

Lincroft-Holmdel Science Fiction Club
Club Notice - 2/6/85 -- Vol. 3, No. 31

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

Unless otherwise stated, all meetings are on Wednesdays at noon.
LZ meetings are in LZ 3A-206; HO meetings are in HO 2N-523.

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>
02/20	HO: ROGER CORMAN--HOLLYWOOD'S WILD ANGEL (video)
02/20	LZ: THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS by Robert Heinlein
03/13	HO: DOWNBELOW STATION by C. J. Cherryh
03/13	LZ: DRAGON'S EGG by Robert Forward
04/03	HO: Book Swap (HO 2N-529)
04/03	LZ: HELLICONIA SPRING by Brian Aldiss
04/24	HO: CIRCUS OF DR. LAO by Charles G. Finney
04/24	LZ: MISSION OF GRAVITY by Hal Clement
05/15	LZ: DOOR INTO FIRE by Diane Duane
06/05	LZ: TACTICS OF MISTAKE by Gordon R. Dickson

HO Chair is Mark Leeper, HO 1E-412 (834-2954). LZ Chair is Rob Mitchell, LZ 1B-306 (576-6106). LZ Librarian is Lance Larsen, LZ 3C-219 (576-2668). HO Librarian is Tim Schroeder, HO 2G-427A (949-5866). Jill-of-all-trades is Evelyn Leeper, HO 1B-437A (834-4723).

1. My electronic address this week is ...ahuta!leeper; my phone number this week is 834-2657. These may even be permanent.

2. Further corrections due to porting software: The issue dated 1/30/85 should have been labeled Vol. 3, No. 29; the issue dated 2/01/85 should have been labeled Vol. 3, No. 30. This issue should be dated 2/6/85 and be labelled Vol. 3, No. 31. [--ecl]

3. Given the paucity of nominations, it hardly seems worth it to print, but here are the results of the Dramatic Presentation Straw Poll:

Nominations	Title
3	STAR TREK III--THE SEARCH FOR SPOCK
3	2010: ODYSSEY TWO
2	GHOSTBUSTERS
2	1984
2	RED DAWN
2	THREADS

Also mentioned (with one nomination each) were CONAN THE DESTROYER, COUNTDOWN TO LOOKING GLASS (TVM), DUNE, EWOK ADVENTURE, FIRESTARTER, LAST STARFIGHTER, ROMANCING THE STONE, and STARMAN.
[--ecl]

*****Presorted*****
* Leeper, Evelyn C. *
* 114A HO 1B-437A *

Mark Leeper
HO 1E-412 834-2657
...{ihnp4,houxn,hogpd}!ahuta!leeper

FRONTERA by Lewis Shiner
Baen Books, 1984, \$2.95.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

This is a book has a lot of promise, but it just doesn't deliver. The premise is good: the first permanent Mars settlement--Frontera--was cut off from Earth when all the governments and social order in general fell apart back on Earth. Now, several years later, the corporations have picked up the pieces and send a "rescue mission" to Frontera.

The scenario for the transition from government to corporation rule on Earth does not bear close inspection, particularly in the USSR, but little time is spent on Earth, so this could be glossed over. And Shiner does have a good writing style, capable of holding your interest with realistic descriptions of life in the Martian colony. But unlike Occam, he multiplies entities (in this case, premises) needlessly. The children born to the colonists on Mars are mutants who have set up their own laboratory in a cave, where they may or may not have developed faster-than-light travel/matter transmission. None of the main characters is what could be described as normal, and this soon starts to look like "funny-hat-ism," where everyone is identified by the funny hat they wear. In many ways it reminded me of Frederik Pohl's Starburst ("The Gold at Starbow's End"), with its gratuitous (in my opinion) mysticism. I didn't like Starburst either.

It's a pity. If Shiner had just stuck to the idea of the stranded Martian colony and how they survived, without all this FTL mumbo-jumbo, he could have had a great story.

Mercury Capsules - February 5, 1985

"Mercury Capsules": SF review column, edited by Paul S R Chisholm. Appears in the "Lincroft-Holmdel SF Club Notice".

A medium for quick reviews of anything of interest in the world of science fiction. I'll pass along anything (not slanderous or scatological) without nasty comments. I prefer to get reviews by electronic mail: send to pa!psc from the AT&T-IS ENS systems in Lincroft; hocse!lznv!psc, houxn!lznv!psc, or hogpd!lznv!psc from everywhere else. If that's impossible, I'm at LZ 1D-212, 576-2374.

• "Overdrawn at the Memory Bank": short story, John Varley.

A data entry clerk named Fingal has just taken a vacation in a lion. That is, he had his consciousness transferred to a lion's brain, to enjoy the different point of view it gave him. The next morning, he wakes up in his own body . . . well, no, he doesn't wake up in his own body. Said body seems to have been, um, ah, well, misplaced. It'll be back just as soon as the management finds it. Until then, Fingal's consciousness is being held in a computer simulation. Hey, Fingal: let's be careful in there.

Computers are boring places to be in, but Varley's story isn't. This is a tour de force of living inside a computer, as rich (for its length) as Verner Vinge's True Names. A nice little story.

Paul S. R. Chisholm

• "Overdrawn at the Memory Bank": teleplay, loosely based on a story by John Varley, un-written for the boob tube by Corinne Jacker, re-produced by Doug Williams, mis-directed by Geoffrey Haines-Styles and Robert Lantos, broadcast by PBS as part of their "American Playhouse" series (was there an American involved anywhere?); 1985.

"You didn't like it?" I didn't like it.

Apollonia James (Linda Griffiths) is a "doppeller" technician; she oversees the computers that put people's minds into animal bodies for the purposes of relaxation (see also above). She's fascinated by (read, "infatuated with") one of her charges. Aram Fingal (Raul Julia) is a rebellious, bored computer operator for one of the gigantic, evil corporations that rule the Earth. He's hacked his way into a secret file in the main computer. Instead of monitoring data, he's watching "Cinemas" (such as "Casablanca"). He's caught, and sent by his psychiatrist to "compulsory doppelgänger". His "doppel" is ended prematurely when the animal he's in is threatened; his consciousness is transferred to a storage cube, prior to being put back in his body. Said body seems to have been, um, ah, well, misplaced. The mean, fat, nasty chairman of the corporation (David C. Moore) wants to just dispose of what's left of Fingal, but James persuades him to let her monitor Fingal in the computer while the search for the body goes on. It's a race against time, if Fingal can be put back into his body before his data cube runs out, and without zapping Apollonia's mind. Meanwhile, Fingal has wrapped a "Casablanca" look around the simulation he sees. There, "Rick" (also portrayed by Raul Julia) tries to convince him to strike out at the mean nasties from his new position of strength (the computer). The chairman doesn't like that, and sends his persona into the machine (as "the fat man" of Casablanca).

In the story, everything takes place inside the computer (except for the beginning and end). The "race against time" tension has replaced a very subtle and interesting effect involving the relative speeds of computers, human minds, and human bodies. Apollonia (her last name's been changed) doesn't appear "in the flesh" until the end of the story; in the teleplay, she's the narrator, and we meet her before Fingal. The bit with Casablanca wasn't in the story at all; it's nice, but overdone (and then some) in the teleplay.

Mostly, though, I disliked the evil corporation element that permeated the teleplay. I wasn't fond of the pseudo-technical garbage, either ("negative energy surge"), or the overt romance between Fingal and Apollonia. I suspect the teleplaywright has never read any SF, except for 1984 (and possibly Varley's story). What we have here is decent "sci fi" (relatively speaking), but lousy SF.

Paul S. R. Chisholm

⊗ The Peace War: novel, Vernor Vinge, 1984.

World War III has been prevented, or at least aborted. Are the world's problems over? No.

A California-based military contractor discovered how to enclose an object in a "bobble", a force screen that nothing can enter . . . and nothing can leave. Missile sites, missiles, Vandenberg Air Base, and most of the world's military hardware has been "bobbed". After a series of plagues breaks out, decimating the unbobbed survivors, the self-proclaimed "Peace Authority" lays down its law: no motorized vehicles, no biological experimentation, no large energy sources (needed to generate bobbles). Violators will find themselves trapped in the middle of a silver sphere.

It is fifty years later. Feudal states make up what used to be the United States. In central California, "Tinkers" have continued the micro electronics industry, becoming a power in the area, as they and "the Peace" examine each other as possible foes. The fugitive inventor of "bobbles" probes for weaknesses in the organization that destroyed the world he'd known. A brilliant, terminally malnourished boy runs from slavery.

And the silver spheres that cover the world turn out to not be quite what their creators thought they were.

This is a pretty good book. Vinge has a bad habit of changing the rules (or appearing to) in the middle of the book. Worse, he changes the point of the story, little by little, until the characters are not going in the direction you thought they were. The characters are pretty flat, but not uninteresting; I didn't have any trouble keeping track of them. The ending was better than I expected. Vinge left some loose ends, but life is like that, and he doesn't have his characters simply live happily ever after.

The real strength of The Peace War is Vinge's treasure trove of ideas. All by themselves, the bobbles are neat. The micro electronics are even better. The author of True Names is back, and spewing with inventions.

This is a story of a revolution, as good a one as I've read since The Moon is a Harsh Mistress. Not highly recommended, but recommended.

Paul S. R. Chisholm

⊗ Moreta: Dragonlady of Pern: novel, Anne McCaffrey, 1983.

PERNophiles beware! You might have very warm memories of your first visit to Pern when you read the Dragonriders trilogy. Unfortunately, Moreta is a poor opportunity for a revisit. You will be intruding on a bunch of strangers who will not be doing much of interest and whom you will probably not care much about. I felt like cutting my visit short, but I stayed to the end to be polite.

John Jetzt

Construction project, Atomic Bomb

The following paper is taken from The Journal of Irreproducible Results, Volume 25/Number 4/1979. P.O. Box 234, Chicago Heights, Illinois 60411. Subscriptions: 1 year for \$3.70

A. INTRODUCTION

Worldwide controversy has been generated recently from several court decisions in the United States which have restricted popular magazines from printing articles which describe how to make an atomic bomb. The reason usually given by the courts is that national security would be compromised if such information were generally available. But, since it is commonly known that all of the information is publicly available in most major metropolitan libraries, obviously the court's officially stated position is covering up a more important factor; namely, that such atomic devices would prove too difficult for the average citizen to construct. The United States courts cannot afford to insult the vast majorities by insinuating that they do not have the intelligence of a cabbage, and thus the "official" press releases claim national security as a blanket restriction.

The rumors that have unfortunately occurred as a result of widespread misinformation can (and must) be cleared up now, for the construction project this month is the construction of a thermonuclear device, which will hopefully clear up any misconceptions you might have about such a project. We will see how easy it is to make a device of your very own in ten easy steps, to have and hold as you see fit, without annoying interference from the government or the courts.

The project will cost between \$5,000 and \$30,000 dollars, depending on how fancy you want the final product to be. Since last week's column, "Let's Make a Time Machine", was received so well in the new step-by-step format, this month's column will follow the same format.

B. CONSTRUCTION METHOD

1. First, obtain about 50 pounds (110 kg) of weapons grade Plutonium at your local supplier (see NOTE 1). A nuclear power plant is not recommended, as large quantities of missing Plutonium tends to make plant engineers unhappy. We suggest that you contact your local terrorist organization, or perhaps the Junior Achievement in your neighborhood.
2. Please remember that Plutonium, especially pure, refined Plutonium, is somewhat dangerous. Wash your hands with soap and warm water after handling the material, and don't allow your children or pets to play in it or eat it. Any left over Plutonium dust is excellent as an insect repellent. You may wish to keep the substance in a lead box if you can find one in your local junk yard, but an old coffee can will do nicely.

3. Fashion together a metal enclosure to house the device. Most common varieties of sheet metal can be bent to disguise this enclosure as, for example, a briefcase, a lunch pail, or a Buick. Do not use tinfoil.
4. Arrange the Plutonium into two hemispherical shapes, separated by about 4 cm. Use rubber cement to hold the Plutonium dust together.
5. Now get about 100 pounds (220 kg) of trinitrotoluene (TNT). Gelignite is much better, but messier to work with. Your helpful hardware man will be happy to provide you with this item.
6. Pack the TNT around the hemisphere arrangement constructed in step 4. If you cannot find Gelignite, feel free to use TNT packed in with Play-dough or any modeling clay. Colored clay is acceptable, but there is no need to get fancy at this point.
7. Enclose the structure from step 6 into the enclosure made in step 3. Use a strong glue such as "Crazy Glue" to bind the hemisphere arrangement against the enclosure to prevent accidental detonation which might result from vibration or mishandling.
8. To detonate the device, obtain a radio controlled (RC) servo mechanism, as found in RC model airplanes and cars. With a modicum of effort, a remote plunger can be made that will strike a detonator cap to effect a small explosion. These detonator caps can be found in the electrical supply section of your local supermarket. We recommend the "Blast-O-Matic" brand because they are no deposit-no return.
9. Now hide the completed device from the neighbors and children. The garage is not recommended because of high humidity and the extreme range of temperatures experienced there. Nuclear devices have been known to spontaneously detonate in these unstable conditions. The hall closet or under the kitchen sink will be perfectly suitable.
10. Now you are the proud owner of a working thermonuclear device! It is a great ice-breaker at parties, and in a pinch, and be used for national defense.

C. THEORY OF OPERATION

The device basically works when the detonated TNT compresses the Plutonium into a critical mass. The critical mass then produces a nuclear chain reaction similar to the domino chain reaction (discussed in this column, "Dominos on the March", March, 1968). The chain reaction then promptly produces a big thermonuclear reaction. And there you have it, a 10 megaton explosion!

D. NEXT MONTH'S COLUMN

In next month's column, we will learn how to clone your neighbor's wife in six easy steps. This project promises to be an exciting weekend full of fun

and profit. Common kitchen utensils will be all you need. See you next month!

E. NOTES

1. Plutonium (Pu), atomic number 94, is a radioactive metallic element formed by the decay of Neptunium and is similar in chemical structure to Uranium, Saturnium, Jupiternium, and Marsium.

F. PREVIOUS MONTH'S COLUMNS

1. Let's Make Test Tube Babies! May, 1979
2. Let's Make a Solar System! June, 1979
3. Let's Make a Economic Recession! July, 1979
4. Let's Make an Anti-Gravity Machine! August, 1979
5. Let's Make Contact with an Alien Race! September, 1979

LEEPER FILM QUIZ #4 (Answers)

1. J.J. Adams
Answer: FORBIDDEN PLANET
2. Victor Barbicane
Answer: FROM THE EARTH TO THE MOON
3. Dr. Miles Bennell
Answer: INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS
4. Mitch Brenner
Answer: THE BIRDS
5. John Cabal
Answer: THINGS TO COME
6. Scott Carey
Answer: INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN
7. Andre Delambre
Answer: THE FLY
8. Jack Driscoll
Answer: KING KONG
9. John Ellman
Answer: THE WALKING DEAD
10. David Filby
Answer: THE TIME MACHINE
11. Dr. Heywood Floyd
Answer: 2001 or 2010
12. Jon Fredersen
Answer: METROPOLIS
13. Adam Hart
Answer: THE POWER
14. Pat Hendry
Answer: THE THING (1951)
15. Ernest Hubbs
Answer: PHASE IV
16. Prof. Oliver Lindenbrook
Answer: JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH
17. Freeman Lowell
Answer: SILENT RUNNING
18. Steve Martin
Answer: GODZILLA
19. Dr. Russell Marvin
Answer: EARTH VS. THE FLYING SAUCERS
20. Cal Meachum
Answer: THIS ISLAND EARTH
21. Miles Monroe
Answer: SLEEPER
22. Cora Peterson
Answer: FANTASTIC VOYAGE
23. Billy Pilgrim
Answer: SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE
24. Dave Randell
Answer: WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE

25. Dr. Matthew Roney
Answer: QUATERMASS AND THE PIT (FIVE MILLION YEARS TO EARTH)
26. Dr. Adam Royston
Answer: X THE UNKNOWN
27. Dr. Janos Rukh
Answer: THE INVISIBLE RAY
28. Steven Shorter
Answer: PRIVILEGE
29. Winston Smith
Answer: 1984
30. Dr. Stephen Sorensen
Answer: CRACK IN THE WORLD
31. Gideon Spillitt
Answer: MYSTERIOUS ISLAND
32. Dr. Brian Stanley
Answer: ISLAND OF TERROR
33. Dr. Jeremy Stone
Answer: ANDROMEDA STRAIN
34. Phillip Strock
Answer: MASTER OF THE WORLD
35. George Taylor
Answer: PLANET OF THE APES
36. Dr. Alexander Thorkel
Answer: DR. CYCLOPS
37. Dwight Towers
Answer: ON THE BEACH
38. Sylvia Van Buren
Answer: WAR OF THE WORLDS
39. Jason Webb
Answer: JOURNEY TO THE FAR SIDE OF THE SUN
40. Maple White
Answer: THE LOST WORLD
41. Gordon Zellaby
Answer: VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED