

TO THE MOON AND BACK (Originally published October 1963)

Some treasured memories from early adolescence are in the realm of adventure and science fiction. We were fortunate to have in our house an almost complete library of Dumas and Verne books, along with an entire series of the *Motor Boys*, (Jerry, Ned and Bob). The books all dated from an early 1900 library, which belonged to a semi-invalid uncle who had lived with us as part of the family. Without television and with nothing to divert us except a small, green, crystal radio—complete with earphones and cat's whiskers—that seldom worked, we became an avid reader.

During the mid and late twenties, we added the follow-up, modernized versions of the *Motor Boys* books, whose terrifying car speeds of almost thirty-five miles per hour in the early 1900 books had by then increased to a fabulous fifty miles per. We also added complete sets of *Baseball Joe*, *Don Sturdy*, *Bomba the Jungle Boy*, *Tom Swift*, a sprinkling of Zane Grays, and finally all of the classical stories of Edgar Rice Burroughs. Zane Grey was interesting, but somehow his literary style did not suit us nearly as much as that of Burroughs. However, we enjoyed all of them.

In those days we swam the muddy Amazon with Bomba, battling the Caymans and piranhas. We lived in the trees with Tarzan, his apes and his Lady Jane. We traveled to Mars, to the Earth's Core, Pellucid and to *The Land That Time Forgot*. But the masterpiece of all Burroughsiana for us was a massive work called *The Moon Maid*. We must have read it over a dozen times. It was republished recently—undoubtedly to take advantage of our current interest in moon travel—in the form of two paperbacks; but originally, it was three volumes within the confines of a front and back red cover.

The initial story took us by Flagship on the very first moon voyage, into the moon's subterranean world. We shared perilous adventures in the diffused half-light amid varieties of strange creatures and civilizations and made it safely back to Earth with the lovely moon maid in tow. The second volume involved us, many centuries later, in a disturbing, far advanced, socio-economic upheaval of the North American continent and presumably, the entire Earth, which had been brought about earlier through a treacherous invasion of the United States by the Kalkars. The Kalkars were a lower class of moon men, towering in size and brutish in manner, but limited in intelligence. The invasion had been engineered by a descendant of the renegade earthman, Orthis, who was left behind on the moon from the first voyage. In this second story, centuries of misrule and welfare statism had made a shambles of the country and its cities. Education and science were no more. The intricate machines and industrial complexes of the ancients had long since worn out. With no one to repair them, they had crumbled and decayed in disuse. The true

blue and Native Americans, who had not gone along with the earlier appeasers and opportunists of their own number to mix and intermarry with the moonlings, were reduced to a pitiful, agrarian minority. They lived in poverty and servitude under the harsh rule of the moon people who had degenerated into an indolent and ignorant bureaucracy. Only a spark of pride and resistance remained, nurtured by faith, a worn Bible and a tattered Flag handed down in secrecy from generation to generation. We suffered with them, and it was miserable. Finally, in the third volume, again many centuries later, came the heart-warming story of resurgent Native American tribes, roaming a land returned to plains and wilderness. We rode along with the Red Hawk, once more on horseback, in feathers and skins and war paint. We pushed westward relentlessly across the deserts and mountains, through the passes of the coastal ranges. Then in glorious battle, we hurled the last of the despicable moon descendants into the great western sea somewhere near Malibu Beach. It was a wonderful feeling.

The moon has always held a special fascination for us because of Mr. Burroughs and his epic book. Within a short time now some earthmen will probably be making that first trip to the moon. It is sad, but now that we are older, we have decided that we really don't want to go along on that first flagship. We are afraid that we might not find the Edgar Rice Burroughs' moon of our younger years. Nevertheless, we hope that our handsome lunar astronauts will find themselves a lovely moon maid apiece up there, and that they will bring them back to Earth when they return. But never mind bringing back those Kalkars, we've got enough troubles and bureaucrats here already.

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