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A Korak in Pal-ul-don Article at erblast.com

# ETERNAL FRIENDS

A Love of Fantastic Fiction

The Mark Tapson Interview

## STEVE ALLSUP

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Tangor,

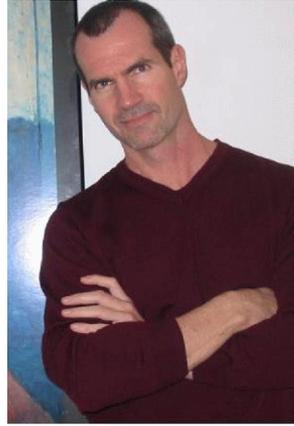
Kaor! Well, I have something I think you will really enjoy here. I am forwarding to you the Mark Tapson interview--Kotan interviews Jadon after 38 years! I sent these questions to Mark and he has put together some truly excellent responses! I really am pleased with his answers. I hope that you can post this on the Korak in Pal-ul-don page, which I promised Mark we would do. He has even included a photo if you wish to post it with the interview. I have mentioned Mark frequently during my time on the listserv, and here at last is the ultimate from one of my oldest and dearest friends. He reveals all concerning his thoughts on Tarzan and fantasy. Here is my proposed title, if you like this or wish to change it a bit:

THE MARK TAPSON INTERVIEW: Jadon discusses with Kotan (Korak) the deep mysteries of Tarzan and Conan

Note: Editor changed title.

## Introduction

Mark Tapson is currently working as a screenwriter in Los Angeles while living temporarily in Australia with his new bride, Anna. Over the years he has worked in a wide variety of occupations involving many areas of life, and for many years was the founding leader of the Samba-Reggae group Oju Oba, popular in the San Francisco area. I first be-



came friends with Mark around the age of seven, when we lived on the same street and attended the same school in second grade. We were in the same class in sixth grade and around April of 1969 we discovered the science fantasy novels of Edgar Rice Burroughs. This became a real craze and soon we referred to each other by our Burroughs-derived nicknames of Jadon and Kotan. Now I finally have the opportunity to interview him about all the mysteries of that part of his life.

*1. Like most people, we both knew of Tarzan initially from the movies. Do you have any memories of seeing the Tarzan films or the Ron Ely TV series as a boy? What was your pre-Burroughs impression of Tarzan? And specifically, what are your thoughts on Johnny Weissmuller's portrayal? Which actor, of the dozens who have played Tarzan, is probably your favorite in terms of really capturing the character the best? I can recall a lot of schoolboy gossip centering around the contrast between Ron Ely's "educated" Tarzan and*

*the traditional Weismuller approach.*

With all due respect to Johnny Weismuller, his movies have done the most damage to the popular conception of Tarzan. Pretty much everything people think they know about Tarzan—that he’s dumber than Koko, lives in a treehouse, calls his son Boy, etc.—stems from them, and *my* pre-Burroughs impression of the character was no different. Not that I didn’t enjoy the movies as a kid, but when better Tarzan movies came along, and once I began reading the books, I saw how poorly the Weismuller films fared in comparison. And Weismuller’s body, though he was a star athlete, just doesn’t cut it by the physical standards of later decades. Not his fault.

My personal movie favorite was *Tarzan and the Valley of Gold*, mostly because Mike Henry had an awesome body and so did his costar Nancy Kovack, who come to think of it probably influenced my choice. I wouldn’t say Henry embodied the character the best, but I don’t think there’s been an actor yet who has—not in the way that, say, Sean Connery brought life to James Bond. *Greystoke* is probably the best Tarzan film because they really tried to stick to the novel, some powerhouse people were involved, like Ian Holm and Robert Towne the screenwriter, and they gave Tarzan real emotional depth. And the acting was generally outstanding. Now if only Christopher Lambert had had Mike Henry’s body. . .

I believe Mike Henry was originally supposed to star in the TV show that ultimately starred Ron Ely, but got fed up with the abuse he suffered filming

the movies. Also, Henry was considered to star in *Batman* until they decided to make it a comedy. I was disappointed that *Batman* was campy and not serious, but as I got a little older and could appreciate the humor, I wouldn't have it any other way. I think Adam West is *the* great unsung American comic actor. But I digress.

I enjoyed the show with Ron Ely, who had a great body but was too "pretty boy"—his light hair and easy, dimpled grin didn't really fit my conception of the Lord of the Jungle. And though I couldn't articulate this at the time, I didn't really get the sense that metrosexual Ely was a guy with an animalistic nature pulsing just under what Burroughs called "the thin veneer of civilization."

I keep referring to their bodies because frankly, Tarzan should be a superior physical specimen. And as a kid I wanted to identify with and find inspiration in my heroes, and so I wanted my Tarzan to be a real Adonis—so *I* could be one in my imagination.

2. *Just to delve a bit into some background for the context in which we first read ERB, I would like to explore some of your cultural impressions as a boy. In general, what were the movies, TV shows and cartoons that most captured your attention as a kid in the 1960's?*

My God, what a great decade for pop culture. My earliest movie theater memory is of *Dr. No*, which impacted me *hugely*, even musically. I don't think there's any movie theme music in history better than the John Barry Bond soundtracks. Bond utterly transformed me as a kid, and I still think the Connery Bond films are the best of the lot. Nothing

beats *Goldfinger* or *Thunderball* or *Dr. No*, though I will say I think Daniel Craig is an inspired choice as the new Bond, and I have high hopes that his Bond films will be the best since the 60's. Anyway, the early Bond movies were life-transforming for me. I ate up any kind of science fiction flick too, like *Robinson Crusoe on Mars* or *Planet of the Apes* or *2001: A Space Odyssey*—I remember being awestruck by the opening shot of the planets coming into view on the big screen to the music of *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. Any kind of war flick or Western or movies about the ancient Greeks and Romans, like *Spartacus* or *Jason and the Argonauts*, anything where there was action and heroes.

As for TV shows, favorites that leaps to mind are *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, *The Lone Ranger*, which was from the 50's but I saw it in reruns, *Daniel Boone*, *The Wild, Wild West*, and *The Prisoner*, *Secret Agent*, *The Scarecrow of Romney Marsh*—all starring Patrick McGoohan, whom I still idolize—and of course *The Twilight Zone*, which is possibly the greatest TV show ever. That reminds me of *The Outer Limits*, and on Friday nights there was *The Time Tunnel* and *The Green Hornet*. . . I'm just jumping around randomly now, but I vaguely remember Steve McQueen in *Wanted: Dead or Alive*, which was over by 1961, I think. There was I believe a spaghetti sword-and-sandal series from Italy called *The Mighty Sons of Hercules*, or something like that, which we in Arkansas managed to get a few episodes of, and it was pretty cool. As I mentioned before, I felt *Batman* was kind of silly but watched it religiously nonetheless. I was never

a Trekkie in the strict sense, but I remember I was orgasmic when *Star Trek* first came out. It's kind of an object of ridicule and parody now, but it was ahead of its time and fantastically imaginative and exciting for a kid. I met and chatted with James "Scotty" Doohan back in the late 70's, and he was a very nice man—I was sad when he died recently, but happy for him that his ashes are in space now, appropriately.

I'm sure I'm forgetting obvious favorites, but anyway it was a great, great decade for TV shows. I pity the generation that has been raised on *American Idol* and *Big Brother*. I have a great idea for a show: if they threw the creators and producers of all these so-called reality shows into a gladiatorial arena and had them fight to the death, now *that* would be cool.

3. *Then, what kind of books and comic books did you usually enjoy the most during the sixties, pre-Burroughs? I remember we usually had to turn in a book report at Williams Elementary about every Friday I think. The comic book world was also experiencing a real renaissance during that decade, with the Marvel explosion, etc. I seem to recall you plowing through a set of the Marilyn Ross Dark Shadows novels just prior to our discovery of ERB.*

Yes, the *Dark Shadows* books as I recall were no match for the show, which amazingly was an afternoon soap opera! The acting was horribly melodramatic, even for that time and even for soap operas, and the sets were cheap-looking, but it was somehow actually scary and the concept was cool. As for pre-ERB books, I was drawn to books and reading from an early age but don't have much

memory of what I read prior to ERB, because he had such an impact on me it just swept away everything that came before.

As for comics, Marvel fans will probably declare a fatwa against me for saying this, but I was mostly a DC comics man. I preferred their artwork and the superheroes too, generally speaking. I liked a few Marvel heroes, like Daredevil and Iron Man and especially Captain America, but I preferred Green Lantern, Batman, even Superman and the Flash. I could never get into the Fantastic Four or X-Men or Spiderman, all of which are now big Hollywood franchises, so I should keep my mouth shut!

*4. Around April of 1969, not long before we graduated from grammar school, we both read the Ballantine paperback of Tarzan of the Apes, and immediately became hooked. Do you have any sentimental memories from discovering this author? What was your initial impression of the Tarzan books compared with the image from the movies?*

I definitely have sentimental memories of discovering ERB, because I can trace my love of reading and writing directly to him first and foremost, then to Robert E. Howard. As I said before, I was already a reader as a kid, and as I got older, of course, I just kept exploring and finding new authors and new books, and I'm still doing that. But it was those two authors specifically who really made the world of books exciting for me and inspired me to try writing myself. Reading the first Tarzan book was like a religious epiphany—I couldn't believe how fascinating and brilliant the story was, even though I was already familiar with the basic concept of

Tarzan. I was enthralled. When I realized there were a couple of dozen more in the series, not to mention about 200 other Burroughs novels awaiting me, I became like a crack addict.

I was fascinated by the “real” Tarzan as opposed to the movie versions, especially the Weismuller films that didn’t even remotely do him justice. Of course, movie adaptations rarely if ever convey the depth and complexity of the original books, and I learned that from my experience with Tarzan.

*5. Can you recall the first non-Tarzan Burroughs book or series that you tried? Which ERB character or series did you like the most overall, Tarzan or one of the John Carter-type science fiction characters?*

Not sure which series I went to next—probably John Carter of Mars or Carson of Venus, but I pretty much loved them all. My favorite was unquestionably Tarzan, and second place would have to go to John Carter, though maybe that’s comparing apples and oranges. I loved the Pellucidar stuff too, better than Carson of Venus. Both the Mars and Pellucidar series were extraordinarily imaginative—I think Burroughs was a fantasy genius. I mean, I still love the image of the horizon at the earth’s core sweeping *upward*—that is brilliant. The ideas of my own as a kid were so influenced by ERB’s imagination. I remember I made up a scenario in which the Great Red Spot of Jupiter was an area with its own atmosphere and life, inhabited by fantastic creatures and warriors, covered by a red sky and bounded by the deadly gases that constitute the rest of the planet—that could easily have come

straight out of the mind of Burroughs.

*6. I remember once that the gift shop in the Mall got in a big cache of the Tarzan paperbacks, which cost around fifty cents, IIRC, and I was amazed when you bought five or ten at once, probably almost five dollars worth. That was a lot for a kid of 12 back then. How did you pay for all the Tarzan and Conan books that you obtained during these years? I remember my own Mom was a hardsell to hit for an allowance advance because there were literally dozens of Burroughs paperbacks to collect.*

You know, I actually never got an allowance—what a ripoff! Seriously though, I made a little money from mowing yards and that sort of thing. These days kids that age get their spending money from selling drugs or contract killings, I guess. But mostly I think my mother just indulged me about my book habit. I think she was relieved I was obsessing over books and not getting into trouble—at least until I was about 17.

*7. Between our houses was an avenue on which there were several churches in a row, with thick woods between. Once when we were up at these churches, which became for us the “lost cities” from the ERB novels, you fell and broke your wrist while we were playing Jadon and Kotan. Do you remember that?*

I sure as hell do. I remember looking at my suddenly-S-shaped left wrist in this detached way, thinking, “Hmm, that doesn’t look right.” Miraculously, there happened to be a doctor right there who said “You’ve broken your wrist,” and actually drove me home. Then I had to wear this massive, ineffective, itchy cast which I couldn’t take off for 6

weeks, which didn't even heal my wrist properly. You don't even see people in casts anymore. Doctors now just put this lightweight, unobtrusive, comfortable, removable support on you and in an hour you're healed. It's amazing our generation survived, the doctors were so primitive. I marvel at warriors of ages past who had only superstitious quacks to heal the wounds of battle. What a crippled mess those fearless veterans must have been, and tough as hell.

*8. I still have a clear picture in my head from that next summer of 1970, of you coming down the hill from your house with a copy of Conan held up over your head and a big smile on your face. From then on we added Robert E. Howard to our reading craze. How would you compare Howard with Burroughs? Tarzan with Conan?*

The writers' styles were quite different. Just in terms of tone, Howard was darker and less romantic, a little liked Burroughs filtered through H.P. Lovecraft. I had, and still have, a preference for ERB's brand of rousing high adventure, but Howard too was incredibly imaginative and the Conan books were a very exciting discovery for me. Tarzan is the mythic literary ideal of the Noble Savage who towers morally and physically over the soft weaklings of civilization. Conan was a more self-interested warrior-king in a bleak world straight out of the darkest depths of the imagination, but even he too was a sort of Noble Savage-type—an uncomplicated guy not weakened or corrupted by civilization.

*9. What was your reaction to learning that Howard committed suicide at the young age of thirty?*

Well, whenever you hear of a talented artist committing suicide, you feel deeply for him or her and wonder, my God, you had this great gift, this outlet for self-expression, and people responded to it and yet it wasn't enough. There was still some dark pull in you that you couldn't overcome. And it's terribly sad. I don't know that much about Howard's life, but you can tell just from his writing that there was a darkness there, a kind of fatalism. The medieval historian Bede described life in the Dark Ages as being like a bird winging out of the winter darkness into the warmth and comfort of the mead hall, and then straight out the other side into cold, dark oblivion again, and you wonder if maybe Howard himself perceived life like that, like it was just a brief passage from oblivion to oblivion. He was so young—it's amazing to think about what he accomplished by then, and you wonder what else he might have written if he had lived 10, 20, 30 more years.

*10. How did Tarzan and Conan impact your perception of physical fitness? Did you get very involved in sports as a teen? I seem to recall that you had a barbell weight set early on, before I did. I did not get a set of weights to work out on until my sixteenth birthday. But I remember that you were always an intimidating presence when we played football, since you were a couple of inches taller than I was anyway, plus with the added muscles.*

Tarzan and Conan, or maybe Frank Frazetta's interpretations, influenced my perception of physical fitness more than even, say, real-life athletes. I wanted to look like those heroes of the imagination,

and believed that one day as an adult I somehow *would* look like them, but of course I didn't really realize at the time just how much work and dedication are necessary to achieve that! I do recall having a barbell, but I didn't have a clue how to work it effectively. I just kind of tired myself out with it, without accomplishing much. The only sport I was really into was football, and I played high school ball but wasn't outstanding, though I did love it. But even the football coaches at the time just ran us ragged without teaching us an effective workout routine and diet. I remember one player telling me he was going to drink lots of beer to put on more weight—um, yeah, that will put on more weight, but not the kind that will benefit you on the field. But we just didn't know any different. Those were ignorant times.

*11. Do you still use any of the workout principles that you developed as a boy now that you are a “mature adult?” Do you still have your own weights or do you go to a gym?*

You know, I don't think I *had* any workout principles as a boy! Seriously, I didn't know anything about how to train or develop my body or work out effectively until I was in my mid-30's, when I could no longer get by on just lucky genes and had to start really *working* at being in shape. Besides, for many years I'd been a musician and rock stars were my idols, and they're not really known for being buff health nuts. Anyway, in my 30's I really dove into learning about workouts and eating right, and changed a lot. Even so, I'd have to say that I'm currently in the best shape I've ever

been in, although age has taken its toll on my cardio stamina (but that's mostly my fault because I don't like doing cardio workouts!). I had attended a gym for years, but stopped back in November when I left L.A. for Sydney, and since then I've done home workouts with just a set of dumbbells, and I'm not kidding when I say the difference is dramatic—I developed definition I never had before and even added muscle. That's partly because I had recently lost some fat and partly because I'd been in a workout rut for a long time, and when I completely changed my workout, it was a jolt to my system and I made dramatic gains.

*12. I may be wrong about you on this, but I always had a kind of impression that your attitude to comics was that they were somewhat of a juvenile thing. However, once I was immensely surprised when I was over at your house and you opened a dresser drawer and there was a stack of the complete Kull the Conqueror comics, about the first 5 or 10 issues, that you had collected. Do you have any recollections of interest about the Tarzan, Conan, and Kull comics that were coming out in those days?*

I actually loved comics until my interest in them phased out in favor of books, but before that I remember walking around as a 6-year-old with a giant stack of comics, just carrying them around for no reason except that I loved the physical connection with them and couldn't bear to leave them in my room. I'm still the same way with books now—I don't like to be more than about 10 feet from a stack of books or I can feel my super-strength fading. I can't say I have specific memories of the

comics you mentioned except that they didn't, for me, equal the books, but they were another outlet for me to enjoy the characters and keep feeding my hunger for more stories about them. I also loved the *Turok* series, which I bring up because I suddenly remember it and it seems related.

*13. Of all the great artists who have illustrated the Burroughs and Howard books over the years, which one stands out for you the most?*

Oh, there's no question it's Frank Frazetta. His images really, really captured the characters and tone of the books, and deeply fueled my imagination. I pictured myself as the heroes of his covers, and pictured the women as my imaginary girlfriends, of course. I can still remember the unbelievably hot chick on the cover of *The Lost Continent*, better than I remember the book! I also loved the covers of the Ballantine Tarzan books, really loved them, but I can't remember the artist's name. Sorry to say I was never very knowledgeable about which artists did what, but I knew what I liked and Frazetta ruled. Especially when you're a kid, that artwork is very inspirational; I remember just staring at the covers and in my mind, those images came to life and I could just run with that. The great cover art of those books contributed to, or maybe even started, my almost fetishistic love of the physicality of books, the sensual pleasure you get from holding and looking at books.

*14. During this period, there were many other fantasy-adventure novels on the stands besides just ERB and REH. Many of them were also illustrated by Frazetta. I recall the Tarl Cabot of Gor series by John*

*Norman, the Elric books by Moorcock, the Doc Savage novels, and many others. In your opinion, did any of these hold any interest compared to ERB and REH? What were some of your impressions of these?*

I enjoyed all of those you mentioned, though they're all quite different. I didn't enjoy the Gor books *that* much because instead of keeping the story moving, Norman used to digress on detailed tangents about things like the various rope knots they used to "lock" doors, and you had to wade through that and through what I only much later realized was a strong dominance-and-submission sexual element—Norman probably doesn't have a significant feminist fan base. I was more enamored of the Elric books and I admired Moorcock's prolific imagination, but I didn't identify with the brooding Elric as much as I did the less conflicted heroes of ERB and the Doc Savage books. I was never, and still am not, much drawn to morally conflicted heroes, and definitely not to the anti-hero that's so common in Hollywood. I mean, you don't want a protagonist who has no faults or fears at all, but I'm drawn to characters whom I can admire and aspire to become or emulate. Maximus in *Gladiator* comes to mind, to mention a movie character.

*15. I remember well when you first felt that your calling was as a writer, at a very young age, probably Junior High (what they call Middle School now I think). You obtained a fancy leather notebook and typed up your first story. I was amazed when you brought it over to my house and it was something like sixty five pages or so. That was a Viking story, wasn't it? Was that influenced by the Conan books? As a*

*writer today, do you still feel influenced by ERB and REH?*

As I alluded to earlier, it was actually ERB and REH that steered me toward being a writer. I was 13 when I went up to my English teacher and told her I'd decided to be a writer. Of course, after that I got sidetracked for many years by all sorts of career interests and by life in general before getting back on track and focusing on being a writer.

I don't remember the notebook but I definitely remember the story. It was right at 69-70 double-spaced typewritten pages, a revenge tale about a half-breed Viking (and Irish) character I made up called Aelfric, who was totally REH-influenced. I can't believe I had the discipline to sit down and write 70 pages in a matter of days—these days you'd have to hold a gun to my head to get 70 pages out of me anywhere near that fast. In fact, maybe I should try that. Anyway, I never tried to get it published, and in truth it probably wasn't publishable anyway. I remember writing a fantasy/adventure story for creative writing class when I was 18 or 19 that got an A, but it was such a direct ripoff of Howard's style that I should have put his name on it. Then I went off on more of a science fiction / speculative fiction tangent for years, and any writing that I tried was geared more toward those genres. I was a huge Harlan Ellison fan in my early 20's, and he was my writing inspiration, though again I didn't try to have anything published—I made tentative efforts but hadn't really hit on my own direction, my own style. Then I stopped writing fiction and drifted off into being a musician. It was only after I moved to L.A.

that I found my way back to doing what I should have been doing all along—writing.

As for my writing today, I would say the influence of ERB and REH is not noticeably present in my screenwriting, except in the fact that ERB especially was very story-driven, and that’s what I look for in a good book or movie. I get very impatient with self-indulgent, “actorly” movies that just meander and have a vague storyline; I want the story to move quickly and have plot reveals and twists, and I think that derives from ERB’s great storytelling—or maybe that’s been my preference all along and that’s why I responded to ERB. I do have a screenwriting idea on the backburner which I shouldn’t tell here or I’d have to kill all your readers, and I don’t have time for that. But it involves 19<sup>th</sup> century explorers in Africa, a story that harks back to my ERB-inspired, childhood fantasies about the glorious continent of the imagination that was Africa. Of course, the real Africa of today is such a tragedy that I can barely recognize my childhood vision of it.

I’m usually busy with screenwriting projects, 95% of which are assignments and not my own original material, but I’m also working periodically on a novel now that I would say owes some debt to ERB and REH in terms of the hero. It’s a thriller set in contemporary times and deals with contemporary issues but the protagonist is a sort of semi-mythic, lone warrior facing off against an apocalyptic enemy. It could be said there’s some updated Conan and Tarzan in there.

*16. Do you think that reading Tarzan and Conan*

*as a young man influenced you to be more of a freedom loving non-conformist, or was that just the result of the rock music culture that affected us later in high school and college?*

That's a good question—not that the other ones weren't. But I'd never thought of the influence Tarzan and Conan might have had on my sense of individualism, but in retrospect yes, definitely yes, these characters were role models for me in my sense of myself as an individual. These guys were loners, individuals, their own men. They were men of action, not ass-kissing corporate yes-men or consensus-seeking, equivocating politicians. Tarzan especially was physically and morally superior to the weaklings of civilization. And Conan was a superior warrior. They contributed to the aversion, if not actual contempt, I still feel for group identity and social conformity. They helped give me a personal strength and sense of myself that got me through those trying teenage years.

*17. What ever happened to your set of Burroughs and Howard books? The last time I saw them was when you packed up your Beetle for your first honeymoon and moved to San Francisco. When was that? Around 1977 or...? I got rid of all my own Tarzan books and comics even before that, around 1975-6, just to get some spending money for partying. I later regretted it.*

Yes, I boxed the books up along with my few other possessions in late '77, and took them along. I'm ashamed to say I sold them to a used bookstore I think in the early 80's. I remember debating it with myself beforehand and wish now that I hadn't

chosen wrongly. They would have been a real touchstone for me in terms of connecting to my youth.

18. *Later in the eighties, they came out with some adaptations of Tarzan and Conan in movie form. There was the Bo Derek version of Tarzan the Ape-man, then Greystoke with Chris Lambert, and Conan with Schwarzenegger. What was your impression of these radically alternative versions? Did you like the Governor as Conan? What did you think of the scripts of Conan and Greystoke?*

I felt that Arnold really had the right physique, but frankly just comes across as too dull-witted and not a convincing warrior. The movie as a whole was really uninspired, to put it politely. As I mentioned earlier, I liked *Greystoke* but Christopher Lambert didn't have that Frazetta physique—though he was probably more like what a real man raised by apes would look like; after all, how is Tarzan expected to get that buffed without access to Gold's Gym? I'm happy to say I never saw the Bo Derek movie. I remember the Tarzan actor in it did have the right look but seemed pretty dull-witted himself, like a male version of Bo Derek. It's too bad more attempts at Conan haven't been made.

19. *In light of famous movie adaptations from books, such as Lord of the Rings, Thunderball, and 2001: A Space Odyssey, do you think that a seriously authentic Tarzan movie could be done, including fantasy elements like Queen La of Opar and the lost land of Pal-ul-don, etc.? Once did you not mention to me that you almost had the chance to work on a Burroughs Mars movie?*

A seriously authentic Tarzan movie *could* be done, and the look of it could be awesome. But it's unlikely that it *will* be done for possibly a long time. The Tarzan concept carries a lot of stereotyped "baggage" that I think Hollywood execs are leery of. They, like most people, see Tarzan as an ape-man swinging through the trees with Cheetah and saying, "Me Tarzan, you Jane," and that's it. They don't know about Tarzan as the refined English gentleman who has to shed what Burroughs called "the thin veneer of civilization" every now and then and return to the wild to cleanse his soul. I think it would take a person of serious power in Hollywood to generate interest in a Tarzan "remake." And then there's the star-finding the right star to cast as Tarzan would be really difficult, and not much gets done in Hollywood without a star attached. They'd have to do as they did in *Greystoke*, which is cast a talented unknown, hopefully with a ripped physique, and surround him with a big-name supporting cast. Everything in Hollywood comes around again, though, so maybe years down the road somebody will say, "Hey, it's time for another take on Tarzan," and maybe they'll get it right.

As for the Mars movie, maybe 2 years ago or more Tom Cruise's production company approached not me but my best friend in Hollywood (who has a long track record as a screenwriter whereas I'm still establishing myself) about working on *A Princess of Mars*, and if he had taken that project on, we would have done it together. But it didn't go beyond an initial meeting and I don't know what's happened to it since. There are always countless projects float-

ing around in Hollywood and every week you talk about this project and that one with various producers, maybe you do an outline or have a meeting or two, but most of them don't come to pass, for a wide variety of reasons. They just sail into oblivion like the bird in Bede's metaphor.

*Thanks, Mark! This has been a great pleasure talking with you about Tarzan and the good old days of high adventure, and I hope that great days also lie ahead, not only for us, but for Tarzan and Conan.*