

THOUGHTS OF AN AGING ERB FAN

By Rudy Sigmund



1950's: My brother Karl (1940-1978) and I, my hero and later best man at my wedding. Fortunately I still have this very same book, unfortunately I still have the same socks.

People who know me know that I am given to sentimental moments, but an event that recently happened brought me to tears. It was not some cataclysmic personal misfortune, and it wasn't the death of a close family member but rather the speed of life that astounded me. The past flashed before my eyes and I began to feel tears welling up in my eyes.

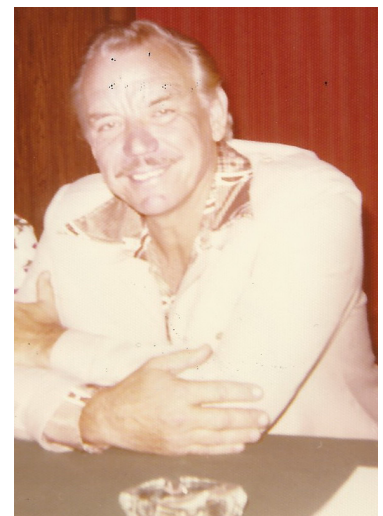
I just recently hosted an ECOF in Minneapolis, about 240 miles from Fargo, ND where I have lived for the last 35 years. Previous to that I had lived in Florida for several years. Hosting an ERB event is something I had wanted to do for a very long time. As I was looking over the site and as many old and new friends were saying their goodbyes I suddenly realized how things have



1960's: Ron Ely signing autographs in Viet Nam over the Christmas Holidays.



1960's: Ron Ely signing more autographs for my buddies in Viet Nam. Only one is still with us.



1970's: Russ Manning, on ERB's 100th Birthday. My favorite comic book artist.



1970's: Jock Mahoney, Johnny Weissmuller, and in red and white shirt "unknown" fan from Michigan.

changed. I remembered my first ERB gathering in 1974 (also my first World Con) in Washington DC and all the subsequent events

through the years, and it made me feel like crying.

There are the friends who I made over the years that are no longer with us and some that just can't make the gatherings anymore because of health problems and or concerns that come with older age. Some of these close friends I was in awe of because many were ERB fans long before I was born (luv ya George and Pete, it does not feel the same to me when you guys can't make the gatherings).

I took this gathering coming to a close with great interest. Then came the tears and maybe a few sobs. I felt like bawling out loud. My wife Jill looked on with surprise, and I guess a little shock. I needed an



1970's: Frank Brueckel and wife Cathy at my house in Florida on my 25th birthday. Frank a former associate editor of original Burroughs Bulletin, author, and retired astronomer. Cathy was an associate for Pete Ogden's Erbania. My oldest daughter's (Lydia) God Parents. Frank and Cathy meet at the 1972 DumDum in LA and I was later honored to be the best man at their wedding.



1970's: Jock Mahoney and wife

explanation. Here it is.

As I viewed this scene I conjured up a young boy, nutty-brown from the sun, carefree and romping around the grounds in front of me. I saw him swinging by his knees upside down from his favorite Tarzan tree (I grew up across from a large edge of city park which I felt belonged to me) and watched him reading old Dell comics (mostly Tarzan) underneath that tree.

I remembered the park had a rough-sawn log cabin that doubled for summer crafts and making crude ashtrays to bring home to mom (who never smoked). This park had no indoor plumbing and I could remember the smell of the incredible "three-holer" that made you do



1970's: Louise Lorraine with her brother and "unknown" fan from Michigan. Who is this guy!@# \$ Looks very familiar?



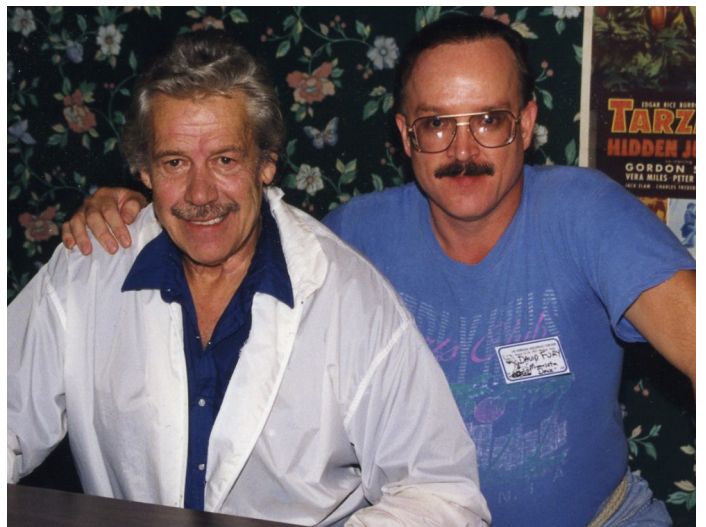
1980's: Gordon Scott my favorite Tarzan actor.



1980's: With Danton in Tarzana



1980's: Gordon Scott and me. I'm the one on the right.



1990's: Gordon Scott and Dave Fury, author and long time very best friend. I told Dave that "I had never seen one of his books for sale that wasn't autographed so that an unsigned one should be rare and very collectable." Davey has never fully appreciated my since of humor.

your business fast and escape while you were still lucid. Then came the sound of my name being echoed from over the meadows and woods from my stout grandmother in a heavy German accent. I pretended not to hear and or know who was being called because of my embarrassment.

I was a recent emigrant from Europe and my family was big on going to Christian church services (my parents were deeply religious). I attended and listened respectfully. To this day I can sing church songs with the best of them. "Jesus Loves Me," "Little Brown Church in the Wildwood," and "Onward Christian Soldier" being my favorites.

At times I was sent to pick local wild blueberries and choke cherries from the multitude of wild berry and cherry bushes throughout this park. The berries were to be used in homemade German pies. I was given pails,

but they usually came back half-empty because there is no candy sweeter than fresh picked wild blueberries. I remembered nothing but fun, having not a care in the world. And I cried!

Why would I weep at the memory of happy, sunny events? Because here I was 62 years old and recently retired and I could not remember what happened to those intervening 50-plus years.

They had been nothing but a massive blur. I was a carefree kid and then, suddenly a tired old

man approaching my twilight.

The middle seemed to have disappeared. It was like



1990's: (Left to Right) Me, Darrell Richardson, Burne Hogarth, Jack Iverson, and Bob Hyde at Louisville Dum-Dum. This picture now makes me feel sad.

1990's: Darrell Richardson and me. "The Ole Tiger". I miss him.

a video tape that runs on fast-forward, zipping by with many scenes discernible. I have had a great wife of more than 40 years, four wonderful children, a decent career (I owned and operated a chain of video stores), a vast number of great experiences and travels. But now it all seemed so vague, so fast, so remote, almost like it didn't happen. I went from young to old in a single moment. It was like writing a very long message on a beach and as soon as the tide comes in, it is dissolved back to nothing but wordless sand as though it were

never there. Just wordless sand! Sand!!

I got into the car, wiped my eyes, and drove back to the freeway and reality. If there is moral to all this, I guess it is probably best expressed by a wonderful old saying:

**Yesterday is history
Tomorrow is a mystery
Today is a gift,
that is why it's call
it "the present"**



1990's: Burne Hogarth with me in Louisville.



Swinging away into the sunset with an old friend.