

New books chronicle romance with number theory, words



Ronald W. Doerfler
Dead Reckoning: Calculating Without Instruments
 Gulf Publishing

John Algeo
Fifty Years Among the New Words: a Dictionary of Neologisms
 Cambridge University Press

Two books for the self-educated among us: "Dead Reckoning: Calculating Without Instruments" and "Fifty Years Among the New Words: a Dictionary of Neologisms."

The first deals with number theory and some of its charming side effects.

In the race to develop computers way back in the dark ages of the 1940s and '50s, people demanded simple, fast and accurate approximations to mathematical functions.

"Reckoning" relies on these and other techniques, based on mathematical properties and long experimentation, in its attempt to teach the reader methods of rapid and arcane mental computation.

One who reads—and understands—this book will soon be astounding his or her neighbors with terrific feats of mental calculation: approximating strange roots and unraveling the most occult logarithms in the blink of an eye.

Well, maybe several blinks of an eye.

The techniques illuminated here require practice and are certainly not as easy as operating a scientific calculator.

Sci-fi novel grips reader, challenges conventions with sex changes, more



"Steel Beach"
John Varley
 Ace Science Fiction

John Varley's first novel in nearly a decade, "Steel Beach," is a tour de force that turns social convention on its head, and delves deep into questions of life and death, in a setting that is strange and exotic, but right next door.

The story is highly reminiscent of



David Badders/DN

lator—which seems to be beyond a lot of college graduates.

But for the numerate, and the numerophiles, this book offers some delightful revelations and a challenge or two.

The second is a book of words.

In 1941 Dwight L. Bolinger, who had until then written a column on neologisms—new words—called "The Living Language" for another magazine, transferred his work to "American Speech" magazine and gave it a new title: "Among the New Words."

In 1944, the column was taken over by I. Willis Russell, who edited it for 42 years.

The column became the longest running documentary record of new English words, including new words from Britain and Australia.

The collection represented here describes literally decades of public thought in English.

"New Words" documents the earliest references to words like "wannabe"—literally one who "wants to be" something—and "wedgie"—pulling the cloth of one's underpants tightly between the buttocks.

Also included are words no longer currently in use. These are the words that failed to make the evolutionary cut. And it's this aspect of the book that may be the most fascinating to logophiles.

What, for instance, does it mean to "quisle?"—act as a traitor, 1940—and what is a "turkeymallee?"

It's a—fortunately—short-lived tamale made with turkey.

So if you've ever wondered who first used the word "contact lens"—they were made of glass in those days, ough—then this may very well be the book for you.

—Mark Baldrige

Phillip Jose Farmer's "Riverworld" series, or of Robert A. Heinlein's later works such as "I Will Fear No Evil," or "Time Enough for Love."

Two centuries after an alien invasion of Earth, all that remains of humanity is a small community on the moon.

Sex-change operations are as easy as getting your tonsils removed, slash-boxing is the preferred sport and life spans reach into the hundreds of years. To reporter Hildy Johnson, all humanity seems stuck in a meaningless, suicidal malaise.

After several of his own suicide attempts, Johnson discovers their true cause.

The central computer that runs the installation itself is growing bored

and suicidal. It causes disastrous glitches in the system, killing thousands in the process.

"Steel Beach" weighs in at 566 pages, giving a detailed picture of a future society in exile from its home planet.

Varley includes some nasty but accurate observations on the press and news gathering in general, as well as some sly observations on the war between the sexes made more interesting by sex changes so easily attained.

Varley has made his grand re-entry into the science fiction world with a bang and "Steel Beach" comes highly recommended.

—Sam Kepfield

Flood

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said. From there he was put in touch with the Red Cross and the project got a green light.

"We're donating everything," Riley said. "We're not taking a penny of it."

His expectations for the book's success are high, he said, based primarily on the success of the Ultraverse titles.

"Our feeling is that the books have been exceedingly successful in terms of sell-through. They're selling out everywhere."

Riley said it should follow that the people who have been buying the other titles will want this one. He said he also expects people who have wanted to do something for the flood victims to be interested also.

White said the advertising campaign will begin in about two weeks and will continue throughout the month of October. After receipt of the order and payment of \$5, he said, the consumer should receive the book—bagged and boarded—in three to four weeks.

To order the book, contact: ARC Comic Book Offer, P.O. Box 91836, Pasadena, CA 91109.

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