

ELDRITCH

LEARNINGS

NO. 17

This issue is written and published for the Roadmas mailing of the Esoteric Order of Dagon (the 34th), May 1st., 1981, by William E. Hart, Fullerton, CA. 92632. Telephone (714) [REDACTED]

This issue is very respectfully dedicated to the memories of three people who (for the most part unknown to them) touched my life: H. Warner Munn, J. Vernon Shea, and John Lennon. I realize John Lennon may not belong in an E.O.D. mailing, but his murder has had a very strong effect on me, and I just felt the need to say so in print.

I'm so very sad and depressed over the loss of Munn and Shea; so much so, that I'm finding it very hard to put my thoughts into words on paper. When I first heard of Shea's death (by way of a phone call from Bob Eber), my first reaction was to try and find as much biographical material as I could about him, by digging through all of my non-fiction reference books. The lack of material on him was so great, that I found it hard to believe someone as warm, creative, lively, witty, entertaining, and someone who'd touched so many lives, didn't have volumes of written material about them. What hurt me the most, was knowing that outside of the E.O.D., there was no one that I see on a day to day basis, that ever heard of Shea, or that would shed a tear for his passing. It just hurts like hell to mourn the passing of a friend, when you realize the people around you don't even notice that someone very special and unique, has left this world forever, and we'll never be with them again.

Since Jean and I first met H. Warner Munn at the 1977 World Fantasy Convention, we've looked forward to seeing him at as many subsequent conventions as possible. His very noticable absence from last year's Fantasy Faire Convention in Los Angeles was a great disappointment to both of us, and we thought that the expense of the trip was the only reason he wasn't there. I only wish that had been the reason. I now know that he just wasn't up to the trip, and wish that we could have had at least some idea of what his condition had really been. I would have liked being able to see him one more time, but I guess his memory is going to have to suffice from now on...

As with many of you, I feel very fortunate that I have not only copies of the writings of these two friends, but also pictures of them that I've taken on different occasions, and best of all, a few recordings I've made of them so that their voices may be heard for many years to come.

I would like to extend a special thank you to Mollie for taking the time to let us know of the passing of Shea; and I'd like to also extend a very special thank you to Crispin for thinking enough of all the non E.O.D. fans to send a notice of the passing of Shea to LOCUS.

SHOTGUNS FOR COMPUTERS?

(For a long time now I've been feeling that my collection of S.F., Fantasy, and Horror books, magazines, etc., has gotten so big that I can barely remember where stories and articles are in here once I've looked at them for the first time. I at first thought I could index everything on file cards, but after indexing a few hundred of my paperback anthologies, I began to realize I'd need close to 20,000 index cards to index all the things I have right now; and there's no telling how many I'd need with an ever increasing collection.

About two years ago I looked into the possibility of getting a small home computer to solve my problems, but as I'm sure most of you know, the cost of the system I'd need to cross reference and index a few thousand books and magazines was about \$2000. Unfortunately, there's no way I could arrange to spend that kind of money on a computer at that time; and even now I'm still paying on other bills, and didn't think I be able to seriously consider a computer for a few years.

Thanks to Jean, it seems we might be a lot closer to getting into computerizing our collection than I thought. What brought this about was Jean's mentioning to one of her coworkers that I happened to have a very fine condition L. C. Smith 1908 shotgun, and hearing this causing the coworker to check a friend's gun book for the current value. It seems Jean's friend at work (without having much info to go on) came back to work the next day and told Jean that our shotgun was now worth about \$5000. Needless to say, Jean went off the deep end about the idea of selling the shotgun, paying off our debts, and getting the computer we want.

Being the sceptic that I am, I told Jean that her friend didn't know what he was talking about, because I as the gun's owner, didn't even know for sure what grade the gun was, or even what extra features the gun had or didn't have. But I had to admit that ever since the gun was given to me 11 years ago by my mother (who had it given to her by my then communal step-father); I had never used it, and had no intention of using it (or even displaying it for fear of theft). Not being one to pass up a chance to get something I've wanted for a long time, I began calling places to find out the true value of the gun, and I ended at the one local place recommended to me as being the place to take it, where they were able to give me a written appraisal (for the fee of \$25), and they were able to sell me a copy of a beautiful book on the L.C. Smith Shotguns (also for \$25). The value which they placed on the gun (which was much closer to what I thought it would be) was \$1750, which they said was the price they would put on it if they were going to sell it in their store. I thanked them for their time and effort, and went home where I was able to double the information they had given me, just by spending a half hour with the book I bought. Jean and I have decided we'll sell the gun if we can find a buyer willing to pay \$2000 for it. To this end I've placed a very detailed ad in our local paper (circulation about 250,000) and starting this coming Monday (4-27-81) we then hope to start hearing from some prospective buyers. Yesterday we found a package deal for the computer we want, so if we can sell the shotgun, we'll soon own an APPLE II PLUS, a 12 in. black and white monitor, and our first Floppy Disk Drive unit.

The reason I've taken the time to explain all of these tidbits about the possibility of our getting the APPLE II PLUS system, is that I need help. The kind of help I need is advice from those of you that have similar systems, and have had the chance to either set up your own personal library system, or try a premade system that's already on the market that you found to your liking. What I want to do is index by book title, type (e.g., hardcover, paperback, magazine, anthology, one or two author collection, etc.), author/editor, story title, and type of item being indexed (e.g., fiction, non-fiction, and poetry).

Once we get this system, I'll add a second disk drive unit at the earliest possible date, and hopefully this will take care of most of my collection. If things do work out so that we manage to get our computer, I'm going to go crazy using it for duplicating my favorite games from the arcades, and also from using it for other games like Dungeons and Dragons. The possibilities are endless. Perhaps I might eventually be able to swap some programs by mail with those of you already into this??

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A SELECTION OF RECENTLY READ BOOKS

THE BEST OF LEIGH BRACKETT, edited by Edmond Hamilton; This book was a very pleasant journey back to the future, as envisioned in the 1940's and the early 1950's. Back to a time when Mars still had people living on it, and the year 1980 was still in the distant future also. I'm really sorry I only got to meet Leigh once, but I have to admit I'll never forget that one meeting. This one's from Ballantine.

THE WEB OF WIZARDRY, by Juanita Coulson, Ballantine Books: This was an enjoyable book while I was reading it about four months ago, but I tend to believe the fact that I couldn't remember anything about it without scanning through it again, is a clear indication that it's a rather forgettable book. Maybe it's just my state of mind right now, but the more I sit here glancing through the book, the more I like what I can begin to remember again. Oh well, if you like Swords & Sorcery, I'm sure you'll enjoy this book; at least for as long as it takes you to read it.

MASTER OF THE FIVE MAGICS, by Lyndon Hardy, Ballantine Books: Now this I can definitely remember! A very engaging tale of a nobody in love with a Queen that doesn't even know or care that he exists, that is until he begins doing fabulous deeds (which someone else tends to always get credit for), and seems to finally be headed towards his goal. The lead character of this book (Alodar), seems to be stuck in his own personal version of the game "aggravation", but he never quits trying; I'm glad he didn't!

A HEINLEIN TRIO, by Robert A. Heinlein, Nelson Doubleday Books (S.F. Book Club Edition); This special three-in-one edition contains the complete texts of some of Heinlein's early '50's novels: THE PUPPET MASTERS, DOUBLE STAR, and THE DOOR INTO SUMMER. THE PUPPET MASTERS is a very pulpy (& fun) mixture of Sam Spade vs Aliens kind of tale, that easily combines humor, horror, and suspense; DOUBLE STAR is a very moving S.F. drama of a man having to impersonate someone to the point of becoming them, and then being faced with the question of who he really is. A fascinating and warmly sad tale.; THE DOOR INTO SUMMER is a classic for cat lovers. A story of cryogenic suspension, with more twists than a corkscrew; a beautiful, and tearful wrap up you won't forget!

THE HOUSE ON THE BORDERLAND, by William Hope Hodgson, Freeway Press; Yes, I really took my time getting around to reading this one, but it in many ways was worth the wait; primarily because even though I've read so many books over the past few years, this volume that Lovecraft referred to as being "a classic of the first water", still stands up as a very original and disturbing story. Truly a unique tale of time and space that ranks with some of the best time travel stories I've read. The descriptions of time rushing by are chilling to this day.

EYE AMONG THE BLIND, by Robert P. Holdstock, Signet Books: Last time around I raved over Holdstock's NECROMANCER (which I still say is one of the best things I've read in years), but this time I'll be a bit more subdued in saying this new book is also a very well written and original tale, but NECROMANCER is a very hard act to follow, and I'd have to give this one second billing between the two. This is still a very unusual novel in which you have humans on an "alien" world trying to become one with the native beings in order to survive. The closest parallel I can think of to this one would have to be the DUNE books; and like them, I hope this is only the beginning of a series.

THE SEEKING SWORD, by Jaan Kangilaski, Ballantine Books: Talk about swords with an ego! This is one that'll kill you. Literally. A very fine reworking of the sword with a purpose myth. In this case, a sword made thousands of years ago to avenge a wrong, which to this day it feels it must keep avenging. I'm not familiar with this author, but I hope to see more books in the future from the same hand. One of the characters in the book shares an office with a fellow by the name of Burlson; You wouldn't happen to know something about swords would you Don?

DAY BY NIGHT, by Tanith Lee, Daw Books: A well written tale of a non-rotating world, with two entirely different civilizations that have no conscious knowledge of each other, but yet are interrelated in ways they could never even dream of. This is one that will keep you wondering up until the very end. Worthwhile reading.

BEYOND REJECTION, by Justin Leiber, Ballantine Books: They say "like father like son", and in this case happily it's true. This is a very fine effort for a first timer from the hands of Fritz Leiber's son. I'm sure a great many copies of this book will sell just because of the popularity of Justin's father, but under any name this is an excellent book. This book concerns one Ismael Forth, a male, who wakes up one day to find out that not only has he died, but his mind now inhabits a beautiful female body. How would you handle this situation? Would you be angry? Upset? Turned on? Happy? A little of each perhaps? Read the book and find out what Ismael's reaction is; but be forewarned; the book reads quite well by itself, but you'll find out at the very end it's only part one of a trilogy.

CONAN THE MERCENARY, by Andrew J. Offutt, Ace Books: This is Andy's well written sequel to his earlier Conan And The Sorcerer. And, like the first book, the illustrations by MAROTO dominate the book. The artwork and story work well together, but I would like to see more written material from Andy; Just for the record, in this 190 page paperback (with large type), about 62 pages have artwork on them, and about 16 more have only chapter titles on them, or are blank altogether; that really doesn't leave much room for the story does it? I think I've lost track of how many Conan books there are on my shelves right now, but I'm sure they must be starting to rival my Michael Moorcock "Eternal Champion" series for space being taken up. Where will it end?

KING DRAGON, by Andrew J. Offutt, Ace Books: This book (another in the series of Ace Illustrated, large type style books), harkens back to the "sword & planet" stories of the early fifties. The plot centers around what happens to two people sent to a "lost world" which has only been visited by humans once before in the distant past, when at that time (3000 years before this story takes place) a group from earth went there to terra-form it and let loose animals and plants they brought with them. The main question has to do with what happened to the original colony, and why were they never heard from again; and also, what kind of world did they create? You'll also find about 50 Esteban Maroto illustrations in this book too.

THE PATH BEYOND THE STARS, by Emil Petaja, Dell Books; This is one of the books I decided to read recently as part of my habit of trying to mix my reading so that I alternate between "new" and "old" authors. The copyright date in this book says 1969, but the writing style makes it seem that somewhere in the mid-1950's would be more accurate. The book does contain some fascinating mind travel aspects, but all in all it doesn't have a lot to recommend it for.

HELLSTONE, by Steven Spruill, Playboy Paperbacks: Ah! Now here's the sleeper of the month. I've never seen any Spruill books before finding this one, but I sure hope I can find a few more. This book probably the best example of how to use the Loch Ness Monster in a story that I've ever seen. This would make an excellent, and very suspenseful movie; The story contains all of the elements needed to make it a box office hit: Sex, intrigue, murder, espionage, sabotage, mystery, occult powers, Druids, "Nessie", adultery, money, and enough twists and turns in the plot to make you dizzy. Even the ending will surprise you. This is the one book I'd recommend above all others on this list.

A WIZARD IN BEDLAM, by Christopher Stasheff, Daw Books: If you've had the good fortune to have already read the two previous books by this same author (**THE WIZARD IN SPITE OF HIMSELF**) & **KING KOBOLD**) then you'll know you're in for a treat with this book. Try to imagine Stasheff writing about a medieval world where everyone except the aristocracy is a clone; and the main character has been landed on the planet to help start "the revolution". A delightful book from an author that writes far too few books. A rare treat indeed.

ALCHEMY & ACADEME, edited by Anne McCaffrey, Ballantine Books: An interesting but overall disappointing anthology. One tale though stands out for all Lovecraftians, i.e., *More Light* by James Blish. This story deals with a man who claims Robert W. Chambers actually had a copy of the supposedly fictitious book, **THE KING IN YELLOW**, and that he had sent a carbon copy to H.P. Lovecraft, who in turn, just before his death, sent it on to the main character in this story. There are also a number of mentions of Lovecraft's "Nekronemikon" (sic). As you can guess, the copy of **THE KING IN YELLOW**, just as with H.P.L.'s **NECRONOM-ICON**, should never be read; but where would the story be if someone didn't try?

TALES FROM THE VULGAR UNICORN, edited by Robert Lynn Asprin, Ace Books: This volume (aka **THIEVES WORLD II**), is an excellent continuation of the quality of stories to be found in the first book. I don't know how long this series will last, but I'm sure that with contributors the likes of Philip Jose Farmer, David Drake, Lynn Abbey, A.E. van Vogt, and Andrew J. Offutt, just to name a few, I'm hoping it'll be a very long time. Don't read this book though until you've read **THIEVE'S WORLD** first.

THE YEAR'S BEST HORROR STORIES SERIES VIII, edited by Karl Edward Wagner, Daw Books: A rather uneven, but overall worthwhile anthology. Anthologies, as a rule for me tend to be uneven; primarily because it's very difficult to find an editor who's taste in so far as the "best of the year" matches my own on a more than hit and miss basis.

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A FEW PERSONAL COMMENTS

Michael Roden-- I just wanted to let you know I did appreciate your very timely "Faith in the E.O.D." flyer; Thanks!

William Pugmire-- Ah, Cap'n Frogmarsh, 'tis indeed a pleasure to have you back in our hallowed halls again. As I'm doing far more than once in this issue, let me apologize for not returning your missive; I'm now about a year behind on correspondence, and it isn't a reflection on my feelings for my friends. I just haven't been able to get myself into a letter writing mood since about last August. Hopefully I'll get my shit together soon!

S.T.Joshi-- To you good sir, a very hearty welcome to the group, and a "Hi, how are you?"

Donald R. Burleson-- Dear Cemeterius Nightcrawler (or was that Necrophagious Strawsucker), I'm very, very happy to have you joining us at last. I'm even wearing my YOG SOTHOTH SAVES button right now in celebration. When I get through typing this zine I think Jean and I will find a couple of really long straws and have a feast in the name of Burleson & Cthulhu (at least that's what I'll tell them when they catch us in the act in the local cemetery of ripe goodies).

David Oreno-- The color photo was a nice touch! Thanks from all of us!

Bernadette Bosky-- Dear B.B., To you above all others do I owe an apology, and a thank you. I owe you an apology because I promised you a letter and some snapshots that I owe you, and to date have failed to send them; I have no excuses other than laziness and procrastination. In September of last year I put the snapshots and some other things I wanted to send to you in a jiffy bag, and then on Sept. 30th. I began writing a letter to you to go with the snapshots in the same package. Over the next couple of days I wrote seven pages of the letter, and then for some reason I let the whole thing sit on my desk until this day (4-26-81). What really makes me feel worse than ever about this is the fact that Jean and I were very tight with our money this last Christmas, and had decided to not buy any presents at all, and so we had our decorations up, but we hadn't put anything under the tree; that is until just a couple of days before Christmas we got a package from B.B. which contained several cassette tapes of music and old radio shows, with each cassette individually wrapped in Christmas paper; and so as it turned out we did have presents under the tree after all thanks to B.B.! I hope that by making this apology public, you'll forgive me for my long silence B.B.. And I hope to finally get your package to you right away!

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THE E. HOFFMANN PRICE PETITION RESULTS

Just for the record, to date only Graeme Flanagan has returned any signatures to me from the petitions I sent through the E.O.D.. If you can't get any signatures yourself, please give your petitions to someone in other a.p.a.s or to someone going to a con where they can collect some!!!