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Special Review Issue

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For this issue, I will comment on a selection of recently-acquired books and zines in the UFOROM library, both SF and forteana, giving you an idea of my reading habits.

Gardner, John. For Special Services. Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, NY 1982.

Yes, I'll admit I'm a James Bond fan. I have read all the James Bond novels, in sequence, and was hooked by the end of Casino Royale. For those of you who have never read a James Bond novel, and are content to view the movies, you should know that no movie, with the possible exception of Dr. No, bears any resemblance to the book. The books by Fleming are taut thrillers, and are excellent reading material. Markham's Colonel Sun is also quite good. Gardner's first effort, License Renewed, was a poor contribution to the series, although it did have its moments. For Special Services is somewhat better, and has more of the Fleming style in it. Gardner was criticized for his lack of knowledge about NORAD for this novel, and while I agree with the criticism, I don't think it really matters for the plot's advance. It appears that Bond's old adversary, Blafeld, is alive, and that SPECTRE is reforming. Bond falls into a perfect trap while trying to find out what's going on. The setting is novel: James Bond in Texas, and the story is good. Go get 'em, 007!

Brundell, Nigel and Boar, Roger. The World's Greatest UFO Mysteries. Octopus, London, 1983.

A book of remarkably poor quality, despite the interesting format. This is basically a collection of unrelated accounts of UFO cases, with the accuracy waxing and waning from page to page. As an introduction to the subject, it might be passable as a sensationalist venture.

Brandon, Victoria. Understanding Ghosts. Victor Gollancz, London, 1980.

I still don't understand them. Brandon's premise is that ghosts are some of those things we do not yet accept scientifically, and that they may be related to the human psyche. She does little to reflect on the implications of these phenomena, although she gets rather philosophical at some points, for no apparent reason.

Goldsmith, Donald and Owen, Tobias. The Search for Life in the Universe. Benjamin/Cummings, Don Mills, Ontario, 1980.

Hailed as the companion volume to Shkrovskii and Sagan's ETI book, this textbook does more than live up to its reputation. It is a very readable text giving all the necessary background for considering extraterrestrial intelligence. Its astronomy is excellent and understandable, and its UFO section is good, although it predictably finds nothing worthwhile to comment about. But I would nevertheless recommend that all serious ufologists read this book as a background for ETI. For those not interested in UFO's, read it anyway, because its presentation on life in the universe will teach you a great deal about this world we live in.

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Cohen, Daniel. Creatures From UFO's. Archway/Pocket Books, NY, 1979.

A children's book about UFO entities and other BEM's, of average quality. Cohen has several of these types of books out, and all are interchangeable.

Suvin, Darko, ed. Other Worlds, Other Stars. Berkley, NY, 1972.

I have been searching for this volume for several years, and finally found it. This is a collection of European science fiction, and includes several stories by Stanislaw Lem. Worth pursuing.

Green, Andrew. Ghost Hunting: A Practical Guide. Mayflower, Hertshire, 1976.

If you've ever wanted to know how to look for ghosts, this is the book to get. It lives up to its title, and tells you the details on how to search for those elusive denizens of the spirit world, with step-by-step instructions. Useful, I think.

Wallace, Irving, et al. The Book of Lists #2. Bantam, NY, 1981.

Well, why not?

Gardner, Martin. Science: Good, Bad and Bogus. Discus/Avon, Buffalo, NY, 1983.

This is yet another book by Gardner showing how ridiculous "pseudoscience" is. This collection of his writings covers the field from astrology to Uri Geller; one gets the terrible feeling that Gardner is patting himself on the back at the readers' expense. He cleverly explains why all "pseudoscience" is nonsense, and why conventional science is "good". Gardner's comments on "pseudoscience" are very useful in their critique of parapsychology, astrology, ufology, etc., but are immersed in a biased, derisive discourse that only clearly displays his closedminded attitude. He may be good at games, but he is one "scientific American" who loads the dice in his favor.

Wisner, Bill. Vanished-Without a Trace. Berkley, NY, 1977.

Berlitz, Charles. Without a Trace. Ballantine, NY, 1978.

Both of these are interchangeable, give errant details and are hack jobs. Next.

Rucker, Rudy. Spacetime Donuts. Ace, NY, 1981 and White Light. Ace, NY, 1980.

I bought White Light when it first came out, but never read it. This year, George Kriger (the famous composer/performer for the Ottawa Electronic Workshop) recommended I read some of Rucker's work. I bought Spacetime Donuts and read it, then I dug White Light out of a box and read it as well. I can now claim to have discovered a new writer worth reading. Of the two novels, White Light is the definite superior, while Spacetime Donuts represents the earlier, exploratory work. Donuts is about a future society where everything is run by a master computer. It becomes insane after a rather stoned hero takes the computer on a trip into infinity, and so the hero must save the world. While quite surrealistic in spots, it is nowhere near the quality of White Light, which sends us to infinity as well, but has a much more adventurous time of it. We meet the eccentric spirit of Einstein at the Hilbert Hotel, and travel the length, breadth and thickness of the strange world of Cimon, where ghosts live. How do you get a room at a hotel with an infinite number of rooms, that is filled with an infinite number of guests? The book is a mathematician's nightmare, full of hilarious visualizations of mathematical paradoxes, but throwing in a good deal of mysticism for good measure. Our hero makes friends with a giant cockroach and assorted talking inanimate objects as he is sent on a mission to help a seagull find God. Highly recommended.

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Hogan, James P. Inherit the Stars. Del Rey/Ballantine, NY, 1977.
The Gentle Giants of Ganymede. Del Rey/Ballantine, NY, 1978.
Giants' Star. Del Rey/Ballantine, NY, 1981.

This trilogy was also recommended to me by George Kriger. It is an excellent "hard-science" series concerning the contact of man by an extra-terrestrial race. In some parts, the scientific jargon is thick enough to slow the story, but it is probably how discoveries like the ones in the books will be made. A skeleton is found on the Moon. Anthropologists, chemists, physicists, zoologists and physiologists all share in figuring out just how it got there. Is the theory of evolution wrong? Why did the dinosaurs die out? And were the asteroids part of a large planet at one time? The stories represent an account of scientific progress and investigation into a perplexing problem, and the plot unfolds in a logical and interesting manner.

Chandler, Raymond. The Big Sleep
Trouble is My Business
The Little Sister
The Long Goodbye
Playback
(Various publishers)

Man, I like the way this guy wrote! Chandler's Philip Marlowe is the most hard-boiled of the hard-boiled school of detectives, in my opinion. His descriptions of details show that he had an incredible sense of the world. He wrote with a cynical eye and an acid pen, weaving stories and plots of pure genius through the seamy side of our culture. Great stuff.

Lawless, Ken. Real Extra-Terrestrials Don't Phone Home. Tribeca Communications, NY, 1982.

This clone of the "Real Men" series of books was expected, considering the torrent of books cashing in on the ET craze. The jokes and gags are of average quality, with none being exceptionally rememberable. And why wouldn't a real extraterrestrial phone home, you ask? Because a real one would land his craft, eat Cleveland, then take off without worrying about any dumb plants. You might just have a point, there.

Gunn, James, ed. The Road to Science Fiction
#1 From Gilgamesh to Wells
#2 From Wells to Heinlein
#3 From Heinlein to Here
#4 From Here to Forever
All: Mentor, NY, 1977 to 1982.

This is a four-volume, 2100-page set of books outlining the development of science fiction as an art form. Gunn reprints short stories and/or excerpts by practically every notable SF writer, tracing the style from early speculations by ancient writers to present "post-new-wave" writers. The detail of his effort is clear in that he takes 1 1/2 volumes to reach the "Golden Age". Originally, Gunn had planned only three volumes, and so the comprehensive index is at the end of volume 3. Volume 4 is the clean-up volume where he acknowledges writers he missed in the first three, and also brings the series more up to date. Included with each example of a writer's work is a short biography (in some cases an autobiography) and a bibliography of the writer's works. Also included is a Who's Who of SF, a list of SF award winners and a whole bunch of other stuff. If I were to teach SF, I'd use the series as textbooks. Great as an introduction to SF, it is also fine for the connoisseur as a review and history of the genre.

THE NEGLECTED SCIENCE OF UFO'S

A remarkable paper has appeared in the scientific literature concerning the curious phenomenon of unidentified flying objects. The authors are no other than the team of Jenny Randles and Peter Warrington, and the paper appeared in New Scientist, 10 February, 1983 pp. 380-381. Jenny had gotten herself into hot water with British UFO groups in the past because of her personal views on their actions; she was attacked feverishly in ufozines, and entered into a running debate to vindicate herself. The paper is remarkable not only for its content but also for its publication at all. The famous "Cutty Sark" paper by James Oberg, which ridiculed the mere idea of ufology as a serious science, appeared in New Scientist three years ago (V. 84 p. 102). Perhaps the magazine is apologizing; this new article shows that ufology might be "respectable" after all.

Peter and Jenny raise some very interesting points and present some fascinating results in their paper. They first observe that ufology is "one of the world's most remarkable systems of belief", and suggest that studies of the phenomenon should be made by more sociologists. One sociologist's study showed that "the average lifetime of a ufologist is two years, after which the individual faces a "crisis point". Some become disillusioned and drift away; others "undergo the reappraisal needed to rationalize their approach". According to the authors, the reappraisal includes the rejection of most previous UFO data as superficial and lacking tone content. They further postulate that UFO's are natural phenomena.

Before I go further in this review, I'd like to examine some of these speculations. I agree that a UFO researcher reaches a crisis point, but that two years is just an arbitrary guess. This point is dependent on several things, such as UFO activity in the researcher's area, the researcher's level of interest, peer group, his or her background, education and emotional makeup. From my own personal experience, I took 1 1/2 years to reach my crisis point, while I know of some researchers who show no signs after 5 years. For me, it was a realization that most UFO reports are not really unusual at all, but form a constant "background" above which a sparse few cases might shine. Most UFO data is difficult to assess, and while some cases are very interesting, they offer little or no clues to their explanations. Their narrative content can be very high, but their true value may be negligible.

Peter and Jenny go on to suggest a renaming of UFO's as "UAP's" (for Unidentified Aerial Phenomena), for those that have strong data supporting their observation. I disagree that a renaming is required; I earlier commented in a SGJ that one astronomer recently proposed a renaming: TOPA (Transient Optical Phenomena of the Atmosphere), and the idea had little merit. After they suggest the new name, they site recent important UFO research, such as that by Rutledge, Persinger and Lawson, and the paper falls flat. Readers will remember my review of Rutledge's book, Project Identification, and that I wasn't crazy about it. Even a cursory skim of the book will show that Rutledge's chase after nocturnal lights was an exercise in futility. What is perhaps more puzzling is that while Peter and Jenny state that UFO's are natural phenomena, Rutledge states in his book that UFO's are extraterrestrial craft.

Peter and Jenny further cite Michael Persinger's studies of UFO's as a piezo-electric phenomenon, and Brian Brady's "verification" that subjecting quartz to pressure will cause the ionization of air. They suggest that there are correlations between UFO sighting locations and active fault zones. Both

Persinger and Brady were on the recent NOVA episode which dealt with UFO's, explaining why the Stephen, Minnesota, case was probably caused by piezoelectricity. I disagreed then, and I still do; present piezoelectric theory falls well short of proving that UFO phenomena can be produced by crustal stresses, although it probably contributes in some fashion. My observation is that there was no significant seismic activity anywhere near Stephen, Minnesota, near that time.

This leaves Lawson's studies on hypnosis of UFO abductees. This, of course, ventures into a purely subjective part of the phenomenon, dealing directly with accounts of UFO experiences. Lawson's most recent findings show a "100 per cent correlation between certain modes of abduction imaginery and the way the subject was born". If born naturally, the UFO abductee describes transport along a tunnel; if born by caesarian section, the UFO abductee describes a "bright explosion of light". This is a very fascinating finding. If the results can be verified and improved upon, they may be an important contribution to sleep and dream research, and also to research into human self-concept. This shows what Peter and Jenny intended to show at the beginning of the article: that the UFO phenomenon should be studied, and may hold surprises for the social sciences, something I have been harping on for several years. But the physical sciences are still at a loss, and need to examine the field and their own approach to the field more closely before progress can be made.

This paper is easily the most important scientific contribution to ufology in recent years. Bravo, Jenny and Peter!

Further Reviews

Sagnier, Thierry The IFO Report, 1983. Avon Books

This is a brand new SF/mystery novel about the government covering up a disastrous encounter with extraterrestrials, and the newspaper reporters who try to uncover the story. The style of writing has several characters, each with seemingly unconnected plots, who engage in very dull day-to-day routines until they begin to get intermingled by the leak of a government report. Though intended to be realistic, the endless idle chit-chats at lunches and dinners is too contrived and annoying. Sagnier name-drops enough to show he did some homework, mentioning Frank Drake, William Proxmine and the Center for UFO Studies, but errs here and there with his facts. His Drake equation varies between "4" and several million, whereas it really has a lower bound of 10^{-4} or so. Excusing him for being an optimist, his book does have some merit in its interesting premise: contact with extraterrestrials will destroy the world's economy and most societies, so contact must be prevented. This is a curious idea, and probably holds water in somebody's warped bureaucratic mind. It's a reaction to contact that I hadn't really thought of or encountered before, but it wouldn't surprise me a bit. All in all, this is a good contribution to UFO fiction.

Fanzine Review

GAG #1 published by Red River Book Shop, 348 Cumberland Ave, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

A new comics fanzine has appeared in Winnipeg, and I suppose it is my duty to tell you (I also promised James Hall, in a weak moment). GAG is a short, photocopied zine brought to you by the guys at Red River, and is free to those who want it. Its epistemological viewpoint is remarkable, encompassing only a small fraction of the comic fandom milieu, yet going to existential and

spiritual limits in its introspective quest for identity. It also gives a review of five comics, and James has an article on the Church of the Subgenius. A true literary landmark, the likes of which I have not ever encountered.

BOOK REVIEW

Seers, Stan. UFO's: The Case for Scientific Myopia. Vantage Press, NY, 1983

I have such mixed feelings about this book, I review it reluctantly and with a significant amount of concern. One of my pleasures is finding a personal account of ufology by a ufologist, complete with anecdotes and reflections on the phenomenon. In this way, I can compare my own feelings and adventures that I have had while pursuing my research. Seers' book is such a book, written in an autobiographic style by an Australian ufologist who began his involvement with UFO's in the 1950's. Seers tells of some early meetings of the Queensland Flying Saucer Bureau, their successes, investigations, run-ins with the RAAF, their infighting and their problems with other groups. All this is related in a light, informal manner, interspersed with comments and letters by other people such as Father William Gill, Dr. James McDonald and George Adamski.

But the book puzzles me. Seers tells how he encountered his share of crackpots, and how he tolerated their antics. He tells how he carefully investigates sightings, and how 90 percent of all cases can be explained. One gets the early impression that Seers has studied the phenomenon a great deal during his twenty-five years of activity, and understands it well. But why, then, would he devote an entire chapter to praise Adamski? Seers talks of a kindly older man, not wanting money beyond airfare and accommodation, patiently putting up with ridicule for his trouble. Seers states that "prior to August, 1952, (Adamski) had not heard of flying saucers". This is not quite true; Adamski had even earlier published a pamphlet on spiritual well-being being necessary to meet the masters. I find it odd that in one chapter, Seers can describe contactees as victims of "wishful thinking", and then openly accept Adamski's story. Admittedly, I never did get to meet Adamski, but I am sure he was a likeable sort of guy, and was quite sincere. Most ufologists I know, however, do acknowledge Adamski was a charlatan. It is Seers' privilege to disagree on this point, and I respect this.

Seers makes some other errors that I find disturbing. He repeatedly comments on the famous Trinidad photographs, saying they were taken off the coast of Venezuela, even including them in the book. But the photographs, of course, were taken off Trindade, 3000 air miles from Trinidad, in the South Atlantic. He also consistently changes the gender of Aime Michel, calling him Aimee throughout the book.

The most curious view presented is not an error at all, but rather a criticism of the Condon Report. Ufologists agree that the Report was biased and inaccurate, and that Condon's own feelings greatly influenced the final recommendations. The now-famous Low Memorandum clearly showed how Condon never intended to have the investigations be objective. And, despite the negative conclusions, many cases were labelled as "unknown" in the index. Among these unknowns is a case numbered "22", from North-Central U.S.A. Seers comments on case '22', telling about the "elderly prospector out in the wilds", and how the case was unnecessary "rubbish" for inclusion

in the report. He further ridicules the case by relating a story about "another of those old miners" who "tangled with a female alien all covered with thick fur". Seers sarcastically says that people who believe such stories are gullible and would be a "riot" if they joined up with Condon as a team. Clearly, case "22" was one of the type of cases that "no serious civilian research group would waste its time on, that is reports by a single witness of doubtful credibility".

Of course, the Michalak case is a very fantastic one, and it must be agreed that the Condon Report fell well short of its expectations. Reading an outsider's view of the case is interesting, for it gives us a new perspective. Why do we believe Michalak's story? What did he have to gain from fabrication? Why do we listen to stories from "old miners"? Perhaps Seers' attitude is correct in some ways, but he seems not to practice what he preaches. Aside from his uncritical discussion of Adamski, he later goes on to describe correlations between UFO activity and sunspot cycles, talking of electromagnetic energy and that an ice age is coming (which is known by the ufonauts). Seers finally suggests that mankind descended from a group of crashed ufonauts, and that UFO's are here to look after their own kind.

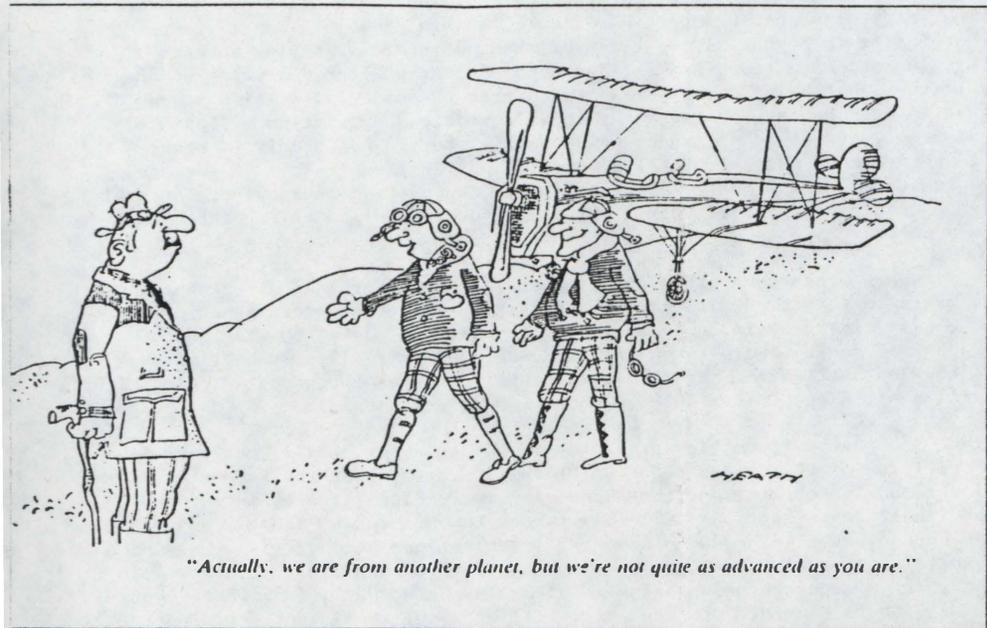
I will stress again that Seers' opinions are valid as such, and cannot put him to task for elaborating upon them. But I can say that while Seers speaks for a rational approach toward UFO's, his poor research and uncritical nature tends to defeat his main purpose to battle science's myopic attitude towards UFO's.

The next few pages give some of the figures from my computer-assisted analyses of Manitoba UFO cases, the final report on which is hopefully soon to be published. The map of Manitoba is the display of locations in the Province with two or more Close Encounters (note that there were only eleven such locations). The bar graph gives the tabulation of the number of Close Encounters per month, over all years and for all cases on file. Note that the graph is not symmetric, and bears little resemblance to the graph of the monthly distribution of all cases on file, which has a definite peak and a trough. Included also is a sketch of the Carman area, showing the rough boundary of Charlie Redstar's domain. Finally, one of the SPSS analyses is given, cross-tabulating the type of case with the color of the object reported, selected for those cases occurring at Carman, Manitoba. This shows that nearly all the Nocturnal Lights are red, and that red is a predominant color overall. While this is not a particularly surprising finding, remember that this is the result for only one location. Since Carman was the primary site for Charlie Redstar, we see where the name came from!

Special thanks to Mathilde Schneider, Barbara Westcott and Sid Greenstone for assistance on this issue.

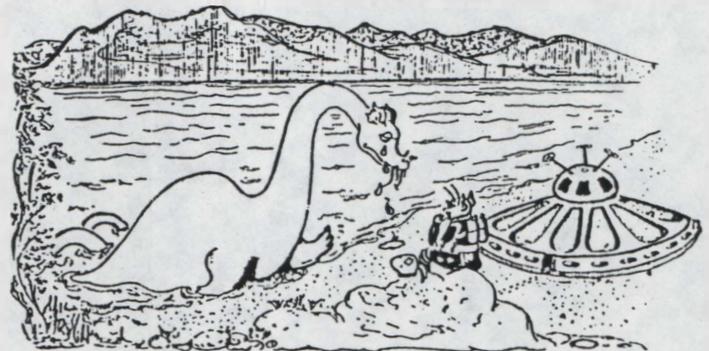
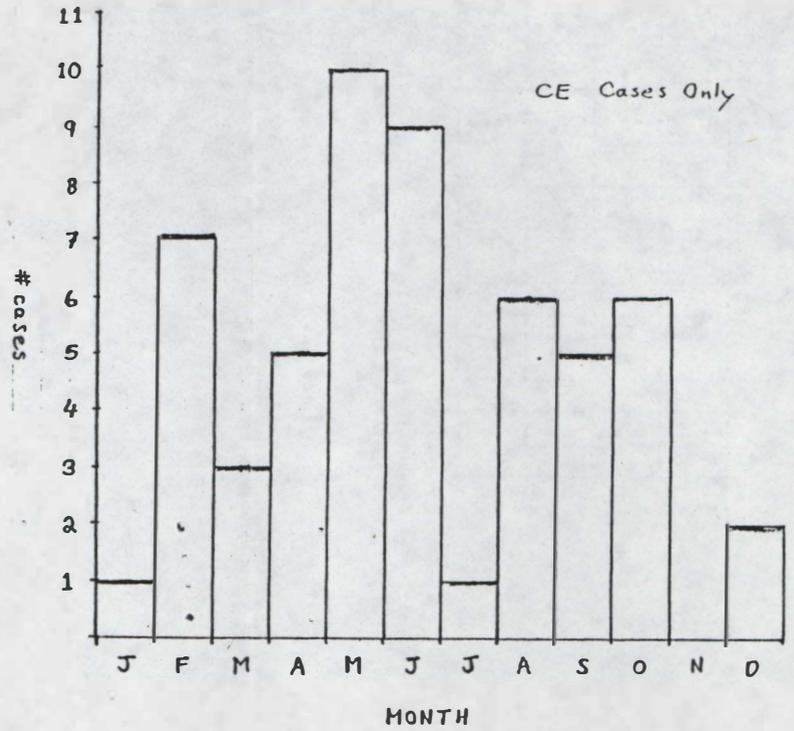
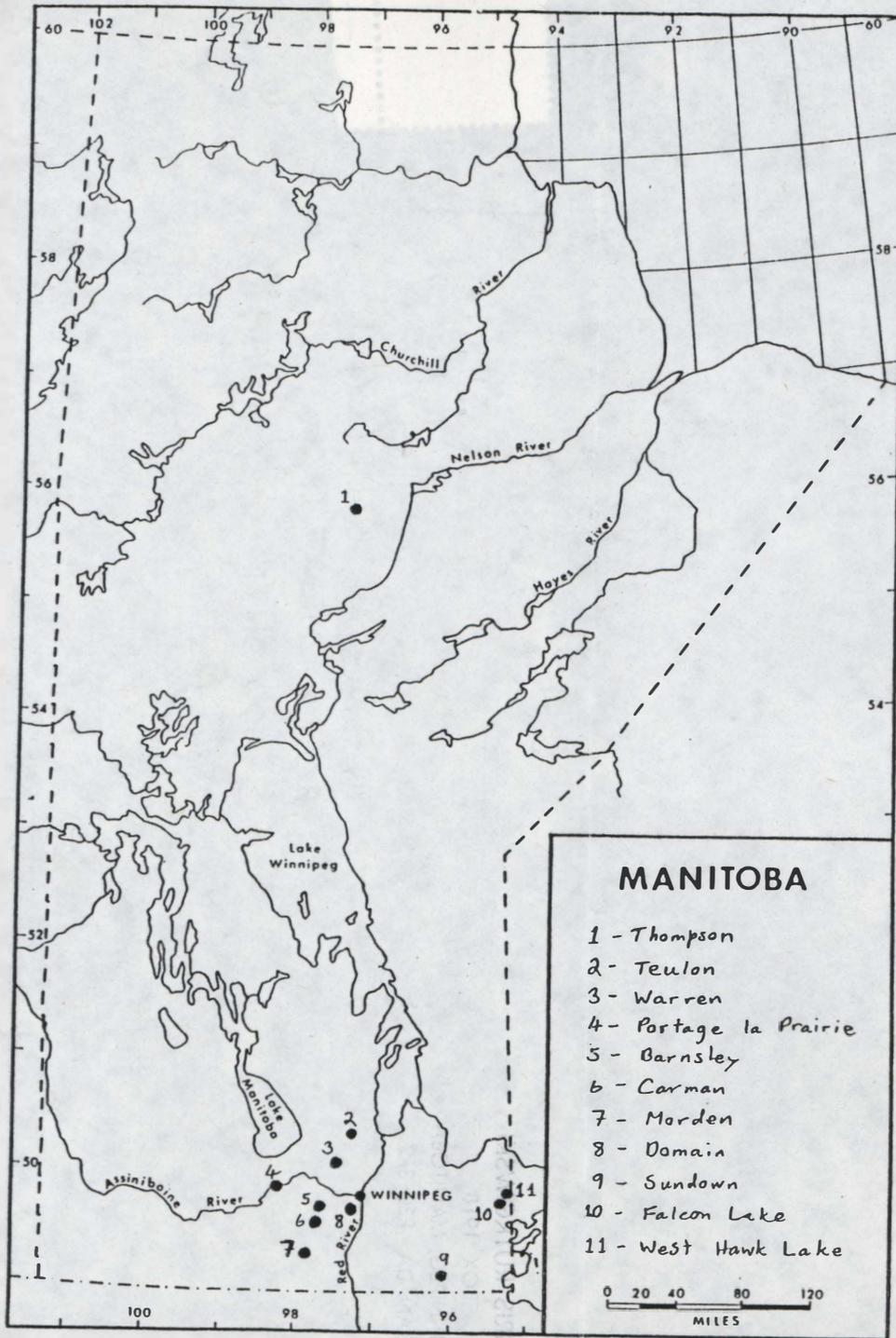
The readers' comments are welcomed. Articles will be accepted for publication on an irregular basis. Members of Project UFO Canada are encouraged to send items for publication, and for informing other members across Canada.

The inclusion of science fiction book reviews in this issue is a reflection on the origin of The Swamp Gas Journal as a fanzine, back in the "good old days" of the Winnipeg Science Fiction Society, better known as Decadent Winnipeg Fandom. My main interest is still the scientific study of UFO's, but I can't ignore my heritage. Winnipeg SF fans still meet regularly each Saturday to discuss world affairs and the price of a good bottle of wine.



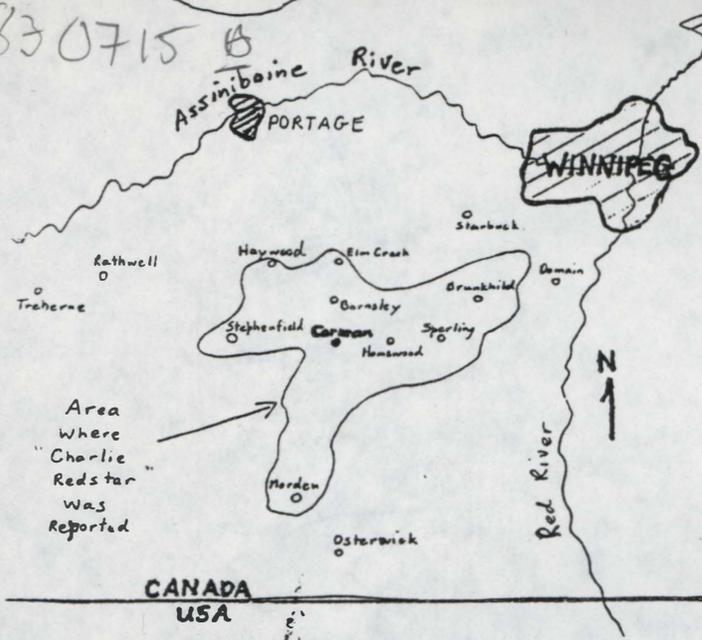
Punch, 1982





"They don't believe in me either" BRITISH SCIENCE FICTION (1954)

830715 B



FILE UFO (CREATION DATE = 07/12/82)

COLOR CROSS TABULATION OF BY TYPE

| COLOR | COUNT ROW PCT COL PCT | TYPE | | | | | | Photo | FOR TOTAL |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|
| | | NL | DD | CEL | CE2 | ND | 10 | | |
| Red | 20 71.4 47.0 58.0 | 0 0.0 0.0 | 0 0.0 0.0 | 1 3.6 50.0 2.4 | 1 3.6 100.0 2.0 | 0 0.0 0.0 | 0 0.0 0.0 | 0 0.0 0.0 | 20 2.0 |
| White | 2 50.0 8.7 5.9 | 0 0.0 0.0 | 0 0.0 0.0 | 1 25.0 50.0 2.4 | 0 0.0 0.0 | 0 0.0 0.0 | 0 0.0 0.0 | 0 0.0 0.0 | 2 11.8 |
| Orange | 1 100.0 4.3 2.9 | 0 0.0 0.0 | 0 0.0 0.0 | 0 0.0 0.0 | 0 0.0 0.0 | 0 0.0 0.0 | 0 0.0 0.0 | 0 0.0 0.0 | 1 2.9 |
| Violet | 0 0.0 0.0 0.0 | 0 0.0 0.0 | 1 100.0 100.0 2.9 | 0 0.0 0.0 | 0 0.0 0.0 | 0 0.0 0.0 | 0 0.0 0.0 | 0 0.0 0.0 | 0 2.9 |
| COLUMN TOTAL | 23 67.6 | 1 2.9 | 1 2.9 | 2 5.9 | 1 2.9 | 6 17.6 | 1 2.9 | 1 2.9 | 30 100.0 |

PEARSON'S R = -0.06343 SIGNIFICANCE = 0.3608
NUMBER OF MISSING OBSERVATIONS = 17

for Location 10 (Carman)

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