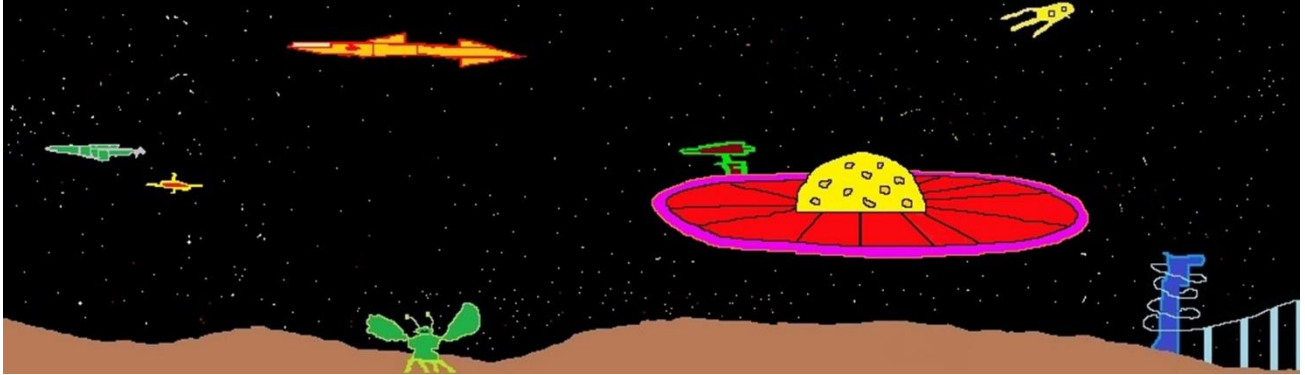


GREAT GALLOPING GHU!



A Personal zine by R. Graeme Cameron

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Cover: a digitalized childhood drawing of mine illustrating my sense of wonder

EDITORIAL: THE GRAEME SPEAKS!

Don't let the title of this zine fool you. As explained below it's a fannish reference, but I'm no longer the fanactivist fan I used to be. I've moved on to other things, such as writing book reviews and publishing two semi-professional SF magazines. Plus working on a science fiction novel, a lifelong habit of mine. Promoting Canadian Speculative fiction is my main kick these days.

Nevertheless, I remain wedded to the core essence of SF fandom, which is to have fun. I apply this philosophy to every facet of my life. After all, I'm seventy years old. I don't have time to mope about!

So, screw serious stuff. I'm just going to relax and have a good time starting up a new personal fanzine (my previous was called SPACE CADET) in order to share all my enthusiasms. I'm going to write about writing, SF literature, movies, ancient literature, archaeology, childhood nostalgia topics, and whatever else strikes me as weird and noteworthy and possibly of interest to you. Be warned! I will attempt to entertain you.

That is why, in an effort to capture the ambience of this zine, I've named it GREAT GALLOPING GHU! This is an expletive I came up with some years back, based on "GHU," a fannish deity invented by Donald Wollheim on August 6th, 1935.

To quote from my CANFANCYCLOPEDIA (a work in progress I never did finish), Ghu, or GhuGhu, is *"the sole deity of the fannish cult of GhuGhuism, otherwise known as Donald Wollheim. An opposing religion, that of the FooFooists, insisted that GhuGhu was a beetle-bodied monster living on the sunward side of the planet Vulcan and Wollheim was merely his unwitting dupe, if not an actual zombie controlled by Ghuish telepathy. The phrase 'By Ghu!' is still occasionally to be found in fanzines for tradition's sake."* And for that reason, found in the title.

It should be noted, in case it's not obvious, that GhuGhuism was a spoof of religion in general and was never meant to be taken seriously, it being merely a classic example of fannish humour and satire in action. So, an appropriate icon for my new zine.

I want my readers to have fun, too. Any boring bits just skip over. I could tell you that fannish tradition is for readers to read every fanzine from cover to cover, but I'd be lying. Even worse, I may occasionally prove inadvertently profound and actually say something intelligent. You never know. Accidents happen. But mostly I aim for light-hearted drollery. In sum, this zine is entirely subjective and personal. Enjoy.

Cheers! The Graeme

MY NOVEL

On December 7th, 2021, I completed the first draft of my science fiction novel. Took me seven months to write and it came in at 72,401 words. Great sense of accomplishment and all that. I let it remain fallow for the remainder of the month and got to work revising it into a second draft in January. Hope to complete a solid second draft before the end of the year.

You'll notice I haven't stated the title or mentioned what it's about. That's because it's still a work in progress. All I've done so far is get the gist of it down on paper. Now to focus, concentrate, and refine the work. I want to keep in mind William Gibson's famous comment "I'm a mediocre writer but I'm terrific at revising." Even if I'm mediocre at both the second draft should be an improvement. Only then will I show it to people.

One thing for sure. I'm not writing to a formula. I'm not even writing to please the readers. I'm writing to please myself, on the theory I'm not unique and there must be others out there who will enjoy reading the book as much as I enjoyed writing it. The result is what I call "distinctly oddball." I doubt any publisher will be interested because it doesn't fit any suitable publishing niche. So, undoubtedly it will be self-published. Probably sometime in 2023. I'll be thrilled if it sells a hundred copies (which is more than most self-published books).

An even bigger threat, I've already conceived a sequel. It may well wind up a trilogy. You have been warned.

Below are excerpts from a column I wrote for AMAZING STORIES Magazine on my "new" method of writing (new to me at least, in that I never tried it before). Consider this another warning.

HOW TO WRITE A SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL

(Excerpts from a longer column published December 3, 2021, in AMAZING STORIES.)

Decades ago I wrote four novels that were never published. They were meticulously researched and followed detailed outlines. I got them back with comments like "We don't like your main characters and don't think anyone else will either."

Now, at the age of 70, I decided to take one more kick at the can, or rather, at my bucket list. But because of my current state of being, I ran into seven problems. Here are my solutions.

PROBLEM #1: My memory officially sucks. They say “live in the moment.” I have to. I can’t do otherwise. I don’t remember what I did yesterday, let alone last week. I have to take notes to keep track of things.

They say every good novel depends on extensive research and voluminous notes. Problem is, that can be an endless rabbit hole with no end in sight, often producing more pages of notes than the proposed novel itself. Doing research can often be a waste of time, an excuse not to write, a horrible practice of merely transferring information from a resource to your own folder without actually making use of the information.

Here’s the real kicker. If I wind up with say, a thousand pages of notes, by the time I finish going through it I will have forgotten all of it. Even if I just peruse one page, it won’t stick in my mind for more than an hour. My research is useless to me. (On the bright side, I really enjoy reading the books in my collection because I’ve forgotten so much that picking up any one of them is like reading it for the first time.) Even creating outlines and character studies is like sculpting with fine sand. It all slips through my fingers once I walk away from my desk.

SOLUTION #1: Don’t bother with research. I just sit down at my laptop and start writing. If I need to find the correct spelling of “Tiglath-pileser” I will save that for the second draft rewrite. What little research I end up doing will be focused, in-the-moment correction stuff. No need to read volumes of Assyrian history in advance. Besides, not doing research saves a heck of a lot of time, something I may not have available in abundance anyway, depending.

PROBLEM #2: If my memory consistently fails, how the heck can I think about my novel? A writer like Theodore Sturgeon pondered his projects so intelligently and cogently in such incredible depth that by the time he wrote his first draft it was in fact the final draft ready to be sent to the publisher. (I was present when his wife explained his technique of composition.) To put it mildly, I can’t do that.

SOLUTION #2: Don’t think about my novel. When I sit down to begin a writing session I have only a vague idea what I’m going to write. I make it up as I go along. What I’m doing is relying on my subconscious mind. Before going to bed I reread what I wrote the day before. Then I let my subconscious stew over it while I sleep. I start writing as soon as I’ve gotten up the next morning and made my first cup of coffee. Definitely a form of automatic writing. Lucid dream-state writing to a degree. Once finished, I go back to bed. When I subsequently get up I’m often surprised by what I’ve written.

PROBLEM #3: I don’t know what I’m writing about. My mind is pretty much an

empty void. Consequently I'm often easily distracted by my own thoughts, to the point of not being able to concentrate. Pretty close to a "Oh, look! A Squirrel!" mentality. Especially since, staring out the window above my writing desk, I often see squirrels.

SOLUTION #3: I rely on my ignorance. My main character, though cunning and resourceful, doesn't believe in cluttering his mind with knowledge. Nobody in my dystopic novel can figure out what's going on anyway. Everything is collapsing too fast to keep track of. Instinct and adaptability are the survival traits required, not knowledge. Perfect. I'm really good at projecting ignorance.

PROBLEM #4: But the book has to be about something. The hypothetical reality of this future history needs to be buttressed with facts and an internal logic consistent with its premise.

SOLUTION #4: I've been around for seventy years. Buried in my subconscious mind are all sorts of biased opinions, half-formed prejudices, and inaccurate observations on just about every subject under the sun. Aztec Empire? Freudian theories? Nuclear reactors? I know all about them, or at least my subconscious mind thinks it does. Just a hodgepodge of inadequate impressions gained over a lifetime, but good enough for my needs. I let my subconscious throw whatever it dredges up into my manuscript as it sees fit. Being engrained in my brain, it has an air of convincing authenticity.

PROBLEM #5: But everything about the methodology of writing a novel is so complicated and self-sabotaging.

SOLUTION #5: Not if you don't think about it. The trick is to keep things simple. I sit down. I type a sentence. I stare at it. Eventually another sentence suggests itself. I repeat the process. Eventually I visualize it as a scene unfolding before my mind's eye. At that point I simply describe what I see. But not too much description. That's the sort of thing readers skip past. So I keep my paragraphs short, and rely on dialogue and inner monologue to carry the story. Readers pay more attention to those things. Easier to relate to, maybe. Makes for a fast-paced, easy-to-read novel.

PROBLEM #6: Inevitably an off-the-top-of-the-head, pantsner-style (writing by the seat of one's pants) manuscript is full of errors, contradictions, typos, misplaced characters and what-not. What could be more frustrating than realizing the paragraph you've just written is not what you intended to express and in fact doesn't even make sense?

SOLUTION #6: Don't worry about it. Don't rewrite it. Just leave as is and carry on. Plenty of time to attempt to figure out what you meant to write once you start the

second draft. The main thing is to get the gist of your novel down and complete as quickly as possible. Don't rewrite. Don't even correct typos. Get it done. Then correct.

PROBLEM #7: But I get so tired writing. When's a good time to stop? How long should a writing session be? If I leave it open-ended I may wind up writing beyond my inspiration and forcing myself into writing laboured and boring prose.

SOLUTION #7: I write exactly three pages. The number of words varies, but is always over a thousand words. Each chapter is three writing sessions long or nine pages. This greatly aids in building suspense and tension, not to mention creating hooks to make people want to immediately read the next chapter. At least, that's what I prefer to believe.

RESULT: A worry-free, stress-free, practically thought-free method of writing. Perfect for an old guy like me. Might work for you, too.

One last piece of advice. Don't talk about your writing. Don't explain it, justify it, or wax poetic about it. Nothing kills your inspiration faster than exposing it to the cold light of someone else's out-of-context incomprehension. Then your brilliant, shining ideas come across as flat, dull, and boring. Talk about writing too much, and you'll give up writing.

All you know about my book is that it takes place sometime in the future when the world is going to hell in a handbasket and that somehow it involves Assyrians (who were historically quite good at giving hell). In other words, it's flat-out weird.

Hopefully this will make you want to buy it whenever the heck it becomes available.

I may or may not write an article on how to revise a first draft once my second draft is complete.

ALEXANDRIAN LIBRARY FOUND!

Sorry. Pretty much clickbait-style false heading. Yet, in a sense, true enough, at least as it applies to me. I will explain.

I possess 56 Penguin Translations of Greek and Roman classics. I used to possess twice as many, but I got rid of the boring ones.

Thing is, the Penguin Classics library is not the complete collection of ancient literature extant. And some of their publications, THE NATURAL HISTORY by Pliny

the Elder, for instance, are selected excerpts and not the complete text.

The Loeb library, those handy pocket-sized hardcover books offering the original Latin or Greek on the left pages and an English translation on the right pages, offer a greater variety but are hideously expensive.

But now the Alexandrian Library has dropped into my lap, so to speak. A friend sent me a link to Delphi Classics, an online publisher offering e-books “for less than the price of a coffee.” They range over many subsets of literature but the ancient classics are what interest me. They are offered in both E-pub and Kindle (Mobi) formats.

I promptly purchased the following for less than \$30.00 CAD.

Books I have but am happy to get the full text version:

- Complete works of *Lucian* – many entertaining satires and essays.
- Complete poems of *Martial* – a poet sucking up to the Emperor Domitian.
- Complete encyclopedia of *Pliny the Elder* – misinformation about everything!

Books I read ages ago and wanted to read again:

- Complete works of *Frontinus* – how to build sewers and win wars.
- Letters of *Fronto* – this is the guy who trained Marcus Aurelius in philosophy!
- Complete works of *Emperor Julian the Apostate* – failed to restore paganism.

Books I’ve always wanted to read but never did:

- Complete works of *Ptolemy* – notes about every known place on Earth.
- Complete works of *Cornelius Nepos* – biographer who listed sources he didn’t use.
- Complete works of *Eutropius* – historian who swiped material from Livy.
- Complete Works of *Manetho* – Egyptian high priest/historian who hated Romans.
- Complete works of *Onasander* – philosopher devoted to crushing Rome’s enemies.
- Complete letters & poems of *Sidonius Apollinaris* – it sucked fighting the Visigoths.
- Complete works of *Strabo* – also describes every known place on Earth.
- Farming manual of *Cato the Elder* – the most evil farmer who ever lived.

Next issue I’ll review Cato’s farm manual. Think I’ll call it “Cato the Elder Idiot.” Beware of anyone who takes him for a role model. Nasty.

Delphi Press can be found at: <https://www.delphiclassics.com/>

HUZZAH FOR HIPPOCAMPUS PRESS!

Hippocampus Press has been around for over twenty years. It's goal is to publish, in annotated form, the complete and unexpurgated fiction and non-fiction of H.P. Lovecraft, including his letters and Amateur Press articles. This is the original source material. There is no better way to get to know the writer and man, warts and all.

To sum up my personal view, I enjoy his writing, admire his intellect, and despise his racism (which is more fully revealed in his letters than in his fiction). I will address his racism at some point, but for now I will simply state he's rather like the weird Uncle many a family looks forward to seeing because of the nifty treats he brings, but fun though he be, find him so creepy they don't dare introduce him to their neighbours. More on this in the future.

Hippocampus Press has grown to include more than Lovecraft. They publish books by and about Ambrose Bierce, Clark Ashton Smith, Robert E. Howard, Arthur Machen, Algernon Blackwood, Lord Dunsany and other weird fiction authors.

One of their editors, S.T. Joshi, is perhaps *the* leading scholar on H.P. Lovecraft. In 1996 he published H.P. LOVECRAFT: A LIFE from which he pruned 150,000 words in order to fit the biography into a single volume. Now Hippocampus Press has released an unabridged two-volume set that not only includes the missing text but additional material S.T. Joshi has unearthed since first publication. Titled I AM PROVIDENCE, it is more than 500,000 words in length! I am pretty certain it is *the* definitive study of Lovecraft's life. More than 1,000 pages I can't wait to read. But first I want to plough through the collected letters of Lovecraft. I've so far read about 2,000 pages of those.

So, what's this all in aid of? I hope to quote and discuss interesting tidbits of one kind or another in future issues of this zine. No, not his racist stuff. Too depressing. I'd rather quote him on his other enthusiasms, like science and literature. His friends and correspondents (and he had many of both) found him delightful and inspiring. So, not a total S.O.B. Rather, a complex and multi-faceted creative talent. Which is why I both admire him and despise him. And why I prefer to dwell on the more interesting and amusing aspects of his character and thoughts.

At any rate, he is an authentic voice from the early twentieth century and an authentic witness to the fact that much of what goes on today, both good and bad, has its roots in the recent past which was once, after all, at the time, the present.

Hippocampus Press can be found at: <https://hippocampuspress.com/>

LOVECRAFT AND FROME

Nils Helmer Frome is Canada's first known Fanzine editor ⁽¹⁾. He published two issues of his SUPRAMUNDANE STORIES out of Fraser Mills, a waterfront district between New Westminster and Coquitlam in the Vancouver Lower Mainland Region: the first in January 1937 ⁽²⁾ and the second in March 1938.

The second issue is particularly interesting. Frome had talked H.P. Lovecraft into contributing his story *Nyarlahotep* and his essay *Notes on Weird Fiction Writing – the "Why" and "How,"* both of which had been previously published in Amateur Press journals. Sadly, Lovecraft passed away about two months after SUPRAMUNDANE STORIES #1 was published. It's odd there is no mention of his passing in issue #2 which came out on the first anniversary of his death. Perhaps Frome took it for granted the publication of Lovecraft's articles was tribute enough.

The definitive study of Frome's life is the 168-page monograph HOWARD PHILLIPS LOVECRAFT AND NILS HELMER FROME by Sam Moskowitz published by Moshassuck Press of Glenview, Illinois in 1989. Only 110 copies were printed. Years later when I contacted publisher Kenneth W. Faig, Jr. I found out none were available. However, being familiar with my fan history research he generously photocopied his personal copy and sent it to me, for which I am eternally grateful.

The monograph includes the text of three letters Lovecraft wrote to Frome, dated December 19, 1936, January 20, 1937, and February 28, 1937. They make fascinating reading.

Here is the crux of this article. I discovered one of the collections of Lovecraft's letters published by Hippocampus press consists of letters to three fans: F. Lee Baldwin, Duane W. Rimel... and Nils Frome! When I saw that I immediately sent away for it! I had visions of a dozen or more missives to Frome, perhaps containing references to 1930s Canadian fandom in general or Ghu knows what! I was very excited anticipation-wise.

You know how life works. I received the volume and discovered it contains only three letters to Frome, the *same* three letters which are printed in Moskowitz's monograph. It is to arrgh!

Can't complain. There are nearly 400 pages of Lovecraft's letters to the other two guys so I know I'm in for a good read.

Frome wrote numerous letters of comment, stories and essays for other fanzines in the 1930s. Indeed, Moskowitz acted as his agent placing them. Samples were

included in the monograph. From them it is clear that Frome had many questions concerning esoteric matters relating to telepathy, phrenology, numerology and the like. Lovecraft set him straight.

For example: *“About the NECRONOMICON—I’m sorry to disillusion you, but there is no such book. It is merely a bit of colour... The idea of inventing mysterious book titles for use as background material in fiction is an old one... It would be unfortunate if many took these things seriously... We have never tried to put across our imaginary gods and daemons and books as real bits of folklore and bibliography, and would be very sorry if anyone accepted them as such.”*

Or: *“About reincarnation—of course that is simply nonsense... Mammals—including man—are simply physio-chemical phenomena... carbon compounds activated by some quasi-electrical form of energy. When the energy ceases and the body disintegrates, that’s the end of it.”*

And most intriguingly: *“Regarding views of the universe and its phenomena—my ideas certainly do seem to differ quite diametrically from those which you have so far possessed. However, I can assure you that they are merely the normal ideas held by serious students of science and reflected in the majority of books by responsible authorities. You must realize that what the cheap pulp science-fiction magazines present is not real science. It is simply romance and day-dreaming based on thin scientific theories—the latter often badly twisted and strained. You will not find any real information about life and the universe in the circle of adolescent ‘fans’ which has grown up around these magazines. Those boys are all day-dreamers...”*

What did Lovecraft actually think about Frome? The introduction to this Hippocampus volume quotes a letter he sent to Robert Bloch circa late 1936:

“If you want bold & nutty scientific concepts to work on, get in touch with the kid who is about to edit SUPRAMUNDANE STORIES—Nils H. Frome, Box 3, Fraser Mills, B.C., Canada. Some of his vague & unformulated concepts would do credit to an Einstein or a de Sitter on the one hand, or to an asylum case on the other hand! I’ve been obliged to decline the honour of collaborating with this fertile young genius—but if you feel like dressing up some highly intricate concepts for Astounding, Wonder, or Amazing, he’s your man!”

⁽¹⁾ In June 1936, Donald Wollheim published a fanzine review in the 7th issue of THE SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW. This was later described in THE IMMORTAL STORM by Sam Moskowitz thusly: *“which is of interest only because it referred to THE CANADIAN SCIENCE FICTION FAN, produced ‘by a chap in Vancouver, B.C., where we least expected a fan to live! A Fair little Magazine’.*” To which Moskowitz added: *“This constitutes the first and last mention of what appears to have been the first Canadian*

fan magazine, published in early 1936.”

Note that Wollheim neglects to identify the editor. Some people think it must have been Frome. Well, Moskowitz knew Frome well, acted as his agent placing art and articles, frequently corresponded with him, yet doesn't connect him to this early zine. The editor of THE CANADIAN SCIENCE FICTION FAN remains unknown to this day.

(2) The Pavlat/Evans fanzine index published in December 1952 claims Frome's first issue of SUPRAMUNDANE STORIES was published in October 1936. This is false. As my photocopy of that issue clearly shows, Frome sometimes put the date he mimeographed a given page at the top of the page. Dates vary between October 1936 and January 1937. Ergo, the earliest the issue was published was January of 1937. Absolutely nothing to do with THE CANADIAN SCIENCE FICTION FAN which came out more than half a year earlier.

This has been a demonstration of the time-consuming pettifoggery every fan historian gets sucked into. I functioned as such for a couple of decades, even winning an Aurora for my fannish history zine WCSFazine in 2010.

But hell, even though it be a fun hobby in itself, fan history research is a never ending task. I did my bit. Let others take up the work. You know, the new generation.

Truth is, I derive infinitely more pleasure and sense of accomplishment from publishing eight stories and eight poems by Canadian authors in any issue of my POLAR BOREALIS magazine. Figuring out the exact date someone spilled ink on their copy of WHY I HATE EASTERN FEN doesn't cut it any more.

So, apologies for boring you. The footnotes are an example of the kind of thing I've now dedicated my life to avoiding.

LOVECRAFT AND FILMS

Contrary to his self-promoted reputation as a determined recluse, Lovecraft was actually quite gregarious. When living in New York city he often went to live theatre and cinema performances, sometimes with his wife Sonia, sometimes with his friends, but never alone. He was near-sighted, and on these occasions wore his glasses. Most of the time he did without.

His primary interest was the meal and social aspects of the “night out,” as rarely did anything on stage or on screen meet with his approval. Not enough cosmic horror, you see. Also, he had little patience with commercial art aimed at the masses.

This is why most such outings rate a bare mention in his letters. But every now and then he offers an opinion.

BEN-HUR (1925) – *“I saw Ben-Hur last September and found it immensely powerful. My liking for broad scenic and architectural effects made me appreciate the settings very much, while my life-long admiration of Rome and her war-like civilization gave me many a thrill as the legions and their imperial eagles marched across the field of view.”* (Letter to August Derleth, December 11, 1926)

THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI (1919) – *“Speaking of the Cinema—it is my deepest regret that I never saw THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI, which everyone tells me had more of the truly weird and fantastic than any other film ever made... I have heard that the original negative is in such poor condition that no fresh prints can be made, but hope that it s fame may someday lead to its reproduction with new actors and duplicate scenery.”* (Letter to August Derleth, December 11, 1926)

FRANKENSTEIN (1931) – *“Most radio and cinema versions of classics constitute a combination of high treason and murder in the first degree—I’ll never get over the cinematic mess that bore the name (about the only bond of kinship to the book!) of FRANKENSTEIN.”* (Letter to Robert E. Howard, April 8, 1934)

THE GOLEM (1920) – *“The one weird film I did see was THE GOLEM, based on a medieval legend of an artificial giant. In this production the settings were semi-futuristic, some of the ancient gabled houses of Prague’s narrow streets being made to look like sinister old men with peaked hats.”* (Letter to August Derleth, December 16, 1926.)

THE THIEF OF BAGHDAD (1924) – *“I never attend films nowadays and don’t even keep track of the names of pictures and performers of the present. The last film I saw which was any good was THE THIEF OF BAGHDAD—three or four years ago. That had a real Dunsanian touch in its Arabesque scenic setting.”* (Letter to August Derleth, October 8, 1927)

ON THE SUITABILITY OF LOVECRAFT’S WRITING FOR FILMS – *“Whilst in the Bristol we accidentally encountered a friend of Loveman’s—a pleasant chap from Cleveland named Leonard Gaynor. He is now connected with the Paramount cinema firm, and expressed great interest in my work when Loveman described it to him. However—in cold fact nothing of mine could ever be suitable for his purposes. Cinemas want ‘action’—whereas my one specialty is ‘atmosphere’.”* (Letter to Lilian D. Clark, July 10, 1931)

The above are examples of what makes Lovecraft’s letters so fascinating.

MY SPACED-OUT DIARY

I used to keep journals, starting in 1967. Occurred to me might offer a glimpse into the past some may find intriguing. It offers striking proof of my immaturity, plus occasional accounts of contemporary events you've probably never heard of. Much that is boring and/or embarrassing has been left out.

JANUARY 1967 – Living in Toronto, age 15, attending Jarvis Collegiate High School.

January 1 – Sunday: The major event is that I saw KHARTOUM starring Heston and Olivier. Absolutely fantastic... I am so tired I just want to go to bed and read Bob Hope's WOMEN I LOVE. He is my favourite comedian... Some sort of 48 hour truce was broken by order of U.S. General Westmoreland. Reason: thousands of Viet Cong infiltrating everywhere. Shows you can't trust anybody... News says the Aussies are the best soldiers. They don't count a Viet Cong dead till they put their foot on them.

January 2 – Monday: I worked hard at F's family store today. We took inventory for five hours and I got paid five dollars... I showed F the latest 8mm film I made. He liked my stick figure SAINT cartoon (inspired by the opening credits of the TV show) and little else.

January 3 – Tuesday: May the 8mm version of TWENTY MILLION MILES TO EARTH I ordered come soon... The teachers were easy on us at school today, but all the same I found it hard. I dread French. I fear gymnastics... Turns out F so liked the SAINT cartoon I animated he wants me to do a four minute version. I will try.

January 4 – Wednesday: I just saw "1984" on TV. A first-class classic movie if you ask me... A new TV show THE INVADERS starts next Tuesday. It should be interesting... Of course, I never miss a session of STAR TREK The show is fantastic... I would like to be a professional writer of science fiction novels. I wonder, I sure would like to try it at least. I would ask for complete rights, \$100, and 25% royalties. Well, that depends if I am good enough.

January 5 – Thursday: I am now determined to become a professional writer. I have a great idea for a book. The world is destroyed by war and the survivors fight for their lives with modern weapons against mutants. It would have an interesting ending too, mankind would die out. Well, we'll see... At school today I got back my four-page science fiction story "Invasion Scout." I received 78% for it. Miss W said it was very good, and though the ending was anticipated it still had plenty of impact... Man, I have all kinds of ideas for the future. I sure would like to become a writer!

January 6 – Friday: Had swimming class today. Let me tell you the procedure. First we run down the clammy stairs into a clammy room with clammy spectator

seats facing the 15 ft by 50 ft pool. We strip naked. No swim suits allowed. Not coed, unfortunately. We go into the shower room. Sometimes the water is cold, rarely hot. The latter is bad, because the pool is always cold, and adapting to a hot shower makes entering the pool even more excruciating. Especially since the metal shutters over the windows are always open, even in winter. On sliding into the pool I shouted "*This isn't water, it's melted ice!*" Got a laugh, even from Mr. C. Anyway, everyone had to do breaststroke laps, except me. I was allowed to dogpaddle back and forth across the shallow end. Best I could do. Quite a challenge to avoid being rammed by the rest of the class doing their laps. 10E swim class not much fun for me.

January 7 – Saturday: Went over to F's and we had a snowball fight. Then he hauled out some technicolour slides his store had received along time ago. They were of nude women. They didn't sell and his parents had forgotten about them. Well, I am not quite mature yet, but I am mature enough to wish I wasn't so shy. Especially after seeing these. Some seemed more lust-worthy than others, but I'm hardly in a position to pick and choose. Maybe someday.

January 8 – Sunday: I told Mom about the slides and she said "*Sex is all right as long as you don't become obsessed by it.*" I guess so... F is afraid his parents will find out. He's afraid to hide the slides in his room. If discovered there will be hell to pay... Hmm, maybe I should suggest he give them to me? Or would that be obsessive? Hmm.

January 9 – Monday: Bought a FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND today, issue #43. Painting of Chris Lee as Dracula on cover. Great photos of dinosaurs from Harryhausen's ANIMAL WORLD which I've never seen. Thinking of sending away for back issues. Used to have a great collection but dad threw them out... Today B, a girl in my class, wore a miniskirt about ten inches above the knee and also a tight black sweater. No wonder I get mediocre marks. Hard to concentrate.

January 10 – Tuesday: Mom is throwing a party in the living room for the chief operator of CHUM who is going out west to work at a country music station. Everybody very loud. Already people upstairs thumping angrily on the ceiling. Makes it difficult to get my homework done.

January 11 – Wednesday: Stopped in at the Japan Camera centre and they had 8mm editions of monster movies! Could only afford one, so bought BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN starring Boris Karloff. Only 12 minutes long but a good selection of best scenes from the movie.

January 12 – Thursday: I would like to become a professional writer. Got changes in mind for my proposed book. First, it would open up in an Earth bar with the hero getting soused... the evil religious sect teams up with the lizard-like aliens to harass

the hovercraft people... get all names from Latin. Use plenty of humour and description. Be sure to play up methods of thinking, particularly those of the lizards... I think I would enjoy writing this. Wouldn't it be great if it got published?

January 13 – Friday: Watched FORBIDDEN PLANET on TV. Greatest SF film ever... Mom's friend Mr. E dropped by to give me a Christmas present, a 620 Watt 120 volt lamp for my movie making. Wow! He told me that last he heard the Boris Karloff project to be filmed at Casa Loma here in Toronto was still on and with his connections he might be able to get me in to meet him. Double wow!... Got three essays to write for school. I'm falling behind. I failed first term. Got to catch up.

January 14 – Saturday: Have a hell of a lot of homework to do. That's the sad bit. Here's the good. Congratulate me. I've done an outline for the first chapter of my first novel. Not sure if I should include the lizard attack I have in mind. Maybe put in the second chapter.

January 15 – Sunday: I suppose I'll keep making changes to my book as time goes on and ideas keep popping into my head, but wouldn't it be great if it got published by my 17th birthday? Gives me leeway of about a year and a half. Should be plenty of time.

January 16 – Monday: I plan to make another movie in my bedroom. Sure got plenty of light now. Got a script too. Just need to figure out how to make a monster I can animate. Plaster of Paris added to my G.I. Joe? Going to need it for making sets at least. Will need paint, too. Should be fun.

January 17 – Tuesday: Today a school assembly. Everybody rude. We all got a stern lecture in addition to whatever it was we were supposed to listen to. Nobody paying attention... I like the faded WW I frescoes on the walls. Supposed to stir patriotism I guess. I find them interesting. Most of the students could care less... In Geo Class Mr. D said the city of Copenhagen used a special means to lure shipping there. Could we guess what it was? K whispered loudly enough for all to hear "Free beer." Got a laugh.

January 18 – Wednesday: Have a history test to study for. I'd rather not... Got back the film I took of the night-time torchlight Centennial parade in front of the Ontario Parliament. Turned out beautiful. Even now I remember shifting back and forth on my feet trying to keep warm waiting for the parade to start. Due to a nearby chap who had a light attached to his camera I was even able to take shots of marchers who weren't carrying torches... Saw latest STAR TREK episode where Kirk fights a Gorn on a planet all by himself. Sort of like my lizard people. Great minds think alike, eh?

January 19 – Thursday: We had a history test. I might have passed. Hope so... Today I bought “*The Monster Wheel Affair*,” the MAN FROM UNCLE book #8. Got them all, and first editions too... Hey YOU! Are you enjoying reading this diary? It has two purposes: 1) to remind me of my past in the future whenever I’m in the mood to read this, and 2) provide someone else some enjoyment in finding out how a 20th century 15-year-old mind works. Are you my nephew, or my grandson? Who can tell? Not me. I’m probably dead. Or at least very old when you’re reading this.

January 20 – Friday: The most exciting event of the day is that the government contributed to my film enthusiasm, i.e. mom gave me her monthly \$8 family allowance grant. I rushed downtown and bought FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE WOLFMAN Love those 8mm Castle films... Just watched THE TIME MACHINE on TV. There’s a good film for you... The Harryhausen film !,000,000 YEARS B.C. should be in theatres soon... I wish there were more of his films available in 8mm... I ordered his TWENTY MILLION MILES TO EARTH almost a month ago. Hope it hasn’t got lost in the mail.

January 22 – Sunday: Went over to F’s house. We played poker. Then we made castles out of bottle tops and knocked them over. Next we played a sort of bowling game using his GOLDFINGER game. We agreed the next animated film we make will see my light on my tripod and his camera on his tripod. Makes sense.

January 23 – Monday: The History test came back. I got 21 out of 35. Marks for others ranged from 35 to 0. On the whole Mr. B was disgusted... I think I’ll dip into the news today and record something for history. Anti-Mao forces are mobilising 300,000 troops in three Western provinces. But they’re not equipped with modern weapons like the 2,500,000 man red army is. Premier Chou has committed the army to Mao’s group. The reactionary leader is President Liu Shao-chi. He doesn’t stand a chance. Both groups are as far left as it is possible to be. Even the Russians say it is carrying Karl Marx too far... The Viet Cong blew up a patrol boat and shot down the helicopter coming to its rescue... I bought EERIE MAGAZINE #8 today. I have the previous 6. I hear issue #1 was published in pocketbook form for copyright reasons.

January 24 – Tuesday: In gym today we had a sort of test. Had 60 seconds to lay as many shots through a basketball hoop as we could. I got it in three times. Oh, well, never claimed to be an athlete... I hear STAR TREK is going to run for five more seasons. I hope so. It’s a great show.

January 25 – Wednesday: Apparently we made so much noise in the gym dressing room Mr. C decided to punish us. He made us run back and forth in the gym, stopping when he blew his whistle, so we’d drop and do push-ups till we were ordered to run again. He told me I’m out of shape. No kidding. I have as much stamina as a Polar Bear wandering across the Sahara. I mean that was torture! Felt

like every hollow internal-organ was about to burst. I hate gym class... In French class Mr. A, who claims Parisian waiters are the lowest form of life next to Parisian cab drivers, ordered K to step inside a closet to demonstrate "*Il se cache*" which means "*He hides himself*." He did so, and settled in as if he intended to stay. When Mr. A ordered him to emerge, he came slithering out with arms extended like the Frankenstein Monster. Got a good laugh.

January 26 – Thursday: I got \$5 from F to buy indoor 8mm film. We plan to film something this coming Saturday. My light should make a big difference... For some reason I was reminded of the Rideau theatre in downtown Ottawa. That's where I saw FIRST MEN IN THE MOON, HELP, THE HUMAN DUPLICATORS and other great films....

January 27 – Friday: Day of tragedy. Mom very upset. Apollo capsule caught fire during ground test. Three astronauts killed, among them Virgil "Gus" Grissom whom mom and dad were friends with when our family lived at Wright Patterson airbase in Dayton, Ohio in the mid-50s. Though Dad was RCAF, he and Gus were taking the same courses. Just recently Dad briefly met him again in Toronto when Gus was on a publicity tour. My bother remembers Gus because Mom and Dad threw a lot of parties back then. Apparently, I also met Gus, many times, but I was too young to remember. Mom says he was a really great guy. She is very sad. Ironically, the sci-fi movie THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL was scheduled to be shown on TV, but it got cancelled to make way for the news coverage.

January 28 – Saturday: F and I went to the Downtown Theatre and saw BRIDES OF FU MANCHU followed by PSYCHO CIRCUS (previously known as CIRCUS OF FEAR). Both starred Christopher Lee. Such a great actor. He lifted my spirits... Then we visited Funland but I insisted we leave because I found it too depressing... Spirits back up because I bought THE SINISTER BARRIER pocketbook by Eric Frank Russell. Looks to be good... Spent rest of the day filming more of my SAINT cartoons at F's place. Had planned to construct Martian sets for our next version of WAR OF THE WORLDS but didn't have enough time. We each ate four hotdogs while filming because his parents let us go into their store on the ground floor and grab their "fast food" hotdogs for free whenever we want.

January 29 – Sunday: More interesting news. Bombs exploded at six Yugoslav embassies and consulates: one in Ottawa, one in Toronto, and the rest in the USA. The Yugoslavs blame rogue Nazis left over from the war. Coincidentally the Red Guard in China held a rally demanding the right to crush the head of Tito's pet dog. Politics can be weird. Hmm, maybe China planted the bombs?... Russia today claimed the deaths of the three astronauts was due to U.S. haste to beat Russia to the Moon... Just watched on TV a version of "HENRY V" recorded at the Ontario Stratford Festival. It was great. Minimal props and sets but terrific acting. William Shatner

used to perform there I heard.

January 30 – Monday: Today it was announced that Mao's troops had surrounded the rebels. He seems to be having a devil of a time staying in power. Oh, well, as long as they are in trouble and we're not... I have given up on TWENTY MILLION MILES TO EARTH. The mail ate it I guess... Have to study for a science test tomorrow, but I'm too tired... Also must get around to writing my essay for history class. Was assigned "*Why Hitler lost the war.*" I suppose I can't use the movies I've seen as sources. Will have to do some reading.

January 31 – Tuesday: I feel miserable for three reasons: 1) I got 12 out of 40 in the science test, 2) learned that Chaffee, White and Grissom did not die instantly, and 3) they could have got out if they had a quick-release hatch. But they didn't. Much delay to come redesigning the capsule... All three buried today. Mom in a sombre mood. Me too... It was announced that Grissom had written a book, or at least started one. Incomplete or not, I want to read it if it gets published... Saw a recap of US space stuff to date on TV. A couple of unmanned Mariner probes sent to Venus and Mars. Unmanned craft snapping photos have orbited the Moon. Some deliberately crashed, taking pictures up to the last second. Even better, unmanned probes landed on the Moon and took photos of their surroundings. Meanwhile, the 2-man Gemini missions have spent up to 14 days in space and even rendezvoused with each other. Astronauts have walked in space (Ted White was the first American to do so). Things have come a long way since I and my family stood on our front lawn and watched Sputnik pass overhead in October 1957. With any luck I'll live long enough to see Men walking on Mars.

To be continued...

MARVIN'S MIGHTY MAYAN MARATHON

In may of 1981 I spent a month touring the ancient cities of Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras under the guidance of Professor Marvin Cohodas of the University of British Columbia (I was auditing the course. No marks involved. I had already graduated.) This is part #10 of my account.

Note: the first 9 parts were previously published in my Perzine SPACE CADET issues #1 (December, 1994) to #8 (August 1997) & #10 (October 1998). These can be found at: <https://efanzines.com/SpaceCadet/>

MAY 6, 1981 – Wednesday: Leaving Mexico City

Had everything carefully packed and ready to sign out of the hotel Mario Angelo. Paid Bill.

Whole group by bus to Anthropological museum. I immediately rushed to the Aztec section to pay homage to Coatlique again and snap a few more pictures. The skull rack, the giant jaguar, the famous calendar stone hanging on the wall, the Stone of Tizoc, the miniature temple, the model of the city, the war canoe, all subjects for my camera.

Too much effort to follow Marvin's lectures. I've heard most of it before anyway. Left to myself, I enjoy things more. I have time to absorb, to appreciate, and not worry about marks.

For example, while Marvin lectured on the Yaxchilan stela in the Maya room, I went outside to the Bonampak mural building, a reproduction of the original, and flash-shot the murals in a systematic fashion, except those on the inside of the front walls which were largely hidden as an iron bar prevents you from stepping inside. One could hop over the bar if it weren't for the ever present guards searching for an incident to alleviate their boredom.

Snapped Pacal's jade mask, though not the mock-up of his tomb, for soon I'd be seeing the real thing. End of lecture. Still time left before we had to leave. Some of us decide to see the zoo across the street. I wind up walking with D, who isn't having any fun at all. Terribly worried about keeping up, about passing the course. We sit in a little soft-drink stand and I go over some basics about the solar cycle and associated religious symbolism.

Then quickly through the zoo with her. Wanted to see a Quetzal bird, figured they'd have at least one or two, but astonished to learn they are extinct. Still can't quite believe it. Hope to read proof to the contrary sometime.

Zoo had some nice jaguars, though kept in cruelly small cages. I remember Professor Marvin Cohodas telling us during one of the pre-trip orientation lectures not to worry about Jaguars in the jungle because they were no bigger than ocelots. Well, one of the jaguars in the zoo was at least 8 feet long! I'm a little less enthusiastic about the prospect of running around in the Guatemalan jungle, especially if I'm being chased by a jaguar!

Caught a Reforma 100 bus back to the hotel on Laerma II for 3 pesos. After buying a few groceries to take with me, including a dozen cans of fruit juice, began writing out a bunch of postcards. Two taxis arrived before I could finish, so only a

couple cards posted.

Marvin and three others already left by bus for Villahermosa. Waited for an hour with increasing nervousness while four of the girls were out buying food. Finally they return and we board. Expected too much for first class. Forgot it's only one step above second class. First class an old wooden coach with simple upholstered seats. Washroom has no toilet paper, no light, no water for flushing the toilet, and a broken toilet seat smeared with excrement. Found out second class a nightmare of vomiting and urinating in the aisle, but first class no fun either. Promised a 16-hour trip to Palenque but took 27-hours. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Pulled out after dark circa 8:15 p.m. Group in merry mood despite grungy surroundings. Leave through infamous slums of Mexico City. Group of men by the track shout something. L turns to wave and shout a reply but flinches as a bottle smashes against the window. For the next thirty minutes the inhabitants of the slums pelt the train with rocks and bottles on the assumption that anyone who can afford to travel by train is rich and therefore worthy of being stoned, or so several Mexican passengers inform us. Standard procedure is to close all the windows and lower the blinds.

Only go to the bathroom twice in 27 hours. Use the flashlight and my own toilet paper, and my shoulder bag to block the door because it wouldn't lock. This was the woman's bathroom. Such distinctions ignored on this train.

For a while we did have great fun. It's M's birthday, so a bottle of Tequila is being passed around. First salt, then Tequila, then lime. Remembering what happened to me at one party where I had consumed half a bottle of the evil stuff, I drank sparingly. We played a game where people took turns doing something special, like singing or telling jokes. I recited a few of my poems.

An old man in a neat grey suit got on, and for someone who can't play the violin, played his very well. Only hit us up once for pesos. I have a distinct memory of him up at the front of the coach playing for a trio of conductors.

Young couple with a very young son joined us, accepting Tequila and attempting to communicate. At one point the chap asked if he could have my straw hat. Would be polite in the Mexican fashion to say yes, but I couldn't take any chances and had to say no, as I needed it desperately to protect myself from the sun.

Another fellow, bearded and with open fly, sat on the armrest next to M watching us weird gringos till he got bored. Took about an hour. Mexicans are not shy. He gradually fell asleep. Mexicans kept telling our Tequila party to shut-up and be quiet, but we carried on in our merry way until one by one we fell asleep.

MAY 7, 1981 – Wednesday: Arriving Palenque

Woke in extremely muggy lowland region roundabout La Venta Olmec country. Numerous grey thatched-roof huts. Saw swampy areas and river delta regions with rushes and lots of white egrets everywhere that made me think of documentary films of Africa.

Train begins climbing to higher ground. Fields filled with stringy, long-horned cattle, trees, and huts each with a fence and collection of turkeys and/or chickens. Occasionally a television antenna.

Becomes not quite as muggy as before, but still depressingly hot and humid. On top of that soot from the diesel engines are turning our clothes and faces various shades of black and grey. Am holding in bowels since determined not to go to the washroom, but beginning to get painful.

Told we'd get into Palenque around Noon. Got to Coatzacoalcos on coast at that time. Only about 2/3rds of the way. Won't get in to Palenque till 11:30 p.m. Disheartening.

Same phenomenon at Coatzacoalcos as at all the other towns. No sooner does the train stop when it's boarded by old ladies and very young boys selling everything from pop to dripping popsicles, watermelons to rice pilaf, and tortillas to semi-smutty joke books. Each crying their wares up and down the aisle. No peace at such stops. So many stops. Definitely the slow train.

As we pull out of town we observe oil-type operations. Or maybe storage for the port. Yeah, Coatzacoalcos probably main port for Villahermosa and surrounding oil-producing region. Lush, jungle-type area as well, though dotted with farms. Some areas raw earth where the vegetation has been completely cleared away and new industry set up. Strangely enough, the worker shanty towns are set up in the same dusty space rather than in the shade of nearby trees. Slum huts near every town. Some towns nothing but slums.

Saw a prosperous-looking worker with a shiny steel helmet climb aboard at an industrial site, then get off a few miles further down the track at a small village consisting of a row of one room shacks, each with a tiny yard. The worker sits astride a hammock within his hut as wife and kiddies crowd around. Then he pushes them away and takes off his shirt. His wife hands him a beer. He lies down with his back flat against the earth floor to cool off. Dirt floor in the shade under the thatched-roof best air conditioner available I guess. He's one of the lucky ones. Got a good job. Yet, basically, a poverty-stricken region of the country. However, even the poorest hut has a clothes line with many bright clothes attempting to dry despite the humidity.

One hut at the bottom of a hill close to the tracks, its doorway partly blocked by two sturdy grim-faced women, has its inner walls festooned with vastly-faded nude pin-ups. Local prostitutes servicing the nearest industrial site, I assume.

Night falls. At least in the day you have the fields to look at, and the small but hideous towns are always interesting, but at night you can't see a thing; not even inside the train. The interior lights are so feeble it is impossible to read.

Seems to me the conductors think they're working on the Orient Express, judging by their air of self-importance. Though only one is truly nasty, kicking M off the steps between two cars, literally aiming a kick at M, though stopping just short of impacting his body. M is ill, or hungover, or both, and needs the best illusion of fresh air he can find. I share my fruit juice with him, and with the others. Constant liquid intake means the difference between life and death in this dry country.

Our second night on the train is dreary, broken only by a bottle-throwing fight between two Mexicans. Conductor calms the angriest one down and leads him away, the loser cautiously following behind. Both came from second class where, from the accounts of those of our group who chose to save ticket money, conditions are even worse.

We arrive at the Palenque train station. We haul ass quickly, since the train halts for less than a minute. We are met by "Alfonso," sent by Marvin, who'd arrived hours earlier by bus. Given a quick ride to the hotel Tulija, three stories of air-conditioned rooms. Paradise!

I get a double-bed to myself, Marvin takes the other bed, and M elects to sleep on the floor. Just as I'm dropping off to sleep someone comes pounding on the door. I open it, expecting it to be one of the girls, but no, turns out to be a drunken Mexican clad only in his underwear. It takes me ten minutes to convince him I do not speak Spanish, and another ten to get rid of him. You don't see many drunks in Mexico, but the ones you do see tend to be whoppers.

Finally, to the whirring of the ceiling fan above and the crickets outside, I fall asleep.

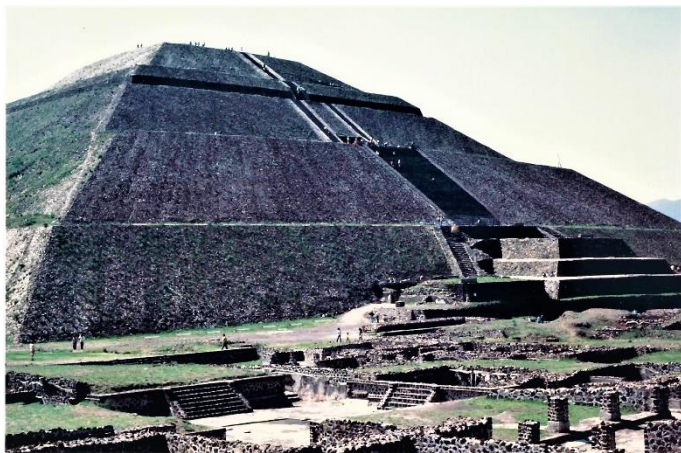
To be continued...

MARVIN'S MIGHTY MAYAN MARATHON PHOTOS

Selected from the 477 slides I took during the trip.



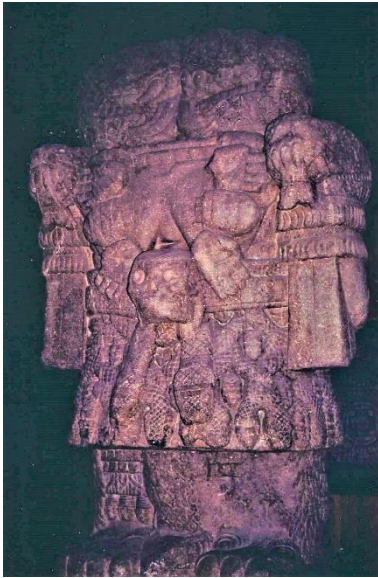
Here I am at Vancouver Airport on April 30th, 1981. My journal entry reads: *"Mom saw me off. Got everything I need. Thanks to Army-Navy store sale, I look like a character out of a Graham Greene or Somerset Maugham novel. White cotton pants, white cotton shirt, light checked tan and white jacket, light straw hat. Am prepared to endure the sun and the heat. Only cost me \$40."*



Sunday, May 3, 1981. Teotihuacan. *"Climbed the pyramid of the Sun. Feeling vaguely threatened by the force of the wind as if it might push me off into the valley below. Walked all the way down the steep steps, not sliding on my ass like some tourists..."*

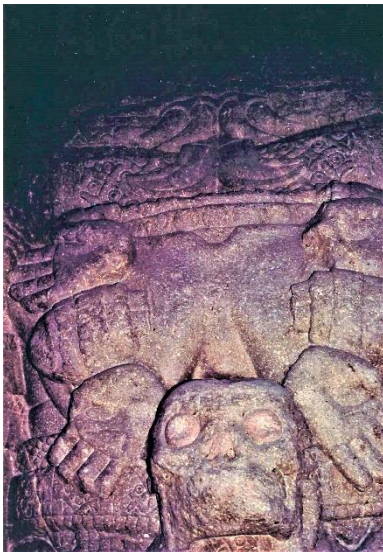


Me on top of the Pyramid of the Sun. Pyramid of the Moon is in the background. *"Apex of the two-hundred foot high Sun pyramid, giant that it is, is only a small platform ten-foot square or so. All that bulk to support what must have been a tiny temple. Poor vendors climb all the way to the top with cases of pop for the thirsty tourists. Nevertheless, a dream come true to be standing here. What a magnificent city this once was."*



Wednesday, May 6, 1981. Mexico City. Anthropological Museum. Somber, dark interior. Hard to light with flash. My favourite pagan idol, Coatlicue, “Serpent Skirt.” (Earth Goddess.) Her size not as impressive as expected, only eight feet high or so, but her head, actually two serpent heads nose to nose representing the two fountains of blood resulting from her decapitation, is definitely awesome.

She was found by accident in an excavation near the remains of the Great Temple in 1790. Promptly reburied, re-excavated, and reburied again. There was concern she would inspire living Aztecs to revolt. Not till 1824 was she finally exhumed, yet not on public display till 1890. She retains her capacity to awe.



Another view of Coatlicue’s “face.” From this angle she resembles Jabba the Hut. She’s wearing a necklace of severed hands and hearts dangling on her breasts above a skull pendent. Looking at the top picture, note the blood serpents sprouting from her severed wrists. And her skirt of snakes represents a general drenching of her blood

The sculpture virtually screams “Look at me! I’m dead! I’ve been sacrificed!” From the Aztec point of view, a cheerful and optimistic sculpture. For, having been sacrificed, she is about to be reborn. And by implication, give birth once again to the Principle Aztec Deity, Huitzilopochtli, the Blue Hummingbird War God.



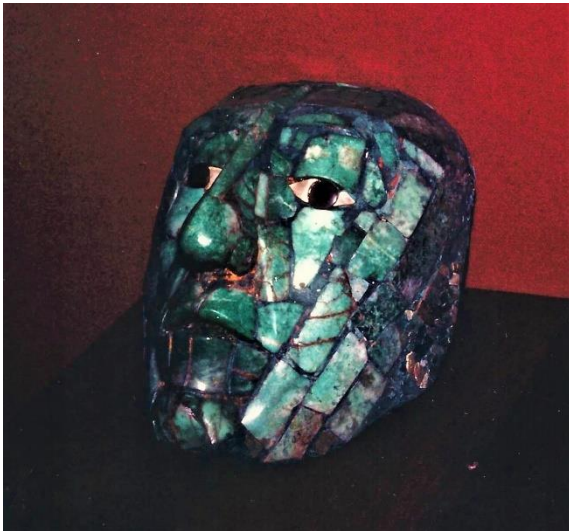
This is Cihuacoatl, another version of the Earth Goddess. She, too, has a serpent skirt, but also a skull-like head, and her hands are intact. Her temple was called Tlillancale, “the House of Darkness,” and she demanded war and sacrificial victims. She is a voracious Earth Goddess of Toltec origin, said to be the patron deity of the Toltec ruling dynasty through which the Aztec Emperors claimed descent. In a sense, she was the mother of the Aztec nation, and was greatly revered.

I don’t remember how tall this statue is, but since I’m looking up at it, I figure roughly 5 or 6 feet high on its pedestal. It is carved from basalt, which lends gravitas.



Okay, this is a jaunty figure outside the entrance of the anthropological Museum. It's believed to be Tlaloc, the Rain God. It was found in the ruins of Catlinchan and is a product of the Teotihuacan culture circa 400-600 A.D. Tlaloc is quite ubiquitous, being present in Mayan, Toltec and Aztec mythology as well. This statue is about fifteen feet tall. It's massive.

In Aztec times the Tlaloc cult was not very jolly. To ensure the rainy season would return, young children and babies were sacrificed, their innocence ensuring the purity of the rain. If the children were seen to cry and shed tears the onlookers rejoiced, for it "guaranteed" the rainy season would be bountiful.



This is the jade death mask of K'inich Janab Pacal, the greatest King of Palenque, whose works and tomb I'll be describing in the next installment. This mask has since been reconstructed incorporating all the pieces originally found, including massive ear pendants and multiple necklaces.

Pacal was born in 603 A.D., became King at the age of twelve, defeated several neighbouring cities, was a great builder, and passed away in 683 A.D., to be buried in a magnificent vault hidden within the Temple of Inscriptions.



This is the famous Aztec Calendar Stone. It was originally fixed between the two sets of steps of the great temple but was buried when the Spanish tore it down. Its complex iconography represents the "current" era of the 5th Sun, the origin of the Aztecs, the defeat of the Tepanecs in 1428, the accession of Motecuhzoma II (Montezuma), and much else. In general it is a triumphal monument equating the glory of the Empire with the promise of the age of the 5th Sun.



Wednesday, May 6, 1981.
Mexico City Anthropology Museum. Reproductions of the murals found in the Mayan city of Bonampak. 100% scale, housed in replica of original building. Jaguar pelt guy a triumphant King. Upset chap on right is a captive destined for sacrifice. Elaborate animal head-pieces were actually quite light weight, being made mostly from something akin to paper Mache.



Chap with Jaguar tunic and Jaguar spear is a King grasping the hair of (probably) the opposing king. This be a standard iconic symbol (hero pose) representing victory in battle, equivalent to the ancient Egyptian image of the Pharaoh grasping the hair of his foe with one hand and preparing to smite him with a mace held in the other. Historical coincidence. Not at all related.



Bonampak army advancing to battle. Lack of detail here and there due to fading of originals. The glyphs on the shields did not in fact appear on them. They were added by the artist to identify particular individuals. This is propaganda art. I doubt they went in to combat wearing the animal head-pieces depicted. Maybe the feather headdress. Aztec Eagle and Jaguar helmets were more practical.



Striking image of court nobles conversing. Arm posture and hand gestures typical in Mayan art. Note how elaborate and ornate the clothing is, and quite unique to the individual. On the one hand, straight forward display of status and rank, and on the other, implications of rivalry and one-upmanship. I think chap in light-blue feather headdress wins. I wonder if they ever had a bad loin-cloth day.



These are fan wielders. The fans are made of arrays of feathers, so very light. Probably too delicate to wave about much, so I believe not used for cooling purposes, but maybe. I suspect symbols of rank that also provided shade for the big shots so honoured.

My main point is that these are most likely court servants and as such, elaborately garbed to add to the dignity of the nobles they serve. Visual proof, if any needed, that the King and his court were wealthy and powerful.

The white wrist cuffs and collars were made of stiff paper and were symbolic of both purity and sacrifice. One way of reminding the court servants of both their privileged status and potential fate if they misbehaved.



Pretty image of Court ladies gossiping on a palace bench? Nope. Actually a non-fatal mutilation sacrifice scene. The woman seated at the right, probably the Queen, is drawing a rope studded with agave thorns through her tongue. Her blood will spill out on her white tunic and onto the paper rolls in the basket. Evidence of self-sacrifice to be publicly displayed. Don't ask what the Kings pierced.



Wednesday, May 6, 1981. View from the train on the way to Palenque. This be an upper-class village hut. Rain on a tin roof doesn't strike me as worth the cost involved. Too noisy. I suspect the thatch-roofed huts in behind are more habitable. Certainly cooler. The two local men contemplating the train seem relaxed and content. Not sure I'd call the scene idyllic. Suspect life not leisurely.



May 7, 1981. The train is now sauntering through the lowland region near La Venta, or Olmec country. Very hot, humid, and muggy. Bamboo huts with thatched roofs ideal in this climate. High peaked roof keeps out the rain while allowing hot air to rise, thus cooling the earth floor. Good place for a siesta in the heat of Noon. Not laziness, but a necessary and practical survival habit.

OOK! OOK! SLOBBER! DROOL!

(Letters of Comment)

Note: Annoying comments by God-Editor [*are in brackets*] immediately after introduction of topic in question. This, a feeble attempt to create the illusion of a conversation in the interests of conviviality.

Nothing yet, of course, because this is only the first issue. Write to me at the.graeme.bcsfazine@gmail.com and tell me what you think.