



Me (or my twin) as a youth posing in front of our mineral collection.

The Summer of the Novel

I have in my house a newspaper clipping with the picture of my identical twin and me. It was 1963, and we were holding tennis rackets. He's squatting, and I'm standing trying to hit a ball. We are dressed in shorts and white T-shirts and on seeing the photo, I remember that in that summer I had almost nothing else to wear. Underneath the photo it says that we had enrolled in a free tennis class sponsored by the city of Tempe. It also informed all and sundry the address—number and street—of our home.



The Newspaper Photo

I wasn't a good student. I never learned the rules of tennis, and I didn't attend the final competition because I was playing on a big swing some 200 yards from the tennis court. For this reason, I must not have got a very good grade though I really don't remember if they gave us grades or not.

I do remember very well, just the same, that during this summer I often went to a bookstore whose proprietor was named Gordon Carpenter.

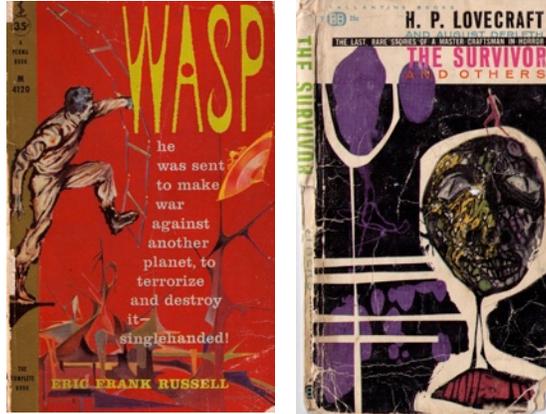
His first name and his last name were a mixture of the names of two famous astronauts of the day: Gordon Cooper and Scott Carpenter and I couldn't help noticing this coincidental combination. We talked a lot about NASA. I would go to the bookstore almost every day to chat. I almost never had enough money to buy a book, but I went to the store anyway.

Gordon frequently talked to his kids on the phone, and many times I heard him tell them smiling, "I love you!"

I told him once that I wanted to write a book and suddenly he thought of something and said, "Well, I'm writing a book right now!"

He took a rather fat volume out of his desk drawer and showed it to me. It was his family tree. It just so happened that Gordon Carpenter was a Mormon and the people of that faith have to baptize all of their ancestors by proxy.

I bought a science fiction novel from him called *Wasp*. It was written by a British author, one Eric Frank Russell.



The two books I bought from Mr. Carpenter

I used to sit in a comfortable chair in the living room of my house enjoying the book while I ate beef jerky seasoned with black pepper. I slowly read every word, savoring everything that the author had composed, and today I don't remember having read anything so entertaining in my whole life. Ever since, I have looked for such captivating books, but up to now I haven't found any except for *The Lord of the Rings* or possibly the works of Edgar Rice Burroughs, who wrote *Tarzan of the Apes* and something like seventy other novels, the majority of which I have read with great pleasure.

In the bookstore, I bought *The Survivor and Other Stories* by Howard Phillip Lovecraft, an author of horror stories. It didn't interest me as much, but I wrote a story that to me was similar in style, and I handed it in to my teacher as homework at school.

I still have the front cover of the book *The Survivor* and some of its pages. I scanned the cover and put the image on my Facebook page. My original copy of *Wasp* is in tatters, but I have bought others and they are now a part of my personal library.

One day in that summer, with a typewriter, I copied a page out of the book on a cardboard card.

Purpose of Organization:

Destruction of present government and termination of war against Terra.

Location of Organization

Wherever they can't find us.

Number of members in the Organization

You'll find out when it's too late.

Jaime Shalapurta

Then I got the grand idea of throwing the card through the window of a car parked in front of a house in my neighborhood. I thought it was a good joke. Unfortunately, a little later I learned that it was the mayor's car and that the FBI was conducting an investigation into the matter.

They never caught me, but I know that I was the number one suspect because the mayor's son was a classmate of mine and he told me.

Years later, he learned Japanese, and we hired him as a translator at the university. Someone in the office asked him, "I've heard that you and Tom were playmates. Is it true?"

"Yes," he said. "But my parents never let me go to his house."

When I was twenty-four, by chance I was sitting on the rug in the house of a fellow at Cambridge University in England. We were drinking liqueur as we played a literary game. One person would quote a phrase from a novel and the others would respond with the title.

I quoted aloud, "Purpose of organization: Destruction of present government and termination of war against Terra!"

The fellow thought a moment and said, "That comes from the novel *Wasp* by Eric Frank Russell. He's living now in Liverpool and has stopped writing. Nobody knows why."

The summer of 1963 was for me a special summer and unfortunately for my friend at the bookstore as well. One day, I went as usual to the bookstore and a woman was sitting at the desk.

"Where's Gordon Carpenter?" I asked.

"Oh, er... he passed away," she said.