

No Rayguns No Rocket Ships  
By Frank Gasperik

I think I have loved Science Fiction since the 1950's.

That was when I rescued a science fiction mag from the trash can, where Miss Henson our 6th grade teacher, had thrown it with obvious distaste. Figuring that anything she disliked, I had to check out, I saved and cached it when I was sent out to empty the trash. . . . Part of the punishment for daring to question her about something long forgotten. I knew from her attitude that she thought all things scientific were better left alone, and that only (in her estimation) art had any validity. Anything she was against, I was for.

Having listened carefully to everything on Radio, and an avid follower of Buck Rogers and Flash Gordon in the Sunday Comics, I was delighted to read of possible futures, that there was more than Rayguns and Rocket ships awaiting us.

I had taught myself to read, and had been reading at an adult level since 4th grade. Most of what we were ALLOWED to read bored me. This SF mag excited me. In it, there were stories that didn't give me the impression that I was being talked to as a child but as an equal. One of them told about Time travel. Not forwards and Backwards in time, but ACROSS TIME LINES! The story was written by Beam Piper. I didn't know it then, as I was rather un-fussy about who wrote what. . . . Nothing I had been given to read had made me want to look up anything written by the same author. . . . Except for Mark Twain.

At any rate, I read all the science fiction I could get my hands on and started looking for more works by specific authors. I found OMNILINGUAL in an anthology and tried to memorize it. This was something REALLY DIFFERENT! I checked out the name of the author and looked for more of his works. None in the library. . . . Ah well.

It was 10 years and a hitch in the Navy later, that I discovered used book stores and ACE DOUBLES, and REVOLT IN 2140. That story described my education to a tee. I had to find more of Piper's works and read everything he's penned.

It was in 1972 that I got my chance. I discovered FANDOM.

I'd been invited to a poker game at Larry Niven's. I didn't know who he was, or what he'd written, just that he was a writer with money. During a break in play, various stories were discussed and I brought up a scene from 4 Day Planet. The one where the protagonist describes blowing apart a Slasher that had gotten into the city boat pool with a "chopper" and everybody wondering where he'd gotten the practice with one. One of the writers said he'd never heard of that story by Beam. I had to wonder about that.

From that poker game and others, I found the LASFS and that led to conventions and since I was

playing FILK before it became big and was good on the 12 string guitar, parties. . . . And PRO parties.

Several years later, at a WESTERCON I first met Jim BAEN We didn't exactly like each other, but since I was friends with people who ACE either had in their stable or were courting, I was admitted to a few of the Ace parties. He did admit that I played a pretty good guitar.

Over the years, I had met many Fans, many of whom had never read Beam Piper. I tried to tell them of the depth of his writing and it's value, but met with varying success. Some found his books, some didn't. Some would Borrow a book and I'd never see it again. Ah well. . . . but those who read him were impressed. Those who looked up MORE piper expressed a desire to read more of him and asked me where they could find more.

I decided to try and do something about this. After all, It looked to me like Beam Piper had been locked into a Deep Dark Dungeon in the Castle of Ace Books and was desperate to be let out.

At a Westercon in San Francisco (Was that 76 or 78?) I was invited to the JIM BAEN Ace Books party by John Brunner, who was by now a friend. Jim Frankel was acting Door guard and told me in No Uncertain Terms that he didn't want me at that party. I looked around him and Waved at Karen Anderson who smiled and waved back. (Karen liked to Sing as did Poul) Poul was quick to invite me in, as did Larry Niven, Jerry Pournelle, BILL TUNING and RANDALL GARRET. With cries of COME ON IN FRANK, I was welcomed and invited by John Brunner to "Drink up, ACE is paying for the Liquor. "

After a few songs and a few discussions I had formulated a plan.

I approached Larry Niven and asked him if he thought that a reprint of Pipers works would be a good idea. His reply was something along the lines of; Yeah good idea Frank. I asked Jerry Pournelle (who knew, liked and respected Beam) if he'd consider Writing a sequel to Space Viking, was something like, Well, If somebody asked me, I'd consider it. When I talked to Bill Tuning and Randall Garrett about it, He said that he's love to do the sequel to LITTLE FUZZY. Randal told him to get back to the Typewriter then and get in shape.

Thus armed, I approached the CASTLE Guarded by Jim Baen.

The opening probe was simple. I asked him how ACE was doing and did they ever do reprints? His reply was something along the lines that ACE was hard to convince that Reprints sold well but if it made money, he and ACE was for it.

Now for the Storming of the ditch. I asked him if he'd like to see a way to make a LOT of money in sales for ACE for very little cost. THAT got his immediate attention.

"How?"

"Meet me for breakfast in the coffee shop at 11 am and I'll show you."

We agreed.

At that point I was called on for some guitar work, Plied with booze, taken to another party, and awoke the next morning with a Hangover that Gus Branhard would have considered Sufficient.

At eleven AM, I was in the Coffee shop preparing my forces for the assault on the BAEN wall, having a bloody Mary and considering coffee.

When Jim came in, looking like HE would like a bloody Mary. I got him one and we talked a bit. I could see he was interested but let him make the first sally.

"Ok Frank, What is it you wanted to show me."

I asked him to come with me and led him to the dealers room across the hall and a door or two down.

In there I took him to the first Book dealer and picked up the FIRST Piper I could find. It was the Ace Double A PLANET FOR TEXANS. It had a \$5 sticker on it. So did the Next Piper Ace Double. And the next. All Piper titles. I called the Dealer over and asked him why so much. His answer was that people were willing to pay more for Beam Piper stories than other writers. Jim's ears pricked up at that.

Story was the same at the other two book dealers we visited that morning . All the Piper books had prices varying from \$5 to \$8. Revolt in 2140 had the \$8 sticker on it. We went back to the coffee shop and had breakfast. At that point he asked my what I envisioned. I asked Jim to let me think about it and I'd tell him at his party that evening. He said OK. I made sure to ask him to inform Jim Frankel to let me through the door. I WAS IN!

I didn't party much that day, just played guitar and thought mostly.

That evening, I was at the ACE Suite on time, about 21:30 for the taking of the KEEP.

Jim Frankel allowed me through the door. . . . He didn't exactly bow, but he didn't bar me either. That was progress.

After nursing one drink with several of the pros I knew and introductions, to a few I didn't know, I spotted Jim looking in my direction. I pointed towards the bar and we met there. I refilled and asked him about Piper's literary estate, He said he could get it, what was it I proposed.

My suggestions were this. Reprints of Beams Original book Manuscripts in UNCUT form,. Collecting his Federation stories and putting them under covers, doing the same with the Cross Time stories and releasing the whole thing as boxed sets. THEN getting sequels to Little Fuzzy, Space Viking, THE COSMIC COMPUTER (Junkyard Planet) and others written and released. Jim asked me who did I think could do the sequels. I told him, People who had known Beam and liked and respected his work.

I called Bill Tuning over and asked him what he thought about doing a sequel to Little Fuzzy. Bill Jumped at it like a trout for a may fly.

A few minuets later I brought Jerry Pournelle into it and started a discussion of the politics in Space Viking. Jerry began to give an in-depth description and Jim asked him if he'd consider doing a sequel. Jerry pleaded a Heavy work load but said he'd consider it. Baen smiled.

The rest, as you know is history.

Jerry and John Carr and Rolland Green got interested in Lord Kalvan, The boxed Sets were released, Bill Tuning did the BEST job on a Fuzzy sequel, and Piper was again free in the world. I pity that ACE will NEVER allow REVOLT in 2140 to be re-released, but one unfortunately can not get everything one wants I suppose. I'm just glad that I was able to get H. Beam Piper reprinted and into the hands of readers again.

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