Few names are so connected to the legend of Doctor Who as that of Terrance Dicks. In 1968, Dicks joined the program during Patrick Troughton’s stint as the Doctor. He and producer Barry Letts were the primary forces responsible for the adventures of the Third Doctor (Jon Pertwee). Both men were later involved in casting Tom Baker as the Fourth Doctor.

Included among Dicks’ contributions to the show are such mainstays as the Time Lords’ first appearance in “The War Games,” the development of U.N.I.T., the creation of that arch-villain, the Master, and the meeting of the Three and, later, the Five Doctors. Most fans also know Dicks for his 50-plus Who novelizations, done for Target Books in England.

A Cambridge alumnus, Dicks began in advertising, where he spent five years. Dicks says he didn’t want to be remembered as the man “who wrote very good commercials for dog food,” so he went into radio, a traditional British training ground for new writers, and later, TV.

His new TV career soon prompted a job offer: script editor on Doctor Who. “That came about because Derrick Sherwin, the series’ script editor at the time, had been offered another job,” Dicks remembers. “He couldn’t leave until he had found his own replacement. Eventually, as a second, third or even fourth choice, he came to me. I said, ‘How long?’ and he said very cautiously, ‘We give you a three-month trial contract and then we’ll see. There’s no guarantee you’ll be here longer.’ That three months turned into some five or six years!”

When Dicks joined Doctor Who, the pro-
gram was in its sixth season and in severe
danger of cancellation. "There was a
general feeling at the BBC that Doctor Who
had probably run its course, and they were
actively looking for a replacement," he
recalls. "I know they talked to Nigel Knares
to get the rights to do another Quatermass
series, but Nigel didn't want to do any more
or have anybody else do them. Then, they
were going to do a Victorian science-fiction
series, like Jules Verne, and that didn't come
to anything either. Eventually, I think they
only decided to go on with another year of
Doctor Who because they hadn't come up
with anything better."

Doctor Who's renewal arrived as Patrick
Troughton decided to depart. It was Dick's
job to write Troughton out, which he did,
collaborating with Malcolm Hulke, in a
10-part story entitled "The War Games."
"What happened," explains Dicks, "was
that not one, but two scripts collapsed
simultaneously. The show was in a
tremendous state of chaos. So, we came up with
the idea of having one, very long serial. We
didn't really know, however, until the end,
whether Patrick was going to leave or not. In
retrospect, I think the story could benefit
from losing about four episodes."

"The War Games" is a particularly im-
portant part of the Doctor Who mythos,
because it introduces the Time Lords and
reveals the Doctor's origin. "There was no
previous explanation about the Time Lords,"
Dicks notes. "My memory is that Derrick
Sherwin told me that the Doctor comes from
this superior race called the Time Lords.
Where he got that from, I have no idea."

Who on Earth

The 10-part "War Games" also set the
stage for the future, when, at its end, the
Doctor was condemned by his brethren to
an indeterminate exile on Earth. "The concept
had, in fact, been worked out by pro-
ducer Peter Bryant and Derrick Sherwin,
"explains Dicks. "It was a purely financial
decision, and not an artistic one. It was
simply cheaper to do a show with the charac-
ters set on Earth. When I first explained it to
Malcolm Hulke, he was absolutely horrified. He
said, 'Now, you have only two stories: inva-
sion from outer space and mad scientist.'"

That's why the Time Lords once again
entered the picture. "Since they had seemed
to work in 'The War Games,' " Dicks re-
lates, "we developed and extended them
throughout the Jon Pertwee years. When-
ever we wanted to get the Doctor off Earth
on some mission, we would have the Time
Lords use him as a kind of reluctant secret
agent. At the end of 'The Three Doctors,'
we finished off that whole concept. So, the
Doctor was pardoned and given back his
knowledge of time travel."

The Doctor's extended sojourn on Earth
caused Dicks to bring back a series element
that he had been instrumental in shaping,
U.N.I.T., the United Nations military force
dedicated to fighting off alien invasions. The
British arm of U.N.I.T. was led by Brigadier
Lethbridge-Stewart (Nicholas Courtney),
previously seen in "The Web of Fear" and
"The Invasion." "We all liked Nick," says
Dicks, "and it seemed like a good idea to
give the Doctor a loose, semi-official status.
It answered viewer questions like, where
does he live? Where does he get his food?"

The team of Doctor Jon Pertwee
(STARLOG #79), producer Barry Letts and
script editor Dicks fashioned a total of five
seasons of Doctor Who. For the tenth
season, in 1972, Letts and Dicks decided to
mount a special show—"The Three Doc-
tors." "The fans had been asking for it for
years," he explains, "and Barry and I had
always looked at it as a ridiculous idea.
Eventually, we thought, 'Why not?' We
contacted Patrick Troughton and phoned
William Hartnell, then living in retirement.
William was delighted and said he would
love to do it. As it was originally planned, all
three Doctors would play considerably ac-
tive roles.

"Just as we were about to enter production,
however, Barry got a call from Mrs. Hart-
nell, who was in a great state of agitation.
She asked, 'What's all this about my husband
coming back as Doctor Who? He can't do it.
He just isn't well enough.' Of course, that
information cast us into a great state of
crisis. It was decided that William could
manage just one day's filming. I then re-
 wrote the scripts in tremendous haste, so
that the First Doctor appears only on the
monitor screen in the TARDIS to advise his
quarreling other selves.

"We sent a car to William Hartnell's
place in the country, drove him to the BBC
studios, made him up, sat him in a chair
against black drapes, so he appeared to be in
limbo, and wrote all the lines on a prompt
board so he didn't even have to learn them.
Those bits were just inserted, scene by scene,
whenever William popped up on the monitor.
Originally, he was to be sent to Omega's
universe. The show's physical action would
then have been divided between three Doc-
tors instead of two. This change was an im-
provement. It worked much better to have

Patrick Troughton disembarked the TARDIS
after "The War Games," written by Dicks
and Malcolm Hulke. Hulke later penned the
novelization.

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Jon Pertwee "didn't want to play Doctor Who for the rest of his life," noted Dicks. Did the actor secretly plan to take on the role of another legendary screen hero?

the two Doctors together squabbling, and the third making a commentary.

After five years, Dicks left the TV series.

"There was the feeling of coming to the end of an era," he remembers. "Jon had been growing increasingly restless because, although the show was a great success, he didn't want to play Doctor Who for the rest of his life. Barry and I had just assumed that when Jon went, so would we. Then, a new Doctor and new people could take over Doctor Who."

**Who in Print**

The new Doctor was to be Tom Baker (STARLOG # 34, 77), whose first appearance came in "Robot," a 1974 story scripted by Dicks. "I persuaded the powers that be that there was this tradition—the retiring script editor should write the new season's first show," Dicks explains. "In fact, there may be a tradition, but I started it because nobody had ever thought of it before! It was quite nice to launch the new Doctor."

"Robot" launched Baker with great success, duplicating the ratings jump which had occurred years before when Pertwee succeeded Troughton. Meanwhile, Dicks' professional relationship with the Time Lord continued in a new medium—the Target novelizations. "In the early days of the show, there were three novelizations done: Doctor Who and the Daleks and Doctor Who and the Crusaders by David Whitaker, and Doctor Who and the Zarbi by Bill Strutton," Dicks explains. "They were published in hardback and didn't make any great impression on the world. Then, in the 70s, Tandem books started a children's publishing house called Target. Their first editor was doing the rounds and came across these old books. He bought them and published them in paperback and they sold like hotcakes.

"He very shrewdly went to the BBC, say-

ing he desperately needed more Doctor Who novelizations. He got a contract and eventually got shunted into our office. I then knew I was leaving the program soon, and I had always desperately wanted to write a book. I seized this opportunity and said I would do one, The Auton Invasion. I then became an unofficial editor, and farmed them out amongst a group of the show's writers, like Malc Hulke, Barry Letts, Gerry Davis and Brian Hayles. Gradually, over the years, most of the others dropped out and, for a time, I had a virtual monopoly.

"Since the books have become so successful, more of the original script writers want to novelize their own scripts, which they have every right to do. So now, I do a smaller proportion of them, but that suits me very well because I don't want to do just Doctor Who books forever."

**Who on Board**

While writing the novelizations, Dicks occasionally contributed to the program, penning "The Brain of Morbius" (as "Robin Bland"), "Horror of Fang Rock," "State of Decay" and "The Five Doctors."

"Horror of Fang Rock" had a complicated genesis. It originally began with the idea that became "State of Decay." Dicks remembers: "I had always wanted to do a vampire story on Doctor Who. One day, at Bob Holmes' request, I suggested a story which was called 'The Witch Lords,' and then 'The Vampire Mutations.' They commissioned it, and I started writing it for Tom Baker and Leela.

"Halfway through, there was an absolute command from on high at the BBC that we were not to do vampires on Doctor Who. At the time, they had a serious dramatization of Dracula with Louis Jourdan, and they felt if we had vampires on Doctor Who, we would be making fun of their other series! Again, we were in a crisis situation. We had to do something quickly. Bob said he had always wanted to do a story on a lighthouse. So, we Dicks always presumed that when Pertwee left the show, so would he.

cobbled up 'Fang Rock' very quickly.

Fortunately for Who fans, "State of Decay" eventually was finished at the request of producer John Nathan-Turner (STARLOG #82). "What I think happened," recalls Dicks, "was that he had a pile of old, unshot scripts that included 'The Vampire Mutations' and it was the only one he liked. He asked if I would like to do it again. Of course, I was pleased to have another go at it. I then rewrote the story with Romana instead of Leela, but it was, basically, the same plot. I just had to write in stuff about how the vampires came to be in E-space since, at the time, the Doctor was trapped there."

His involvement in the 1983 special, "The Five Doctors," began in an unusual way. "I was actually in America at the time," he admits, "at a science-fiction convention in New Orleans. At about 8 a.m., the phone rang and a voice at the other end said, 'This is Eric.' And I thought, 'Eric who?' It was Eric Saward, the current script editor of Doctor Who, and he said, 'We would like you to write the 20th anniversary special for us.' Of course, I was very pleased.

"Obviously they wanted to have all five Doctors in it. They had decided to have Richard Hurndall as a William Hartnell lookalike, because, I think, he had been seen playing a rather Hartnellish old man in Blake's Seven. Various companions were also to be in it. We also had to have a Dalek and K-9, too.

"The main job was to come up with a concept which would take in all the Doctors. I felt it had to be, in some way, a Time Lord story, because that would be appropriate. It really all worked for me when I came up with the concept of The Game. Somebody would be playing a game in which all the Doctors and their companions would be pieces on a board. Then, you could have them kidnapped out of time and space. As soon as I had that central image of the hand putting the little model on the board, it gave the project a kind of unity which held it all together."

**Who in Review**

The part that Tom Baker, as the Fourth Doctor, was scheduled to play in "The Five Doctors" underwent several radical changes. At one time, his character was thought to have become crazy, and he was suspected of being the villain. Then, the unexpected occurred. "I had just completed my first draft," Dicks remembers, "when I got a call from Eric Saward saying, 'Well, I'm terribly sorry, but there was confusion between Tom, his agent and us. Despite the fact we thought he was going to do it, he now isn't. So, you must rewrite it without Tom Baker.'"

"What they did have were these clips from 'Shada,' the unfinished story, with Tom and Romana on the river in Cambridge. So, I rearranged the action again. Originally, the Baker Doctor stole the Master's transportation device to return to Gallifrey and unearth the plot. The Peter Davison Doctor was going to remain in the Death Zone and conquer the Dark Tower by the main gate. I redid that, and Baker got
caught in a time warp, which gave an added menace because, since he was temporarily unstable, he affected the Davison Doctor’s stability. Davison started fading into invisibility every now and again. It all worked. That stuff from ‘Shada’ fits beautifully and you would never guess that it hadn’t been meant to be like that. It fits in with the story’s logic. The astonishing thing is, I think, it actually improved the story, because it was easier to cope with four Doctors rather than five. It was like what happened with ‘The Three Doctors.’ It’s funny the way history repeated itself.”

Dicks is one of the few people to have worked with the first five actors who portrayed the Doctor on television. His opinion of each reflects his vast experience with the show. “I had very little contact with William Hartnell, so I don’t know much about him,” Dicks comments. “One of the things I liked about his performance was that he was less lovable than the others. There’s a tendency sometimes for the Doctor to become too ‘cozy.’ I quite like an acid, sharp-tongued Doctor who will behave mysteriously, arrogantly or even coolly. You’re not really dealing with a kindly, human uncle, but rather this alien being who may one day do something strange for his own reasons. I like having a bit of mystery and menace about the Doctor.”

“Patrick Troughton, the first one I actually worked with, is a lovely chap. A very nice and private man, he worked very hard and then at the day’s end, kind of dematerialized! He’s perhaps the most neglected Doctor and, in a sense, perhaps the most classically-trained actor to play the Doctor.”

“Jon Pertwee was, I suppose, the first Doctor to use his own personality. The Doctor you saw on the screen was very much Jon. He’s a tremendous personality, very charming and professional. He would read scripts with enormous attention to detail. If there was anything he didn’t understand or felt was illogical, you would have to explain it and justify it.”

“Tom Baker, again like Jon, was much the same on-screen and off. He’s a rather strange, disconcerting person. He had tremendous charm, and like Jon, could go from being charming to dominating and do a kind of strong, dramatic thing.

“I’ve only written for Peter Davison in ‘The Five Doctors.’ I don’t know him well, but he’s a very nice man. He’s a little like Patrick perhaps, a genuinely shy and modest person who stops being the Doctor when he’s not acting. Throughout ‘The Five Doctors,’ I was always concerned that he should appear to be in charge. Of course, it was very tough against all these old foes and scene-stealers like Patrick and Jon. So, I made sure that I gave Peter the best lines and scenes.”

He admits knowing little about the latest Doctor, Colin Baker. “It was as much a surprise to me as to anyone else. I know nothing about Colin Baker,” Terrance Dicks concludes. “I think it’s important that Doctor Who is done in exactly the same way that it always has been done.”

“I don’t want to do just Doctor Who books forever,” is Dicks’ other-side-of-the-coin comment on his post-TV career.