than two-thirds of the world’s land and more than half the world’s population have no direct access to paved roads. This lack of infrastructure presents challenges to accessing these isolated regions.

Imagine a world where virtually any place can be reached. Medical equipment, food and aid workers can be sent to aid disaster-relief efforts, and essential health outreach programs in developing nations around the world can constantly receive the resources they need.

The ACLS makes this idea a reality. The Hybrid Airship uses a combination of technologies to allow us to provide service in the most remote areas, opening a new world of possibilities.

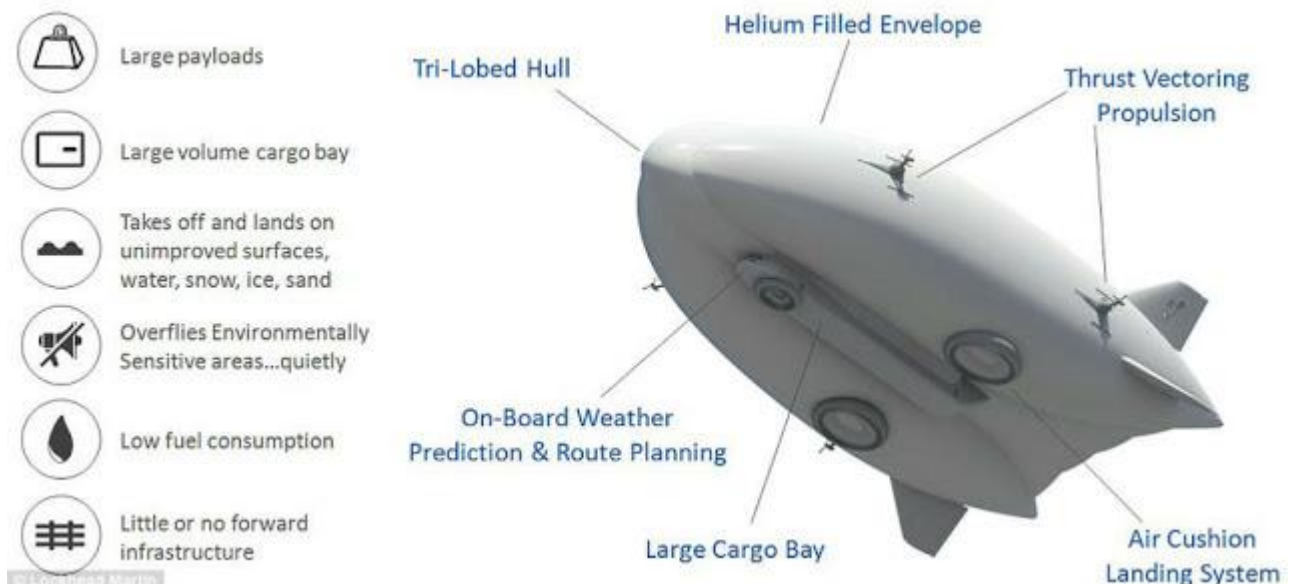
Traditional airships use a cable and pulley system for directional movement. When the Skunk Works® team began developing the Hybrid Airship nearly 20 years ago, they pulled knowledge from our Lockheed Martin fixed-wing brethren to build digital flight controls, or a fly-by-wire system, into the airship's standard systems.

Designed by Lockheed's legendary top-secret Skunk Works team, a prototype known as P-791 was built with the first test flight taking place in January 2006. Since then additional improvements have been made in the design. By 2015 Lockheed announced that the ship met all FAA certification requirements and was accepting orders. The new ship would carry twenty tons of cargo, or nineteen passengers, plus a crew of three.

In 2016 Straightline Aviation signed a letter of intent to purchase 12 LMH-1 hybrids at a cost of 480 million dollars. What attracted SLA to the Lockheed Martin product is that the hybrid airship is heavier than air, even though it is filled with helium. Its skin and airframe weigh it down; it doesn't need mooring like a traditional blimp. Engines guide the airship into position, and on its belly are wheel-like structures that spin to let it either hover or "grip" a surface. Lockheed said this provides stability in windy conditions for loading and unloading supplies, making it much easier to operate than a lighter-than-air machine. "The difference between lighter-than-air and hybrid airships is quite profound," said SLA's CEO. "It may seem small but it is a spectacular development."

Initial deliveries were to begin in 2018. Plans were made to test the capabilities of the craft in the Alaskan backwoods, where small aircraft and helicopters currently serve isolated communities, mining camps, oil maintenance stations, and individuals at a substantial cost. The savings from using the LHM-1 would be enormous. However, in September 2017, Lockheed-Martin announced that the first commercial flight of the LHM-1 had been pushed back to 2019. That's this year, for those who (like me) may be counting.

I'm sure most of the people reading this are more interested in interplanetary spaceship design, but so far as I'm concerned this is a major technological breakthrough that will dramatically change the way transportation will take place in the near future. With expensive petroleum a forgone conclusion for the foreseeable future, a lower cost hybrid airship that can deliver cargo and passengers anywhere, under any weather conditions is a genuine game changer. Fifteen years ago this would have been over-the-edge speculative science fiction. Today, it is reality. To quote Patrick O'Brian from "Master and Commander", his Napoleonic era naval adventure: "What a miraculous age we are living in."



THE GOLDSMITH ERA OF AMAZING AND FANTASTIC

by

David B. Williams



Amazing Stories, the first magazine devoted exclusively to science fiction, was founded in April 1926 by Hugo Gernsback. After several changes in ownership, the title was acquired in 1938 by the Ziff-Davis publishing company, which installed Raymond A. Palmer as editor. Palmer concentrated on action-adventure fiction, much of it mass produced by a stable of Chicago area writers. The magazine became a digest with the April-May 1953 issue with Howard Browne as editor. He resigned in 1956 to move to Hollywood and write for TV and the movies. After a brief period with Paul W. Fairman as editor, Cele Goldsmith took over in December 1958. She would continue to edit the magazine until June 1965.

Goldsmith was one of *Amazing's* most successful editors. Originally hired as a secretary to Howard Browne, she became his editorial assistant, and continued in that capacity with Fairman. When Fairman left the company suddenly, she became the editor of both *Fantastic* and *Amazing*. Although she was not vested in the history of the science fiction genre, she knew what she liked, and she bought stories that she felt would appeal to readers both old and new.



She soon gave the magazines a lively personality, publishing good works by many leading authors including Marion Zimmer Bradley's first Darkover story, a novella titled "The Planet Savers", Harlan Ellison's first SF novel, "The Sound of the Scythe," and Roger Zelazny's Nebula-winning story "He Who Shapes". She also published the first stories of several new writers who went on to prominence in the field, including Ursula Le Guinn, Piers Anthony, David R. Brunch, and Thomas M. Disch.

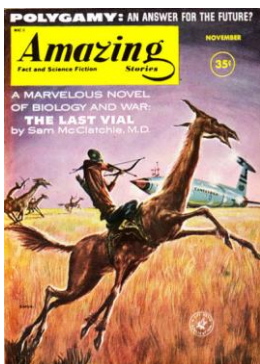
I only met Ms. Goldsmith once, very briefly. I approached her at Chicon II in 1962 and introduced myself. She recognized my name immediately from my occasional appearances in her magazine's letter column. She was a rather heavy-set woman with an attractive face. The next evening I found her seated at the table next to mine at the Awards Banquet being regaled by Avram Davidson on one side and Fritz Leiber on the other.

Ursula Le Guinn said Goldsmith was "as enterprising and perceptive an editor as the science fiction magazines ever had." In addition to winning the approval of her writers, Goldsmith was awarded a special Hugo in 1962 for editing *Amazing* and *Fantastic*.

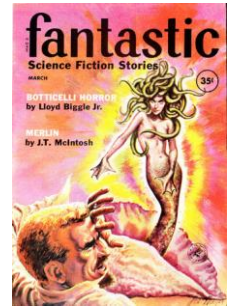
Goldsmith succeeded by seeking out good writers and good stories. In 1961 she visited Poul Anderson in California and asked Jack Vance and Frank Herbert to join them. She showed the writers several SF-themed cover paintings she had bought in bulk from Italy and asked the authors to write stories based on the artwork. Vance produced "I-C-A Bem" (*Amazing*, October 1961) and "Gateway to Strangeness" (August 1962), while Anderson wrote a mermaid story for *Fantastic*. These assignments were very agreeable to the writers, who earned a higher word rate and were assured a cover story.

For most of Goldsmith's era, the magazine's editorial director was Norman M. Lobsenz, but don't let that title fool you. He played no role in the selection of stories. But he did write the editorials, which the readers might assume from that title were actually written by Goldsmith.

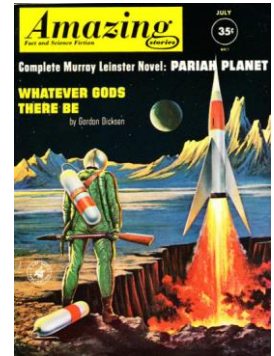
Amazing's companion magazine, *Fantastic*, was reconfigured in 1958 and under



Goldsmith became the best fantasy magazine in the field, publishing much excellent material. Fritz Leiber revived his Fafrd and Gray Mouser stories and the series appeared there on an irregular basis. Other sword and sorcery series appeared, notably the Brak stories by John W. Jakes, and the Dilvish stories by Roger Zelazny. Authors whose first published stories appeared in *Fantastic* under Goldsmith's editorship included Piers Anthony, and Phyllis Gotlieb, and she published early work by Cordwainer Smith and Michael Moorcock.

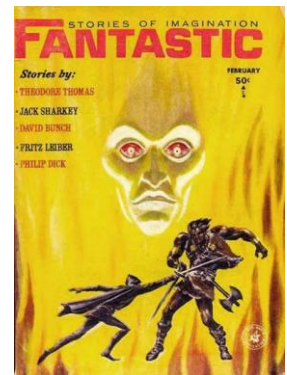


Amazing may not have been the most popular prozine of the era, but it was very popular with some readers, including me. *Amazing* was the second prozine I ever spent money on, and it remained at the top of my reading list for several years. It was also the favorite prozine of later film critic Roger Ebert, who bought every issue and saved them for decades after he gave up reading science fiction. Years afterwards, as an adult, he would take them out and leaf thru the stack of saved copiers every so often, recalling the Good Old Days when he was an avid science fiction reader. Hardcore fans also liked the mag. Sam Moskowitz did a survey and discovered that almost all the fans who bought *Analog*, also bought *Amazing*.



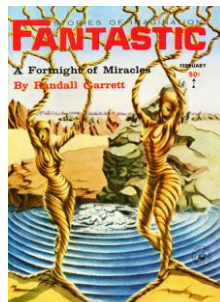
Goldsmith enhanced the pages of *Amazing* with profiles of prominent writers such as C.L. Moore and Fritz Feiber. She also published serials by top writers, such as "And All the Stars a Stage" by James Blish and "Pariah Planet" by Murray Leinster.

Sales of the two magazines were not strong, particularly compared to the non-fiction titles Ziff-Davis was publishing. A general contraction in the distribution and the number of outlets carrying magazines in general did not help the situation. In 1965 Ziff-Davis sold *Amazing* and *Fantastic* to publisher Sol Cohen, who continued to produce the two magazines as a retirement project. Cele Goldsmith, who married Lalli in 1965, and thereafter used the name Cele Lalli on the masthead, was given an opportunity to continue on as the editor, but (wisely) chose to stay with Ziff-Davis, where she was highly successful editing *Modern Bride Magazine*. She finally retiring in 1995, but then tragically died in 2002 as a result of lingering injuries from an automobile accident.



Sol Cohen decided to maximize the profit potential of the two magazines by switching to an all reprint policy. His purchase of the titles had included second reprint rights to all stories originally run in the magazines. He went thru several different editors, and a number of confrontations with the recently formed Science Fiction Writers Association before finally hiring well known fan Ted White as editor. Despite only being able to offer the lowest rates in the field (a penny a word), White was able to discover new writers, work with established writers seeking to sell experiment work, and during his ten years as editor he also gave the two magazines a fannish slant with fanzine reviews, and some interior illos and even a few covers done by fan artists.

The editorial history of *Amazing* was something of a roller coaster with periodic highs and intervening lows. Palmer, Goldsmith, and White were editors who carried *Amazing* up to the high points and made names for themselves in the history of magazine science fiction. For me, and for many fans who lived thru the era, the years when Cele Goldsmith edited the magazine will long be remembered as a period featuring one of the best editors in the SF magazine field.



THE ALIEN GREY IN POPULAR FICTION

by

Rich Dengrove



Over the past decades the image of aliens from outer space who visit planet earth for purposes both good and ill has evolved and changed. From people who looked exactly like us (except maybe healthier), to green bug-eyed monsters, to walking reptilian lizardmen, the process has changed. Today the most commonly accepted personification of aliens from outer space has become the Alien Grey. An Alien Grey has an elongated grey-skinned thin humanoid shape with an enlarged head and very large eyes. This personification of visitors from outer space can be found everywhere in popular culture, especially on TV and in the movies.

Alien Greys have usually been associated with flying saucers. The idea behind the flying saucer Alien Greys is that they are very rational but lacking in emotion. On an unspecified planet, they have evolved much the way we human are evolving. With large heads to carry a greater amount of reason, and small bodies, there is apparently room for much less emotion. Often they have other indicators: large eyes, and small ears and noses (or no ears or noses at all) for less emotion. According to the folklore, they are unemotional beings who have no qualms about abducting humans. Sometimes they kidnap humans for their research to find out why the human race has reproduced so well. Sometimes they snatch humans for their own purposes which are not revealed to the

unwilling subjects at all.

The first officially recorded flying saucer Alien Grey abduction was of Betty and Barney Hill in 1961. Bud Hopkins in his pivotal work "Intruders: The Incredible Visitations at Copley Woods", New York: Random House, 1987, claimed that there is no proof that anyone ever conceived of Alien Greys before that.

However, here, I will argue an alternate theory---that Alien Greys go back to the 19th Century, and that they had a presence in popular literature from the '20s to the '40s. Only later did they make their way into flying saucerdom. Since that is my objective, I will not examine pulp stories published later than 1947 when flying

saucers were first spotted, since from that point on the magazine stories (and illustrations) could have been tainted by the belief in flying saucers.

One last comment before I actually tackle this subject. I have to tell you about my main source, a DVD by Martin Kottmeyer. In particular, his “Grey Scrapbook”. He did some very extensive research, and while I have disagreed with him on a few issues, I cannot praise the material in the “Grey Scrapbook” enough. It took a lot of intelligence and enthusiasm, not to say determination, and a person who knew his way around a library, with the ability to root out pertinent books and articles to turn out this work. For all these reasons, I wish to thank Martin.

After saying that, I want to go on with what I believe is the primary concept behind all Alien Greys, despite some notable variations. The Alien Grey stereotype is of a creature that possesses lots of reason and little emotion. How they look depends on what “an abundance of reason” signifies to the author. Usually that involves a large head; and what signifies little emotion usually involves a short, thin, or weak body. In addition, with the large head comes a sign of much intelligence, and this usually involves more advanced technology.

One element of the early Alien Greys has gone by the wayside. In many early pulp stories, the large heads and small bodies had evolved from humanlike creatures. In fact, the early pulp Alien Greys were the product of universal evolution, i.e., toward being more rational and less emotional. Those Alien Greys depicted were supposed to be ahead of Earthmen in evolution. The flying saucer Greys still take this to heart. However, later pulp writers discarded this theory. To accord with the actual Theory of Evolution, most later science fiction writers have not assumed a single line of evolution, but suggest many different elements are at work.

Could it be chance that greater intelligence is correlated with a larger head and more advanced technology? That is what some advocates of flying saucers Greys would have you believe. However, it has long been a traditional belief that people with greater reasoning abilities have larger heads and more advanced technology. Many of us still believe this, and writers in the 19th Century took this to heart.

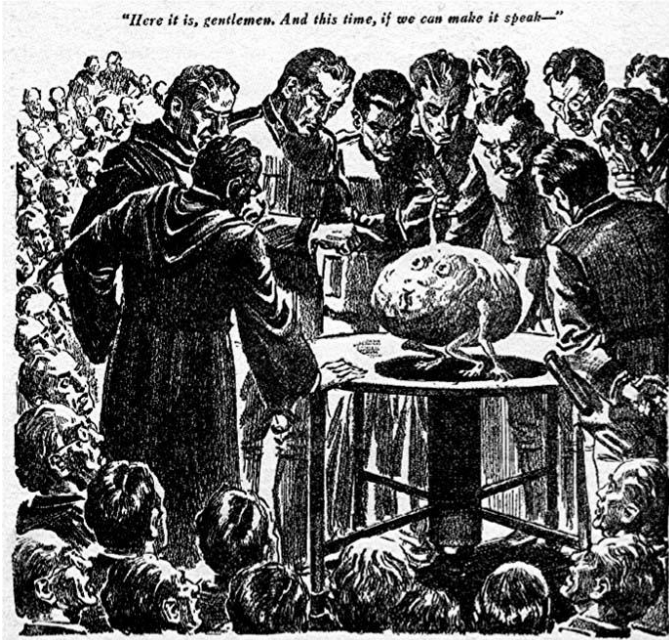
Something else that did not occur by chance is that novels were written about human-like aliens with normal body proportions having problems with reason and emotion just before novels and short stories about Alien Greys ever appeared.

Many have traced this argument back to Christian Huygens’ book “Cosmotheros” (1697). He supposedly said mankind was currently thinking at the height of reason. No beings could possibly develop large heads and a greater intelligence. Thus inhabitants of Venus or Mars would look like us humans and have the same technology as flourished in Huygen’s era. However, this is nonsense. I read the part of “Cosmotheros” dealing with reason; and it says nothing of the sort. Huygens did not limit the thinking capacity of extraterrestrials, but just said they used the same techniques of reasoning as we humans. Whether their intellectual prowess was the same as ours, or exceeded ours, he does not say. Several authors of histories of science and literature claim that Huygens said extra-terrestrials could not exceed our current ability to reason, but I suggest that Huygens has been misinterpreted over the centuries.

Still, there was a previous stage of fictional evolution before authors wrote novels and stories about Alien Greys. It occurred in the late 19th Century. Three notable novels concerned the fictional inhabitants of Mars, and were written about extraterrestrials who closely resembled us humans. However, the science and technology of these human-like creatures was hundreds, even thousands of years in advance of the human race in the 19th Century. Much like the later Alien Greys, these extraterrestrial human-like creatures were using their emotions much less. That made them more callous and sapped their initiative.

The first of these novels was written by Percy Greg. In “Across the Zodiac” (1880), Greg had his Martians lose so much emotion they were really no longer human-like. In addition, their initiative had been drained and they had become unfeeling and uncaring. Fellowship and love had been eliminated from their civilization. However, a secret society existed to try and make the Martian human-like again, with goals of making them more sympathetic to others; and to rekindle their curiosity and enthusiasm.





The second novel was Robert Cromie's "Plunge into Space" (1890). In his novel, at least one important Martian emotion had been extinguished, curiosity; and only a placid happiness prevailed. Visitors from Earth could not stand this, and returned to Earth.

A third novel is more problematic. Gustavus Pope in "Journey to Mars" (1894) wrote about a Navy Lieutenant who is taken to Mars. There he finds the signature attribute of the Alien Grey, high technology. Nonetheless, he finds signs of emotional evolution too: progressive institutions and racial tolerance. Did Martians devoting themselves so much to reason give the lie to claims that high reason means low emotion? Not quite. There is a fly in the ointment. It is spoiled by a Martian king who decides to seize the Lieutenant's girl friend, a princess, by force to make her his wife. Is this a critique of reason, or emotion, or was it just an excuse for turning the novel a Victorian melodrama? It is

difficult to tell. If it is the former, then Pope was the only writer of this group to feel that higher reasoning did not dampen our overall emotions.

Within three years after Pope's novel, the finishing touch was made. No longer did the Martians have to be humans. That barrier was broken in Kurd Lasswitz's 1897 novel "Two Planets". Extraterrestrials could far surpass us in mental powers, and they were only slightly different from normal planet Earth humans, being described as having a larger head and larger eyes.

Now we are coming into the era of the true Alien Grey. There seven classics that were written very early

The COMING of the ICE By G. Peyton Wertebaker



in the Alien Grey era, most of them were popular when originally published, and many continue to be popular even today, altho perhaps some would disagree that all of them qualify as true classics. Maybe some are lacking in literary quality, however, I gather they have moved people; and for what other purpose is a classic?

Our first classic was "Auf Zwei Planeten" (1897), or "Two Planets", by Kurt Lasswitz, a German philosophy professor. I decided to count his Martians as Alien Greys because the novel deals with the hallmark theme of all Alien Grey tales, the balance of reason and emotion and its effect on the physical body. I have to admit, that, unlike the Flying Saucer Greys and most other Grey Aliens, the minds and bodies of Lasswitz's Martians are balanced as to reason and emotion. While Lasswitz's Martians' heads are large, a sign of more rationality, their large eyes have an unaccustomed function: they make the Martians more compassionate. For that reason, while the high technology brought on by their superior reasoning abilities allowed them to conquer Earth, their superior emotions motivated them to leave the planet when Earth humans rebelled.

The second appearance of the Alien Grey was in H.G. Wells' novel "War of the Worlds", (1897). Wells reserves a sizable portion of his novel to telling us how rational the Martians are. Curious for such an early Alien Grey, his Martians are extremely alien in their appearance and their

behavior. Their brain development and intelligence has increased to such an extent they are almost all head. On the other hand, their emotional index has to have dropped to near nothing, because their bodies are mostly tentacles. Either by evolution or technology, they have even done away with the digestive system; and subsist on blood taken from brainless human-like creatures. This meant they did not suffer from the digestive ills that plagued the 19th Century. In addition, with their great reasoning powers, they also developed a technology which far surpasses ours. In fact, they wear machines like we wear clothes.

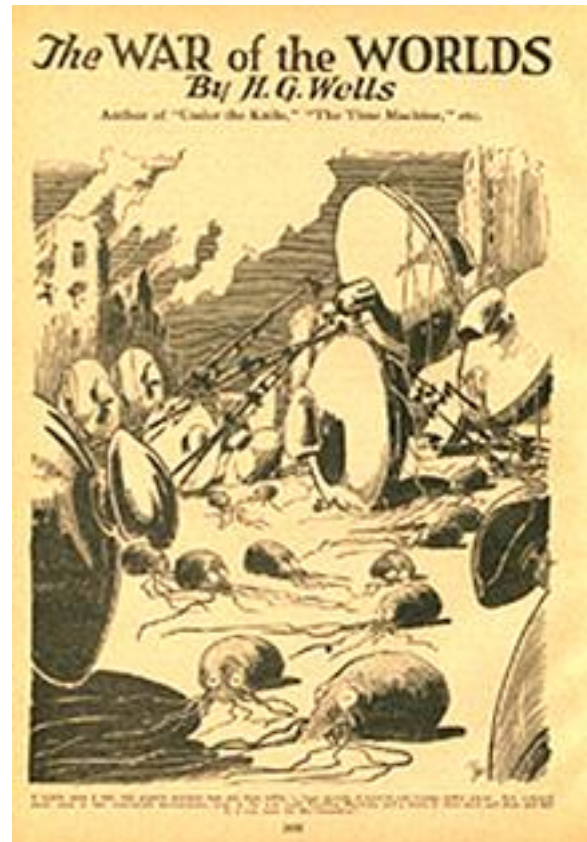
What makes Wells different from other authors is that he could care less that his Alien Greys lacked all emotion. Rightly, he pointed out that the European colonists of the 19th Century were not that much better than the Martians of his story. They had no compunction about using their high technology to crush native societies and rule over peoples they considered inferior.

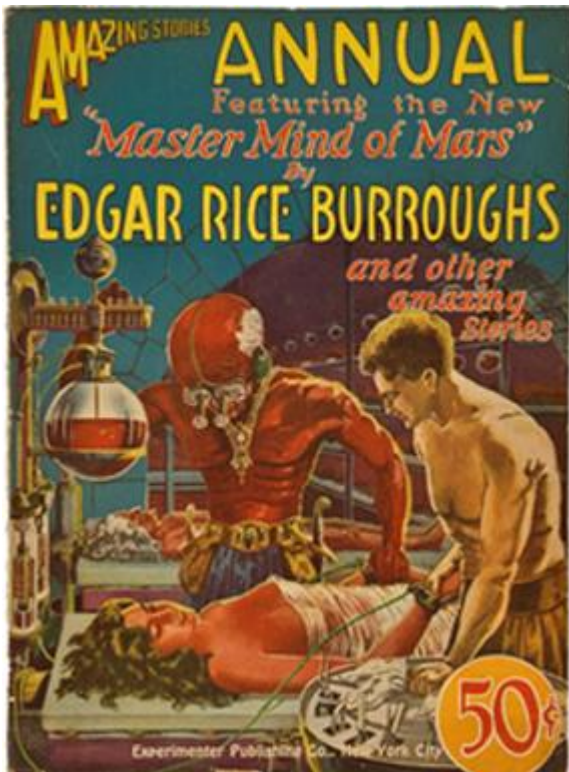
Wells' "War of the Worlds" was followed a year later by Garrett P. Serviss' "Edison's Conquest of Mars" (1898). In those days newspapers regularly ran fiction as well as news, often offering special all-fiction sections with their Sunday editions. Conceived and published rapidly because editors wanted to take advantage of the popularity of Wells' novel, it ran as a serial in a number of large circulation newspapers.

Despite claims that the novel is a sequel to "War of the Worlds", it differs as night from day. Even its Martians are different. The Martians in Serviss' story resemble human beings, except they are taller because of the lower gravity. However, a minority of the Martians have larger heads. The reason given is the Martian armed forces have perfected a science resembling phrenology, and have expanded parts of their troops' brains depending on the mission.

Serviss argues that such large brains break the balance between reason and emotion, and makes the Martians more warlike. This is a trait modern Flying Saucer Greys are often accused of having. For that reason, Serviss claimed they are addicted to making war. Of course, Serviss ignored Wells' point that Europeans are similarly aggressive. Instead, he finds incredible perversity in their desire to conquer us.

Someone else who agrees that a larger brain, and increased reason makes people more warlike is George Griffith in his "Honeymoon in Space" (1901), which was a much needed editing of his 1900 magazine serial "Stories on Other Worlds." An English Earl and his American wife land on Mars. They find a race of large headed men and women. Like Serviss' Martians, they are taller because of the low gravity. Also, the imbalance between the mind and the body has wreaked a different havoc on the Martians here. The modern Flying Saucer Greys lord over us mere humans because of their advanced technology; but that's not the case with Griffith's Martians. All the fighting they do means they are the only Greys not possessed any greater technology at all. They do not even possess guns. These particular aliens also have a trait common to modern Flying Saucer Greys,





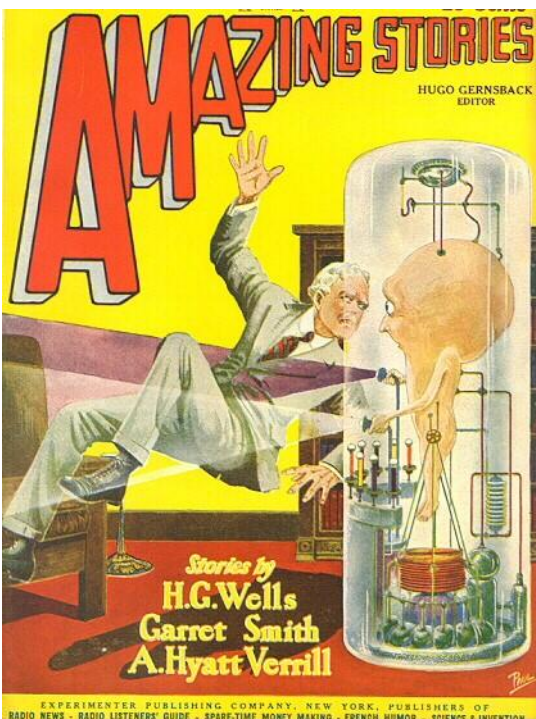
one rated by the characters as bad: the lack of emotion means all men and women dress the same. The Earl and his wife regard this as a terrible scandal.

By contrast, a different race of aliens inhabit the satellite Ganymede, and evolution has balanced their reason and emotion. Their brains have not grown proportionately larger; and their bodies have not grown proportionately smaller. Thus, they look and act very much like us humans. The Earl and his lady approve of that.

As opposed to Serviss' and Griffith's very human looking Alien Greys, H.G. Wells once again makes a big leap forward by creating Alien Greys of a completely different species. It helped that he had some knowledge of biology. In "The First Men on the Moon" (1901), the Moon men live underground. Most are man sized but vaguely insect like creatures, with large brains. Those brains carry specialized knowledge. They are ruled over by the Grand Lunar, who is one vast brain. Thus, Wells invented both the extreme Alien Grey, who is mostly brain, and the non-human Alien Grey. They not only differ from the modern Flying Saucer Greys but are different from most other Alien Greys. Unlike the Martians from "War of the Worlds", these moon creatures are not superior because they make war, but because they are more humanitarian. In their society, the rich do not exploit

the poor; and they do not make war at all. Wells is responsible for genuine innovation in the Alien Grey genre; but he makes no guesses as to how these Moon men evolved.

With "The First Men on the Moon", Wells was very inventive concerning Alien Greys. In the novel "Chessmen of Mars" (1922). Edgar Rice Burroughs was very inventive too. His Alien Greys, the Kaldanes, mount and attach their spinal cords to the spinal cords of the headless Rykors, whom they have bred to be headless. This vaguely resembles the machines that the Martians use in "War of the Worlds". However, it is a biological triumph rather than a mechanical or electronic one, as opposed to the psychic and psychological triumph of modern Flying Saucer Greys. While Burroughs tells us how the Rykors evolved, he does not explain how the Kaldanes did.



You can see from these stories that the Alien Grey was not created in the '60s or '70s with the Flying Saucer Grey; but appeared on the literary scene sixty or seventy years before. In between the 1920s, when Burroughs wrote "Chessmen", and the late '40s, when I stop, there were many stories about Alien Greys using my more expansive definition. The Alien Grey did not miss the age of pulps. In fact, they flourished in it, especially after *Amazing Stories* was introduced in 1926 and the whole genre of science fiction found its own publish niche. Malicious alien invaders of all types began to fill the pages of the SF magazines, but the hallmarks of the alien species were higher intelligence, advanced technology, and very often, enlarged heads with stunted bodies.

As the stories and novels about Alien Greys flourished, so did variations on the Alien Greys prototype. There are so many variations that I have to list them by general categories. It would take a very long article indeed to discuss every single one of these stories and novels. .

Let us first discuss the physical characteristics of these

Greys. The lack of emotion could make Alien Greys very short, or very thin, but not big overall. For that reason, in appearance, you might not consider some of the variations true Alien Greys. Also, you might not consider them Greys unless you were aware of the conditions of their home planet. That is what some authors have taken into account. For instance, Stanton Coblenz (1931), Edmond Hamilton (1932) and H.G. Wells (1937) portrayed Martian Greys as bigger than us because of Mars' lower gravity.

Other variations clung to the general Alien Grey form of large head and small body, but added characteristics from the whim of the author or the needs of the plot. For instance, Williams (1941) gave no reason for his Alien Grey having fangs except to make them scary. For the opposite reason, to make them angelic, James B. Alexander in his novel "The Lunarian Professor" (1909) gave his good Alien Greys six wings.

Not all the Alien Greys of the pulps had original features. Some were just variations on more reason equals a larger head and less emotion equals a smaller body. For instance, some tales were variations on the Grand Lunar in Wells' "The First Men on the Moon" (1901): i.e., just one enormous brain with no body at all and thus no emotions. For instance, Donald Wandrei (1927) wrote about a far future when only immense brains denuded of any bodies used godlike powers to survive. Henry Kuttner (1938) wrote about a very evil brain which ruled over ape-men on Mars.

The Alien Greys have not just been the products of evolution. Their very rational brains have allowed them to use technology to change themselves and others. All the early Alien Greys, except maybe for those in "Honeymoon in Space", developed advanced technology. Even the Kaldanes, who purposely bred human-like Martians so that such they can mount them as the headless Rykors; and form a single body used scientific techniques to achieve that biological goal. H.G. Wells, in a later 1937 novel concerning his Martians, had his Martians influence us Earthmen across the vastness of space so that we would breed and become Greys like them.

The pulps contained other technological marvels by the Greys as well. Sometimes, it is difficult to separate the technological marvels from the marvels of natural evolution. In a number of stories and novels, the Martians, like many Flying Saucer Greys, somehow develop telepathy. Williams (1941) has his Alien Greys develop teleportation as well. Breuer (1939) has the Greys finding the secret to immortality and dabbling in atomic energy. Millard (1941) has them become invisible masses of vibrating life force, which, like the Flying Saucer Greys, can control the minds of humans.

Now we go from their technology to the subject of their morality. Nearly all Alien Greys fall on the side of evil. An important reason is that they abduct us humans for their experiments. Abduction occurred among Alien Greys in the flying saucer era so they could figure out the secret of our high birth rate, or to warn us mere humans about our evil behavior, or for some other unknown reason. Pulp stories had other reasons for their abducting humans, usually to aid their plans to conquer the human race and take over our planet. You could say this started with Wells' "War of the Worlds", altho in Wells' story the Martians are not trying to carry out some grand plan: they abduct humans to drink their blood.

Also with no grand plan in mind, Vincent (1929), has his Alien Greys, from a 'macro-universe' abduct men to use as slaves and women for purposes of debauchery. This is rare. Lacking emotion, they are usually regarded as having a low sex drive. Schachter (1937) gave a more Greyish reason for them kidnapping humans – for their brains. Similarly, Kuttner has his Alien Greys abduct humans to torture them out of their knowledge. Literally, they drain their brains of it. *Planet Comics* in 1946 had another Greyish reason for them to abduct humans and other extraterrestrials – for scientific research. The Brick Bradford comic strip (1946) went one



"Abducting without a license?! ... But, officer, I promise I was going to throw them all back."

step farther. Not only did the Alien Greys abduct humans for science, but they placed them in giant test tubes as if they were exotic moths.

On the other hand, a few Greys, whether pulp fiction or Flying Saucer, have fallen on the side of good. In Lasswitz's "Between Two Planets" or in Alexander's (1909) tale, an Alien Grey wise man gives a human professor the history of the future, for which the professor is very grateful. Reitmeister (1934) has another take on good Greys. His Alien Greys create a utopia that fulfills everyone's needs. They are what I have called balanced Alien Greys. Their large, rational brains are not paired with a weak body, but a strong one.

More in-between good and evil are the Alien Greys of Sambrot (1933). They just do not want to be bothered by Earth people. Thus, they have figured out ways to make Mars look barren of life forms and worthless to them.

It is evident that the Alien Grey is a popular fiction creation and is not specific to flying saucer culture. Summing up, the Alien Grey is the product of the debate between emotion and reason. The Flying Saucer Grey is primarily one specific type. Traditionally, among almost all Alien Grey, large brains will usually indicate high amounts of reason; and small, weak, thin bodies will indicate low amounts of emotion. Nearly all writers believe that is bad in some way. Apparently, around 1897 was the right time for the Alien Grey to be invented. Lasswitz invented a Grey balanced between reason and emotion; and Wells invented the hyper-rational, very unhuman Grey. There have been many different types since then, most are unbalanced between emotion and reason, but a few do strike a balance. Either way I'm sure we haven't seen the last of Alien Greys in popular fiction, or in the literature of those who believe in flying saucers and alien visitors from beyond the stars.



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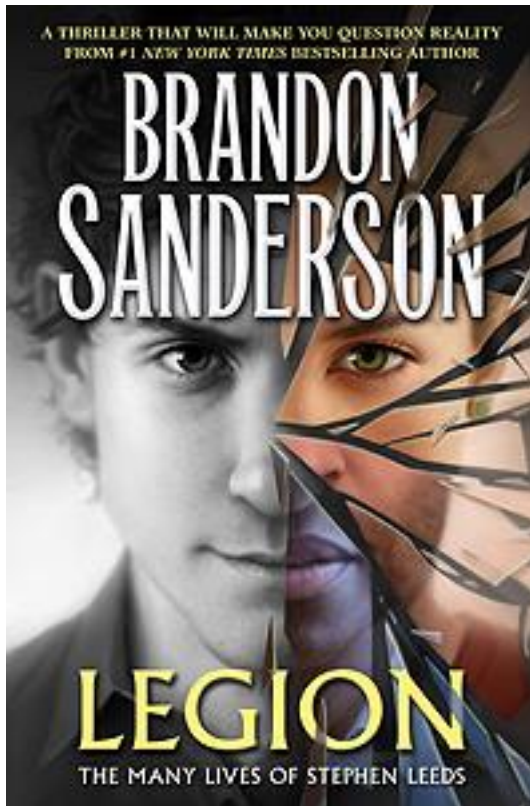
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BACK ISSUES OF FADEAWAY FOR SALE

Print copies of most issues from #18 thru this current number are still available. The price is \$6.50 each, post paid within the United States. Issues before number 28 are not posted on the efanazines.com site and never will be. Quantities on all these issues are very limited. Send check, cash, or money order made out to Robert Jennings at the address on the indicia on page 1 of this number. If an issue is sold out a prompt refund will be made. Also for sale, back issues of *The Comic World* at \$9.99 each, post paid within the United States. Numbers 8 thru 21 are available. Numbers 14 thru 21 have rusty staples. These are the ONLY issues I have left of either zine, so please do not ask for numbers I do not have.

BOOKS



LEGION—THE MANY LIVES OF STEPHEN LEEDS
by Brandon Sanderson; Tor Books; 353 pages;
Hardback, or e-book

Brandon Sanderson is a very busy writer of science fiction and fantasy novels. Thus far he has authored over 25 novels, including the popular Cosmere and the Way of Kings series. He was chosen to finish the final book(s) of Robert Jordan's Wheel of Time series, reportedly by Jordan's widow Harriet McDougal. In his spare time he turns out a wide variety of short stories and novelettes on a regular & frequent basis, in addition to being married, raising a family, and teaching creative writing at Brigham Young University.

This particular book is actually a collection of three stories, two of which have been previously published, and one of which is brand new to this hardback.

They all deal with protagonist Harry Leeds, an oddball, fiercely reclusive genius who supports himself off and on by acting as a detective for unusual cases, or by charging people to interview him. The world at large regards Stephen Leeds as insane at least, and more likely as a dangerous psychopath the authorities haven't managed to get the goods on—yet.

Leeds has Aspects; imaginary individuals who compliment his personality. He will tell you that he is not insane, but most of his Aspects are. These Aspects are perfectly real to

Leeds. It's not his fault the rest of the world can't see or hear them. He has a rambling mansion of 40 or so rooms to house all of the different aspects. Each aspect has a specific field of knowledge that Leeds can draw on when he has to deal with the real world, or actually go out and perform some detective work to keep his coffers filled.

In reality Leeds is a sometimes functional genius who can speed read, speed view, speed listen to whatever he wants or needs, but instead of remembering the information consciously, he unconsciously has created spirit people who specialize in the knowledge he has absorbed. In the back of his mind he knows the Aspects are probably imaginary and not real, but he chooses to forget or ignore that knowledge most of the time.

The aspects interact with Leeds and each other. These conversations, unheard by anyone except Leeds, are a high point of this book. The first story in the book introduces us to the character(s) and involves Leeds in a case to locate the inventor of a camera that can take pictures of the past. A large corporation has been bankrolling the inventor, and they obviously have plenty of plans for the device when it is finally perfected. The plot leads to Israel, and dangerous terrorists who have their own interest in the camera. The action is nicely paced with the entire plot sequence well handled.

The second tale provides more pertinent background about Leeds, including his butler and problems with the rapid turnover of other servants who can't deal with his hoist of invisible, imaginary aspects. The case involves a missing corpse, vanished from the city morgue without a trace. The body was that of a bio-metric computer whiz who was working on a way to encode information within human cells so that any individual could become a living computer. Along the way he and his associates developed a new virus that might carry and embed the computer code, but which, as an unexpected side development, caused rapidly spreading cancer in any person infected with the virus. The virus may have been released into the general human population, while code for the virus and all the rest of the information is gone. The company that hires Leeds suspects the body holds a key to unlocking information about both the virus and the vital encoding information itself. Needless to say other people are also very much interested in this remarkable new line of research, and are willing to use lethal force to obtain the information.

The final adventure deals with Leeds facing the reality that his aspects may be adversely affecting his life, possibly causing him to become non-functional. As several of his aspects die, or turn into murderous Nightmares, he is drawn into a complicated plot by a message from Sandra, his one and only lover from the past. It develops that Sandra has involved herself with a company that claims it can eliminate the need for Leeds' aspects, and also can provide a simulated reality that is so effective that the human mind cannot tell it from the genuine real world. They need Leeds to test and refine their designs, with or without his permission.

As Sanderson says in his short introduction, the set-up for the stories is what if a person's hallucinations were beneficial to him, rather than a distraction. In the real world delusional fixations are often disabling and dangerous to the person who harbors them. The challenge was to create a character that could make them work for him, and Sanderson has succeeded admirably with this trio of stories. He mentions that the original Legion story was the only non-novel length plot concept that he ever wrote a sequel to. The mix of action, comedy, psychological maneuvering and detective work melded with solid action adventure is a very satisfying combination that all comes together perfectly with the Legion stories. Along the way he also provides a more realistic definition of insanity. As Leeds puts it, insanity exists "when your mental state stops you from being able to function, from being able to have a normal life. By those standards, I'm not the least bit insane."

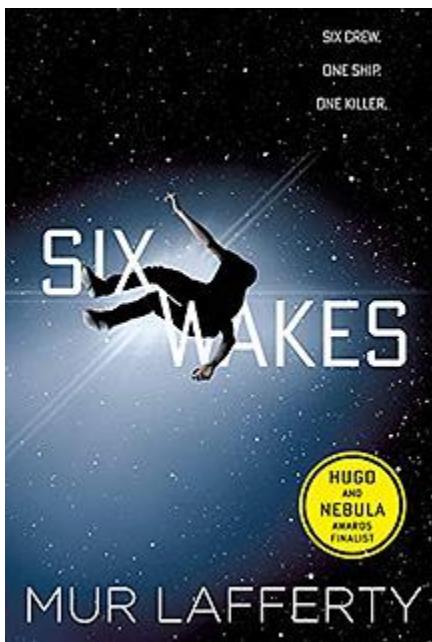
Unfortunately Sanderson also indicates that the third story in the book is going to be the final Stephen Leeds adventure, which is disappointing so far as I'm concerned. I really enjoyed these tales, and I found the character of Stephen Leeds to be intriguing. Naturally Sanderson has also mentioned other cases and events that were not touched on, including the strange case of the teleporting kitty cat, plus his uneasy relationship with the local police. If he closes up the series as he says he has, we will never get to discover what those other cases involved.

No doubt every writer has his own priorities, and as a guy who writes novels at a breakneck pace, it is likely that the emotional involvement of creating entire new universes and keeping them operating is a solid financial inducement to keep Mr. Sanderson's attention focused on turning out more and more new series novels. But at the same time I would like to suggest that writing the occasional new story about Stephen Leeds would certainly satisfy a lot of his readers, including me.

I recommend this book without hesitation. It was a fast read that pulled me along page after page. The characters, both the good guys and the bad guys, are all well developed, and the plotwork is solid, making this a very satisfying reading experience.

I do have a cravat regarding the publishing end of it. The hardback book retails for \$27.99, but is being heavily discounted by most internet and chain store retailers. Unfortunately there is no inexpensive e-book version. The cheapest e-book version I could find costs \$14.99 from Amazon. At the same time Amazon is selling the hardback itself for \$13.99. Go figure. But whether you buy the hardback, the e-book, or just badger your local library into picking up a copy, you really ought to read this book. It is great fun.

---review by **Bob Jennings**



SIX WAKES by Mur Lafferty; Orbit Books; 400 pages; Trade Paperback or ebook

How about this for a locked room mystery? On a STL generation ship only six crew members are required to keep systems running during the 500-year journey. The crew was chosen for their technical specialties with the understanding that they won't live through the trip. They do have easy cloning and mental recording so when one body wears out they can clone a new one and transfer memories into the new copy. All of the chosen crew are criminals lured into the mission with the promise that all of their crimes will be erased when they reach the new world.

Things go off the rails when all six wake up in the clone vats in new copies with no memories of the past 25 years. Their former selves have all recently died, the ship is off course, the spin gravity is off, and the ship's AI is catatonic. The mission has obviously been sabotaged, and one of the six must have been responsible for the deaths and damage. The new clones must fix the ship and discover which of them is the perpetrator.

The crew must sort thru clues buried in their past lives as well as hidden in the ship systems. The crew slowly discovers they have more in common than they thought. They also have only a short time to solve the mystery because their food replicator has been set to only produce poison, the cloning tanks are inoperable, their memoir backups have been erased, and what's left of the ships AI has decided the mission is compromised, and is returning to Sol.

It's "Apollo 13" meets "Ten Little Indians" by way of "The Martian". The crew members must fix the damage, avoid starvation, and figure out which of them is a cold-blooded murderer before the killer strikes again with more permanent results this time. Just like a good Agatha Christie locked room mystery, any of the crew could be the killer, and they must solve it using only the resources they have available.

"Six Wakes" was a Hugo finalist last year. It's a bit hard going at first because it takes a while to understand enough about the characters and the situation to make sense of the action. As with a lot of mysteries, there's a lot of information that the reader doesn't have that is critical to solving the problems.

This is not a story with enough early hidden clues to deduce the solution. The true motive for the murders only becomes apparent as critical information comes to light later on in the story. It all makes sense in the end, and it was fun figuring out the motives, even if the ending was a bit contrived.

---review by Gary Robe

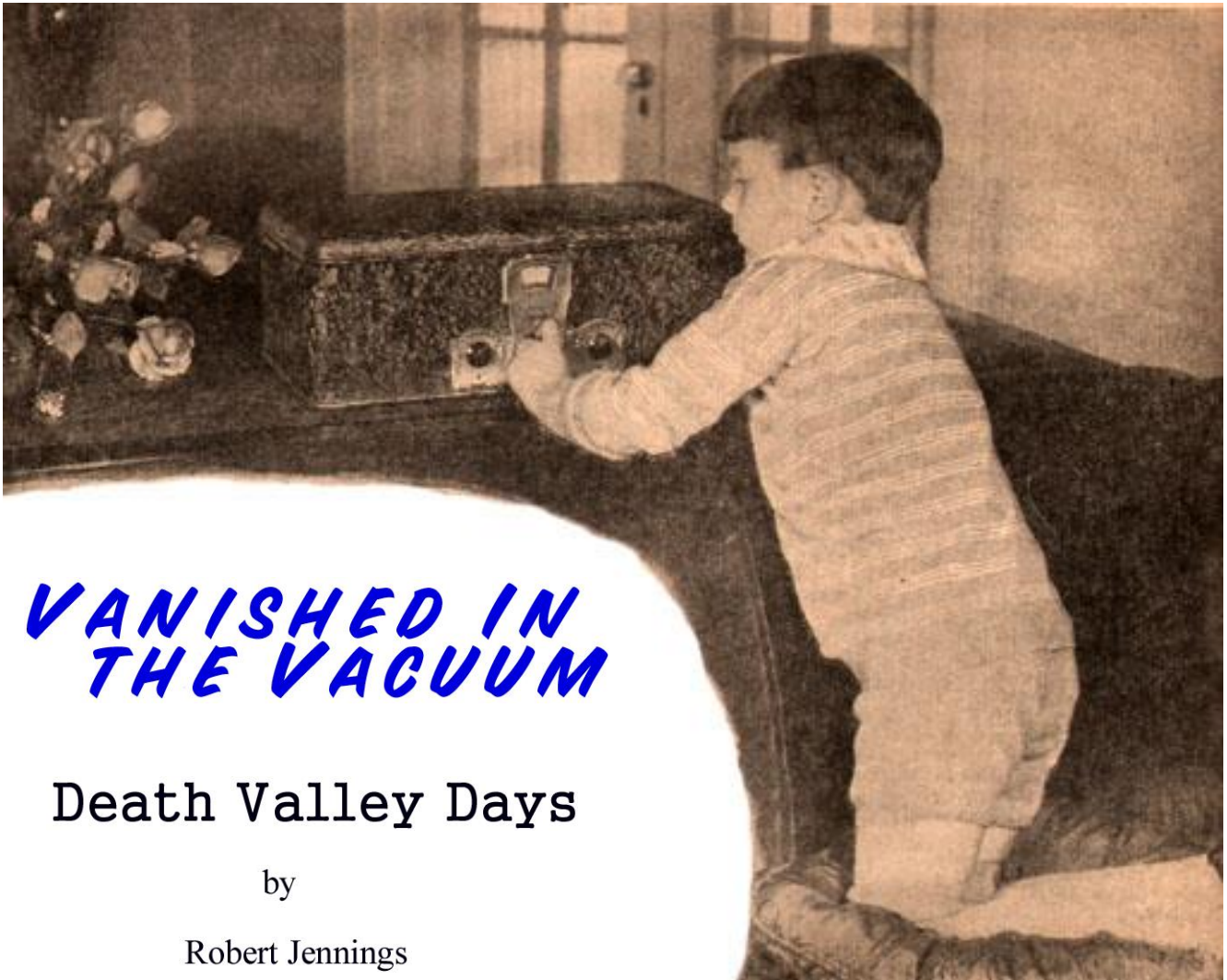
WE SOLD OUR SOULS by Grady Hendrix; Quirk Books; 336 pages; Hardbk, Trade Ppback, ebook

This is a supernatural adventure about a washed up female guitarist, former leader of a leading 90's cutting edge heavy metal rock band, who burned out, dropped out, and whose life has been total low level mundane frustrating hell ever since. Meanwhile, Terry Hunt, the former lead singer in her group, Durk Wurk, has gone on to phenomenal success in the music business, not just heavy metal, but crossing all genres to become a global superstar.

What when wrong? Why are Kris Palaski's memories blurred, or missing parts concerning the final breakup of her band? She decides to look up her old band mates and try to unravel the mystery. Instead, she uncovers a dark, ominous supernatural conspiracy with satanic roots that seeks to suck the souls of thousands, then millions of innocent music lovers into its maw.

This novel moves fast, with the feel of a spy thriller, and genuine dangers confronting not just the heroine, but everyone she encounters, especially her past band members and people she knew from the past. Along the way the author manages to impact the feeling of what heavy metal music is all about and why it means so much to the heroine and to the people who listen to it. This was remarkable to me because I never cared for heavy metal rock, yet Mr. Hendrix does make me care about the music, and if his story has a few plot flaws here and there, he more than makes up for it with the fast paced flow and the intensity of his writing.

---review by Bob Jennings



VANISHED IN THE VACUUM

Death Valley Days

by

Robert Jennings

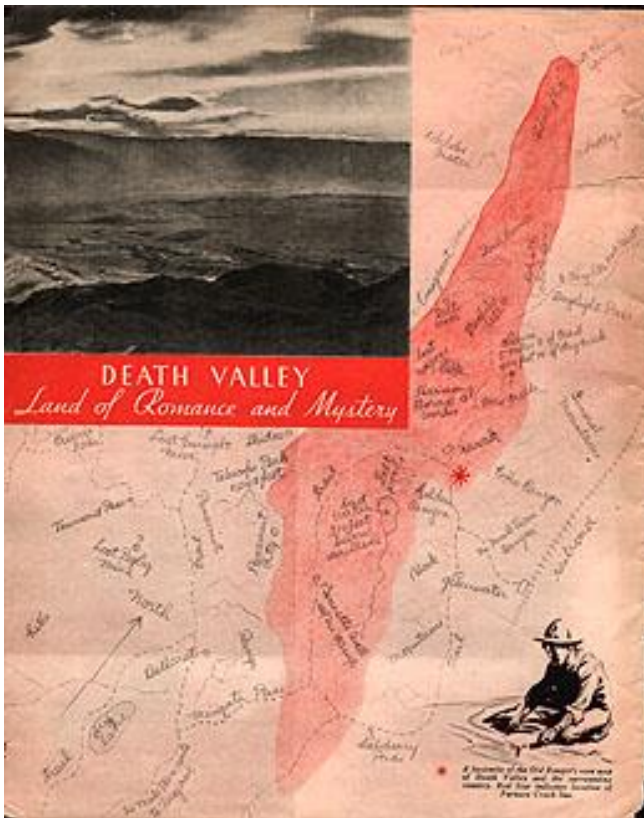
Of all the lost shows from the golden days of radio, few are as well known or as well remembered as Death Valley Days. This remarkable half hour dramatic series was on the air for more than twenty years, from 1930 to 1952, spanning the golden age of radio from its infancy up to its declining days. And yet for all those years of broadcasting, only four Death Valley Days radio programs have survived.

Death Valley California was nationally known well before the Pacific Coast Borax Company decided to try using radio to promote their product line. Indeed, the fame, and infamy, of this remarkable piece of real estate was established early in the history of the United States.

Death Valley is a land of stark and dramatic contrasts. Parts of Death Valley are the lowest level of any geographic point in the United States, falling to 282 feet below sea level at Badwater. At Telescope Peak the land rises to 11,049 above sea level. The

temperature of the desert in the summer months is one of the hottest places on the face of the earth, averaging 110 degrees. In 1913 a temperature of 134 degrees was recorded at Furnace Creek, a record excelled only in 1922 by a reading of 136 degrees at Azazia Libya, which is considerably closer to the planet's equator. Furnace Creek has a higher elevation than Badwater, and old timers always commented that the temperatures at Furnace Creek were milder.

Any region which receives less than ten inches of rain per year is officially classified a desert. Death Valley receives less than two inches of rainfall a year, yet this same region boasts abundant flowing springs of cold water, and pastoral stretches of lush fertile ground which have grown crops as delicate as watermelons and wine grapes. It also boasts some of the most spectacular and most contrasting scenery in the west.



Humans have been living in the region of Death Valley for millennium. By the time the California gold strike of 1848 hit newspaper headlines across the nation, the Desert Shoshone people had been there a thousand years, trapping, hunting and surviving comfortably by wintering in the lower parts of the region, and then retreating to the foothills and higher elevations when the blazing summer season came.

The first recorded white people in the area were gold seekers following the lure of quick wealth. A wagon train of would-be prospectors, over a hundred wagons with more than two hundred people, along with five hundred horses and oxen, arrived at Salt Lake Utah on October 1, 1849. Salt Lake was the jumping off place for wagon trains before crossing the Sierra Nevada Mountains, and this party had arrived at a very inopportune time.

The onset of winter meant that most of the passes and trails over the mountains were either already snow bound or soon would be. Two years earlier the Donner Party had tried to cross those mountains in winter and had been nearly wiped out by snow storms and harsh weather and had (it was reported) even resorted to cannibalism, eating the bodies of their dead companions to stay alive. That horrifying story was vivid in the minds of the new arrivals.

Yet the gold fever was so strong that when Jefferson Hunt offered to become leader of the train, suggesting that they bypass the mountains entirely, swinging well south, saying he had knowledge of the “old Spanish Trail” thru wasteland which would allow them to still get to the gold fields despite the winter weather, the party eagerly paid him ten dollars per wagon and following his lead without a second thought.

At Cedar Creek Utah the party was approached a young man from a local express train which offered to sell them a map showing a shortcut thru the mountains that would cut weeks off their travel time and lead them to the region below San Francisco, considerably closer to the gold fields. He claimed that this was a map originally scouted by John Fremont on one of his early exploratory trips into the area. Hunt warned that anyone taking that trek might be “walking into the jaws of hell.” However a substantial part of the group, following the lead of Rev John Wells Brier, were eager to strike it rich as quickly as possible. They split off from the original caravan and decided to follow the map. Hunt’s party continued along the Spanish Trail and arrived at Los Angeles safely seven weeks later.

Brier’s group followed the map until they saw some mountains ahead, and encountered a gapping canyon, at which point the group split, with half the wagons rushing back to rejoin Hunt. Brier’s party, about 27 wagons, pushed on into desolate country.

The map was a fake. It led them down the mountain into the Furnace Creek Wash, where a nightmare journey began. The party had limited amounts of food and water, and split into two parts after squabbling over the best way to get across of the desert. The hardships and misery endured by both groups was extreme. The winter weather was dry and the wind whipped them incessantly. Their bitter odyssey lasted almost three months, a period of incredible suffering, deprivation, and almost aimless wandering. Luckily they stumbled across some creeks and water holes along the way, but they had barely enough food to keep themselves alive, and there wasn’t enough ground vegetation in winter to feed the oxen and horses.

Many of the animals died from starvation. Others had to be slaughtered to feed the families of the travelers. Some of the emaciated oxen were cooked by smashing several wagons to provide firewood. When there was no other firewood, they burned their possessions. At one point they were dying of thirst when a freak snowstorm struck and saved them. By blind luck both bands of the original party somehow

stumbled across each other at the western side of the valley, and finally managed to get out.

About four people died during this awful trek (one was very old, one was very young and sickly). This was not an unusual death rate for an overland caravan at the time, especially in light of the hardships the groups had endured, but it left a deep and bitter mark on those who lived. As the survivors of this disastrous expedition finally crossed the western ridge and left the region, one of the emigrants famously looked back and said with venom in his voice: “goodbye to you, Death Valley.”

The name stuck. They were rescued by some Spanish cowboys from Rancho San Fernando, who were astonished that anyone could have crossed the desert at all. When they arrived in the gold fields the party lost no time telling others about the incredible hardships they had endured. Their adventure was written up, and embellished, and almost immediately Death Valley had gained an infamous reputation.

But at the same time another sort of reputation also was formed. One member of the party had used some rocks near White Sage Flat to make a rough marker for the second wing of the group, pointed toward the hills which were their destination. After he got out of the valley he had a chunk of that same very soft rock shaped into a new site for his rifle. He apparently thought the rock might be lead, but it turned out that this “gunsight” was actually made of very high-grade silver ore. Several men in the second party had worked silver mines back in Georgia and recognized the ore immediately. Later some party members and interested investors returned to the area to try and locate that marker and the source of the silver ore, but they had no success. The Gunsight Silver Lode was one of the first mineral legends to lure people back into Death Valley. It became known as the Lost Gunsight Mine, and it stayed lost

Nobody found that supposed hoard of silver ore, and meanwhile the Comstock Lode was discovered in Nevada Territory. Thousands of would-be prospectors streamed right past Death Valley. A resident of the area, Doctor Erasmus Darwin French and some friends searched for the silver mine over the next few years. In 1860 in the Coso Mountains they did locate rich silver-bearing ledges, and mining was established.

A decade later, in an adjacent area of the west part of the Nopah Range near Amargosa Valley a big outcross of lead was discovered in 1870. There turned out to be serious amount of silver ore mixed with the lead, and a mine was established there which was worked for almost a decade under the Gunsight Mine name. The mine was crude, poorly braced and extremely dangerous, but the strike was a rich one, and ownership changed hands several times.

The problem was getting the ore refined, and then somehow getting it out. This proved to be a perpetual difficulty for most of the mineral wealth in and around Death Valley. Some years later, in 1892, another Gunsight Mine was established in New Mexico (named after a notch in a mountain that looked like a rifle gunsight). This mine was very productive and operations continued for several years even after the bottom fell out of the silver market with the repeal in 1893 of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act (the silver coinage act).

Over the next sixty years tales of incredible mineral wealth to be found in Death Valley, if you happened to be lucky, and if you happened to survive, were the stuff of newspaper legend, and sure-fire secondary headlines on many a slow news day.

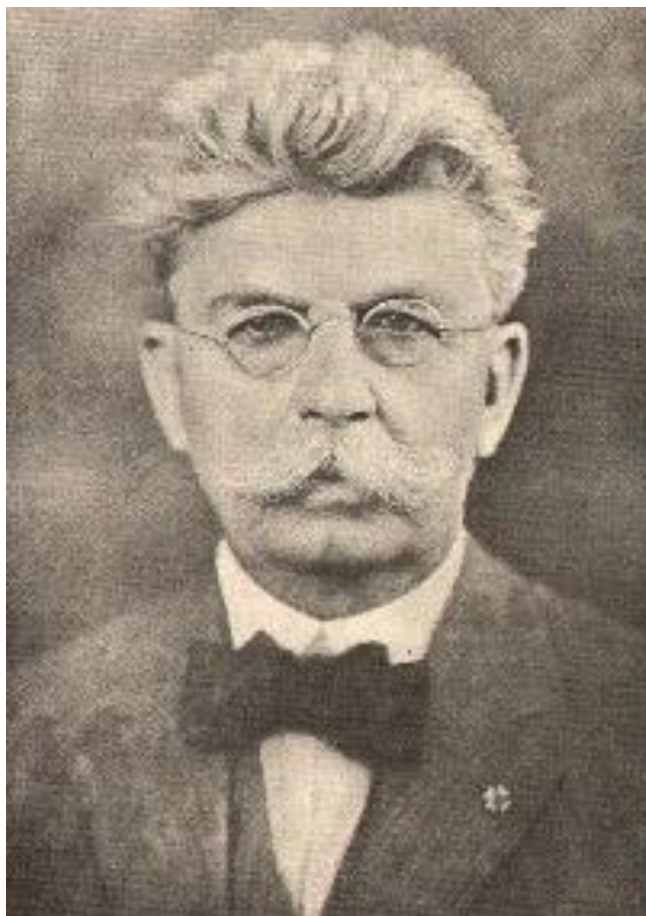
There was mineral wealth there all right, but getting at it, and more important, getting it out, were problems which were extremely difficult and sometimes impossible to solve. The other aggravating



factor in this hard scrabble race for riches was the fact that many of the mineral deposits in the region were limited, or shallow based, or so hard to extract as to be economically unfeasible.

Despite this, prospectors and parties of mining investors keep their sights on Death Valley, and the Valley seemed to offer an endless string of inducements as veins of gold, silver, copper, lead, and zinc were discovered beginning in the 1860s and continued with new discoveries turning up every few years. Boom towns with names like Panamint City, Ballarat, Harrisburg, Greenwater, Rhyolite, Chloride City, Skidoo, and Leadfield sprang up, then dropped dead a few years later when the mines petered out.

In 1881 borax was discovered in the middle of Death Valley near Furnace Creek by a down-and-out would-be prospector named Aaron Winters who had heard about the value of the mineral from a visitor. He contacted a San Francisco businessman named William T. Coleman. W.T. Coleman promised to pay Winters \$20,000 if his claim was as lucrative as he suggested. The claim was fully as rich as Winters had declared. Coleman was not thrilled when he discovered the location was in the center of Death Valley. He also had to pay Winters another \$2,500 to



secure the water rights to the claims. However it was Coleman who figured a way to make those deposits pay.

He has worked for F. M. "Borax" Smith in Nevada learning the mining business. Smith had discovered a huge field of ulexite or "cottonball" in 1872. Cottonball was the primary source of borax at the time, so called because it was normally found as snow white fluffy wads which resembled cotton. Smith had formed the U.S. Borax Company in Nevada, tripled the nation's production of borax, and helped develop many new uses for the mineral.

In 1883 Coleman formed the Harmony Borax Works in Death Valley, and began open-pit style mining to exact the ulexite. He hired 40 men to mine the ore, pulling out about three tons a day. He formulated a system of partially refining the ore right on site, so that enriched borax smelt could be hauled out of the area to the railroad junction at Mojave. The bullion was then shipped to a final processing plant where pure borax could be extracted. During the summer months the temperature was so hot that the processing water wouldn't cool enough to let the suspended borax crystallize out, so he shut down during hot weather and moved his crew to his other location near Tecopa.

Incredibly this second borax strike had also been located by friends of Winters. Winters immediately recognized the value of another big borax deposit in a cooler part of the valley. He arranged the sale of this mine to Coleman for \$15,000, to be split three ways amongst himself and his new partners, and Coleman was able to operate all year round.

Coleman was the man who is credited with devised the famous 20 mule team wagon train system for moving the bullion 165 miles out of the desert to the railhead in Mojave, altho to be fair "Borax" Smith has used a similar double wagon with water trailer and 24 mules at his original Teel Marsh borax plant.

In actuality the 20 mule team wagons used two horses in the rear, since horses were easier to handle and obeyed human direction more easily than mules. Eighteen mules did most of the heavy work of pulling the specially constructed double wagons loaded with fifteen to twenty thousand pounds of bullion, (about one tenth the capacity of a modern rail car). There was also an iron water tanker which the men and animals needed to tide them over between springs and creeks along the trail. It was a twenty day trip, ten each way, out of the desert, up and over the Panamint Mountains, then down the slope to the nearest rail junction at Mojave.

Coleman hired Chinese laborers to turn the rough trail into something resembling a road. That included knocking out rock-salt pinnacles, widening narrow mountain curves, diverting streams, filling slope ravines and established water stations along the route.

Contrary to sensational newspaper accounts of later years, driving the teams was not particularly dangerous. Nobody ever died or was badly injured making the journey, and despite the occasional spit hoof or lame mule, nothing seriously delayed the wagons, not even a flash flood on one run which mired the wagons in axel deep mud. Making tight turns on narrow mountain roads and going across deep gullies could be risky and required special arrangements, but the drivers were all experienced teamsters and had worked tougher hauls in the California mountains on other jobs.

Five teams consisting of a driver with one or sometimes two assistants (the "swampers") covered about seventeen miles a day. After unloading at Mojave, they would load up supplies for the mine and personal items such as tobacco and magazines for the miners, refill with water, then head back to the diggings where they would reload the wagons and start all over again. One wagon team was loaded and left the mine every four days. The mule team wagon trains were the most effective and economical method available for getting the product from the mine to the railhead at that time. For their efforts the drivers were paid between \$100 and \$120 per month, very high wages for the period.

Unfortunately the Harmony company dissolved its operations five years later in 1888 following financial reverses. New borax deposits had been discovered which were closer to the rail lines, and the price of borax tumbled. His competitor F.M. Smith bought the operation, but did not resume mining there. He wanted an easier and more reliable method of moving borax bullion out of the desert than mules, and he decided that a railroad deep into Death Valley was the best way, even if he had to build a line himself. In 1890 a narrow gage railway was built from Death Valley to Ryan, signaling the end of the use of the famous 20 mule team wagons.

In 1890 Smith formed the Pacific Coast Borax Company, and began aggressively marketing a line of borax-based cleaning and laundry products. The boxes featured a picture of the Harmony Mines' 20 Mule Team wagon. On the advise of

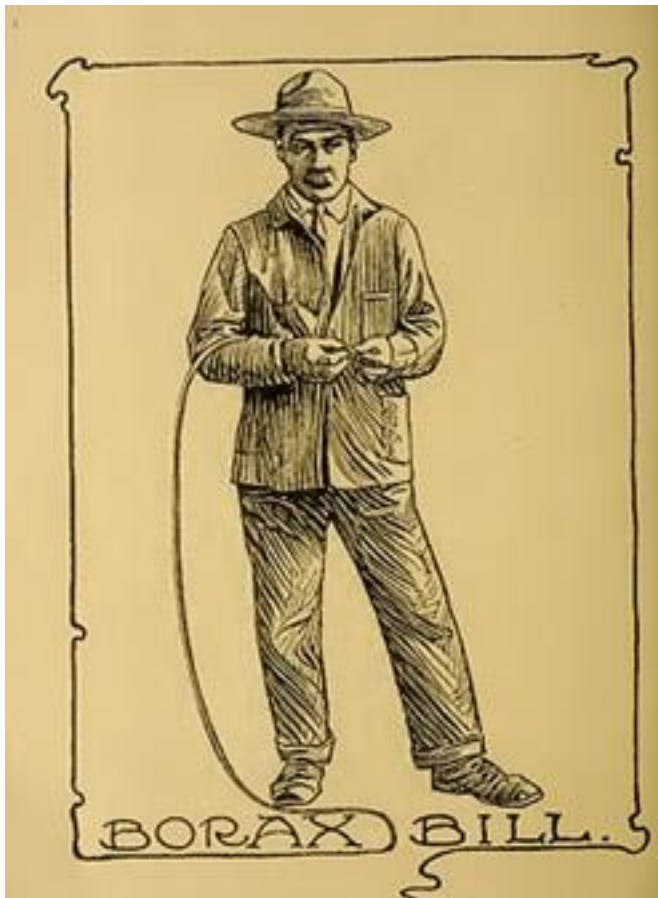
Stephen Mather, son of J. W. Mather, administer of the company's New York Office, the product name was officially changed to 20 Mule Team Borax to match the picture. The logo was first used in 1891, and registered as a trademark in 1894.

Young Mather more than earned his keep by thinking up innovative ways to keep the company and its products in the public eye. He had been a reporter on the *New York Sun*, so he first convinced fellow *Sun* reporter J.R. Spears to write a book to help glamorize Death Valley and borax. "Illustrated Sketches of Death Valley and Other Borax Deserts of the Pacific Coast" appeared in 1892 and immediately established the romantic legend of the 20 mule teams and the industrial importance of the borax industry. Most of the earlier editions featured "Illustrated Sketches of Death Valley" in prominent letters. The rest of the title was there, but in a smaller typeface. The book featured some of the first photographs of the spectacular Death Valley scenery ever seen east of the Rockies. This volume was issued in both deluxe and regular editions and has been reprinted several times over the years, most recently in 2001.

Two of Coleman's old wagon teams were refurbished and sent to the 1904 St. Louis Exhibition. Along with them a booklet was printed and distributed free to the fair visitors, and later across the nation, titled "The 20 Mule Team and a Sketch of Its Famous Driver Borax Bill."

"Borax Bill" was in reality William Parkinson, a man who had never worked in Death Valley and knew almost nothing about mules. However he looked the part and he was a quick study with a flair for showmanship. He awed the crowds at the Exhibition when he put the mule team thru simple exercises while uttering a "colorful" string of profanity and cracking an enormous whip. Response was so enthusiastic that he was soon doing an extensive east coast tour. His picture was added to boxes of the company product, and for several years "Borax Bill" was as closely identified with the product as the 20 Mule Team. Unfortunately





The
20 MULE BORAX TEAM
and
ITS FAMOUS DRIVER
 BEAUTIFUL WOMEN.

THE beautiful women of old Egypt used Borax to keep their flowing garments soft and snowy. In Pompeii the ladies of the nobility used Borax in the public baths and they were famed in the ancient world of culture for their sweetness and charm. Borax was known and used by the elect in the Seventh Century but it remained for the Wonderful West of America to produce this valuable mineral in quantities large enough to enable all to have the great advantage of its use. The first large deposits in modern days were found in 1872 in Nevada and Death Valley, California. The largest producer of borax and borax products in the world, the Pacific Coast Borax Co., are refining the output of these deposits.

To bring greater knowledge of borax to all households the famous 20 Mule Borax Team is now touring America.



Parkinson let fame go to his head. He kept asking for more money and more perks with his job until a disgusted Smith finally fired him at the end of 1906.

Ten years later the company hired Frank Wilson to be "Borax Bill", and initiated a heavily publicized tour beginning with the Pascadena Rose Bowl Parade that took him and two sets of 20 mule team wagons across most of the country before finally ending up in New York City.

Meanwhile, in 1905 after years of lobbying and badgering the railroads for better access into the region without success, Smith founded the Tonopah & Tidewater Railroad specifically to ship his borax to market and started work on his rail line, planning first to run a line thru part of Death Valley into the central Nevada gold fields. This proved to be an unwise decision. He quickly discovered that pushing rail lines thru the mountains and valleys of the region was an extremely difficult and time consuming endeavor.

He got bogged down in Amargosa Canyon, spending a full year blasting and filling and only managed to construct eleven miles of rails. This work ate up enormous chunks of capital in the process.

Much later when his railroad was finally constructed and operating it was officially listed as a Common Carrier, but in actuality what it mostly

carried was borax to and from his processing plants and out to the commercial markets.

Then, in 1913, John Sucklow, drilling for water on his homestead, discovered the world's largest deposit of borax ore forty feet down. This was a different kind of borax ore than ulexite. The strike was only three miles from the Sante Fe Rail lines, and a scant twelve miles from the town of Kramer.

"Borax" Smith immediately bought that claim and began developing it in earnest. Those new borax works were so huge that the railroad gladly built spur lines right up to the mine and refinery which was established there, and that mine remains today one of the primary sources of borax in the world.

This did not end the extraction of borax from other Death Valley mines, but the focus was shifted from the heart of the desert to the more accessible sections near the edges of the region.

Western writer Zane Gray came thru the area one day, looking for local color to work into his books. He discovered working conditions at the Pacific Coast Borax processing plant in the company town of Death Valley Junction on the Amargosa River were so horrible that nobody could work there more than a few months. The workers lived in old canvas tents summer and winter, and many of them were

routinely injured or had become permanently disabled during their brief employment there. When he returned to New York he wrote a scathing article for Harper's Bazaar.

Smith claimed he had no idea things were so bad, and immediately began to build a model industrial town on the other side of the river. He cleared out the red light district and the saloons, erected a modern processing plant, and invested in a 168 acre Ideal City style town devoted to the safety and health of his workers at a cost of over \$300,000. It featured schools, a library, houses for married families, first rate barracks for unmarried workers, and even recreational facilities for off duty employees. It went from being a murderous accident prone sweat shop to a work site so popular that the Pacific Coast Borax plant had a waiting list of people who wanted employment there.

Meanwhile, the legend of Death Valley continued to grow. Every few years another mineral strike of some kind would create more public excitement.

In the early 1870s Panamint City was founded. Cheerfully described as the toughest and rawest little hell-hole that ever tried to pass for a civilized town, its founders were thieves and outlaws who stumbled onto a vein of gold at their hideout and decided to give up their lawless ways. That proved more difficult than they had anticipated, but an influx of 2,000 or more new people into the town helped somewhat. The big gold began to play out in 1875, and in 1876 a flash flood wiped most of the town off the map. The vengeance of God was the verdict of a great many people, including some normally conservative newspaper editors who reported to event. The ruins of Panamint City still remain today as a tourist attraction.

In 1897 a vein of gold was discovered and the town of Ballarat sprang up. 15,000 tons of gold ore were extracted from the Radcliffe mine between 1898 and 1903, and the town boasted 400 permanent residents in 1898. In 1903 the gold gave out, and within nine months Ballarat was a ghost town.

In 1905 copper-stained volcanic surface rock was discovered at the Greenwater Range. It seemed clear that rich copper deposits were just below the surface, and the town of Greenwater sprang up immediately, primarily fueled by enthusiastic investment and stock speculation by California banks and holding companies.

This city was well named, because there was no usable or drinkable water anywhere in the area. Water had to be imported to supply the two thousand

residents at \$15 a barrel. By 1909 the mine finally shut down without ever turning a profit. The owners had no more money left to sink into the operation and the town collapsed, literally. Within two years only a few foundations were left, but the economic wreckage of this venture led to the California Depression of 1907-1908 which took a number of marginal mining efforts down to ruin with it.

In 1905 word spread that some of the old mines in the Hell's Gate area could start up again using new and better mining and refining methods. A cyanide refining process had been introduced in 1890 at South African gold mines. This new process resulted in an incredible 96% extraction rate of gold from rough ore.

Chloride City was built almost overnight on the strength of the so-called Bullfrog Strike. A year later it was clear that even modern mining methods couldn't do much in this desolate, remote area and the town emptied out. Some of those people moved over to the new gold strike at Harrisburg, but the surface gold was exhausted quickly, and processing the lower grade ore was hopelessly expensive. Harrisburg didn't even last a year.

Rhyolite was the biggest town in Death Valley, and the most prosperous, for awhile. During its glory gold days it boasted a population of between five and ten thousand people. These were thirsty people. There were over fifty saloons in town, but only two churches. They also boasted a stock exchange, an opera house, and a couple of dentist offices. By 1909 the gold was gone, and by 1910, so were the people.

Rhyolite was the epitome of the boom and bust mentality of Death Valley. When word of the gold strike got out, real estate and construction costs exploded in the area that became Rhyolite City. Land downtown jumped from fifty dollars per plot to as much as nine thousand dollars. Ranches, truck farms, poultry and egg hatcheries were established around to city to feed the population. When the mines went bust everybody lost everything. Most people, even the farmers, never got their initial investment back let alone turn a profit.

In 1906 two prospectors were on their way to the Harrisburg strike when they stumbled across gold as they camped one night. They immediately staked claims to most of the region. They invited some of their old pals in to share the bonanza, including laying out the town, which they named Skidoo. The expression 23 Skidoo became part of American slang in the first third of the twentieth century, reportedly because of the original 23 miners who united to grab



all the land on which the town stood, and thus reap most of the rewards when the strike boom brought in hoards of gold seekers and mine workers. When the gold ran out and the bubble exploded, those 23 people were the only winners from the rush: 23 Skidoo, grab the money and run.

Skidoo is notable for hosting the only hanging ever seen in Death Valley. A saloon owner named Hooch Simpson was having some financial problems which he tried to resolve by robbing a local bank. The robbery attempt was foiled, but Hooch went back that night and shot the store owner in whose building the bank was located. The store owner had been the witness who had identified him as the thief. Later that night a group of townspeople grabbed Simpson and hung him. The story goes that he was actually hung twice. His body was strung up a second time to accommodate some newspaper people who had arrived too late to get pictures and a decent story from the original lynching. Skidoo vanished three years later when the surface gold vein was worked clean.

The last big boom town came in 1926 when Charles Julian, a sharp mining promoter, became head of the Western Lead Mines. The locality that was Leadfield had been a scruffy place noted for free standing and some co-op lead mining, but Julian had bigger ideas. He laid out 1749 city lots, let it be known that the lead deposits were richer than

previously imagined, and that the new Western Lead Mines were going to start major operations. Things went well, for awhile, but by 1927 it was clear that there wasn't as much lead in the mines as Julian had led people to believe, and that he was also the primary beneficiary of the sale and development of Leadfield city lots. Some other difficulties with his financial situation also emerged, and by the end of 1927 Leadfield was a ghost town, altho mining engineers later declared that the area could have been successful if a modern stamping mill had been erected in the area.

By the end of World War One mining technology and ore processing took great leaps forward. Death Valley began to see a lot of open pit mining operations, and a considerable amount of "scrape and scat" style strip mining. This type of extraction was suited to the locality where most of the mineral wealth was near the surface, but this kind of mining also did considerable damage to the environment, and even in the early twenties there was public unease about the havoc these new mining operations were creating.

Meanwhile newspapers and magazines built fanciful stories of lost mines, grim violence and tales of desert washes littered with bones of luckless pioneers and prospectors. In the newspapers Death Valley became the fabled last refuges of outlaws and

scoundrels. Colorful local characters were always good for a headline with their exploits and efforts to publicize some new mining claim. Hollywood added to the legend by discovering how convenient and how picturesque the locations were. By 1930 more than a hundred movies had been shot in the region. Close to a dozen of those movies had the words Death Valley in the title, and at least thirty used Death Valley as part of the story plot.

In the 1920s a strong business in tourism began to take hold. A tent camp was established at Stovepipe Wells, and a couple of years later a borax mining company near Furnace Creek turned their cabins into a dude ranch.

Wealthy easterners looking for relaxation and attracted by the spectacular scenery began establishing permanent homes in the region, the most famous of which was a huge mansion known as "Scotty's Castle", owned and built by Chicago insurance magnate Albert M. Johnson, but named after semi-famous con man Walter E. Scott, "Death Valley Scotty", who had fast-talked the insurance man out of several thousand bucks to support one of his non-existent gold mines, but remained his friend anyway because Johnson loved the region and considered Scotty not just a colorful local character, but also one of the funniest people in the world.

In 1929 the stock market crashed and the nation was plunged into the Great Depression. In 1930 the Pacific West Coast Borax Company contacted the McCann-Erickson advertising agency in New York about the possibility of creating a short run series of radio shows to promote their consumer products: 20 Mule Team Washing Powder, Boraxo hand soap and 20 Mule Team Soap Chips.

Most people consider these products the primary uses of borax, but as a matter of fact, since "Borax" Smith had made it his business to expand the uses for the mineral in the 1870s, the industrial demand for borax had exploded. Borax was and is used for everything from disinfectants to glass making, refrigeration, pottery glaze, machine abrasives, boric acid, wood preservatives, cosmetics, industrial solution softeners, medicines, insecticides, flame retardants, fertilizers, industrial ceramics, chemical buffers for manufacturing, anti-fungal solutions, flux for iron and steel welding, coatings for playing cards as well as most glazed paper, and much more.

By the 1920s the industrial uses for borax had exceeded all expectations of the founders of the company, but they were still turned borax into washing powder, cleanser, and water softeners. In

1925 the discovery of huge deposits of borax ore in what became Boron California solidified the company's hold on the world production of the mineral.

The direct consumer use of borax for laundry and cleaning products was a rather small part of Pacific Coast's borax business by 1930, but the company officials ran an extremely efficient operation. They were sitting on top of the world's largest deposits of borax ore, and they intended to explore and exploit to the absolute maximum any way they could to sell more borax, including selling as much hand soap and laundry cleaner as possible.

Boraxo was and still is a famous hand soap powder well known to printers, mechanics, butchers, and plumbers as one of the few sure and certain ways to get your hands clean even if they are soiled by the worst gunk imaginable. Sales on this product have been consistent for decades. Boraxo is sold nowadays primarily by industrial janitorial companies and its reputation today is upheld by word of mouth endorsement from those who use it.

20 Mule Team Soap Flakes, composed half and half of soap and almost pure borax, was a staple for seventy-five years in most households, particularly in regions which had hard water. Borax powder is a natural water softener, and it is also a natural deodorizer and emulsifier, which means it breaks down dirt and grease particles so that water can dissolve and wash them away. The number one use of this product thru the years was by young mothers, who learned from their mothers or female relatives that baby diapers soaked in a 20 Mule Team Borax powder solution come clean and do not retain odors.



Borateen, developed in the late 1940s, directly addressed the problems of diapers and was marketed up thru the early 1970s.

With the last gold strike in Death Valley only twenty-five or so years in the past, and many movies in theaters featuring Death Valley backdrops, as well as being mentioned on the packages of their grocery store products, it was not too surprising that the

sponsor suggested the radio stories be set in or around Death Valley.

For some unknown reason the ad agency assigned this job to a woman, a copywriter named Ruth Cornwall Woodman. She was a Vassar graduate, married to a banker, and the mother of two small children. Considering the times, many people may well have wondered why she was working at all. But then, Ms Woodman was no ordinary lady, and creating a western radio program that would sell product in 1930, right at the beginning of the Great Depression was going to be a challenge.

The first thing she discovered is that except for silent movie fluff and pulp magazine fiction, she knew very little about the west, and almost nothing about Death Valley or the region around it. It was an entire continent away, but she decided that she should make a trip to California and check out the terrain personally.

One of Pacific Coast Borax's employees was an old-timer and something of a local character named W. W. "Wash" Cahill. The company assigned Cahill to be her guide and protector. Amazingly enough Woodman and Cahill got along. Even more amazingly she got along with most of the local inhabitants of the region when she arrived and started to explore the region.

She was almost always dressed in skirts and in current eastern fashion, and used both proper English and correct Emily Post style manners. This seeming incongruity was apparently a careful ploy on her part. She realized that many of the old timers in the region had not encountered that many women over the years, and she also recognized that they wanted women who looked and acted like women, not a Hollywood smart-mouth wearing corduroy pants and a kaki shirt.

In 1930 there were still people left who knew about the old days, including the stories that didn't make the newspapers, and the stories the newspapers wouldn't have printed anyway. Her open friendly manner and honesty about her motives overcame most resistance on the part of the locals and after a few weeks she had enough background material to create some interesting stories, and enough leads to pick up more if the series clicked.

Armed with notebooks full of colorful legend and fact, she set out to create a program that would tell stories endemic to the region, and which would also sell product for Pacific Coast Borax. What emerged was one of the most unusual, and for the times, most mature dramatic series being offered on radio.

Each of the stories was represented as being a true slice of old western history. At first the stories were set in or very close to the Death Valley region. A composite character known as “The Old Ranger” was the host of the program who introduced the stories. The implication was that the Old Ranger was himself a product and survivor of the old days, that he had first hand experience with the miners, outlaws and settlers depicted in the stories.

From the very beginning the show stressed the concept that these were true adventures, real stories about real people who had lived in the real west, a west which had only recently seen the final days of wild escapades and desperate danger. Real people were mentioned by name, entire plots were built around real personalities who had been part of the panorama of California history.

Plugs for the sponsor, subtle or otherwise, started early. “She Burns Green,” telling the story of how Aaron Winters discovered the first commercial deposits inside Death Valley aired on the second program, followed by two more episodes depicting the other major borax discoveries in the region. The seventh program was titled “The 20-Mule Team Makes Its First Trip.” The script for this show was periodically rerun over the years.

The early days featured openings of authentic western songs by John White, “the lonesome cowboy”. Other songs or parts of his songs were interspaced in the stories, often used as dramatic bridges or marking shifts in the plot action. The entire format suggested loneliness and the vastness of the untamed western landscape.

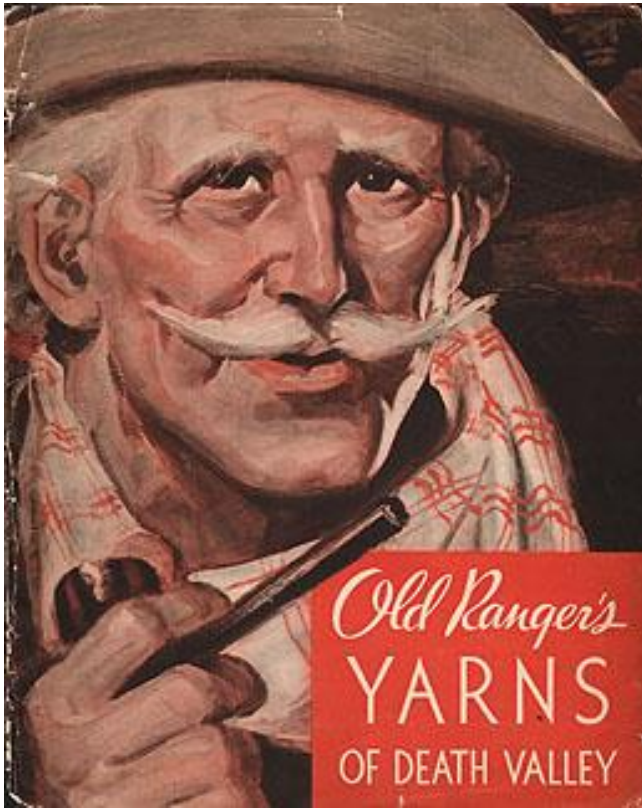
A few years later with the fall 1935 season this gave way to what was to become one of the most memorable yet understated openings in radio history. The show opened with the fading, forlorn notes of a bugle call, followed by announcer Dresser Dahlstead’s lines: “As the early morning bugle-call of the covered wagon trains fades away among the echoes, another true “Death Valley Days” story is presented for your entertainment by the Pacific Coast Borax Company, producers of that famous family of products—20 Mule Team Borax, 20 Mule Team Borax Soap Chips and Boraxo. Well, Old Ranger, what’s your story about tonight?”

What followed made radio history, and left its listeners with a lifetime of memories. The stories were powerful, and often showed the courage and determination of the human spirit against the forces of man and nature. Quiet moments, like the simple joy of a family Christmas in the wastelands were interspaced with adventures of outlaws, Indian raids,



lonely prospectors and human beings in the midst of building a nation in the untamed wilderness.

Some problems developed early. Altho Ruth Woodman made annual trips out to the region looking for new material, the number of knowledgeable survivors was fading rapidly by the early thirties. The death in 1934 of Scott Harris, the last of the original 20 Mule Team drivers signaled an end to the era of the old west. Increasingly she had to seek out museums, yellowed old newspaper files, or the sons and daughters of those who had settled the area before them. Harry Gower, another veteran Pacific Coast Borax employee who had worked on “Borax” Smith’s Tonopah & Tidewater Railroad was added early-on to help her find the sources she needed to continue her extensive research.



Other problems were that the amount of material directly related to Death Valley was exhausted very rapidly. Altho the theme of Death Valley as the focus of the stories was maintained,

She Burns Green

The first "Death Valley Days" yarn ever broadcast — and still the Old Ranger's favorite

WHEN they asked me to pick out four yarns from my "Death Valley Days" collection and write 'em down, I knowed right off what one of 'em would be—the story of Rosie and Aaron Winters. A story which proves that truth is stranger than fiction.

Where Aaron Winters come from, or why he ever went to Death Valley in the first place, I have no idea. In desert society it ain't considered polite to ask such questions. Nor was, either. Men have been known to answer 'em with a "ick-shooter."

I know it that at the time of this story (the Winter of 1880) Aaron, a grizzled old desert rat of sixty, had been living out there for over twenty years. If you could call it living, Rosie didn't. Rosie was Aaron Winters' wife. Young enough to be his daughter. And pretty as only a Spanish-American girl can be. Cramp-pale, like a magnolia blossom, with haunting dark eyes, and a frail little figure.

The home of this oddy-mated couple was on Ash Meadows, just east of Death Valley. Ash Meadows got its name from some stunted ash-brush that grew there. Otherwise there was nothing but sand and rock as far as your eye could see in all directions.

I stopped at the Winters' shack only once, but I'll never forget it. It boasted but a single room, with the earth for a floor. On one side it looked like any prospector's shack. An old cook stove, settin' on a projecting rock. Prospector's tools leaning against the wall. Sacks of horse feed piled in the corner.

The other side of the room was Rosie's boudoir. A deep window ledge, covered with a clean towel, served as a dressing table. In the center Rosie had propped a mirror against an old starch box. Like a old ribbon, once gay but now sadly faded and worn, hung beside it. On a second starch box stood a row of cosmetics—bottles bearing the labels of Hogan's Magnolia Balm, Feltora's Gossum yr for the Complexion, Florida Water. All of them long since empty, but still cherished by Rosie.

The shelves about the fireplace all had newspaper covers, painstakingly cut in scalloped patterns. Two rocking chairs wore hand-embroidered tidies on their backs. The pillows on the bed were carefully protected with ruffled pillow shams.

Certainly Rosie didn't make these pathetic attempts at interior decoration to impress the neighbors. For the nearest settlement or railroad station was exactly two hundred miles away.

And not once in a blue moon did anybody pass through Ash Meadows. The tramp prospector who knocked at their cabin door that night in 1880 had lost his way.

Rosie and Aaron had just sat themselves down to supper.

"A meal fit only for a Paite," observed Rosie as she

increasingly she had to expand her scope to include the entirety of the far west in order to keep her stock of stories coming. Since the scripts were all supposed to be based on true events, there was also a major problem in that a considerably number of true stories ended in tragedy. That wouldn't go on radio, so editing had to be done to relate stories that generally ended on a note to triumph, even if history showed that the protagonist was headed for economic disaster or even death a few years later.

Separating fact from fiction was also not easy. Westerners have never been shy about bragging and grossly exaggerating their adventures even during the days when the west was still being settled in the 1850 to 1890 period. Newspapers of the era were also interested in selling papers, not in dragging up scandal about prominent local dignitaries, so reading between the lines of old newspaper write-ups was a talent she had to develop early on in her research.

Still, a remarkable amount of balance was obtained. In order to try and separate fact from fiction sometimes historical people or events got more than a half hour show. Billy the Kid got a four-show coverage in a tour-de-force that tried to gather every shred of information known about his exploits during and after the Lincoln County Range War. Many larger than life characters, such as James Reavis, the Baron of Arizona, came in for two linked programs. Death Valley Scotty was featured on several different shows over the years.

One of the early keys to success was a series of radio premiums she initiated. Originally these had been intended to test the extent of the listenership. The CAB radio ratings of the early thirties was not considered entirely accurate by many advertising agencies, especially since a lot of their numbers relied on telephone surveys. During the Depression quite a few families didn't have telephones. Out in the rural areas, many farms and ranches didn't even officially have electricity. Their electricity was generated by windmills and by linking old car batteries together to create enough power to run the water pump, the four light bulbs per house (one each in the kitchen, living room, main bedroom and children's room), and the radio. When the wind fell, the lights were shut off so the radio could stay on. The public response, or non-response, to premium offers was considered essential to actually determining how many people were listening to a particular program.

The first premium, available for sending in a single box top from any 20 Mule Team product, was a booklet dated 1931 which told the overall story of Death Valley, with special emphasis on the part

Pacific Coast Borax had played in the development of the region. Response to this was overwhelming, far greater than anyone had anticipated. The exact numbers mailed out have been lost, but the booklet went back to press at least once, and perhaps as many as three times to satisfy the demand.

This was solid proof that there were plenty of people listening to the program. Apparently sales on their consumer product line also increased, because Pacific Coast Borax authorized the program to become a regular ongoing series, if, of course, Ms Woodland would continue to oversee the production.

In 1932 an expanded edition of "The Story of Death Valley", with lots more photographs, was offered as a premium and again generated an enthusiastic response.

Later in 1932 the first of a series of "Old Ranger's Yarns of Death Valley" was a premium. These proved to be extremely popular with the listeners. Each 8-1/2x11" slick paper booklet was loaded with authentic photos of Death Valley, and also carried condensed prose stories adapted from popular Death Valley Days scripts. Today these condensed versions are a valuable resource for OTRadio collectors and researchers seeking to learn more about the focus of the program.

It is unknown (by this writer anyway) exactly how many of those "Old Ranger's Yarns" booklets were produced, but they lasted up until at least the late 1930s. The popularity of these premiums can be verified by the fact that they are very plentiful today. Families kept those booklets for decades, and they can be found by today's collector without a great deal of searching.

These "Old Ranger's Yarns" premiums were supplanted in 1939 by Vol 1 #1 of "High Spots of Death Valley Days" which was very similar in format to the Old Ranger books. I have not personally seen this premium, but the implication from the numbering is that it was going to be an ongoing series.

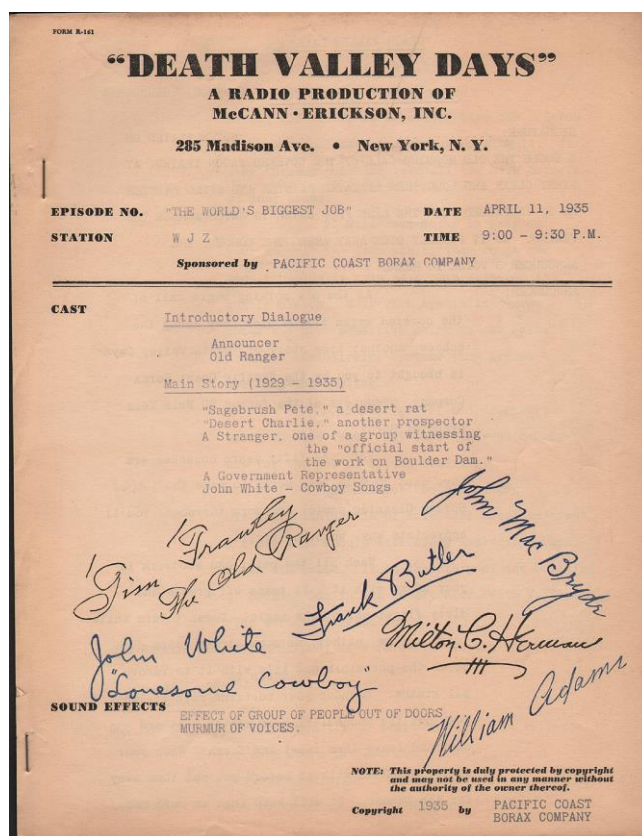
Some of the other premiums are tougher. A 1934 booklet "Cowboy Songs of Death Valley" (adapted for vocal and piano) featuring a full color shot on John White on the cover shows up less frequently. At this point in time one wonders why the booklet didn't also include guitar cords with the music, since a guitar was the instrument John White played on the radio show.

A premium of "Old Ranger Seeds", packages of seeds for cactus and wild flowers found in Death Valley is almost impossible to find.

One of the most popular premiums was the 1935 special booklet with the complete radio script of

the program from 11 April 1935, titled "The World's Biggest Job." This program told of the building of the Hoover Dam in Boulder Canyon, which was almost completed at the time the program was broadcast. An inspiring tribute to the ingenuity of the human race to create a controllable supply of water and electric power, it was also a stirring endorsement of the public works projects being promoted by the Roosevelt administration in Washington, DC. This booklet featured a special aerial photo cover of the actual dam construction site, and the title page of the script autographed by every member of the cast.

The program began life on NBC Blue, broadcast as a live 9:30 Tuesday evening half hour offering out of Hollywood. The following year it was on NBC Red. It shifted back and forth for several



years between the Red and the Blue, usually with a Thursday 8:30 PM time slot until 1941, when the show jumped over to CBS, where it remained for the rest of its existence.

Ruth Cornwall Woodland was the primary researcher and writer for the entire run of the program, with scripting help from Ruth Adams Knight. The producer was Dorothy McCann. She was apparently a relative of one of the McCann-Erickson agency owners, but she asked no special favors and quickly demonstrated that she could pull her weight during the years of radio production.

Right—John White, “The Lonesome Cowboy,” and Tim Frawley, “The Old Ranger,” of Death Valley Days.

Below—Behind the scenes at Radio City. Here is the group of actors broadcasting Death Valley Days now in the fifth year of its outstandingly successful run.



H. B. C. PHOTO

The show ran thru a total of five “Old Rangers”, beginning with William Shelly. In 1933 George Rand became the Old Ranger, followed in late 1935 by Tim Frawley, then almost immediately by Harry Humphrey and in 1938 by Jack McBryde, who lasted till the end of the first program run, in 1944.

In the middle of 1944 Death Valley Days changed format. There is no information on why this happened. Perhaps there was a feeling that most of the good stories based on true events had been pretty well used up, but more likely ratings were the driving factor.

Thru the early years of the 1930s the show held onto ratings around 13, with the best season being in 1934-35 when it booked a solid 15.8. But after that the numbers began to slip. By the end of 1940 the numbers had dropped to 7.4. Things took a boost with the move to CBS in 1940 with ratings jumping to 10.1, but then they began to slowly slide again. In 1943 they hit their lowest all time level of 5.9. Obviously the public was listening to something else on the air in the Death Valley Days time slot.

The program became “Death Valley Sheriff”. The change came with little warning. The broadcast of 3 Aug 1944 was Death Valley Days. The following week, on 10 Aug 1944, the show was Death Valley Sheriff. By July of 1945 the program was called Death Valley Days: The Sheriff. Sometimes it ran as Death Valley Days Presents The Sheriff.

Copies of this series exist, about fourteen of them, but they are not in general circulation. The few collectors who have them are unwilling to share, a dog in the manger attitude that speaks ill of certain people in this hobby. Even the episode titles are largely unknown, altho some titles have recently been uncovered in a copyright search. Write-ups about this

series in newspapers and radio magazines are almost non-existent. Virtually the only information many collectors have comes from John Dunning who located a few references in trade papers.

The show featured Robert Haag as Sheriff Mark Chase of Canyon County California. Robert Wagner and Donald Briggs also played the part. There was a female character in the stories named Cassandra Drinkwater who was used for comedy relief.

In recent years a sort of cartoon postcard promotional announcement about the program has turned up, but it offers no hint as to the story content or theme of the show. The original Death Valley Days stories had a strong human interest focus. These new stories were apparently more humor than action oriented. Ratings for this program were better than for Death Valley Days. The show turned in numbers ranging from 9 to just over 10.5 for most of the years of the 1940s.

In March of 1951 Pacific Coast Borax dropped their sponsorship of this program. The following week on 6 April 1951, Proctor and Gamble, an arch rival in the laundry soap business, and the company which had invented Tide, the first laundry detergent, which was soon destined to put almost all laundry soap products out of business, took over as the sponsor. By July they had pulled out and American Chicle was the summer sponsor, at much lower rates. By the end of September, just before the new fall lineup was due to premier, the show was cancelled.

Pacific Coast Borax was out of the broadcasting business only briefly. They had dropped the Sheriff radio show to prepare for a 1952 revival of Death Valley Days as a syndicated television

program. Episodes were filmed in advance; there was no attempt to do live TV with this production. Direct syndication allowed them to buy time slots in all the regional markets and avoid network control.

The format was essentially the same as in the glory days of the late 1930s. Most of the original features of the radio program were retained. The famous bugle call opening was used, as was the "Old Ranger" to introduce the stories. To make sure the program was true to its roots, many of the TV stories were adaptations by Ruth Cornwall Woodland from her original radio scripts.

The "Old Ranger" on TV was played by veteran western character actor Stanley Andrews, who thoroughly looked the part. He was also well known for making public appearances, particularly with children, talking about the history of the American west and, of course, the importance of borax in that history. He stayed with the job up until ill health forced his retirement in 1964. He passed away in 1969. That great B-movie western actor Ronald Regan was tapped to be the next series host, and stayed thru most of 1966. Ronald Regan left this lucrative and popular role to become involved in California politics.

His place was taken by Robert Taylor, who left in 1968 due to serious health problems that claimed his life in 1969. He was replaced by Dale Robertson who also lasted two years, and was himself replaced by Merle Haggard, who was the final host when the show closed down in 1970.

The focus of the television show was somewhat wider than on the radio program. Now the stories covered the entire history of the west, but there was still special emphasis on Death Valley, the California region, and mining as opposed to cowboys and cattle ranching. Ruth Woodland oversaw the creative development of the program and wrote most of the television scripts with help from others along the way.

The emphasis on true adventures was continued. Fortunately by the 1950s more historical material was becoming available for examination as the drive to preserve the history of the west was increasingly a serious academic concern. Many young actors who went on to become famous movie and television stars were featured in these half hour dramas.

In 1954 the TV show first offered what was to become the most popular single premium ever created in the history of radio and TV. Pacific Coast Borax had continued the policy of using real life replicas of the wagons and teams as part of their ongoing

RADIO STARS
in
"DEATH VALLEY DAYS" Program

John White, better known as the "Lonesome Cowboy," was named by his peers, as the "Old Ranger" of the radio show in the early 1930s.

Recreating and starring the original cast, including the radio show's host, the outstanding actresses of the show, the program is a tribute to the show's history and the role of borax in the west.

The "Old Ranger" from Death Valley—legendary actor, 20 Mule Team driver and show host, visits the state of the old 20 Mule Team west in Death Valley.

ENLARGED pictures of the "Old Rangers" John L. White, the "Lonesome Cowboy," Virginia Curdiner and other members of the cast in "Death Valley Days" are attractively reproduced in a 24-page souvenir book. The book also contains beautiful views of Death Valley and its vicinity, together with a map of the Valley and the guide of interest referred to by the "Old Ranger" as he relates his stories every Monday evening. Words and music of the 1930s classic "Gill Along Little Dogies" are also included in this attractive book.

If you haven't already received your copy of the souvenir book, simply send in your name and address and the top of a can of 20 Mule Team Borax. Address the nearest office.

Pacific Coast Borax Company
2775 Lombard Street, New York, N. Y.
2775 Lombard Street, Chicago, Ill.
WINDSOR, CALIF.

20 MULE TEAM BORAX
Nature's own water softener, cleanser and deodorant

publicity campaign, and now they decided to create a model kit of the company's trade mark, the 20 Mule Team borax wagon.

The original kit was made of wood. The mules were roughly pre-carved, the rest of the kit was standard model kit fare, altho it may have been a bit difficult for the average youngster. The kit was promoted on the program and also on the back of boxes of the sponsor's products. This kit was offered for years, for decades, for generations. When the first production run sold out, Pacific Coast Borax ordered another run, then another, and continued to offer the kits.

Over the years the contents of the kits changed somewhat. More of the parts were pre-stamped. A little later more plastic parts were added. In time the mules were made of molded plastic. Wood gave way eventually to an all-plastic kit. In the 1970s styrene plastic was the substance used. This kit was still being offered to customers up thru the late 1980s and into the early 90s when, finally, after several changes in company ownership, the last of the

kits was allowed to sell out and the molds were not recast.

Copies of these kits, assembled as well as unassembled and still in the original box can be found today at most nostalgia and collectable shows. No one knows how many of those model kits were made,



but the quantities probably ran into the millions. It was a remarkable run and a remarkable publicity campaign

that linked television viewers directly to the sponsor's product thru a model that was the very symbol of the sponsoring company. No piece of giveaway merchandising has even been so successful. I don't think we'll ever see anything like that again.

The Pacific Coast Borax Company continued as the sole sponsor of the television show and promoted their products there for almost twenty years, up until the final broadcast. Death Valley Days ran 452 episodes, making it the third longest running program in television history. In recent decades reruns of the program have turned up on the tube at odd places and at odd times.

This television version is the program most people recall today. They remember the stories, and they remember the product. Many of these programs have been put on video tape or DVD, and more are planned to be released over the next few years. There is an ongoing campaign to get the show placed in reruns on a cable station, and there is even some serious talk or reviving it with new stories.

However, times change. Nothing is more certain than change itself. In 1956 Pacific Coast Borax merged with the United States Potash Corporation to become U.S. Borax. In 1967 the company was acquired by Rio Tinto, one of the world's largest mining companies. Their focus was on industrial uses for mine products. They continued to produce the 20 Mule Team line of consumer products, mostly as a sort of concession to the older executives of the U.S. Borax company.

In 1969 Ruth Woodland wrote her final script for Death Valley Days and retired. She died the following year on April 22, 1970 at the age of 75 in Santa Monica. With the death of Ruth Cornwall Woodland the company cancelled the production of

new Death Valley Days TV shows, but the program was in reruns for several more years.

In 1988 the Boraxo, Borateen, and the 20 Mule Team product lines were sold to Dial Soap, who continue to produce 20 Mule Team Borax (now marketed as a laundry booster) and Boraxo to this very day, but they do not emphasize these product lines. In 1999 the very last appearance of the touring promotional 20 Mule Team wagons was made in the Pasadena Rose Parade, the world's largest parade.

Rio Tinto changed the name of their consolidated world-wide borax division to Borax, one word.

Today the company is still developing new uses for borax. Their latest effort is to develop a clean fuel cell based on sodium borohydride. In 2002 the first Chrysler Natrium, a zero emissions automobile running on sodium borohydride was produced and has been making publicity appearances ever since.

The importance of the radio program to the future of Death Valley itself cannot be overemphasized. For all the gold, silver, copper, and lead riches heralded as being discovered in Death Valley it was the lowly borax deposits which were the most economically important. Borax made Death Valley, and borax saved Death Valley.

For most Americans the first, and the primary source of information about the Death Valley region came from the radio and the television show. In 1933 President Hoover visited the area and was so impressed with its beauty that he declared Death Valley a national monument and issued a proclamation closing the area to mining. Congress overturned that proclamation later in the year, but the seeds of conservation had been sown.

In 1934 the first of a series of Civilian Conservation Corp camps were established in Death Valley to improve the national monument park lands. They constructed access roads and telephone lines, dug wells, improved watershed drainage, built campgrounds, completed the first comprehensive survey of the area and even built an airfield. For many young men these CCC camps were their first exposure to outdoor life or the wilderness, and the experience made deep impressions on them. When their service with the CCC ended they told friends and family about the majestic beauty of the region.

In 1937 a highway was completed between Lone Pine California and Death Valley, which opened the doors to a flood of tourists. During World War II the government shut down all gold mines in the United States by official order, and suspended

registration of any new gold mine claims until the end of the hostilities.

In 1949 the centennial of the 1849 gold rush was a Hollywood star studded spectacular that brought thousands of visitors into Death Valley and was so successful in publicizing the area that it became an annual event.

The movement of Death Valley Days to television in 1952 refocused public attention on the region and finally, in 1975, after literally decades of lobbying, California residents succeeded in getting congress to pass the Mining in the Park Act which effectively stopped mining and exploitation of the region's natural resources and called for a comprehensive review of all existing mine claims. Most of the area was turned over to the National Park Service. In 1994 Death Valley became a recognized National Park, with much of the land re-designated to wilderness. It took a long time, but this spectacular piece of the American west is now a recognized national heritage.

Surely one of the most important people responsible for this chain of events was Ruth Cornwall Woodland, the brilliant woman who turned half forgotten American history into one of the most

enduring radio and television

programs of all time. Her papers and research material, covering all the years she worked on the program, including most of her radio and television scripts, have since become part of the University of Oregon Special Collections Archives.

Her legacy and the effects of the program she created will never be forgotten.

But as for the radio series itself, after more than sixty-five years of searching and digging, any hopes of turning up more transcriptions of this ground breaking radio program are almost over. Four shows, that's all that remains. Everything else is gone, vanished in the vacuum.



Below—N. B. C. engineer and program production manager in studio “Control Room” at Radio City.



WIDE WORLD—COURTESY TOWER RADIO MAGAZINE

Right—Radio City in Rockefeller Center, New York. The circle marks the location of the National Broadcasting Company Studios.

AMONG YOUR SOUVENIRS . . . we suggest you keep this folder and enclosed radio script as a reminder of the “Old Ranger’s” stories as told each week on the Death Valley Days program. This particular story is called “The World’s Biggest Job” and concerns Boulder Dam which is depicted on the cover.

Extra copies of this folder and script, which we hope you will find really interesting, are available to you and your friends. For each additional copy send the top cut from a 20 Mule Team Borax package. Address Pacific Coast Borax Company, 51 Madison Avenue, New York City.



N. B. C. PHOTO

READER REACTION



Ken Faig Jr. carolfaig@comcast.net

Thanks so much for *Fadeaway* #59. Amazing art from "Brain Boy." I enjoyed your article about the revival of *Amazing Stories*. Of course, it is an iconic title because it was the first of the U.S. all-sifi magazines way back in 1926. It would be nice if *Amazing* were still being published (in paper) when the centennial rolls around in less than eight years. I've been wondering if there will be much to-do over the centennial of *Weird Tales* in 2023. Of course, the recent publication of *The Things Amazing!* concerning the first two years of the magazine was a grand beginning.

John Thiel; 30 N. 19th St.; Lafayette, IN 47904

I received the third issue of *Amazing* in the same mail as *Fadeaway*, and was interested to look over your impression of the magazine. I'd say its third issue is bigger and more impressive than the first two issues, which is a definite advance and shows the magazine to be moving along, and I think it has a lot of saleable

qualities as well. I think it was near to being miraculous how Steve Davidson brought this magazine into existence.

Your impression of the cartoons is the same as mine; they really don't amount to much and seem out of key with things, however, they match the cartoons in F&SF, I think, and are superior to them. The fiction seems rather informal in its approach much of the time, and the writers appear to be trying to make their stories special items of interest to readers; there is a tinge of amateurishness to much of the writing. It doesn't seem like they'll come up with a really lengthy story, either, unless the magazine continues to enlarge.

There have been publishing mistakes in the second and third issues, too—I don't know if they were in all copies or not; it seems like they might have corrected some if they examined the runs. Last issue some of the print was smeared, and this issue there's two blank pages at the end of the magazine. I notice that they have stopped using slick paper, which is all right with me; it may be what caused the smearing in the second issue.

Some experimenting seems to be taking place right in front of the readers. But despite all this, the magazine is a great venture made in hard times and I too have been all for the success of the magazine, and have been helping spread word of it. I think it has a good start and that the people who have seen it would not want to see it disappear. I'm happy to see that you, too, support the magazine.

I just thought I'd comment on that, but I enjoyed the rest of the issue of *Fadeaway* too.

///I agree that the editor and staff of the new *Amazing Stories* have made enormous improvements with the third issue. At the same time I think there is room for improvement, particularly in the overall quality of the fiction. Their latest plan to increase the word rates may help that situation. I am also concerned that they seem intent on running short stories, often short-short stories, and seem not to offer longer fiction at all. But my main objection, noted in my editorial, is that less than half of each issue is devoted to fiction, which just seems wrong to me. I am also deeply concerned that their financial situation seems to be so close to the edge that they are launching another crowd funding effort to continue operations. To me that does not bode well. I hope the magazine will continue, and will continue to improve. The SF field definitely needs another print magazine.///

Jefferson P. Swycaffer; P.O. Box 15373; San Diego CA 92175

I hadn't known that **Amazing Stories** had rebooted; very pleasant news indeed! That was always a pretty darn fine magazine, chock-full of...well...amazement!

I'd never heard of Brain Boy! The concept seems standard enough, but the lack of a gleaming costume is certainly a cliché-buster. Looks like he's just wearing a military uniform, when he's not in a business suit.

Well, okay, why not? At least he's still got all his clothes on, unlike DocSavage! A graver concern is the character's ability to read minds. That **seriously** scotches lots and lots of possible plots. All he has to do is

get near the big bad guy, read his mind, learn his nefarious plan, and then either exploit the (inevitable) weaknesses in the scheme himself, or alert the G-Men and let them scoop up the baddie. Mind-reading makes many plot concepts completely unworkable, doubly so if none of the league of bad guys, schemers, and masterminds **knows** that he can read minds. (This is a power that DC significantly under-utilizes when J'onn J'onz is the hero.)

Useful book reviews! Entertainin' in their own right, they are good guides regarding what to seek out...and perhaps what to leave alone.

Fun old Jeff MacNelly cartoon. I was a big fan of his "Shoe" comic strip; bought all the collections. Over the years, his art style on "Shoe" changed a bit, and, alas, not really for the better. His earlier strips had a kind of warmth that the latter strips lacked. The depiction of the characters became harder, colder, a bit crueler. The writing stayed largely the same: flippant, sarcastic, a trifle mean-spirited, but always truly funny.

re George Phillies on real old-time western gunfights -- and modern ones, too, alas -- yeah, accuracy is kinda stinko with handguns. In my old home-town, there was a shootout between a sheriff and a suspect, where they each emptied their guns at each other, and didn't score a single hit -- despite the fact that they happened to be in the front and back seat of the same car.



(The closest experience I've got is when we used to gather at the Art Building at SDSU and hold all-day dart gun fights. You know, the old kind with suction-cup tipped darts. We had some really fine times spronging at each other, missing far more often than hitting!)

Robert Cepeda's cartoon is, of course, a punnishing delight! Brad Foster's cartoon is also fun, and so terrifly true! We are all cucumbers with anxieties! And Marc Schirmeister's spots are always keen and kinky!

Quickie Book review: not long ago, I bought an e-book -- good and cheap, I think it ran \$1.99. Just about the first thing the protagonist says in the first-person narrative was, "This is my story. If you don't like it, you can stop reading right now." So...I did. I shrugged, and deleted the book. I hold it to be bad strategy to dare the reader not to read your book. My advice to young writers: don't do this!

///Uh, I think you must have temporary brain freeze, or maybe it was just real late at nite when you wrote this letter, but I've been hyping the return of *Amazing Stories* as a print prozine for quite a while. In fact, I did a half page write-up/review of the first new print issue back in *Fadeaway* #56 on page 19, which include a pic of the mag's cover. In addition I mentioned the effort, including the original Kickstarter campaign in several issues of *Tightbeam* back when I was the editor of that zine.

You can learn lots of details about the rebirth by going to their website at amazingstories.com.

Brain Boy was a remarkable comic book series. I don't remember very many other comic heroes who used psionic abilities to handle their adventures. The writer of the series was able to turn out exciting and interesting stories that took into account his mental powers and still created situations that always challenged him. Writing stories about a person with super-human mental powers is probably not much more difficult than writing interesting stories about a character who has extraordinary super powers, but the *Brain Boy* tales were always carefully plotted and offered plenty of plot twists.

You can check out the series thru the Dark Horse archives volume, which is selling for discount prices on many book selling sites, including Amazon, and I also urge you to check out the two recent *Brain Boy* mini-series that Dark Horse put out in 2014 and 2016. Those issues are very cheap and I guarantee you will not be disappointed.

I liked the Shoe comic strip, but toward the end of his career (MacNelly died in 2000 at 53 years old, way too young in my opinion), he left most of the actual art on the strip to his assistant Chris Cassatt, which may account for your opinion about the shift in the way the strip's artwork felt to you.

Gee, I dunno if I would have Xed out a budding author's book just because he challenged the reader with the very first line. You haven't even given the guy the chance to show whether his writing/story telling skills are good or bad. This harkens back to some of the stone age SF stories that started with I-am-sure-no-one-reading-this-will-believe-the-incredible-events-I-am-about-to-relate. I was always willing to give those guys a chance to relate some of the incredible events before passing any kind of judgment on the material.///



Nic Farey fareynic@gmail.com

Thanks as always Bob! I found the 'Brain Boy' piece especially interesting, as this was a comic-book superhero I hadn't been aware of, and it got me thinking about "superheroes" who went unmasked and uncostumed, and there aren't that many, are there? John Constantine is about the first that comes to mind, but there was also the "Kon-El" 2004 version of Superboy who was portrayed in jeans and t-shirt, the latter of which admittedly had the big red 'S' on it. The Phantom Stranger ought to be another, despite the classic Neal Adams representation which suggests he is masked, whereas "officially" it's supposed to be the brim of his hat that shades his eyes from view.

There were plenty who were/are masked but not "costumed" as such: the Spirit, Sandman (Wesley Dodds), Green Hornet, the Question, Mr. A, Rorschach, to name a few, although arguably none on that list are "super" heroes in that they don't have transhuman or metagenic powers.

I'd contend that the British comic strip hero Garth should be considered "super" given his inordinate physical strength as well as having what could be seen as mystical abilities (including time travel and the ability to enter the otherworldly realm of his eternal lover, the goddess Astra).

Good arrers!

///There are almost no comic book heroes with extraordinary powers that do not wear some kind of distinctive costume. I don't think the re-re-revamped Superboy really qualifies, since he always wore the same T-shirt with that big red letter S on the front, which makes it a distinctive costume in my opinion.

I would grant that Garth has super powers (he's at least stronger than a dozen ordinary humans), but he is properly speaking a comic *strip* hero, not spawned by or residing in comic *books*. If we include comic strips then the field is open to such characters as Invisible Scarlet O'Neil, Popeye, and Maximo the Amazing Superman (alho technically I suppose Maximo only appeared in Big Little Books). I think a good case could be made for Alley Oop and Felix the Cat as well. There are probably others.

Dipping into the realm of the weird, I think that two early comic book heroes published by Centaur qualify as super beings without costumes. The Eye was basically a giant floating eye with disintegrating beams and other remarkable powers, including speech (don't ask!), and Speed Centaur, who was a real life actual centaur living in New York City who went around solving crimes and fighting bad guys. These characters were introduced around 1939 and were gone by the end of 1940. They ended when Centaur Comics went out of business.

I wonder if the fact that John Constantine always has a cigarette in his mouth qualifies as a costume? Maybe not; I suppose that falls under the Distinctive Peculiarities file.///

Ray Palm raypalmx@gmail.com

ThanX for *Fadeaway* #59. I enjoyed the article by Edwin L. Murray about the Brain Boy comic book series. While familiar with other Dell comic book characters like Space Man and Nukla I never had the chance to read BB's adventures.

There was a comment that all the covers of Brain Boy featured him flying except issue #2. I agree that at first BB looks like he's running down the stairway at the soldiers below. But taking a second look at the perspective it seems he's up higher than the soldiers as if he's leaping from or flying down the stairs. Then again the stairway behind him is at a natural angle and suddenly it pitches forward.



I prefer my superheroes in plainclothes. Some costumes are more for display than utility especially with the "super babes" that young male fans (and comic book creators) prefer.

I've discovered that all the *Brain Boy* issues except the first one are available online over at Comics Books Plus: <https://comicbookplus.com/?cid=2490>. (All Hail The Public Domain!) . From what I've read I'll take the BB brain power version over that cinematic metaphysical train wreck "Lucy" by Luc Besson.

///I agree with you that it is possible that Brain Boy is actually flying in the cover art on issue #2, however the scene itself with the stone stairs in the backdrop makes it difficult to determine. To me it looks like he is leaping from one of the higher steps toward the armed soldiers in the foreground, but then again, he could be flying.

I agree that some of the costumed female super heroes these days are designed specifically as eye candy for the male reader. I am reminded of a Calvin & Hobbes cartoon where the pair are discussing the situation and Hobbs wonders if the super power of the female hero Calvin was reading was the ability to get into that tiny costume. Calvin said they could all do that. My opinion for most of the costumed super heroines these days is that if they exhaled suddenly they would suddenly be half naked.

Thanks for the notice about the comicbookplus website. For golden age material in the public domain you might also want to check out <https://digitalcomicmuseum.com///>

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

Your review of *Amazing* was very interesting. Seldom indeed do we see reviews of prozines, let alone fanzine reviews. Asking for more money is indeed an interesting outcome, though they do appear to have an explanation as to how it will be spent.

I do not recall ever seeing *Brain Boy* comics, though it came out well after I had moved to reading SF novels. I was vaguely aware that suddenly comics were from a different publishing house, and that their prices

had gone up from ten cents. There did appear to be a problem with power escalation here, but the series ended first. Why did it end? Sales? Loss of lead author? The lack of a costume was indeed novel, so far as I can remember.

Your review of “A Guide for Murdered Children” was interesting. What was the point of the first 30 pages? Might it have made more sense if it were re-read? “Crossing Over” does sound to do a realistic treatment of what for many people would be a serious challenge. I vaguely recall reading “Vulcan’s Hammer” when it came out, but can’t say that I recall it clearly.

I do recall Traveller when it came out. Several people got as far as trying to roll up characters. After much rolling of dice and consulting of tables, they were almost done, when the character *died*, at which point you had to start over again. This “feature” did not make the product very attractive to potential players. In addition, the universe seemed a bit limiting in terms of the sorts of adventures that you could have. The Hugo awards have certainly changed a bit with time. Apparently there are no longer any good male SF creators, since for the past several years most Hugo awards went to women. I do not care about the sex of the person getting the award, but at some point you might wonder if someplace there is a teeny bit of bias. Perhaps. Perhaps not.

///Naw, fanzine reviews of prozines are not that rare, altho they seem to be much less common near the end of this new decade of this new century than in times past. I only hope that the new *Amazing Stories* will manage to survive and establish a strong readership base.

There is no clear answer as to why *Brain Boy* folded after six issues. Distribution was not the problem; Dell had handed their own primary distribution for many decades and got the comic into all the places that carried comic books. By the time it came out all the comics had gone to a twelve cent cover price, (or fifteen cents, in the case of the Gold Key titles). If you would like to view a few issues and see why people are still enthusiastic about the character you can check out some numbers posted on the web at this URL--

<https://comicbookplus.com/?cid=2490>

Traveler was a fatally flawed game system so far as I am concerned. Space travel had to be in real time, which meant it took the characters years, sometimes lots of years, to go from one planet or star system to another. The combat system was a mess, with, for example, a saber doing almost as much damage as an energy beam weapon would. Some laws of physics applied, but then again, ha ha, a lot didn’t. Space ships sometimes maneuvered like air craft, while gravity fields weren’t really covered at all. It all made for a game that wasn’t much fun, despite the people who wrote the adventure modules coming up with a number of very interesting scenarios.

I don’t necessarily think there is any particular bias about the gender of the people who appear on the Hugo ballot each year, but there are a lot more female writers out there than in the past, and a lot more readers are nominating works that appear in pixel format instead of/or along with print versions. The e-book format is generally less expensive than print with allows a broader range of people, particularly younger people on a limited budget, to read more material. This skews the nomination process and the voting even more to younger, newer readers than ever before, and a lot of them are impressed by the writing style of the female writers.///



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

I read *Fadeaway* #59 and here is my reaction. As usual, a varied one depending upon the issues that grabbed my interest

Edwin Murray’s article on *Brain Boy* caught my interest; and I could see why it was popular even though Dell was selling their comics section and turning out the light. Most superhero comics, with all those muscles, appeal to jocks. That comic appealed to the Geeks – which we are. The superpowers were psi powers, which didn’t require the normal over-muscled body because they were mental powers. There was another sign the writer of the comic was appealing to intelligence: he did some characterization beyond who could beat up who. I am wondering if the only change *Brain Boy* might need to flourish in the world today would be to make him grungier. Grunge is in – especially among geeks, who never had any fashion sense to begin with.

Thus, I agree with Edwin Murray. However, I have to disagree with your review of *Crossing Over*, Bob. I have seen married couples who fought all the time. As to why they remained married, who knows? It is true many marriages where fighting is commonplace end in divorce. However, other couples put up with it till death do them part; and a few can't conceive of life without lots of 'argumentation.' Would they stop arguing to raise a less than abled daughter? Sometimes, yes, sometimes, no. In any event, a couple who argues all the time is not an anomaly. No. in my experience, it's a couple who doesn't argue who's an anomaly.

We go to the letters now. The first is Jefferson Swycaffer's. Am I arguing against his letter like couples argue? You be the judge. To me, while *Traveler* may have been an awful role playing game, like Jefferson says, it inspired Jefferson to write several decent enough novels mixing an everyday future and space opera; so the game wasn't a complete loss.

George Phillies, on the other hand, complains about something else, i.e., the size of the MIT Science Fiction Society library. I remember doing research in it in 1972. I was compiling a bibliography of A.E. Van Vogt's work for a Masters in Library Science. Don't ask! I agree the library was small. While sufficient for my purposes, and not filled up quite yet, I could see where it was on its way. Especially, given the recent boom in SF literature. I hope MIT officials relent because, to a great extent, science fiction goes hand-in-hand with science.

Bob, in answering George Phillies letter, you alight on the fact many have beliefs unbased on fact. While I freely admit that beliefs about Cryptokitties are based on hopes, beliefs vary in their amenability to facts. When the crash comes, Cryptokitties will be deader than a doornail. The facts will be overwhelming. On the other hand, conspiracy theories may be impenetrable to facts. I suspect some people still believe that Hillary Clinton tortured kids in the basement of a pizza parlor called Comet Ping Pong. Those true believers presumed those who failed to find even a basement were part of the conspiracy.

'Argumentation' again. Louis Desy, Jr. believes that Disney will let Marvel's comics fail and the movies based on its characters limp along. I doubt that very much. For now, wouldn't Disney be killing the goose that lays the golden egg? Films based on Marvel's characters remain money cows. There is a ready made audience for the movies and comics: old farts who became ape about the comics as kids, and teens and twenty some-things who have made the movies into box office gold. It wouldn't do to kill the Marvel Universe.

While I disagree with Louis Desy on that one issue, I agree with Bill Plott on another issue. Stories can be too formulaic. If they are carbon copies, even action thrillers, like the Spider, can become a bore. Of course, that you're using a formula doesn't mean that you have to make each story a carbon copy of the previous one. In fact, I am wondering whether Tolstoy took the formula of "Little Red Riding Hood" and used it to write *War and Peace*. ...Maybe not.

Being too formulaic is not the only problem with novels or short stories either. My wife Heidi gave up on reading romances several decades ago. The Harlequins, she found too gooey and brainless. On the other hand, the historical romances, she found outright unpleasant because they were pockmarked with S&M. As for myself, I think Gay sex will be the next big yawn. The only reason to multiply such scenes ad infinitum is if you're actually Gay. Of course, others, like, Rob Imes are never bored no matter what they're reading.

I have another comment on Rob Imes' letter, where he discusses the price of castaway novels sold in libraries. They sell very cheaply for two very simple reasons. First, they don't have to pay for the books; and, second, whatever space they give to displaying them, they have long since paid for it.

Let me end this way. I'm anxious to see the next ish. I wonder what your readers will say about *Brain Boy*. Probably not as much as they said about *Buckaroo Banzai*, which sounds like a terrible movie your readers would love. On the other hand, *Brain Boy* sounds too intelligently written for your readers to love.

///As indicated in the article, *Brain Boy* had two successful mini series from Dark Horse a few years ago. My opinion is that sales were sufficient to keep the character going, but Dark Horse, like many comic publishers these days, seems to be pushing media tie-ins or is more interested in resurrecting characters that they had big successes with a few years ago. I would love to see the character come back again with the same type of stories and the excellent art those two mini-series delivered, but the current comic market often seems like shifting quicksand to me, so who know what will happen.

If you care to actually read a few of the original *Brain Boy* comic book stories, you will find them posted for free on the internet at this URL: <https://comicbookplus.com/?cid=2490>

Uh, Pat Patterson wrote that review of "Crossing over", not me. He is clearly credited. The problem posed by the novel was the extraordinary situation of trying to escape the chaos of a collapsing civilization while also trying to care for a severely developmentally stunted daughter. Pat concluded that the author of the book did not do an adequate job of handling the situation, or facing the realistic problems that kind of situation would create. It's an intriguing concept, a real challenge for even an accomplished writer, but it would seem that the author of that particular book was not able to handle it well.

So far as Disney and Marvel Comics, I don't think Disney particularly cares what happens to Marvel Comics, so long as they don't lose a lot of money, and so long as they can occasionally come up with a few new characters or story plots that can be successfully transferred into motion pictures. As I said, most of the Disney Marvel movies seem to deal with the characters as they were established in the late 1960s/early 1970s. That's what the audiences seem to want, and since profits are what the Disney movie division aims for, we will undoubtedly see lots more of the same, despite the occasional movie devoted to a "new" character like Ms. Marvel.

Library sales around this part of the world ask real money for the material they are selling, even tho the majority of the books they are selling come from donations made by library patrons, with maybe about a quarter of the stuff being actual library discards. My local library, for example, has a four day book sale, where only established Library Friends & Donors are invited the first day, with hardback books priced at five to ten bucks each. The next day the prices go down to two bucks a copy, then the third and fourth day the prices are a dollar each for hardbacks. The price of paperbacks never goes below fifty cents. The prices for kiddie picture books fall to fifty cents on the final day, which is when most of those actually get sold. Considering that yard sales, church bazaars, and flea markets are selling hardbacks for a quarter to fifty cents each, and paperbacks for a quarter each, the library sales always wind up with tons of left over material.

In past times I used to speak to some of the people running these events and suggest a more realistic sales model, but except for a couple of instances, everybody else kept telling me that they couldn't change things, that This-Is-The-Way-We-Have-Always-Done-It, and the boxes and boxes of left over stuff at the close of each sale event is just a temporary anomaly. With the growing shift to e-books this scenario will just keep getting worse.///

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



Front Cover---from the BarkaArts free access website, but no artist is credited

Dave Coverly---from his **Speed Bump** comic strip---page 13

Marc Schirmeister---37, 38, 39, 40

Steve Stiles---page 36

Clip Art From The Internet---14, 15, 16, 42