

Preface: PIPER'S FOUNDATION
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I have a unique privilege: I have the legal right, acknowledged by the copyright owners, to do stories in H. Beam Piper's worlds.

This didn't come lightly. It was given to me by Beam Piper himself many years ago, long before I had any suspicion that I might write science fiction. Beam apparently knew my future better than I did.

It happens sometimes: an instant bond between two men on very short acquaintance. It was that way with Beam. He was twice my age. I had admired his writing. He had never heard of me, but was fascinated by my tales of the space program. We met, I think, in Poul Anderson's room, and we began talking; when we realized the time, it was dawn. The next night also ended at dawn; and for both of us the convention ended too quickly.

Afterwards we corresponded. I was then a graduate student in political science, studying the history of government, the pain and hopes and dreams of political philosophers and statesmen, the brutal realities of politicians . . .

Our letters read like treatises. Beam, though not formally educated, had read more books than most professors; and he was a keen observer of human nature. I for my part asked questions, or called attention to works he had not seen, adding little to the vast tapestry of the future Beam had conceived; and he expressed his thanks by of-

fering me an equal right to the finished product. It was more than I had coming, but Beam never believed in doing anything by halves.

Then my degree was finished at last, and with my wife and young son I moved to California, where I was general editor of a top secret Air Force forecast of missile technology; a job that required me to understand everything, from warheads to guidance to rocket motor casings. I threw myself into the work. Beam continued to write, and I replied with post cards, or not at all; and one day I heard that he was dead by his own hand.

I didn't believe it. I called the police in Williamsport, convinced that he had been murdered by someone clever; but no, the note was authentically Beam Piper.

There remain questions. His extensive notes have never been found; yet I know that he kept a well-organized set of looseleaf notebooks, with entries color-coded; a star map of Federation and Empire; a history of the Systems States War; and other materials including some of my own letters which answered historical questions he had posed. Somewhere out there is a gold mine.

It isn't all lost. I have his letters; and some of his notes can be deduced from his writing. Beam firmly believed that history repeated itself; or at least that one can use real history to construct a future history. The casual reader will not easily deduce the historical models Beam employed. He was familiar with forgotten details: as an example, one of the battle scenes in *Lord Kalvan* is drawn directly from the obscure Battle of Barnet in the Wars of the Roses. He knew the grand sweep of history, but he also knew the small tales; the intrigues and petty jealousies, heroism and cowardice, honor and betrayals.

This, I think, is why his stories have such a ring of truth. They seem real because many were real. Such things as

happen in Piper's statecraft have happened time and again to real politicians.

And to real heroes and heroines: for all his knowledge, Beam was no dry intellectual. He was a story teller; a man who could keep you up all night with his books and tales. He had respect for the intellect and for intellectuals, but he was never one of the breed.

He was a cavalier.