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Editorial Matters

We try to keep events in the non-sf world out of **Locus** and don't usually expect sf events to spill over into the outside world. Plans don't always work.

I was at JPL for the Uranus flyby on Saturday, January 25, with dozens of science fiction authors. It was originally to be our lead story with a full-color cover. On Sunday, Fred Harris of AuthorServices called to tell me L. Ron Hubbard had died. On Tuesday, the **Challenger** blew up.

Carolyn Cherryh called about an ad which was to go into the **New York Times** on Sunday, February 16, supporting the continuance of the space program. It would cost \$36,000 and the backers wanted \$360.00 from 100 sf people for it. For reasons too complicated to go into fully, I do not sign any ads (I think they're useless except to make the signers feel good) or join many organizations or make public statements about anything outside of sf. I offered to send money though. Any money over the \$36,000 needed will be going to a fund for the children of the **CHALLENGER's** crew, so you might want to send contributions to C.J. Cherryh, 1901 Bella Vista, Edmond OK 73034.

If she had called a day later, I probably would have said yes. The local newspaper had a column about the disaster which expressed surprise about the public outpouring in favor of the space program, accusing us all of "growing up on Heinlein and the belief that technology is always beneficial." Here were the two worlds intersecting again. The column went on with the usual litany about spending the money to help the poor and I had the usual flash thought about Isabella and Ferdinand feeding the poor of Spain instead of backing Columbus (we all sometimes work in well-worn grooves) before it all trailed off as I stopped reading and went back to being depressed.

Most of **Locus** went to the printer on Monday, February 10. We held back the cover and first section for the Nebula

nominations due a few days later, but the issue was mainly done and the cover had been laid out for the nominations.

On Wednesday morning we got the news that Frank Herbert had died.

I knew that Frank was very ill, and we had all signed a get well card for him at JPL during the flyby, but the reports on the experimental cancer treatment he was getting were encouraging, and his sudden death was a shock. I'm not a true newspaperman. I've never written an obituary in advance, and we have no file of them on hand. I know the cover will be redone and there will be something in this issue (which must go to press in two days), but I don't know yet how much or what else will have to be delayed. I have to leave for Boston and New York within a day and will not see the final issue until you do. But it's obvious we will have to run some sort of appreciation next issue.

ECONOMICS

I had more reaction than usual to some of the figures I used in the book summary about Waldenbooks and B. Dalton. The easy one was how discounts hurt. If you invest \$3.00 to make \$1.00, you're doing fine. It's a 25% profit. If you have to invest \$12.00 to make \$1.00, you might as well buy CDs; they pay better and are safer.

My comment that the chains need 20% to 30% growth per year invoked several comments about profiteering. Here are figures closer to home -- the ones I have to wrestle with every year. Annually, the print bill for **Locus** goes up 10% for the same size issues, the labor cost for help goes up 12%, and postage and miscellaneous go up 9%. In order to stay in the same place -- never mind expanding -- the gross income has to cover this. If the circulation (subscriptions and bookstore sales) goes up enough, there are no problems. If not, we have to raise cover price and/or ad rates. We had a smaller than usual increase in circulation and felt that

(Continued on page 57)