

# HAILING FREQUENCY

This will be a continuing open letter column showing some of the responses and suggestions that our readers have sent to us. Any comments on the comments below are welcome.

Dear Editor,

I just got *Stardate #1* at the place I buy most of my comics and games. Good stuff! I was expecting something comparable to the early issues of *The Space Gamer*, or maybe to more recent issues. This was better.

Specific Comments: I was wondering if the cover would be in color. I never dreamed the color the cover was going to be in! Feurisch! Fantastich! And pretty, too.

The "Datafile" on the Klingon/Romulan tech exchange was good, but I'm afraid that it merely looks like a sad attempt to cover for Paramount's goof: a Klingon bird-of-prey? Well.... Actually, it does fit in well with *The Klingons* supplement, and their endeavor to keep all the different plot threads, inconsistencies and all, within an overall consistency. A good piece.

"The Serpent Factor" adventure was excellent: a real centerpiece. It seemed reminiscent, somehow, of recent pre-programmed *Traveller* adventures (which have been very good recently). I liked it alot.

"The Treatise on Alcoholic Beverages" was excellent, although I don't believe the still. In space, a vacuum-still would be effective, and could be made without any electrical parts at all. Also, Joe Faust didn't list the *real* reason that copper tubing was used in distilling booze: iron pipes were used very early on and turned the booze into deadly poison. It's no fun going blind from bathtub gin, nosiree. I was very impressed by the disclaimer at the end: it's fun to joke about drunkenness, but the real thing is not funny. I admire Mr. Faust, and you, very much for that special note. I wish that more magazine editors could take that kind of care to be socially responsible for what they write.

James Van Hise's review of *Starship Troopers* and its responses was excellent: it reviewed not just the book, but a series of books written almost as a dialogue. I admired it tremendously.

And "Space Dock" was simple, but perfect.

For a first issue, you've really got a nice one here.

Jefferson P.  
Swycaffer  
San Diego, Cal.

*Thanks for all your nice comments, Jeff. We hope to keep the quality of the first issue consistent with the ones following. — DLK*

Dear Editor,

I finally saw Issue #1 and I liked it. Colorful. Informative. I liked Bill Barton's stuff, found the *Starship Troopers* article tedious and superfluous, loved *Jaynz Ships of the Galaxy*, and the adventure. The article on stills in starships was ridiculous. In a tightly-regulated ecology, wouldn't the materials be hard to come by? Joe Haldeman's *Forever War* handles it better. More importantly, why should Starfleet tolerate this drunken nonsense, or let it take this childish outlet? My group's consensus is that an article on *why* Starfleet enlisted personnel *need* a still would have been more pertinent.

Pete Rogan  
Detroit, Mich.

*Thanks for your comments, Pete. I have to admit, the "Alcohol in Starfleet" article has generated the most controversy from Issue One. A number of other readers have written in and asked not to have their letters published. Some of these are downright disgusted that we would publish an article to "game drunkenness". While I agree with their feelings that intoxication is no laughing matter (especially when combined with moving vehicles), I maintain that putting a few drunken brawls into a role playing situation can add enjoyment to a gaming session. Our disclaimer at the end of the article should tell everyone how we feel about drunkenness in the real world. Any further comments? — DLK*

Dear *Stardate*,

As a *Star Trek* fan who also happens to be a female — and an ardent feminist, I have one major gripe. Why, in all the FASA gaming materials, in all the scenarios and manuals, are there so few women characters? Is that because your staff (and gamers) seem to be predominantly male — or is it that your staff is unenlightened? There are no women admirals, no captains, no

female ambassadors, UFP council members....or Vice Presidents! So what gives? Given Gene Roddenberry's reasoning that social progress will keep up with advances in technology (he showed this by putting minorities and women in positions of power and responsibility before it became acceptable to do so), I think you folks at FASA should do the same. After all, women are just as smart, capable, and strong as men, and they can be just as ruthless and cunning (more so, if there is any truth in folklore and legends!).

Shona Jackson  
Tucson, Arizona

*While there is some truth to the fact that more male characters are placed in role playing game scenarios, I don't think that this is an intentional slight against female gamers. The reason is more likely that not many women write RPG adventures and most male writers probably feel more comfortable in dealing with the sex they know most about. As our premiere adventure in #1 shows, female characters can be even more important than male ones in some situations. The Klingon spy, Valkris, is certainly proof of this.*

*This is a topic that definitely should be looked into further. So, how about it, Shona, or any other writers out there, let's see some female-oriented submissions (Amazon planets, cutthroat female pirates, whatever). — DLK*

Dear Sirs,

I take strong exception to Mr. Van Hise's article in your first issue, in which he calls Robert Heinlein a militarist, and comes close to calling him a fascist. As Heinlein has made repeatedly clear in book after book, he is nothing of the kind; indeed, he is a strong defender of individual liberty in all its manifestations. *Citizen of the Galaxy* is an anti-slavery novel; *Red Planet* and *Between Planets* portray revolutions against tyrannical states; *Stranger in a Strange Land* portrays an individualist and humanist religion; *Time Enough for Love* contains an interesting exposition of Austrian economics. The point is that the societies and ethical systems portrayed in Heinlein's novels vary extremely widely, from the socialist near-Utopia of *Farmer in the Sky* to the militarist but free society of *Starship*



*Troopers*. Heinlien portrays many different societies, but all have one thing in common; a love for liberty.

*Starship Troopers* is meant to shock; its intent is to depict a society very different from our own, but one which shares our basic interest in freedom, and which is admirable on its own terms. It is interesting to me that Mr. Van Hise is unable to go the distance with Heinlien—to say, yes, I disagree with this society's ethics, but they are self-consistent and make for an interesting world.

Let us examine what Mr. Van Hise finds objectionable. First, he dislikes *Starship Troopers'* refusal of citizenship to those who do not serve in voluntary government service. Please note that Heinlein does not insist on military service—citizens may serve in many ways; and also that Heinlien has always been a passionate opponent of the draft. I find his system quite reasonable; everyone benefits from governmental services, whether or not they serve, but why shouldn't a society say "You may only help choose your governors if you first serve to benefit the governed?" This strikes me as a reasonable ethical principle.

Mr. Van Hise also dislikes the fact that criminals are subjected to corporal punishment. It is true that, in our society, floggings and executions are considered inhumane. However, I think one can make a strong case for such. As America's crime shows, imprisonment does not adequately deter criminals; corporal punishment might. Imprisonment does not reform criminals; neither would corporal punishment, presumably, but that makes it no worse in this respect. Imprisonment costs the taxpayers a great deal—and why should they be required to pay such a large cost for the benefit and comfort of thugs? Corporal punishment is, of course, quite cheap. Many will consider this an immoral argument; I consider it a reasonable one.

*Starship Troopers* is from the first to the last a moral argument. The question it poses is: can a highly militaristic society still be admirable, at least in certain respects? The answer it reaches is "yes," and it is highly interesting for that very reason. Mr. Van Hise has seen only an adventure novel with an objectionable message, and has indicated that Heinlein *believes* that message. Identifying a writer with his novel is a common mistake. Heinlein is no more a militarist than is he a cannibal, though the characters of *Stranger in a Strange Land* eat their messiah at the end of that story. Instead, he is a writer who writes social commentary through the

medium of his novels—and yet, unfailingly, makes them interesting.

Greg Costikyan  
Jersey City, NJ

Thanks for your input Greg. You are certainly entitled to your opinion of *Starship Troopers*, just as James Van Hise is. However, I think I must take exception to your idea that Robert Heinlien is not a militarist. My dictionary defines this as "a person emphasizing the military spirit and the need for constant preparation for war." Mr. Heinlein, all his many excellent novels aside, takes quite a personal interest in our country's "constant preparation for war." I invite you to read an intriguing article in the October, 1984 issue of *Science Fiction Chronicle* by Frederick Pohl. He describes Mr. Heinlein's avid support of the so-called High Frontier ABM laser satellite system being proposed by such members of the fanatic right wing such as Senator Jesse Helms, Phyllis Schlafly and Jerry Falwell, of the Moral Majority. I'm afraid support for such a dangerous and probably unfeasible project (which, incidentally, stole its High Frontier name from the peaceful proposals for space supported by Dr. Gerard O'Neill and the Space Studies Institute) puts Mr. Heinlien in the militarist category for me. This certainly doesn't mean he is not an excellent writer, and probably a very nice human being. Many of my friends are right wing Republicans and we get along

quite well (we just don't talk politics much). It's just the fact that such support to militarize space even before we have so much as a toehold out there for peaceful means really depresses me about the future of mankind in general. Do we deserve the stars if the majority of humanity ever favors ideals like Mr. Heinlien's? — DLK

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