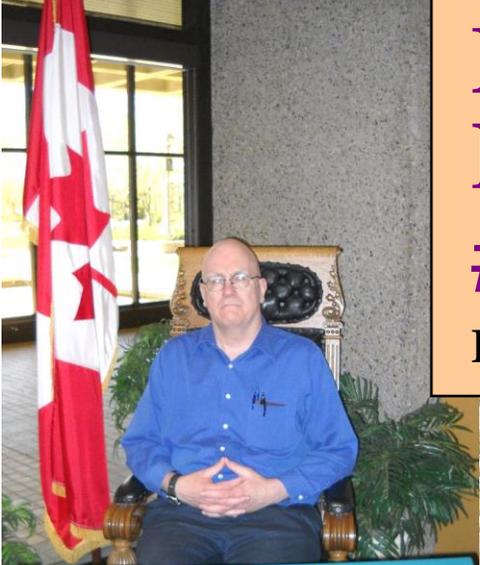
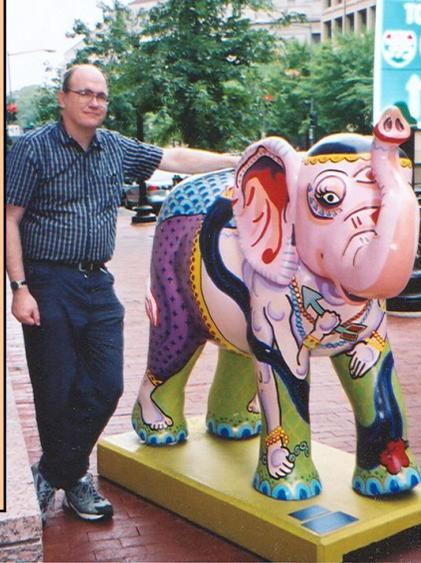


My Back Pages #5

Rich Lynch



THE SPEAKER'S CHAIR

This chair is a reproduction of the first Speaker's chair used in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. The office of the Speaker is linked closely with the history of the chair, which symbolizes the long history and enduring values of the province. The Legislative Assembly meets in the chamber of the Speaker in the Legislative Building and any discussion takes place on the premises of the chair. It is used as a symbol of the dignity and independence of the province.

Photo courtesy of Bill Jackson at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.



My Back Pages #5

a few more of my articles and essays

Well, the Dog Days of August have arrived again. The midsummer heat and high humidity here in the D.C. area once again have made the outdoors an unpleasant experience. A few weeks of this weather is almost enough to make me look forward to winter snows again. But not quite.

Anyway, the coming of August means that the annual World Science Fiction Convention is not far in the future. It's invariably a fascinating event and is always something to be looked forward to. My wife Nicki and I have been to twenty-six Worldcons, in cities as close to home as Baltimore and as far away as Glasgow and Melbourne. This year's Worldcon is in a place that neither it nor we have been before – Reno. Nowadays Reno is a gamblers' paradise, but back in the late 1850s the area just south of Reno was the site of a gold and silver rush of immense and historic proportions.

So we're looking forward to not only the convention, but also to seeing some of the history surrounding that part of the "Wild West". The previous time a Worldcon came anywhere close to this section of the United States was back in August 2008 when, as you will read, Denvention was only one of many conventions (and not *nearly* the largest) that visited Denver that month.

*Rich Lynch
Gaithersburg, Maryland
August 2011*

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(Thanks to Geri Sullivan for permission to use her photo of Bill Rotsler, to Laurie Mann for permission to use her photos of George Laskowski and Stephen Boucher, and to Chaz Boston Baden for permission to use his photo of Craig Miller & Genny Dazzo.)

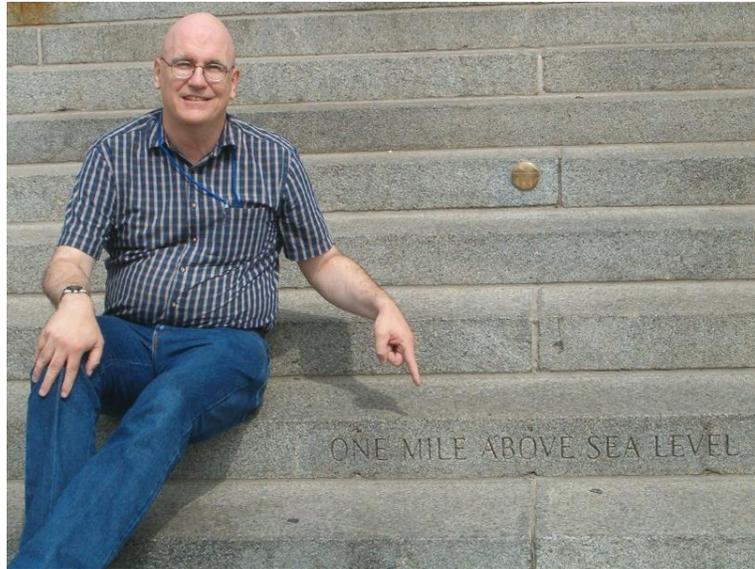
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Denver 2008

Prolog: A Mile High!

It had been two years since the last time Nicki and I had been to a Worldcon. Last year, instead of going to Nippon 2007 we had spent ten days in Italy, and it was such a pleasant experience we had just about decided to go back to Europe again as our big trip of the year. But that was before the dollar tanked against the euro.

So instead, there we were in Denver for Denvention 3, not all that sure we'd be having a good time. I'd been there once before, back in 1995, but the closest Nicki had ever been to the city was when we changed planes at the Denver airport on the way home from the 2002 Worldcon.



on the steps of the Colorado State Capitol building



Nicki and friend Pat Molloy, with signage

The trip to Denver from Baltimore wasn't especially pleasant, so we were looking for some kind of good luck omen on the taxi ride into the city from the airport. And we found one. We were idly looking out the cab's side window at some of the cars we were passing, and there was a car from Indiana with a license plate that read "XERPS". It was Frank Kalisz, who we see every year in Cincinnati at Midwestcon. He and his wife Millie have been throwing "Xerps in 2010" alien-themed bid parties at conventions for years. It was such a surprise that it broke the mood and by the time the cab dropped us off at our hotel we were both feeling ...quite literally... a mile high!

The Conventions of August

Like any Worldcon, there were fans from around the globe at Denvention 3, but it was not nearly the largest convention that Denver would host in August, of course. There was that rather large political one at the end of the month, and to get out of its way, several other events scheduled for later in August had moved their dates to earlier in the month. This made for a near-continuous stream of conventioners of various flavors coming into and out of the Colorado Convention Center. The first few days of Denvention overlapped the end of a big meeting of the Institute of Statistical Mathematics. By the end of the

convention, the John Deere people and the International Association of Fire Chiefs had begun their conferences. But Denver wanted us all, and there were even small signs in the windows of many businesses that welcomed each convention to the city.

Of these, the ISM conference was the one that most closely resembled Denvention. Many of their attendees seemed interested in the science fiction event just down the concourse, and some of them looked like fans. The ISM conference even had a sales area with coffee mugs, T-shirts and the like. (My favorite was a child's size T-shirt that read "Dependent Variable".)

And the convention center itself was science fictional and even whimsical. The main lobby features hanging fixtures that look a bit like stylized UFOs from some 1950s movie and just outside, peering in through the glass facade, is a 40-foot tall blue bear. The big beast was created by a Denver-area sculptor, Lawrence Argent, as part of a public arts project and installed outside the convention center in 2005. Its official name is "I See What You Mean", though I'm not really sure that I do.



"I See What You Mean"

The People of Denvention 3

One thing that I *am* sure of is that my memories of Denvention 3 will be highlighted by all the reunions with friends that I don't get to see all that often. One of them is Australian fan Robin Johnson, who was selected by the 2010 Australia Worldcon to be its Fan Guest of Honor, of which he greatly deserves. Robin likes to travel and he has been to many of the places that I've been, including Cape Point in South Africa. Nicki and I had a pleasant dinner with him the evening of the Hugo Awards, with far-ranging conversation on dozens of topics including, of course, Australia. But there was never even a hint from him of what the entire convention would find out the next day, when Aussiecon 4 announced its invited guests.



in the Dealers Room with Erle Korshak

Robin's fan activity dates back several decades, but there were fans at Denvention whose activity dates back much farther than that. There are now only a very few people left who attended the very first Worldcon back in 1939, and two of them, Art Widner and Erle Korshak, were in Denver for this year's convention. Widner was looking a bit creaky and was a little slow in getting around, but Korshak looked in better shape than I am!

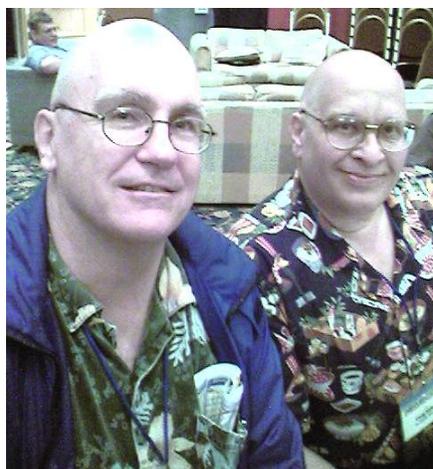
Denvention seemed smaller in size than the last few North American Worldcons that Nicki and I have been to, but that made it easier to find people. One of the easiest seemed to be our friend and longtime fellow Southern Fandom Press Alliance member Guy Lillian, who I crossed

paths with many times during the convention. I had been saving Coca-Cola bottle tops for him (apparently it's possible to use them to pay for movie rentals and the like), and he and his wife Rosie were surprised to receive a bagful of them. SFPA members Jeff and Liz Copeland were also attending, and it was the first time I had seen them in many years. In fact, there were so many people from SFPA at Denvention that there was an ad hoc SFPA party the final day of the convention. (And I managed once again to avoid the inevitable and dreaded one-shot partyzine.)

Besides Guy, there were people I most definitely *did not* want to avoid, because I had brought more giveaways than just a bag of bottle tops. My friend Moshe Feder is also a collector of Coca-Cola stuff, but not to use for trade-in. He has an actual collection of Coca-Cola related items of all sorts, and I had brought four Coke



teapots for Genny



me and Craig: matching hair styles!

cans from my various travels,

including two featuring Chinese Olympic mascots that I brought back from last year's trip to Beijing. The most fragile giveaways of the trip were two small ceramic teapots for Genny Dazzo, each themed with a cat sleeping on a chair. Nicki and I had found them at a thrift store and a yard sale, and knew Genny would want them for her large and ever-growing collection of themed teapots. (I'm guessing she must have the better part of a thousand of them by now.) She was happy to get them, though not really surprised. (We bring a teapot of some kind every time we know we'll see her.) The big surprise was seeing her husband Craig Miller. It turns out that he and I now have matching hair styles!

Of Blogs and Black Holes

The Denvention itself seemed more or less like most other Worldcons. Have I become jaded by the big convention experience? Maybe, but I guess I could say the same thing about many of the smaller regional conventions I've been to. I was not on any program items at Denvention but I did find a few of interest to attend. One of them was Nicki's only panel, titled "Have Blogs and Listservs Replaced Fanzines?" The consensus was that the answer is still probably no, but that may not be true in a few years. Many if not most fanzines are now web-only, and some fanzines that started out as print-only, including Guy Lillian's Hugo-nominated *Challenger*, are now most easily obtained in an electronic version. At any rate, the proliferation of blogs over the past decade or so has pretty much placed a death sentence on the personalzine, but there is still a niche for the staid old genzine that blogs and listservs cannot easily fill.

The panel I was looking forward to the most happened on the last day of the convention. Its title was "Mini Black Holes and the Politics of Fear". The subtitle of the panel should have been "How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the LHC" because that seemed to be the opinion by the two panelists (writers David Friedman and Gerald Nordley) on what we should do. The LHC is the 'Large Hadron Collider', the largest, most powerful, and perhaps (as some people fear) the

most dangerous physics experiment ever devised. It's a gargantuan atom-smasher that the high-energy physics crowd is hoping will, among other things, shed some light on what the universe was like nanoseconds after the Big Bang. It could possibly create some very exotic and (hopefully) extremely short-lived subatomic particles (such as micro black holes) that could lead to validation of certain theories and genesis of some new ones. The fear is that some of these exotic particles, if they are indeed produced, may not be as short-lived as predicted, which in the very, very worst case could lead to something way beyond a global catastrophe. It could be the very end of existence.

The two panelists seemed to be of the opinion that anybody who thought that was below contempt. I now believe the machine is safe, but back during the week of Denvention (and before I read all the technical papers about LHC safety) I wasn't so sure. There was a somewhat testy exchange when, after I questioned the risk analysis of the machine (I expressed my opinion any potentially infinitely bad outcome should have exactly zero risk, and nobody to my knowledge had said the risk from operation of the LHC was exactly zero), I got back a "don't strain your brain cells about this" type of response. At the end of the panel, I left the room thinking the same thing that NBC News anchor Brian Williams would later say about the LHC: "I hope they know what they're doing!"

The Things We Did In Denver

I would like to think that Nicki and I did know what we were doing for the time we had in Denver away from the convention. One of the first places we went was the Downtown Aquarium. It's a bit mis-named – it's not really in the downtown area, but it's easy to get there by bus or cab. I had thought it would specialize in the fresh water fish that populate the Rocky Mountains' rivers and lakes, but it went way beyond that – there were many salt-water tanks including a very large one that had on display one of the most popular aquatic creatures, as least as far as the viewers were concerned – scuba divers. The aquarium is making a bit of money by selling "tank time" for people who



Nicki at the Downtown Aquarium

want to swim among the fishes. Not something for the faint of heart to do, as there were sharks in there.

Something worth seeing that *was* located in the downtown area is the State Capitol. The golden dome is spectacular from the outside and the rotunda created by the dome equally so on the inside. And there are guided tours, which we found to be both interesting and informative.



rotunda of Colorado State Capitol Building

We never once left the city limits, but there was enough to do and see that we didn't feel we needed to. For instance, we happened across an early afternoon free concert by western music singer Bill

Barwick, who had won the Will Rogers Cowboy Award back in 2005 from the Academy of Western Artists. We were in an indoor food court getting something to drink when we saw him and his sideman setting up on a small stage. We later found out that the city of Denver sponsors a series of these small concerts at that stage, one a week, and we lucky enough to be there at exactly the right time.



Western music singer Bill Barwick

Luck didn't always work in our favor, though. We had pre-purchased two tickets to the August 5th baseball game at Coors Field between the Colorado Rockies and the Washington Nationals. I had really been looking forward to seeing the inside of that stadium and it lived up to my expectations. It's one of the newer generation of fan-friendly "retro" ballparks designed specifically for baseball. The seats we had would have been great, beyond the left field fence but close to the playing field. But that turned out to be the only night all week there was a lengthy amount of bad weather. A stationary front had parked over Denver and the game was rained out.

Epilog: Reflections on the Contraction of Time

You know, there's one thing about growing older that's as puzzling as hell to me. My subjective sense of time is starting to get distorted, and each succeeding year seems noticeably shorter than the one before. I expect that if this continues, the years will eventually seem to have zero length, and then even move into negative durations – I'll be able to fondly remember the year 2020 five years before it arrives!

The same seems true about Worldcons. One thing I've come to understand is that the passage of time is not linear at these events. The first two days of the convention subjectively seem to last a month. But then something happens to the flow of time and the second half of the convention seems to pass by in the blink of an eye. That's the way Denvention 3 turned out, and all too soon it was time to come home.

If we ever come back to Denver, there are other things we'd like to do. Next time we'd spend some time outside the city up in the mountains. Next time we'd try to find out more about musical events in the city, of which there are many. And next time we'd save some time for the Denver Art Museum...and go there on a day when it was open! ☀



Nicki, outside the Denver Art Museum

Afterword:

Some of the most enjoyable Worldcons Nicki and I have attended are the ones west of the Mississippi. And two of the most memorable of those, as you will read, were the 1978 and 1997 conventions, in Phoenix and San Antonio. In particular, the 1997 Worldcon, LoneStarCon 2, turned out to be a week of nonstop activity out on the Texas prairie. We're looking forward to returning there for its sequel in 2013.

A Tale of Two Worldcons

The man and woman who boarded the airplane together in St. Louis looked familiar to us. We had probably seen them someplace before, but after two decades-plus of conventions and fourteen previous worldcons, almost everyone was starting to look familiar. They sat right across the aisle from us, and by the time the flight landed at San Antonio we had decided at least one of them was an author, but we couldn't figure out which one. As luck would have it, they sat near us again on the airport shuttle into the city, so we decided to just ask them a neo-ish question: "Are you here for the convention?" It was the woman who replied somewhat patronizingly, giving us the answer we probably deserved but all the confirmation we really needed: "Gosh, there's a convention here this week??"

And so began LoneStarCon. We didn't recognize anyone on the bus, but the minute we walked into the hotel there were familiar faces all over the place. It was a comfortable feeling, knowing that the next several days would be filled with reunions with old friends and introductions to new ones, dinner expeditions, interesting conversations, friendly politicking, and (of course) all the late-night parties. Worldcons are unique events that bring all of these and more together for us; we feel almost compelled to go to the Worldcon each year, despite the cost and aggravation of getting there. It's true that Worldcons are big and expensive, but for us, Worldcons are an essential part of fandom as we expect they are for many other fans.

But hasn't it *always* been that way?

Well, no it hasn't. It wasn't that way at all. Our first Worldcon was in 1978, Iguanacon. Back then, we knew hardly anybody. We hadn't been actively involved in fandom for very long, and so when we were greeted with that blast of hot desert air as we got off the plane in Phoenix we were still little more than neos, plopped down in the middle of a frenetic human kaleidoscope. Back then we were mesmerized by the sense of limitless energy of the convention and all the people there, from the operations people scurrying around everywhere to the Guest of Honor, writing a story amid the chaos all around him, secluded inside a tent set up for him in the atrium of one of the hotels. Back then, we could only marvel at the myriad programming tracks that competed for your attention and which continued well into the night each evening, at the size and resplendence of the masquerade, at the dozens and dozens of writers present while wondering who among the nominated would win the Hugo Awards (especially the one for Best Novel). Back then, we went to just a few room parties, partly because we knew so few people. Back then, the convention was full of that science fictional sense of wonder, and it went on forever; subjectively it seemed like a month passed before we returned back home.

Back then, when we were much younger, the world was a different place. Have things really changed that much? We'd like to think that each Worldcon still possesses that magical sense of



my LoneStarCon name badge

wonder (maybe we're still neos at heart), but after more than two decades of fandom you get the feeling that you've seen it all before. But on the other hand, you don't really get *tired* of it.

Anyway, as Worldcons go, LoneStarCon wasn't the biggest we've been to, nor the best run, nor the most memorable. It *was* one of the more fun ones, though. We hadn't known very much about San Antonio other than that the Alamo was there, so we traveled to south Texas with few expectations. Turns out it's actually a good city to hold a Worldcon, for more or less the same reason as for San Francisco or New Orleans – the city itself offers more than enough diversions to fill the hours away from the convention. Part of the attraction, of course, is the history surrounding the Alamo, where in 1836, the army of Mexican general Santa Anna overran and killed to the last man a group of Texas independence fighters led by William Travis. The downtown area of the city was conveniently near to the Alamo, all just a quarter mile from the convention. We went there our first full day in San Antonio. We're not sure what we were expecting from the Alamo, but we do know we were expecting it to be a bit bigger than it was. The Alamo mission building, known as the 'Shrine' to Texans, is really quite small, not all that much bigger than a large single-family home, with its interior basically just one large area, with a few small rooms around the perimeter where ammunition and powder was stored.



the 'Shrine' of San Antonio

We didn't stay long at the Alamo; just an hour or so and we were on to other places. We suppose the rest of the grounds was filled with history if you looked for it, but it wasn't all that obvious. There are no gravesites on the grounds. Nobody knows the true final resting places for Jim Bowie, Davy Crockett, or any of the others; Santa Anna had all the bodies burned.

The rest of the city was also interesting. The Big Attraction of San Antonio is not the Alamo, but the Riverwalk. It's a small canal that twists through the heart of the city, about twenty feet below street level. Down there it's almost a different world, or more accurately, several different worlds. The southern part of the canal quietly winds through the historic, first-settled part of the city, where there are cypress trees, small islands, garden areas, and even an amphitheater. That part of the Riverwalk has a sub-tropical feel to it, as if you'd expect to see parrots in the trees. The northern part of the canal, though, was jam-packed with tourist-collecting restaurants. One of them, the County Line Barbecue, was so popular for fan dinner expeditions that for practical purposes it became part of the Worldcon program.



the San Antonio Riverwalk

The food really was pretty good in San Antonio. Before we went we had visions of nothing but Tex-Mex, but there was enough variety that you could eat pretty much whatever cuisine you wanted. The most memorable dinner expedition was Friday night of the convention, when our friends Neil and Cris Kaden organized a trip to Gruene, Texas, three counties north of San Antonio, a small town on the Guadalupe River. It was early evening when we arrived there, just about the right time for Gruene's feature attraction, its dance hall. Next door to our steak house was what had once been a large barn, with loud Texas swing music coming out and lots of younger people going in. It was just a hot summer night, and they were all living for the weekend. Were we really that way once?



Gruene Hall, where Texas swing is king

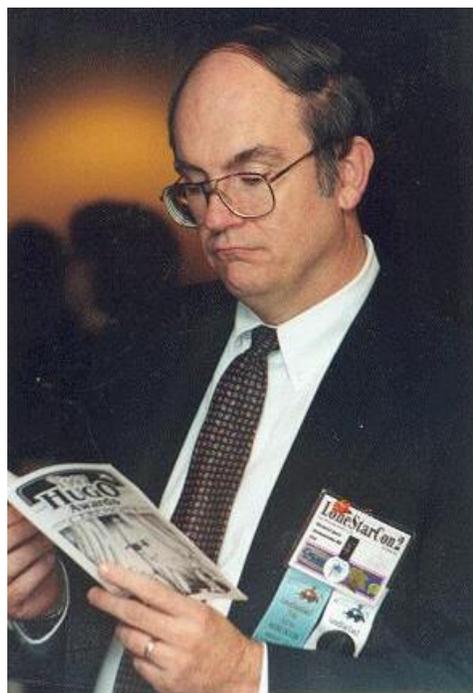
Besides all this, there was a Worldcon to go to. And because of that there were friends to see again. Worldcons are now about the only place we get to meet up with many of our fans friends from what are now remote places. One of the happiest reunions was with two of our best friends in fandom, Dorothy Tompkins and Lowell Cunningham from Knoxville, Tennessee, whom we've known for more than fifteen years. Back when we lived in Tennessee, we got together every few months or so either at a convention or some kind of party (they used to host a little microcon they called "Barbecon" at their home that featured lots of eating and partying; at one of them, in 1986, Lowell and Rich kept each other awake throughout the night just so they could stay up and see Halley's Comet). We hadn't even realized they were going to be at LoneStarCon because Lowell hadn't been scheduled in any of the program events. We had kind of expected that he would have been, seeing as how his 'obscure' little comic book had been made into the year's top grossing movie, *Men In Black*.

Another friend we invariably see at worldcons and nowhere else is fellow fanzine publisher Guy Lillian. Guy, bless him, has also been our friend for a long, long time, and over the years we've had some interesting adventures together. But there are times when he delights in teasing people, and in the process, causing some embarrassment. Guy was passing through LoneStarCon's concourse area when he found Nicki standing in line for a Fred Pohl book signing. "Hey," he said, loud enough for the people in front and behind to hear. "What are you doing in line? Don't they know you're an important person?!?" After a bit of banter he moved on, but by then Nicki could feel the eyes of those around her. A few moments later, the woman behind her leaned over to check her name badge and nominee ribbon: "Are you an author I should know?" Gee, thanks a lot, Guy! (Wait until he sees what we've got in store for *him* next year!)

There was more to the program than just book signings, of course, and we actually got to more program items this year than for any other worldcon except Iguanacon. The quality of the program really didn't seem that much different from other worldcons; maybe it's just our interests that are subtly shifting. The program items we were on were, of course, all fan-related

and all of them aimed mostly at the neofans – discussion panels on making connections in fandom, fan slang, and an introduction to fanzines. Other program events we attended ranged from media-oriented (everything from a modest discussion panel on strong female characters on TV to J. Michael Straczynski’s *Babylon 5* extravaganza), to science-related (discussions on the on-going Mars Pathfinder and Galileo Jupiter missions), to the historical (interviews with some of the notable fans of prior fan eras, including the Fan Guest of Honor, Roy Tackett), to organizational (but five minutes at one of the WSFS business meetings was more than enough!). There was even a short operetta, *The Pirates of Fenzance*, staged by the next year’s Worldcon, Buccaneer.

In short, there were enough things to do at the convention that the time seemed to fly by. Saturday night arrived all too quickly, and with it the Hugo Awards Ceremony. *Mimosa* was once again a nominee this year (and our thanks to all our readers!); it’s always pleasant being nominated, but the day of the Awards is always hard on the digestive system. Just before the event we went to dinner with our friends Joyce Scrivner, Mark Loney, and Nigel Rowe, but somehow the topic of conversation got stuck on food poisoning, which didn’t exactly help to calm the queasy feeling in our stomachs. When Nigel’s order of raw oysters arrived, Mark eyed them suspiciously and launched into a story of a major



just prior to the Hugo Ceremony



Best Fanzine Hugo Award

food poisoning case in his home country Australia involving oysters. (It fell on deaf ears, though. Nigel, undeterred, ate every oyster, and even thought about ordering more.) Nobody could think of anything bad to say about shrimp, however, so that’s what we had.

Being a nominee does have some advantages. Back in 1978 we sat in the back of the Phoenix Convention Center’s balcony on Hugo Night, and everybody on stage looked about the size of your thumbnail. At LoneStarCon, we had seats just six rows from the stage. The Best Fanzine Hugo was the third one announced, right after Dave Langford won once again for Best Fan Writer. But Dave had also won the Best Fanzine Hugo (for his entertaining newszine *Ansible*) the previous two years, and after that we weren’t very hopeful about our chances this year. So when *Mimosa* was announced as the winner, it took a couple of seconds for us to realize we’d won. Later, we found out that the results had been very close, with *Mimosa* winning by just seven votes (making up for last year, when we’d lost by only eight). And we’d perhaps been lucky to win at all – the main opposition wasn’t *Ansible* after all; it was Dave Truesdale’s fine reviewzine *Tangent*, which had a substantial thirty-one vote lead going into the final round of vote counting.

If winning the vote count was an adventure, getting up to the stage was even more so; the stairs backstage were as steep as Mount Everest, but were lined with people who directed/lifted us upward, all the while whispering, “Congratulations! Watch your step!” The award itself was handsome, a chrome rocket mounted on a slab of coarse-grained Texas granite which had been machined into the shape of the state of Texas. It was time for some acknowledgments, and we



miniature chocolate
rocket from
Buccaneer's party

did so – to Roxanne Smith-Graham, who helped create the *Mimosa* website... to Dave Kyle, who, way back in 1979, had put the idea of a fanhistory-themed fanzine into our heads... to all the other fanzine nominees (Rich said that all the other nominees were so good that he wished the vote had ended in a five-way tie)... and to our contributors, to whom we *really* owe the honor. A fanzine is only as good as its contributors make it, and we've been blessed with some very excellent writing and illustration. The way back down from the stage seemed equally perilous with those stairs looking in the dark as steep as the wall of a canyon, but once again there were a dozen or more steadying hands helping us along (“Congratulations! Watch your step!”). Afterwards, at the Buccaneer-sponsored Hugo nominees party, Rich's wish came true, after a fashion – all the other nominees *did* receive awards. There was an entire table filled with miniature rocket-shaped gifts – all of them made from chocolate!

Anyway, it really was an enjoyable week. There were way too many parties each night, so many that you had to decide if you were going to visit each one for a few minutes, or pick two or three where you could settle down and spend some quality time with friends. We mostly chose the latter, mainly because we're getting too old for all that stay-up-to-three-in-the-morning stuff. The best place to settle down was actually not a party at all, it was the Cincinnati Fantasy Group suite. They have one at every Worldcon, and it's a much less frenetic place for talking to people than the typical Worldcon bid party. The most outstanding bid party was the Boston in 2001 suite, which had two theme parties; the one we got to was an “Under the Sea” party, with hundreds of blue helium-filled balloons covering the ceiling of their suite, shrimp with cocktail sauce, and candy sushi. If they gave out Hugo Awards for bid parties, that one would have won easily.

So that was LoneStarCon, one very full week on the Texas prairie. The world has changed just a bit for us in the past nineteen years, but we're still finding a sense of wonder about fandom's Big Show. And that, as much as anything, is the reason we look forward to going each year. ☀

Afterword:

This article apparently resonated with some of the readers of *Mimosa*, from the number of comments Nicki and I received. The one that summed it up best was from our friend Ruth Shields, who wrote that: “I don't feel quite the same sense of wonder at Worldcons anymore, but I still do feel that I've crammed weeks of enjoyment into those four or five days and it is still hard to return to the real world each time.”

Next up is a reprint of a book review I did back in 2006 for an online publication. The book's author is a friend Nicki and I cross paths with at many Worldcons, and we're looking forward to seeing him again in Reno.

A Separate War and Other Stories by Joe Haldeman

as reviewed by Rich Lynch

There can be no argument that Joe Haldeman is one of the most prolific and talented writers of speculative fiction. In the nearly four decades he has been writing and selling fiction, he has won the Hugo and Nebula Award each five times. Five of the ten have been for shorter works of fiction, and even though Haldeman perhaps is best known as a novelist, it is still a fair statement that he is a master of the short story, novelette, and novella. Therefore, it is an Event-with-a-capital-E when a new collection of Haldeman's stories is published.

This new collection brings together fifteen previously uncollected works, including his very first published story, "Out of Phase" from 1969, which describes the consequences of letting a shape-changing adolescent nearly omnipotent alien loose on a foreign world to find his own way. It's a terrific story, very entertaining, and still holds together well more than three decades after it was written. In an afterword to the story, Haldeman explained that it had not been reprinted in earlier collections because he had been intending it as the first section of a planned future novel – except that he couldn't. It turned out the main character was too similar to one that appears in his 2004 novel, *Camouflage*, so Haldeman abandoned the plan with the realization that "I had unconsciously plagiarized myself!"

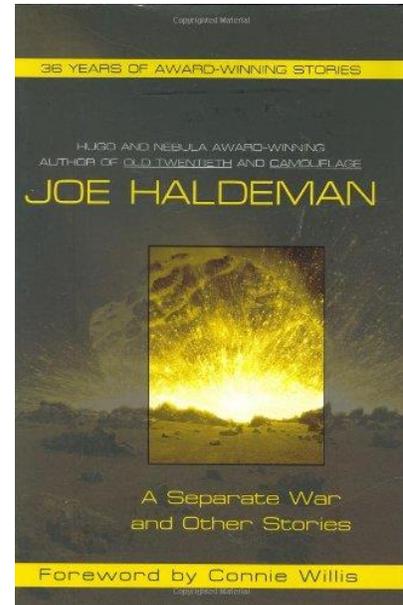


Joe Haldeman

Another gem in this collection is "For White Hill", a novella about the future of art and the transcendence of love over the end of existence. It is an extraordinary story, certainly one of my ten all-time favorites. Haldeman based it on Shakespeare's Sonnet #14, "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" Each of the fourteen sections of the novella is based on a line of the sonnet.

There are some other interesting stories in the collection, but nothing nearly as splendid as these two. Unlike Haldeman's previous collections, *A Separate War and Other Stories* mostly represents stories written specifically in response to requests from friends and editors. For instance, "A Separate War" was written in 1998 for Robert Silverberg's *Far Horizons* anthology, where writers were asked to revisit classics of the genre they had created and add new stories in those universes. The result was a companion piece to the ending of Haldeman's award-winning novel *The Forever War*, where he followed the storyline of one of the other characters in the novel to let us find out what happened to her.

This is the first collection of Haldeman's stories in a decade, and it is possible it might be another decade or more before the next one appears. In recent years, he has split his time between Boston, where he teaches fall semesters at M.I.T., and his home in Florida where he writes novels. His writing style is that he prefers not to interrupt teaching or working on a novel to write a short story, so he been producing only a very few works of short fiction a year lately. A new Haldeman collection, especially after such a long wait, creates high expectations, but a few of the stories did not seem to me all that memorable, perhaps because of the constriction of being written for special requests of editors. For instance, "Diminished Chord", a short-short originally written for a Renaissance Faire magazine about a musical instrument that has an aphrodisiac effect on listeners, did not, er, *resonate* very much with me in part because it stopped rather than ended. "Memento Mori", a vignette about a nanotechnology-induced rebirth of sorts, was written for the editor of *Amazing Stories* in response to a request for a story of exactly 1,000 words and also 'illustrated' a painting that was used on the cover of the magazine. The result seemed somewhat force-fitted. And "Brochure", which appeared in the science journal *Nature*, seems more of an idea for a story than an actual story.



As a result, I do not think this is Haldeman's best collection, but there is still more than enough here to satisfy most readers of science fiction. As Connie Willis wrote in her introduction to the collection, one of Haldeman's strengths as a writer is his unconventional outlook on the human condition: "He writes about traditionally science fictional subjects – but he employs them in uniquely nontraditional ways to explore what it means to be human in a variety of identity-splitting environments." This collection is filled with many such idea-filled stories. Hang on for the ride. You will not be bored. ☀

Afterword:

There weren't any reader comments on the review that I ever saw, but I was surprised and a bit amused to discover that "The Free Library" website had compiled an excerpt of my review with excerpts of other reviews of the book from the *Baltimore Sun*, the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, and the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. The excerpt of my review that was used, however, made my opinion of the book seem less positive than it actually is.

At any rate, I'm looking forward to seeing Joe Haldeman at the upcoming Reno Worldcon, and hope (and expect) that we will cross paths at many more Worldcons in the coming years. For many good friends I have had over the years, that is now no longer possible.

This appears to be a good time for a remembrance, of sorts, for one of them. Wilson "Bob" Tucker was an award-winning author of science fiction and mystery novels, and he was also one of the most famous of all science fiction fans. I was fortunate to have known him as a friend from 1978 to the time of his death in 2006, but accounts of his fan exploits, some of them bordering on legend, extend all the way back into the 1930s. Here is a tribute to Bob that I (with the help of Nicki) wrote in 1994 in honor of his 80th birthday.

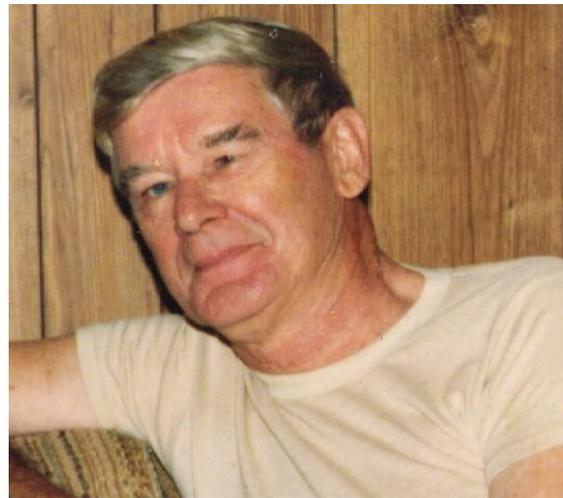
A Greeting for Bob Tucker

Hello, Bob!

We are honored to be able to contribute to the Memory Book being prepared for your 80th birthday. Over 60 of those years you've been a science fiction fan, something that I (with a puny two decades of fan involvement) continue to marvel at.

Nicki and I were fans only about three years before we first met you. We were living in Chattanooga, Tennessee at the time. It was February 1978, and we were only a few issues into what was then a small clubzine, *Chat*. We had made a spur-of-the-moment decision to attend a small convention that was a nine-hour drive away, out in the middle of Arkansas, where you were Guest of Honor. Here's how we (in *Mimosa* 7) described that first meeting...

It's no secret that Bob Tucker has been a big influence and encouragement to us over the years. He was a frequent guest at our house when we lived in Chattanooga, and has been the source of several articles that have appeared in *Chat* and *Mimosa*. The result of that first meeting was a four-page interview that appeared in the sixth issue of *Chat* (March 1978), and boosted that issue's page count to eight pages, a seemingly astronomical level of activity for us at that time. But it turned out that after that, we would never do another issue of less than eight pages again.



my friend Bob Tucker

It is to Tucker's credit (and his wit) that the interview came out as well as it did; we didn't ask him a single question about any of the fannish hijinks he's been involved in over the years like the 'Staples War' or the 'Tucker Hotel'. He must have thought we were just a couple of neos, and who knows – he may have been mostly right.

Over the years, I can think of many memorable moments when you've been around. We've captured some of them on tape, such as the joint interview with you and Bob Bloch at the 1978 Rivercon (which saw print both in *Chat* 12 and *Mimosa* 7), and more recently the three-way discussion between you, Rusty Hevelin, and Roy Lavender at the 1991 Midwestcon (which will see print in the newest *Mimosa*, in December). But there are other moments, less well documented, that stick in my memory – for instance, I remember very clearly a restaurant trip one evening; gentleman that you are, you refused the offer to ride in the front passenger seat of the tiny compact car we owned. Instead, you insisted that Nicki sit there, which consigned yourself to being wedged into the back seat with two other people. There was so little elbow room back there, it was almost impossible to move at all, so when you heard a strange noise coming from the floorboards, you had to practically become a contortionist in order to reach down with your hand to investigate. I can still almost hear your cry of triumph, as you held up the culprit, a long-lost Halloween clicker, which I had been using to time lunar occultations and that I had been in search of for months.

Anyway, Nicki has many similar memories of good times with you. Here is one of her favorites. She used it as an introduction of you at the 'Live Fanzine' we did at Chattacon 13, in January 1988, and it was later reprinted in *Mimosa* 4.

Everyone seems to have his or her own favorite Bob Tucker story. My favorite is the one he likes to tell about staying at our house some years ago. I was up early one morning after Chattacon was over and Bob was sleeping in our spare bedroom. Since I had an apa deadline, I was mimeoing my zine, trying to make as little noise as possible.

Now if you know anything about mimeos, this is next to impossible: they have a very distinctive "clunk-a-chunk, clunk-a-chunk" sound which is real loud. So I was working away, when a smiling Bob bounced out of the bedroom with his robe and slippers and announced, "Good morning!" Bob then looked fondly at the mimeo, and said that familiar sound had awakened him and he knew he was in a fan's house. I'm not sure that a mimeo is Bob's favorite sound to wake up to, but I'm *sure* it's high on his list.

We want you to know that the times we've hosted you, or been in your company even, are high on our list of highlights in our activities as fans through the years. We don't run across each other nearly as often now as we did when we lived in Tennessee. It only makes the times we do meet up that much more special.

So happy 80th, Bob! May the bricks for your Hotel keep coming in the mail, for years to come!

Richard Lynch (with best thoughts from Nicki, too...)
Gaithersburg, Maryland
November 13, 1994 ☀



Bob and Nicki in 2001

Afterword:

The final time Nicki and I saw Bob Tucker was in October 2001, at a small convention in Illinois. The Tucker Memory Book from 1994 was a one-off production with a copy count of exactly one, and I hope it will someday resurface for all of us to enjoy.

Another friend lost, back in the mid 1990s, was the incomparable Bob Shaw. Nicki and I first met him in 1981 when he was the Guest of Honor at a science fiction convention in Birmingham, Alabama. He was science fiction fandom's best humorist, epitomized by his 'Serious Scientific Speeches' (which were anything but that), two of which were published in *Mimosa*. So it was a real honor for me, back in 1994, when my friend Charlotte Proctor asked me to write an appreciation of Bob for the program book of the DeepSouthCon she was chairing. But it turned out to be a more difficult assignment than I had anticipated, because I had to first figure out *which* Bob Shaw I wanted to describe!

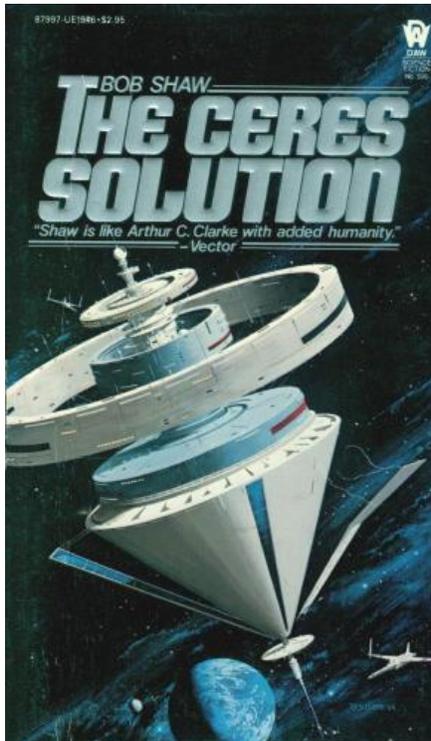
Will the *Real* Bob Shaw Please Stand Up?

My good friend Charlotte has honored me with a request to do an article about Bob Shaw for this program book. I'm only too happy to do this, but before I can even complete this first paragraph, I find that I'm already up against a dilemma... Which Bob Shaw do I write about?

You see, there are *several* Bob Shaws who will be guest this weekend at DeepSouthCon. There's Bob Shaw the famous science fiction writer, who wrote such notable novels as *Orbitsville*, *A Wreath of Stars*, *The Ragged Astronauts*, and (my



Bob Shaw



my favorite Bob Shaw book

personal favorite) *The Ceres Solution*. That

Bob Shaw has been described (in *The Science Fiction Encyclopedia*) as being “a writer of remarkable ingenuity” and “one of the finest entertainers” in contemporary science fiction. Bob has been an active science fiction writer since 1954, when his story “Aspect” appeared in *Nebula Science Fiction* magazine. His fiction, characterized by inventiveness, understanding of character, and attention to technical detail, has a fresh, timeless quality that has garnered him recognition from fan and professional writer alike. His short story “Light of Other Days” was a Nebula Award finalist in 1966 and a Hugo Award nominee in 1967, while *The Ragged Astronauts* was a Hugo Award nominee in 1987, and *Orbitsville* gained a British Science Fiction Award in 1976.

A second Bob Shaw you'll meet this weekend is Bob Shaw the humorist. Before he turned full time to writing, Bob had aspiring careers first in structural engineering, then aircraft design, and finally public relations and journalism. This wealth of worldly experience has provided him a great

number of entertaining stories and anecdotes about things he's seen and done, ranging from aircraft engineering (ask him about when he attempted to document what happens when an aircraft loses an engine in flight) to sports writing (ask him about the time he covered a football game for the newspaper he was working for).

And finally, there's Bob Shaw (or BoSh, as he's better known) the science fiction fan. Bob's involvement with fandom began in the 1950s, when he, Walt and Madeleine Willis, George Charters, James White, and John Berry made up what became known as ‘The Wheels of IF’, the wonderful Irish Fandom of the 1950s and early 1960s, and it continues to this very day. Bob's doings and activities in fandom are legendary, almost too numerous to even briefly describe in

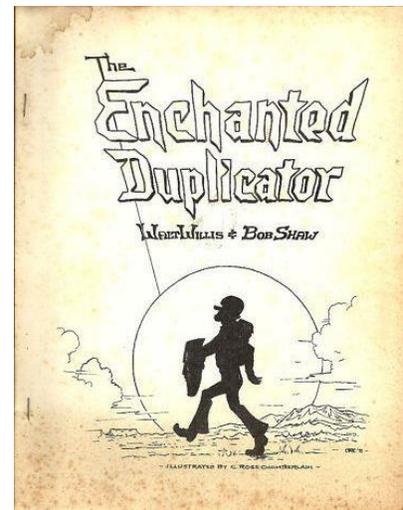


Irish Fandom of the 1950s:
Bob Shaw, James White, George Charters,
Walter Willis, and Madeleine Willis

the room I have here. For example: Bob's 'Fanmanship Lectures', which appeared in the fanzine *Slant*, and describe (according to *A Wealth of Fable*) "how to reach Big Name Fan status by Machiavellian techniques" were an early example of the type of humorous fan writing that's evolved into his 'Serious Scientific Speeches' (one of which you might hear this weekend). Of even greater renown is the one-shot publication Bob co-authored with Walter Willis in 1954, the parable of the quest of Jophan for *The Enchanted Duplicator*. Today, *TED* is perhaps the most famous piece of fan writing ever done, and has

had more reprintings than many Hugo-winning novels. Since then, BoSh has written about everything from "The Man in the Grey Flannel Toga" to "What I Learned from Watching *Star Trek*". There have been several collections of BoSh's fan writings, most notably the 1986 NESFA Press edition of *Messages Found in an Oxygen Bottle*, and in 1979 and 1980, Bob was (most deservedly) awarded Hugo Awards as Best Fan Writer.

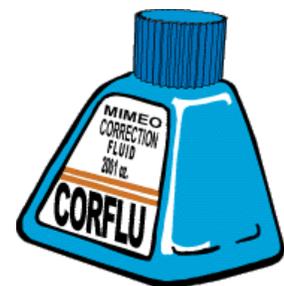
So you see, my good friend Charlotte has really outdone herself by inviting the three personas who are Bob Shaw to be guest at this year's DeepSouthCon. He is perhaps the best example of that rarity in the science fiction field, someone who has excelled, and continues to excel, both as a professional writer and a fan. I can't say which of the Bob Shaws you will find most memorable this weekend, but I *can* assure you of this: You will not fail to be entertained by his presence. ☀



Afterword:

And we were not. My memory of that DeepSouthCon is that Bob was extremely outgoing and engaging. He was on several panels and did do a Serious Scientific Speech (though an abbreviated off-the-cuff one). He was genuinely surprised when he was presented the Rebel Award (given for service to Southern Fandom) at that convention. And it was the last time I ever saw him.

Back out west for the next article, this time for a trip to a convention that *wasn't* a Worldcon. The annual "Corflu" fanzine fans' convention (named after the nickname for mimeograph stencil correction fluid) has been in existence since 1984. From an attendance point of view, there's no comparison between Worldcon and Corflu – Worldcons typically draw a few thousand science fiction fans where Corflus attract a few dozen. But from an enjoyment viewpoint, most of the Corflus that I've been to were at least as memorable as Worldcons. The 1992 Corflu, in particular, was one of the most entertaining convention trips I've ever taken.



Corflu Odyssey

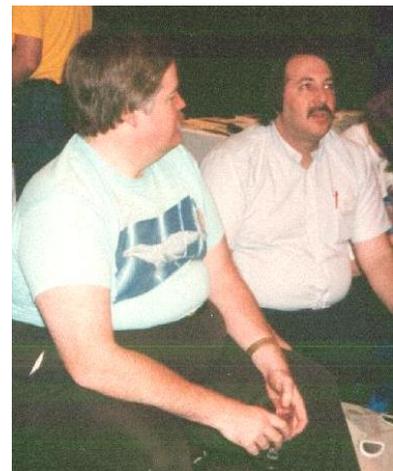
“You will soon be involved in many parties.”

Rich found that on a slip of paper inside a fortune cookie one evening in mid-February. Looking back, from some four months distance, we can now tell you that the fortune was right. In late February, we traveled to a far-off place, to a long, multi-day party with friends from far and near, to an event purportedly devoted to fanzine publishing but with plenty of emphasis on fan history as well. It was the 1992 Corflu fanzine fans’ convention, and we want tell you about it...

It’s been over a decade since we were last in Los Angeles. We missed the 1984 Worldcon, which fell right in the middle of our five-year bout with encroaching gafia. Since then, there hadn’t been any reason to travel there. So, with the upcoming Corflu there, we were primed and ready.

The trip out to L.A. was pretty innocuous, but the contrast between our starting point and destination reminded us of a scene from *The Wizard of Oz*. Do you remember when Dorothy looks out onto colorful Munchkinland from the drab, black & white interior of her aunt’s house? It was almost that dramatic, the difference between Washington, D.C. and Southern California. The mid-Atlantic coast of the United States isn’t known for pleasant weather in late February; the morning we drove to Dulles International Airport, the weather was windy and rainy, and cold enough for a heavy jacket. When we arrived in L.A., it was sunny and very warm. While we were waiting for our luggage in the airport, we felt a little silly carrying jackets more suitable for Minnesota; nobody told us that when we boarded the DC-10 at Dulles that we’d be walking through the door into summer!

There was more to do in the Los Angeles area besides go to Corflu, of course. With that in mind, we arranged our travel to arrive in Los Angeles two days before the convention began. Elliott “Elst” Weinstein met us at our hotel soon after we arrived, and we spent that afternoon seeing parts of Los Angeles we’d missed in our previous trip. First stop was downtown L.A., for a quick science fictional tour of the city. We drove past City Hall, which doubled as the Daily Planet building in the old *Superman* TV series. (It loses some of its charm without the globe at the top, though.) Next was the Bradbury Building, whose interior was used in the movie *Bladerunner* and the “Demon With a Glass Hand” episode of *The Outer Limits* TV series. (We were somewhat let down to find out that it’s actually home to a few agencies of the California state government.) The building across the street from the Bradbury, which houses a large open-air food market, was festooned with all kinds of marvelous gargoyles and fantasy figures. Rich thought it all reminded him of stories by Harlan Ellison, “only bigger!”



Mike Glycer and Elst Weinstein
at the 1992 Corflu

Big is what you get when you come to Los Angeles. You really need a car there. There’s lots of places to see, but they’re spread throughout the metro area. For instance, just west of

downtown, next to the LaBrea Tar Pits, is the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, which has maybe the world's largest collection of Rodin sculptures, plus a nice collection of northern Renaissance paintings. Farther east, the old part of the city near Olivera Street is set up with Mexican merchants selling all sorts of things from Olde Mexico, at L.A. prices. In nearby Japantown, prices are much better, especially on the colorful ceramics that seem to be a specialty there. Every storefront in Japantown has a large white ceramic cat with its right paw raised in greeting. We saw a sign in one of the stores telling us about the cats: the white cat stands for good business, while the black cat represents good health. Raising the right paw stands for good service, and raising the left is for keeping diseases away. Nicki noticed one store that, instead of a cat, had a sign that read 'Cat Stolen'. Keeping in mind what we had just learned, we did *not* enter!

Nicki did wind up buying a pair of small ceramic cats, which now reside next to our Rebel Award plaque on the mantle over our fireplace. But that wasn't even her prime purchasing objective on this trip. For the story on what was, it's time to change channels and segue to the continuing story of... Quest For T-Shirts!

At this point we're forced to admit we're both chronic collectors, though not as bad as we once were. When we moved from Tennessee to Maryland almost four years ago, we had to cut back considerably on belongings that made the trip with us. Consequently, lots of things found new owners, including Rich's collection of SF digest magazines that extended back to the 1940s, which he very sadly and very reluctantly decided to donate to the South Florida Science Fiction Society as a tax write-off. The things we seem to accumulate now are a little more esoteric. For instance, Rich now collects suspension bridges, state capitals, and U.S. counties. Nicki, on the other hand, likes to visit various college and university campuses to acquire new additions to her ever growing collection of college T-shirts.



Nicki's ceramic cats

That collection has grown considerably in the last few years; it started about 15 years ago when Rich, returning from a business trip and looking for a last-minute gift to bring back, glommed onto a University of Michigan T-shirt in the gift shop of an Ann Arbor motel. The rest, as they say, is history. We haven't counted them lately, but the ever growing number of T-shirts Nicki has completely fills one dresser and is threatening various other clothes storage space.

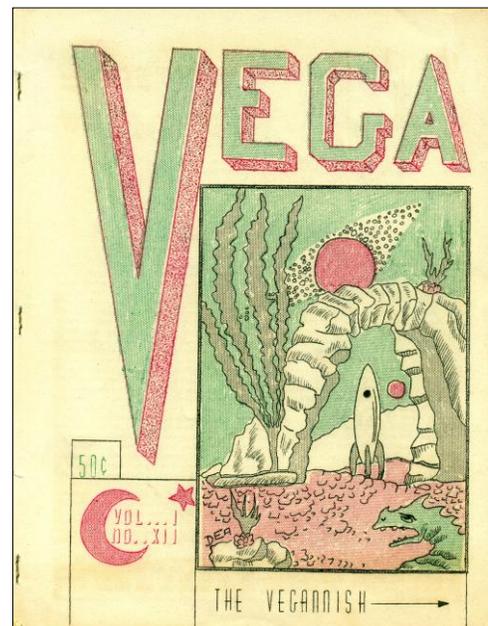
For our Los Angeles trip, the Hit List included the University of Southern California and Loyola Marymount University, both reasonably near the Corflu hotel. (UCLA was already in the bag from a previous trip, many years earlier.) The USC campus turned out to be your typical congested big-city university, with little to make it very memorable. Marymount, on the other hand, was spectacularly located on a highland southwest of downtown, with a sweeping, panoramic view of the city center. The next time on the evening news you see a journalist giving a story with downtown Los Angeles as his backdrop, he might be using the view from Loyola Marymount. Besides the nice view of the city, there were other sights at Marymount that caught Rich's eye as well. The exceptionally warm weather brought out plenty of string bikinis on coed sunbathers that last day of February. He was still pondering the incongruity of it all as Nicki led him by the hand back to the rental car.

Even with two full days sightseeing, we didn't get to everything we had planned. No Hollywood Boulevard this trip; there just wasn't time. No Los Angeles Kings hockey game either, even though The Great Western Forum was only a couple miles from our hotel – their two home games during our trip were on nights we had other activities planned. Even the statues of Rocky and Bullwinkle on Sunset Boulevard would have to wait for another opportunity.

One thing that didn't have to wait, though, was a Thursday night visit to LASFS, the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society. When in Los Angeles, it seems almost obligatory for science fiction fans to visit LASFS. Apparently, the same thought occurred to other fans in from out of town as well; besides us at that meeting were Art Widner, Bill Bowers, Dick and Leah Smith, Len Bailes, and George Flynn – previous Corflu veterans all. It turns out that LASFS is now only about two years from its three thousandth meeting (all consecutive, every Thursday night). Rich noted this to LASFSian Mike Glycer by asking him, "LASFS started the Loscon convention to commemorate its 2,000th meeting. What's going to happen on its 3,000th?" Mike replied, "Gee, I don't know, maybe we'll stop it." Just one more indication that great fannish minds run in circles...

Finally, it was time for Corflu. The convention committee had publicized that vintage 1950s-era fanzine fans would be encouraged to attend this year's convention, and we weren't disappointed. It was an opportunity to rediscover some of fandom's past glories, to find out things that happened a long time ago that made us what we are. Ted White was there, of course, but he goes to every Corflu. Rich had hoped to meet Noreen Shaw, Charles Burbee, Redd Boggs, Andy Young, and Gregg Calkins, after reading about them in *A Wealth of Fable*, but unfortunately, they didn't show (Burb was in the hospital with a broken hip). No matter, there were still quite a few earlier-era fanzine fans there: Robert Lichtman, Forrest J Ackerman, Bill Rotsler, Dave Rike, Roy Lavender, Bruce Pelz, and Dean Grennell. In particular, Rich had looked forward to meeting Dean Grennell. Back in the 1950s and 1960s, Dean was one of fandom's best photographers, both in quantity and quality, but he was even better known for his fanzine *Grue*, which was one of the best fan publications of the 1950s. It turned out that he'd brought two old fanzines with him for Rich; one of them was an issue of *Grue*, and the other was the front half of maybe the most famous single issue of any fanzine ever published, Joel Nydahl's *Vega* anniversary from 1953.

For those of you who haven't heard of the *Vega* anniversary, it's famous for its contents, but even more so for what happened to Nydahl afterwards. That issue of *Vega* was intended to celebrate its first anniversary of publication, and as a result ran to more than 100 pages. Nydahl went all-out to get good material for the issue, and succeeded; the table of contents reads like a who's who of 1950s fandom: Walt Willis, Marion Zimmer Bradley, Harlan Ellison, Fred Chappell, Terry Carr, Lynn Hickman, Charles Wells, Juanita Wellons (now Coulson), Bob Tucker, Dean Grennell, Bob Silverberg, Redd Boggs, Bob Bloch, and more. The cover is three-color mimeo with tight registration. It's a truly impressive fan publication, even if we only have the first



half of it. As for Nydahl, he spent so much time and money on the issue, he completely burned out and dropped out of sight, never to return. The affliction became known as Nydahl's Disease, otherwise known as *annishia gafiatus*.

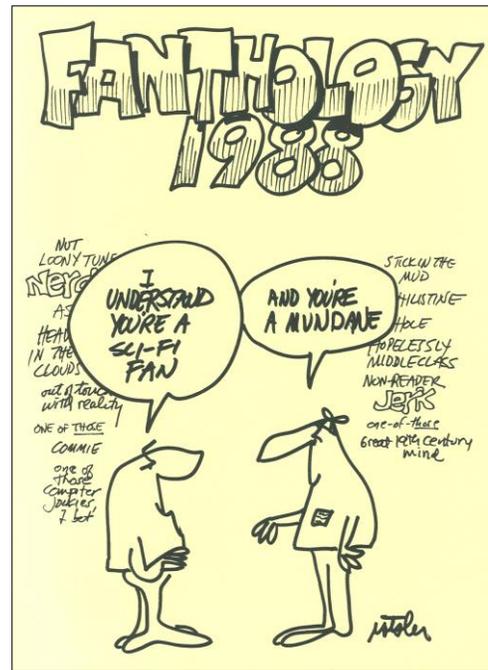
Besides *Vega*, many other old fanzines made appearances at this year's Corflu. In fact, Corflu is an ideal place to acquire fanzines, both new and old. The TAFF/DUFF auction saw quite a few of them change hands. Rich came away with a copy of *Science Fiction Fifty-Yearly*, a fanzine published by Bob Tucker and Bob Bloch in 1957, to mark their combined 50 years of fan activity. A copy of a 1944 postcard-zine, *Fan Newsletter*, brought a sales price of seventeen dollars, maybe an all-time record for a fanzine purchase price when figured on a per-square-inch basis. The *Fanthology 1988* fanzine also made its appearance at Corflu, to mixed reviews.

The hotel chosen for Corflu, the Cockatoo Inn, was an older hotel a few miles from the Los Angeles International Airport that seemed to be desperately trying to hang on to its dignity in the face of new high-rise hotels that now surround the airport. It must have been one of the better places to stay back in the 1950s, from some of the old autographed photos of celebrities hanging on the walls of the restaurant. Now, forty years later, it wasn't exactly run down, but we suspected that many years had passed since the last time any celebrity had stayed there. The hotel's layout was a bit different in that many of the sleeping rooms were in a separate building, across the street from the hotel lobby and restaurant. The unique aspect of this arrangement was that the hotel buildings and parking garage completely surrounded one lone house. Apparently the house's owner, back in the 1950s, had decided not to sell his land to the Cockatoo, and the hotel went in anyway, right around him.



Bill Rotsler in action

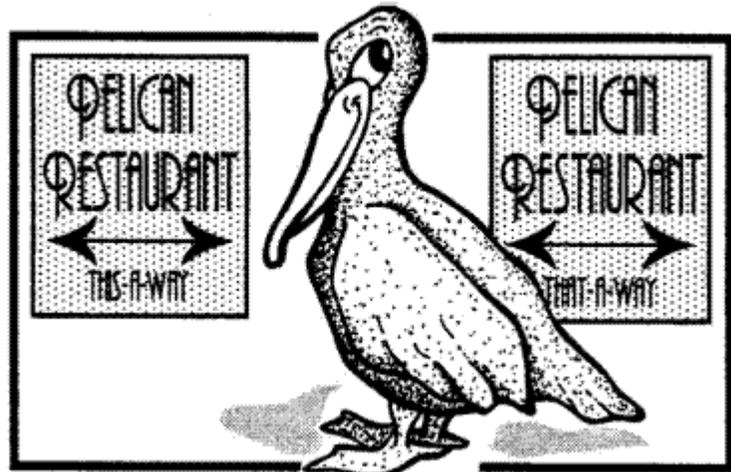
Quite a bit of it didn't find its way back to the hotel cupboards (as you might expect), which led someone to remark, "Bill Rotsler: the dishwasher's friend."



Apart from the banquet, few fans ate at the hotel restaurant, except for the free continental breakfasts. We found that out pretty early on, after a breakfast we shared with Linda and Ron Bushyager, and George Flynn. It took well over an hour, much of which was spent trying to get the attention of the waiters. This led George to say on the way out of the restaurant, "It wasn't the best breakfast I've ever had, but it was the longest!"

After that, we took advantage of every opportunity to organize dinner and lunch expeditions away from the hotel. One of them introduced us to Peruvian food, which turned out to be not too bad (if you pick a dish not too heavy with cilantro). To our surprise, that dinner came complete with a five-member Peruvian folk music group; to our dismay, they set up their amplifiers about 10 feet in front of our table. Words are really inadequate to describe the ordinarily gentle sound of the panpipes flute boosted to the amplitude of a jet engine. Dick Smith, who was sitting across from Nicki, remarked that we'd better eat fast, because the plates were starting to vibrate right off the table. On the way back to the hotel, we found out that the food must have been more filling than we thought. We had turned in our rental car by then, but were able to squeeze into the back seat of a two-door mini-compact someone else had rented. We didn't have any trouble getting out at the restaurant, but on the return trip Rich got his shoulder and knee wedged into some crevasses in the car while trying to climb out, and couldn't. It took Nicki shoving from behind and Ben Yalow pulling from the outside to get him loose. It was definitely not one of Rich's finer moments...

We don't mean this essay to degenerate into an anthology of eating stories, but there was another dinner expedition later on that was even more memorable. It started out innocuously enough, with three carfuls of fans heading out to the Pelican Restaurant in Manhattan Beach for seafood. Mike Glycer had earlier headed off with one carful, while we, Moshe Feder, and Elst Weinstein would follow in Elst's car, leading Art Widner and Dave Rike in Art's two-seater pickup truck. Elst was to lead, since he's an L.A. native, but he wasn't totally familiar with this section of town. So he decided to use the directions and hand-drawn map provided in the convention's restaurant guide.



Elst wasn't too thrilled with the map, because it had been prepared by Rick Foss, a fan and friend of Elst's who was also a travel agent – Elst knew Rick and that he often oversimplified things like this. However, the restaurant was located on one of the major streets, Highland Avenue, which was on Foss's map. All we had to do was follow El Segundo to Highland, turn down Highland for a few blocks, and we'd be there. What could go wrong? So we started out, with Elst explaining some of the area's history as he was driving, and Art trying to keep up with us. The street we were on, El Segundo, takes its name from a nearby oil refinery (supposedly the *second* one built in the area). We saw it before too long – it was like a fairy castle, with thousands of little lights vaguely defining its shape. But just then El Segundo dead-ended instead of intersecting with Highland, and the only street available took a sharp turn to the right –

exactly *opposite* the direction we needed to go. This led into a warehouse district, deserted at eight o'clock on a Saturday night. We had to traverse a bunch of narrow little streets with stop signs at the end of every block to find our way back to a main thoroughfare.

Elst was getting annoyed, since it was pretty certain we now wouldn't get to the restaurant until well past our reservation time. His car was a high-powered Acura, and just about every block on the way out he would roar up to a stop sign and utter some epithet about Foss, then take off again. It went like this:

Vrooom! Screech! "Foss is going to have a lot of explaining to do about *this!*" Vrooom! Screech! "Death to Foss!" Vrooom! Screech! "I'll kill him!"

The mythical corner of Highland and El Segundo may go down into fannish lore as the Rick Foss Memorial Intersection. It was all very entertaining to Art and Dave, desperately trying to keep up with us, who had figured out early on that we'd gotten lost.

After we finally arrived at the restaurant, a different dilemma presented itself – where to park? Nothing was available on streets near the restaurant, and the parking lot across the street was full. We must have coasted up and down streets for five minutes before Elst, in desperation, was able to find us a parking place in a way we *still* don't believe. It happened like this:

Those of you who know Elst are probably aware that he has been involved with more than his share of fan hoax happenings through the years. One of them is/was APA-H, the late and unlamented hoax/humor apa; another is the Church of Herbangelism. The church's chief deity, Herbie, is the same character who had his own comic book in the 1960s and whose trademark lollipops possessed phenomenal powers as tools and weapons. Anyway, just as we were starting to lose hope of finding a parking place anywhere in the area code, Elst said that, although it shouldn't be done too often, once in a while if you invoke Herbie's name, a parking spot will free up for you. *Within five seconds* a car pulled out from the curb, leaving an open spot right in front of the restaurant, and we were in it. It was unbelievable; it was almost enough to make converts of us...

The restaurant, it turned out, wasn't nearly full that night, and we had no trouble getting seated. The whole back area of the restaurant became sort of a mini-convention, because there must have been 25 fans there that night. Festivities went on for a couple of hours. As we were leaving, some of us decided that, since it was a beautiful moonlit night, we'd walk down the hill to the Pacific Ocean which was just a short distance away.

When the street leveled off, it dead-ended at a small parking lot containing one lonely booted car. At the entrance to the lot, a sign attracted our attention – a whale inside a red circle with a diagonal red slash running through the circle. We surmised this must mean "No Harpooning". (Another sign declared that cars were not allowed to park overnight, which seemed to contradict the booted car.) We carefully made our way on the sand down to where impressive-size waves (to we East Coasters, at least) were rolling in.

Geri Sullivan, who was with our group, seemed excited by the spectacle of it all; we don't imagine she sees very many breakers that big up in Minnesota. Rich, on the other hand, was urging caution at getting too close to the water's edge – these waves were a *lot* more powerful than what we'd seen from the Atlantic at last year's Ditto convention in Virginia Beach. Rich said later he had a momentary vision of Geri getting carried out to sea by the undertow, and having to send out her convention report in a series of postcards from Easter Island. It turned out

that the Pacific was trickier than the Atlantic, too – Moshe Feder slipped and got his pants leg wet when he didn't scramble away quite fast enough. A big wave had snuck up on him when he turned his back to the ocean.

By that time, it was getting pretty late, and we'd had enough excitement, if not entertainment, for one day. But on the way back to the hotel, we experienced a 'California Moment', one of those times you realize you can be nowhere else but in Los Angeles.

Elst had wisely decided to take an alternate route back, one that didn't depend on following Foss's map, but that did put us on a wide street with a long series of traffic lights. As we were stopped at one of them, a car in the lane next to us honked at another car in front of it, and both drivers rolled down their windows. Now, we don't know what happens where you live, but where we've lived, we've seen people start fighting when this sort of thing happens. However, this was Southern California:

"Hey, Dave, your car phone isn't on!" the guy in the rear car yelled.

'Dave' looked in his car for a moment then yelled back, "Yes, it is!"

"I've been trying to call you, and all I get is a busy signal!" Evidently, 'Dave' had his name and what looked like a telephone number posted in his back window, and the driver of the second car, who also had a cellular phone, had noticed it.



"What number are you trying?" said 'Dave'. And the guy behind him shouted a string of numbers. The light was still red.

"You've got the wrong number!" 'Dave' yelled, and recited the correct one. The signal turned green.

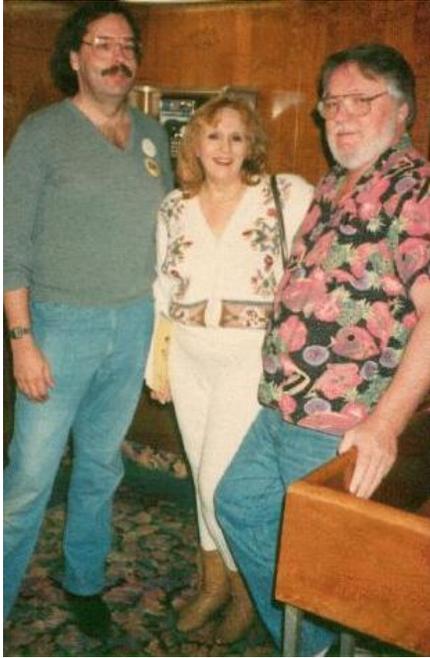
Meanwhile, we'd all been laughing hysterically at this. Then Elst said, "Let's call Dave!"

Elst's idea was to call 'Dave' before the other driver could, so the guy would *still* get a busy signal. It took him several traffic signals to convince us this was indeed a good idea, and we finally gave in. "OK, what was the number?"

By that time, no one remembered, but just then we reached another red light, and 'Dave' was still in the lane next to us. So Elst powered down the passenger-side window of his car, and yelled, "Hey, Dave! What was that number again?"

'Dave', at long last, suddenly noticed us, and gave us an embarrassed half-wave and smile as we tried to keep from dissolving completely into laughter. When the signal turned green, 'Dave' turned right and disappeared into the night. We managed to make it back to the hotel without further incident.

As the convention started to wind down, we had a chance to think back over the weekend, to consider just why we look forward so much each year to this particular get-together. Perhaps the strength of the convention is the people, from many different fan eras, who come from near and far to be there. As we said earlier, it's the people who attend that provide a great opportunity to rediscover things that happened in different times (and different places) that made us what we



Arnie and Joyce Katz with Bill Rotsler

are today. This year, Arnie and Joyce Katz from Las Vegas finally made it to a Corflu. They brought along several fans who seem genuinely interested in this form of fan activity, and we look forward to receiving fanzines from them. There were only two non-North American fans present – Eric Lindsay from Australia and Nigel Rowe from New Zealand, England, and probably places in-between. There were also people there that we seem to see at almost every Corflu – Don Fitch, Andy Hooper, Pat Virzi, Richard Brandt, Suzanne Tompkins, and Jerry Kaufman among them. They didn't find their way into other parts of this convention report, but we appreciated their company during the weekend just as much.

The last night of the Corflu always seems to be the best. The convention had ended, and there were about twenty hangers-on in the con suite, trying to use up the last of the drinks and munchies. Nobody seemed to want it to end. As the hours wore on, more and more people said their good-byes, wanting to get some sleep before early airplane flights the next day. Every time the group got smaller, the energy level seemed to pick up slightly, as if everybody was trying

to make up for the loss. Things were still going strong when we left, but on the way out, everyone came up to us and wished us well. The last person we saw on the way out was Geri Sullivan, who grabbed our hands for just a second as she said, "It's been fun, hasn't it?"

And we said, "Yes, it has. Let's do it all over again next year!" ☀

Artist credit: all illustrations by Sheryl Birkhead

Afterword:

Of those mentioned in this essay who were at the 1992 Corflu convention, we've lost Bruce Pelz, Bill Bowers, George Flynn, Roy Lavender, Dean Grennell, Forry Ackerman, and Bill Rotsler. Kelly Freas, who was at the English Regency convention, has also passed away. And the Cockatoo Inn itself met its demise about four years after the Corflu convention; it was demolished to make way for a more modern hotel, but not before its immortality was assured by a cameo appearance in the Quentin Tarantino movie *Jackie Brown*.

In the seven years that followed the 1992 Corflu, many other friends passed on and as a result, practically every issue of *Mimosa* included a remembrance of someone. The summer of 1999 was an especially bad time, and just before the 1999 Worldcon, *Mimosa* 24 was published and included the following article as my closing comments for the issue.



Cockatoo Inn, not long before it was demolished

Non-Stop Parking and Other Remembrances

October 31, 1997 (Warsaw, Poland).

It's All Hallow's Eve here in Eastern Europe, but there's nary a witch nor goblin to be seen. About the scariest thing I've seen are all the closed money changer kiosks, as I was desperate to change some dollars into zlotys so I could buy a train ticket to Gdańsk for early tomorrow morning. I thought I'd have a horrific time purchasing the ticket, late as it was on a Friday night, but it really wasn't a problem. I'd already written down the departure time I wanted, and when I got to the ticket window at the train station, I told the sales lady in my best Polish enunciation, "*Jeden bileta Gdańsk, druga klasa, prosze.*" ("One second-class ticket to Gdańsk, please.") It worked! In fact, it worked so well that the guy behind me said something to me (in English) that I would never have expected to hear: "Your Polish is pretty good!" Now hearing *that* was scary!



Warsaw's central train station

###

I don't think I've ever written much in *Mimosa* about what I do in the 'real' world. I'm employed by an agency of the United States Government, and for the past several years I've been working on an international trade promotion initiative. The goal is to find the project opportunities that all the multinational corporations consider too small and then match them up with smaller project developer companies who are thirsty for those kinds of opportunities, but don't have the resources to be all over the world finding them. It's a fairly proactive program without much in the way of resources to work with, and whenever there's a success, you get the feeling you can actually make a difference in the world.

Eastern Europe is where this initiative seems to work best (I won't bore you with the technical details why that's so), and I've traveled there many times in the past decade. It's a fascinating part of the world to visit, and each time I've been there I've come away with a greater understanding of the region and the people who live there.

And, yes, I've had my share of misadventures, quite often involving a language barrier, on some of these trips. There are a lot of languages spoken in Europe, and learning more than just a few survival words and phrases in any of them is very difficult for me. Fortunately, even though language barriers can be a big problem in Eastern Europe, it was fairly easy enough to get along when I was alone, surviving on English. In fact, English-language words are rapidly invading the region – many signs and storefronts often use English-language words, such as 'stop', 'hot-dog', 'computer', 'druggist', and, inevitably, 'sale'. There are also some English-language

phrases in use there we *don't* use in North America, a prime example being 'non-stop', which seems to be the preferred way of saying 'open 24 hours'. Examples of its use include 'Non-Stop Snack Bar', 'Non-Stop Gasoline', and, most amusing of all, 'Non-Stop Parking'.

####

November 3, 1997 (Sanok, Poland). The hotel situation in Eastern Europe seems to have improved considerably in the past year or so. There wasn't really even a single hotel I stayed in this trip that I'd object to returning to on a future trip. On the other hand, I didn't have to stay at a couple of the places I endured last year. The lowest of the low was probably the Hotel Warsaw, which had nothing wrong with it that a complete gutting wouldn't cure. My most lasting memory of that place, however, was the calling cards I found under my door listing phone numbers I should dial if I was wanting a little female companionship. When I showed one of them to my Polish host, he laughed and said, "Ah, you are staying at a full service hotel!"

####

It probably wouldn't be incorrect to claim that for many decades, the 'language' of fandom, the primary form of fan communication, has been the written word, by letter or fanzine. This was especially true for Chuck Harris, who became famous in the 1950s both as a fan writer and a fan editor (he was probably as much responsible for the success of the legendary fanzine *Hyphen* as the equally legendary Walt Willis). That Chuck was also stone deaf and did not attend many fan gatherings perhaps emphasizes the importance of the written word to fandom back then.



Walt Willis, Chuck Harris and Madeleine Willis
(at the 1957 Worldcon)

Besides his work with Willis on *Hyphen*, Chuck also published his own fanzine, *Quinzy* (or just *Q*, as it became better known). Even though I'd heard about it, I had never run across a copy of *Q* before 1990; no real surprise, since the largest copy count for any issue previous to that one was only 25. That larger-circulation issue of *Q* was actually a trip report by Chuck of his visit to North America, the result of a special fan fund to bring him there. Here's how I reviewed the issue for another fanzine:

This is a voyage of discovery and along the way, Chuck shares his surprise about things like: strawberries being served as garnishes rather than only as a dessert; that you can travel on a train for a night and a day, and still be only half way between Minneapolis and Seattle; that tumbleweeds exist not only in the movies; that jalapeño peppers are *hot*! The skillful blending of sense-of-wonder into the events of the trip makes for fascinating reading.

In short, this is the type of trip report where you can't wait to turn the page to see what happens next. It's an enjoyable look at the American way of life from someone who's a good enough writer to point out the differences in an amusing manner. I hope reader response to the issue will convince Chuck to keep this issue's copy count next time he publishes, if for nothing else so we indigent fanzine fans in the States can see what *real* fanzine writing is.

It was my misfortune, surely, not to have crossed paths with Chuck Harris very often, either in person or in print. Looking through all our back issues, I see that we published only two pieces by him in *Mimosa* – a letter of comment and an article co-written with Vince Clarke, both in issue 12. The first time I met him in person was at the Corflu fanzine fans convention of 1989, where he had the status of an unofficial Guest of Honor; it was his first trip to North America, and he had so many people surrounding him it was impossible to do more than just say hello. The only other time I really got to ‘talk’ to him (via a shared laptop computer) was at the 1992 Worldcon, Magicon, where there were enough other things going on that he was much more accessible.

Chuck passed away on July 5th, peacefully, reportedly while resting in his favorite chair. We sometimes learn more of a person from the eulogies and obituaries that are written after his passing, and I think that could be true for Chuck Harris. Jerry Kaufman described him as an “original voice in fannish writing: bawdy, roguish, impassioned and humane.” Patrick Nielsen Hayden remembered him as much for his unique personality as his talent as a writer: “Chuck loved the things he loved – his family, his friends, fandom – and was so grounded in these things that he often seemed completely fearless about everything else. He would say anything, and frequently did. To be around Chuck in public was to constantly alternate between being mortified and nearly dying of laughter. He knew what was really important.” And Rob Hansen remembered Chuck, along with Vince Clarke and Arthur Thomson, as one of the great influences on British fandom: “They were my personal trinity of fannish elders, those three, warm, witty, wonderful guys who epitomised what fandom can be and what it should be, and I feel privileged to have been their friend. Now, with Chuck’s death, they’re all gone, an era has passed, and I feel diminished.” So do we all.

###

October 29, 1997 (Budapest, Hungary).

It’s been a trying day. Business meetings did not go all that well today, and this afternoon I almost had my briefcase stolen. It happened while I was looking over some artwork at an outdoor kiosk. The print I wanted seemed a bit overpriced at 3000 Forints (about \$16) so I offered 2400 instead. When the dealer seemed a bit stubborn, I set my briefcase on the pavement while I checked my wallet to see if I had enough money in case he wouldn’t budge. It wasn’t five seconds later that someone tried to snatch the briefcase; if I hadn’t deliberately leaned it against my leg I would have lost it. When I felt it go, my reaction was automatic, fueled by adrenaline. I grabbed a handful of the jacket of the culprit (it was a woman), spun her around facing me, carefully removed the briefcase from her grasp, and gave her a hard shove that almost knocked her down. She staggered away. One deep breath later, I turned back to see the art dealer staring at me, open-jawed. After about five seconds he found his voice: “OK, I think I can do 2400.” Silver linings appear in unusual ways, I guess.



Hungarian Parliament building in Budapest

###

My friend George “Lan” Laskowski also died in July. He’d been ill for quite some time with pancreatic cancer so it wasn’t really unexpected, but any loss of a friend is still a shock to the system. Unlike Chuck Harris, I crossed paths with George many times in the two decades plus that I’d known him. I have a pretty vivid memory, in fact, of the first time I met him. It was at a mid-south convention in the late 1970s, back before the time of *Mimosa* when we were still publishing the Chattanooga clubzine *Chat*. He stood out in a crowd because of the raccoon hat he wore, which I guess he considered as kind of a fannish trademark of sorts.



George Laskowski in 1991

Like Nicki and me, George was a fanzine publisher, as most of you are no doubt aware. His general interest fanzine, *Lan’s Lantern*, began publication not long before we first “pubbed our ish” and even though *LL* had much more visibility and diverse readership than *Chat*, he treated us as his equal. And several years later, at the 1986 Worldcon when we were disenchanted by all the nastiness endemic to our local fandom at that time and considering dropping out of fandom to get away from it all, he made a point of pleading with us not to, and to publish a second issue of *Mimosa* instead. (And we did, early the next year – five years after the first issue had appeared.) A couple years later we moved north to Maryland and didn’t see him too often after that, usually only at Worldcons and Midwestcons. But we still kept in touch through the mail, and we kept on each others fanzine mailing lists.

George only had two contributions in *Mimosa*, a letter of comment in issue 12 and a short piece of fan fiction in our second issue. Even though he often wrote fanzine articles for other fan publishers, I really don’t think George will be remembered as a fan writer. For many years he was so prolific as a fan publisher and *LL* so popular a forum for his readers, that may well be how he’ll be recognized in future fan history books.

In his remembrance of George, Arthur Hlavaty remarked that *Lan’s Lantern* was “a big, friendly place that encouraged maximum participation, rather than a unified, tightly organized display of editorial control.” Laurie Mann agreed, adding that: “I felt he was one of the people who was uniquely a fan. *Lan’s Lantern* had the diary, the reviews, the trip reports, the loads of fan art, lengthy letters, and frequent nattering. He was almost always a joy to be around at cons, with his natural enthusiasm for life.” Leah Zeldes Smith was one of the people who acquainted him with fanzines back in the 1970s, and one of her memories of George was a note from him, after he won his first Best Fanzine Hugo, “thanking me for introducing him to fanzine fandom,” and went on to say: “We hadn’t been in touch in a while, and George was older than I am, but I think, now, I have just a dim inkling of what a parent feels when a child dies.” And Janice Gelb recalled, “I remember sitting at the Hugo Awards rehearsal with him at Intersection [in 1995], giggling away at all the chaos. I think all of fandom remembers his graciousness after the snafu at Magicon where Spider Robinson mistakenly announced that his fanzine, *Lan’s Lantern*, had won the Fanzine Hugo when it had actually been won by *Mimosa*.”

Nicki and I will always be entangled in that surreal bit of fan history with him, at Magicon in 1992, the only time a Hugo Award has been mistakenly awarded. George did win two Best Fanzine Hugos for *LL*, one at the 1986 ConFederation (in spite of the campaign for ‘No Award’

that year) and the other at Chicon V in 1991. When he won at ConFederation, Nicki and I made a point of telling him how happy we were for him, and even how proud we felt for him. After what must have been a big disappointment at having to relinquish the 1992 Best Fanzine Hugo, he made a point of coming to us and apologizing for something that wasn't even his fault, and telling us how proud *he* was of *us*. His hat was a raccoon, but his memory was of an elephant.



####

April 8, 1998 (Prague, Czech Republic). Prague is an easy city to get around in, and perhaps the best way to do that is with the city's subway system (which seems to be the only "gift" of the communist era anyone there is thankful for). It goes almost everywhere, and it's easy to use – once you get past buying a ticket from the self-service machines. I thought it would be simple –

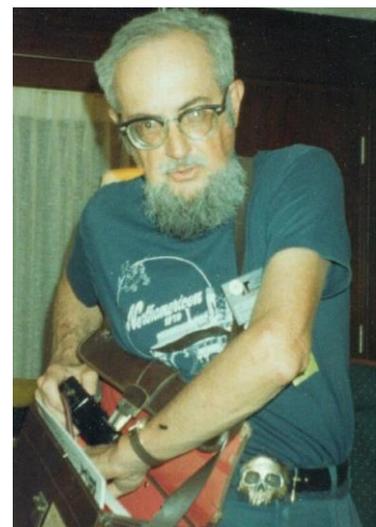


Prague's old town square

just push the button for the type of pass you wanted, feed in the coins and wait for the ticket to pop out. But when I tried it, I couldn't get the machine accept the coins; they wouldn't go in the slot. So I had to wait, loitering near the machine and trying to act nonchalant, hoping someone would come and buy a ticket so I could see how it was done. Finally, a young lady on the way home from school showed me how it worked – you had to also push a *second* button to finalize the selection before the machine would accept any money. I'm glad nobody asked me what I did for a living – I would have been embarrassed to admit I was a trained engineer!

####

I don't know if it's possible to be 'trained' as a correspondent, but if it were, there's at least one fan who would qualify for an advanced degree. Robert "Buck" Coulson, who died in February, was probably fandom's most prolific letterhack this side of Harry Warner. He wrote interesting, somewhat rambling letters that blended together comments on the fanzine he had received and relevant things that were happening in real life, and it was usually pretty easy to find a paragraph or two to excerpt into the letters column. In *Mimosa* alone there are eighteen Buck Coulson letters of comment in the 23 previous issues. He also wrote one article for *Mimosa*, about some of the early Midwestcons, which appeared in the 13th issue; he had come into fandom in the early 1950s and was an excellent source of fanhistorica.



Robert "Buck" Coulson

Buck Coulson and his wife Juanita became known in fandom back then from their own fanzine, *Yandro*, which they published

monthly through much of the 1950s and 1960s. *Yandro* was a balance of fannish and sercon material that seemed to have something for everyone. It became popular enough that it was nominated for a Hugo Award ten years in a row, winning in 1965. However, the worldcon was in London that year, and Buck and Juanita couldn't attend. Buck later wrote (in a letter of comment to *Mimosa*) that by the time they received the actual, physical Hugo Award in the mail some nine months afterwards, "the rocket looked a bit like it had spent all that time knocking around the asteroid belt in the hands of an incompetent pilot. Pitted, in other words. Nobody had blown a hole through the drive section or anything, but it did look like a hard-working ship. Well, the Hugo Awards had started having a primary and final ballot in 1959, and *Yandro* had been on it every year until we won in 1965, and for three more years afterwards. So we started calling *Yandro* 'the world's best second-rate fanzine'. Had to quit that after we won, but we decided that a second-rate Hugo for a second-rate fanzine was quite appropriate. We found it was very useful for holding 3-inch rolls of tape in our previous dwelling, but here it's on top of the piano with the other trophies and an inconvenient location for tape. Pity; there never used to be any cries of 'Where the hell's the masking tape?' It was right there in plain sight."



In the 1960s, Buck partially transitioned into prodom, coauthoring two *Man From U.N.C.L.E.* novels, and then in the 1970s, two short mystery novels, *Now You See It/Him/Them* and *Charles Fort Never Mentioned Wombats*, the latter two each set in the midst of a science fiction convention. Bob Tucker thought that those two books "revealed to some extent just what he thought of fans and fandom, what he saw as our assets and our foibles," and described the latter one as "an account of fans gathering for the Australian worldcon of 1975. Those fans foil an alien invasion and save the world by disbelieving in aliens and their UFOs. It was a splendid tongue-in-cheek tale filled with the recognizable fans and pros of 1975-77." They are indeed entertaining to read, and Nicki and I own a copy of each of them, but I was dismayed to see that I'd never gotten Buck to sign them for us. Way back then, when we bought the books, I was still little more than a neo, and I may have been too intimidated by Buck's reputation as a curmudgeon to ask.

Buck was often referred to as a curmudgeon, a description that he seemed to encourage. Gene DeWeese, who collaborated with him on all four novels, remembered that, "He long had the reputation – often purposely cultivated – of being the ultimate fannish curmudgeon. It started, I suspect, because he was simply the most honest person I've ever known and didn't suffer fools easily. And he didn't hesitate to let you know, as I found out on a couple of occasions when he thought, quite rightly, that I'd slipped into that category." Bob Tucker recalled that, "More than once in print and in person he was described as a curmudgeon and he appeared to glory in that appellation, but he was not the dictionary description of a curmudgeon – not a grasping or churlish fellow. To many of us he was a kindly curmudgeon, a lovable iconoclast who would quickly disagree with one word used in this sentence. He was a Fredric Brown Character." Dave Rowe agreed, adding, "His knowledge was gargantuan but he never pontificated. Forget the curmudgeon image, Buck was a great guy to just sit down and talk with."

There were a lot of people who were close to Buck Coulson. Bob Tucker, for instance, related that, “Our friendship was so close that I put him into two of my books and he gloried in it. In *To the Tombaugh Station* (1960) he is the captain of a spaceship named *Yandro*, and he plays a part near the end in trying to save the dumb hero from crashing on Pluto. In *Resurrection Days* (1981) he is the pastor of the hero’s church (which was a double-barreled in-joke for fans in the know).” Buck also often went out of his way to do kindnesses for people; Sheryl Birkhead recalled that, “*Yandro* was one of the first fanzines to publish my artwork, and later on, when I needed a mimeograph, he made sure that I got one.” And Carolyn Doyle had this to offer about how entertaining Buck Coulson could be: “Getting letters from Buck was a trip. He had a wonderful variety of postage stamps that he might plaster the envelope with, and the stationery might be anything from watermarked paper with a letterhead for ‘Crusader Service’ (Armour Cleaned! Lances Sharpened!) to cut-up sections of old blueprints from work.”

As for me, unfortunately, I don’t think I ever really got to know Buck all that well, or at least as well as I might have. I never really did get many opportunities to sit down and talk with him. He didn’t go to many conventions the last few decades of his life, and the ones he that did attend were usually ones that I didn’t. What’s left is all the correspondence from him we received in the mail; I’m going to miss all those thoughtful letters and insights into fan history. Nicki and I always looked forward to hearing from him. He was our friend.

####

May 1991 (Helsinki, Finland). I was surprised that so many Finns (in Helsinki, at least) have a pretty good command of English. Turns out that English is the unofficial third language of Finland, right behind the two official ones, Finnish and Swedish. There’s been only one instance where I had trouble conversing with a Helsinkian – while boarding a tram, I accidentally stepped on the toe of a surly-looking old lady who was leaving it. I immediately apologized, but she either didn’t understand English or was having none of it, because she let loose an extended verbal barrage in Finnish that turned the air blue. I could hear her yelling at me until the tram turned the corner at the end of the block. I started hoping a hole would open in the tram floor that I could crawl into; people sitting near me seemed to be having trouble keeping a straight face. I guess you could say that even though that grouchy old lady wasn’t able to converse with me in my language, she sure didn’t have any trouble communicating with me in hers.



####

There’s an old saying that “deaths come in threes.” It’s been much worse than that lately. Gary Louie, a Los Angeles-area fan, died in February of a heart attack. He was seven years younger than I am. Gary was very active in convention-running fandom; he helped put together the Exhibits area at the 1996 L.A.Con III, and I understand that he usually helped out in some way for practically every convention that he attended. I can’t say that I was a good friend of his, but we did know each other. Back in 1991, when I was in the midst of editing a new hardcover edition of Harry Warner, Jr.’s 1950s fan history, *A Wealth of Fable*, Gary provided everything from useful advice to sympathetic words several times when the project had gotten bogged

down. I remember that he even offered to help work on the book's rather comprehensive index, a mostly thankless but necessary part of the editing process. The only reason I didn't take him up on the offer was that it needed to be done by just one person for reasons of continuity and style. I imagine there will be a rather big hole to fill in many convention committees and operations staffs now that he's gone.

Los Angeles fandom has been hit hard this year. Marjii Ellers, who had been active in the 'Regency Dance' and costuming aspects of fandom, passed away just four days ago as I write this, on July 26th. One of the problems in being a continent-wide away from Southern California is that it's hard to get to know many of the fans there very well, and I regret that I didn't cross paths with her very often. I think I originally met Marjii in the late 1970s or perhaps the early 1980s, when I was in Los Angeles on a business trip and stopped by a LASFS meeting while I was there. What made me talk to her at all was that she was wearing clothes that featured scenes from one of the *Star Wars* movies. They were really a marvel, and when I naively asked her where she'd purchased them and for how much, she told me that she'd designed and sewn them herself; the material had come from a child's bedsheet set. From the various remembrances I've read about her on the Internet since she died, the overwhelming theme is that she was competent in everything she ever did, and went out of her way to be helpful, especially to those who really needed the help. At one of the earlier worldcons in the 1990s, Forry Ackerman had recognized her as a recipient of the annual 'Big Heart' Award. It's obvious that it couldn't have gone to a nicer, more giving person.



Marjii Ellers

###

December 9, 1998 (Bucharest, Romania). I've changed only about \$50 into Romanian Lei since I arrived two days ago, and I'm not nearly going to spend it all. This is a *very* inexpensive country – I bought a soft pretzel from a street vendor this afternoon for the princely sum of 500 Lei, which works out to slightly less than five cents. Anyway, I saw there was a symphony performance tonight, and it looked like an opportunity to use up most of my remaining Lei. Or so I thought. When I arrived at the symphony hall, I was surprised to find that there wasn't a box office there. I tried to explain to the person at the door that I needed to purchase a ticket for the performance, but he had even less English than I had Romanian, and pointed me toward the coat check area. I thought I was doing a little better with the lady there, especially when she motioned me toward a staircase up to the next level, but when I got to the top, a door opened into the back of the concert hall. One last try, with the lady usher there: "Excuse me, I need to purchase ticket for this performance. Can you help?" She pointed me toward a vacant seat at the back of the hall. At that point, I gave in, realizing that it was my karma not to be able to spend any money in Romania.

###

Here's a question for you – what *might* the following all have in common: Babe Ruth's 713th home run, the 30th day of December, the Apollo 16 mission to the moon, and this 24th issue of

Mimosa? Answer: they are all next-to-last. It's been our karma (as well as our pleasure) to publish what we hope is an entertaining fanzine that's also educational from a historical perspective. But it's very possible that we won't be doing it for too much longer.

We don't mean to alarm or disappoint our readers. The decision isn't even final yet, and we're leaving open the possibility of changing our minds. The only reason I'm mentioning this at all is that we've heard some speculation (seen it in print, actually) that *Mimosa* will soon cease publication; not saying anything would only feed the rumor mills.

So why are we even thinking of stopping? Our interests aren't changing, but they are broadening and starting to impact on available spare time. I'm starting to become more and more involved in the international and cultural communities here in Washington, and there's been some times in the past couple of months when I've had to decide if I should go to some interesting evening event or stay home and work on a fanzine. Nicki, I know, would like to spend a bit more time with her quilting. Even within the boundaries of fandom there are things competing for available time and resources; my 1960s fan history project, for instance, has practically gone into hibernation for the past three years and I'd like to start making some progress on it. Even scheduling business trips and vacations around when we'd like to publish an issue is even starting to become a problem. In short, it's becoming harder and harder to publish two issues per year. When we began *Mimosa*, we thought that two issues each year seemed to be the acceptable compromise that wouldn't stress our resources while still maintaining continuity with our readers. Anything very much less than that would not be fair to our contributors, our correspondents, or our readers.

So we wanted to be the ones to tell you this, that each 'next' issue of *Mimosa* could be the last. We're definitely doing a 25th issue. We *might* do a 30th issue. We probably won't do anything more than that. We've had a wondrous time these past two decades helping to preserve fan history, and we're pleased that other good fanzines, such as Tom Sadler's *The Reluctant Famulus* and Guy Lillian's *Challenger*, are now doing the same. It's time that they got some of the recognition we've enjoyed over the past decade. Thank you all for taking us to the top of the Tower of the Enchanted Duplicator – the view is very fine from up there.

####

November 30, 1998 (Bratislava, Slovakia). There's getting to be a tradition for each of my trips here that on my last night in Slovakia, my friends at the Power Research Institute take me out on a pub crawl. This year's hit list included a fine little restaurant in the middle of Bratislava's Old Town, a nondescript watering hole out on the northwest edge of town, and even a Harley Davidson biker bar (in theme, anyway) in the southern industrial area of the city. One other thing that happened as the night went on (and after our translator went home) was that the language barrier started to drop, especially for me – the more I drank, the easier it was to pick up on a few Slovak words and phrases. By the time the evening came to a close, we were all half-looped and understanding each other perfectly. Or so it seemed, anyway. Maybe I've discovered a new method of learning languages!



####

I should mention that the travel diary excerpts in this essay are mostly from a series of “Postcard Diaries of Eastern Europe” that I’ve written and are available online at the *Mimosa* website. I decided to write them because of arcane Government rules and regulations about travel expense repayment that made it difficult to call home with any hope of getting reimbursed. It costs a *lot* to call North America from Europe, especially from hotels, and I just couldn’t afford the cost of all those daily phone calls.

Instead, I decided to send out a postcard every day, one that was a stand-alone essay, a chapter of an overall larger diary of that trip that would provide a flavor of just what Eastern Europe is all about. The challenge was to be interesting, be entertaining, and above all, be *brief!* It wasn’t easy. There were lots of evenings that I was so tired I just wanted to go to bed instead of finding where I could buy a postcard (not to mention the airmail postage), and then trying to compose something pithy about the day’s activities that would fit into however many words I could cram onto the card. I don’t think I always succeeded, but most every day I was able to find one or two things interesting enough to build a mini-essay around.

Even though I’ve been to Eastern Europe many times, each trip there is always a voyage of discovery as the region undergoes change from year to year. There still is a sense of wonder for me.

####

November 6, 1997. I’m on the overnight train from Warsaw to Prague, and tomorrow morning I catch the ground shuttle out to the airport for the flight home. Perhaps the single most unforgettable moment of the entire trip happened earlier today. I was walking back toward my hotel from the very last business meeting of the trip when I was accosted by an older Polish man who was looking for some directions. After about 30 seconds of him pointing this way and that, and talking to me rapidly in Polish, it dawned on him that I was silently standing there with a blank look on my face. He looked at me expectantly, and I seized the opportunity to point to myself and say, “Amerykanka.” A great look of amusement came across his face: “Amerykanka?” I nodded and replied, slowly, “Wash-shing-ton-dee-see.” And with a great look of delight he yanked out his wallet, slipped a photograph of a young woman from it and pointed to it, saying “Air-ling-town-vair-gene-ee-yah.” Apparently his daughter had come to America and was living right across the Potomac from where I worked. You know, looking at the map, I see that there are about 5,000 miles that separate Eastern Europe from Washington, D.C. But in reality, they’re a *lot* closer than that. ☼

Artist credit: all illustrations by Joe Mayhew

Afterword:

I should mention that my friend Joe Mayhew, who did the cartoon illustrations for this article, died less than a year later from an incurable brain disease. He is missed.

My final “Postcard Diary of Eastern Europe” was in 2002, and it was nearly a decade until I returned there. As for *Mimosa*, in the end, Nicki and I decided to publish through issue #30. This allowed us to do a two-issue “Mimosa Fanthology” of some of the best articles and artwork from the run. The final issue, which was published in August 2003, began with the description of another memorable western Worldcon trip, the 2002 ConJosé. Here it is again:

Do You Know the Way to ConJosé?

Doesn't seem that long ago, but the last time we had been to California was back in 1999 when we were the fan guests at the Anaheim NASFiC. We didn't get to see very much outside the Anaheim Marriott then, so the last time we actually got to do a bit of vacationing in California was back in 1996, just prior to L.A.Con III when we spent a weekend in San Francisco, then drove down to L.A. via Ventura.

That was a pleasant week, so we decided to do it again, more or less, but in the opposite direction (starting in Los Angeles this time), since the 2002 Worldcon was in San Jose, not Anaheim. Things did not get off to a good start. The United Airlines flight from Baltimore was more than an hour delayed due to some kind of mechanical problem with the airplane (they ended up using a different airplane for the flight), so we missed our connecting flight from Chicago. Luckily, there was another flight to L.A. about an hour later, but it turned out our luggage didn't make that connection and arrived at LAX about another hour after we did. And when we finally tracked down the luggage, one of the suitcases had been badly damaged en route (the zipper had been mostly torn out).



Craig and Genny

By that time, it was about 8:30pm, so we decided to take it up with United after we got to San Jose; we needed to find our hotel in the Van Nuys area then meet up with Craig Miller and Genny Dazzo, who were going to give us directions to their home for dinner the next evening. Due to more problems with the rental car, we didn't make it to the LASFS clubhouse until only the last few hangers-on were still there, but one of them, the writer John DeChancie, offered to lead us to the after-the-meeting restaurant where LASFS members often went. For once the timing was good – most people were just getting their food orders, and Craig and Genny were there. They told us they weren't too worried, as they figured we'd find a way to contact them if we didn't

show up. We told them they had more trust in our people-finder abilities than we did!

Genny and Rich had been talking about lasagna recipes at Midwestcon earlier in the year, which had led Craig and Genny to invite us to their home for a lasagna dinner. And, since you can't bake lasagna for just four people, they also invited some of their friends (all of whom were involved in some way with the television and film industry). Since the Washington area SF fans' career interests tend to revolve around government, it was interesting to listen in to a totally different topic that was the main interest of a different part of the country – the movie business. There were many interesting stories that night, and we had such a good time listening to them Rich never did get to tell any of his Eastern Europe adventures.

It turned out that Genny had been preparing the lasagna for about three days! (Some things, including a good lasagna meat sauce, you just can't rush.) She also collects teapots, something we'd known for a few years (we've contributed several, in fact), but this was the first chance to see the collection. It was huge! She must have at least 500 of them, probably more, and they are all on display on shelves and bookcases in her dining room. They range from the large to the

tiny, from the prosaic to the ornate. Later, on the way north to San Francisco, we found her a teapot shaped like a pumpkin in a second-hand consignment store in Ventura. It was different enough to be interesting, but after seeing her collection, we weren't entirely sure she didn't already have it!

A day and evening in Ventura visiting our friends Lester and Esther Cole was next on our schedule. We first met them back in 1993, at the San Francisco Worldcon, and both of them have written essays we've published in *Mimosa*. Ventura's downtown area has been transformed since we were last there into mostly a touristy area of antique and consignment shops and restaurants, with a regional attraction of one of the Spanish Missions that were built along the California coastline back in the 1700s. Definitely worth a day there, but our schedule didn't allow us to stay any longer than that.



with Lester and Esther Cole in Ventura

Next on our itinerary was a visit to the Hearst Castle, about three hours drive north from Ventura. The nearest town to the Castle is San Simeon, but we decided to stay the night instead about 10 miles south, in Cambria, which looked to be a more interesting place. And it was! The main street was lined with lots of little craft and antique stores to explore, and there were also many good places to eat. At one of them, where we stopped in for an evening snack, we were introduced to a local delicacy, the olallieberry, which seems to be a cross between the raspberry and blackberry – chocolate olallieberry bread pudding with whipped cream is just too good, actually, to adequately describe in print.

As for the Hearst Castle itself, it greatly exceeded our expectations, and we don't think we've been in a building that's comparable – it's a mansion that aspires to be a palace. The building and grounds now belong to the State of California, and it's not run like a typical state park – there's an IMAX theater in the welcoming center that shows a 40-minute dramatization about the construction of the place and several guided tours to choose from to see the place (you can't just get a grounds pass). We chose the Hearst Castle 101 tour (or whatever the name of the introductory tour was called), which, after an exciting bus ride up a narrow, steep winding road, took us through most of the ground floor of the main building.

And from there, it was on to San Francisco. The Internet found us a good hotel deal – a \$65 per night double at the Renoir Hotel, just off Market Street. Unfortunately, the San Francisco Giants were playing in Colorado, so we didn't get to visit the new stadium but we had more than enough other things to do to fill the two evenings and a day we were in the city.

One problem with having just two evenings in San Francisco is that you can only go to two different restaurants for dinner. One of them was The Stinking Rose, the garlic-themed restaurant, which was as good as we remember it from 1993 and 1996. We met up there with a fan from the Washington club who was on her first visit to the West Coast and showed her around Chinatown after dinner, which was its usual mesmerizing human kaleidoscope. We'd also intended to go to Des Alpes, a limited-menu Basque restaurant (where we'd taken Guy Lillian, Teddy Harvia, and some other fan friends, back in 1993 during the San Francisco Worldcon), but to our dismay it was gone! Where it had been was now occupied by a Chinese-

owned business, proof that San Francisco's Chinatown has continued to expand in the time since we were last there. Change is inevitable, but we'll miss Des Alpes – we'd gone there for dinner whenever we were in San Francisco, and it was like an old friend.

And then, finally, it was time for ConJosé. This was the 20th Worldcon we've attended (our 15th in a row). We guess that means we're no longer neos, but subjectively, the 1970s don't seem that long ago.

It was not the most smoothly-run convention we've ever attended. We'd decided to stay at an outlying hotel, mostly due to waiting three months after the hotel blocks were opened before booking a hotel room (we never thought that \$130-a-night hotel rooms would sell like hotcakes). But if we'd successfully gotten into what would have been our first choice, the Hyatt St. Claire in downtown San Jose, we'd have most likely have gotten a rude surprise. Some screw-up with the convention booking service had resulted in a large overbooking for that hotel, and many people who'd thought they would be staying in the downtown instead found themselves out at the Hyatt near the San Jose airport, the better part of an hour's commute away by the county's slow-moving light rail.



Pat Molloy and Naomi Fisher take the slow way back to the San Jose Airport Hyatt

The convention itself didn't do too much better than that the first day – the registration people had apparently had some kind of problem with their membership database which resulted in them not having membership badges for any pre-registers whose last name began with the letter N. Pocket programs weren't available until that afternoon, either, which made it difficult for a while to figure out which events were going on where.

Originally the convention was to have been held in San Francisco, but problems with hotel and/or convention center availability resulted in the venue shift a few months before the site selection vote back in 1999. We think we would have probably preferred San Francisco, but downtown San Jose is not a bad place to be. Many of the convention attendees took some time off to visit some of the local attractions, like the strangely-constructed Winchester Mystery House and the Tech Museum of Innovation. The one we went to see was the local Museum of Quilts and Textiles, which had a display of quilts on the topic of "The Last Year" – some stark images of the elderly during their final weeks. The quilts were done in a realist style to be almost indistinguishable from portraiture paintings when standing farther away than about ten feet. But it was not really morbid; the images were actually quite compelling – worthy remembrances of people who had accepted death, and were meeting the ends of their lives with dignity.

Parts of San Jose itself seemed rather morbid, but in a dignified way. There were many empty and abandoned storefronts along the street where the light rail ran, possibly where dot-com companies had once been located before the bubble burst, awaiting new life when the economy turns upward again. The local economy had other ways of coping, though – there was a large street craft fair in downtown San Jose the weekend of ConJosé, similar in scope and content to the Sugarloaf Craft Festivals here in the Washington, D.C., area, with hundreds of

vendors. Thousands of people braved the hot weather to browse, and eat, and buy. We bought a silver armadillo pin for a friend of ours from a craftsperson who told us he liked to read science fiction, and who was amazed to find out that the World Science Fiction Convention was taking place just a short distance away from him. A bit earlier, Rich had talked to another craftsperson who was selling ornate little wooden boxes of the kind he'd seen during his Russia trip back in 1994. When he told her that, she asked where in Russia he'd been, and was rather surprised when Rich mentioned that one of the places was the Siberian city of Krasnoyarsk – originally her home. It really *is* a small world!



Ron Bennett and Nicki

There were many friends of ours at ConJosé from all around this small world. Janice Gelb, who lives maybe 15 miles from San José, was trying her best (with mixed results) to stay out of convention operations long enough to attend much of the convention. Adrienne Losin, who lives south of Melbourne, Australia, stayed hidden so well that we didn't cross paths with her until near the end of the convention. One unexpected treat, on the last day of the convention, was the discovery that British fan Ron Bennett, the 1958 TAFF delegate (and *Mimosa* contributor), was at the convention for that one day. He was actually in the States to visit his son, who edits a Silicon Valley-based computer trade journal of some kind, and just showed up unannounced. The only reason we found him at all was because of a chance remark of a bookseller friend of ours who'd sold him a book in the dealers room.

It was a chance remark of a different sort that led to the most-repeated story of the convention. Australian fan Stephen Boucher, who comes to the U.S. so often that he's become part of midwest fandom, had been asked, in jest, if he was interested in bidding Australia for the 2005 NASFiC convention. Stephen replied that if he was going to bid for a convention the scale of a NASFiC, he'd rather bid for a Worldcon instead. Bingo! Twenty-dollar bills for pre-supporting memberships immediately began piling up in front of him. Before another day had passed an 'Australia-in-2010' bid shirt had been produced and a website was online. A somewhat dumbfounded Stephen was later heard to remark, when asked if he was going to be the Chairman, "I'm just the hood ornament on this bulldozer." And thus are Worldcon bids born and fan history created.



Stephen Boucher

ConJosé seemed to do a better job of creating fan history than showcasing it – there seemed to be fewer fan history-related programming items than at other recent Worldcons. In fact, maybe the most interesting fan history-related hour (for Rich, at least) of the convention happened at a room party, where he and Ben Yalow took the opportunity to describe some of the things that happened in fandom of the 1940s, '50s, and '60s to an interested fan named Janis Ian. After the convention, Rich sent her a copy of the 1950s fan history book he had edited and she sent back two of her CDs. Fair exchange.

What ConJosé lacked in fan programming, it made up for in a Fan Lounge. An upper floor of the main hotel had two large suites – one was used as the Con Suite and the other became the Fan Lounge. Depending which way you turned getting out of the elevator, you found one or the other (and, from the looks of puzzlement, not always the one that was expected). As the Fan Lounge was the one with all the fanzines and fanzine fans, that’s the one we spent time in. It was a place of relative quiet and good conversation as well as lots of good food, which made it a preferred breakfast spot.

The Con Suite also had lots of food, much more than even fans could consume, and they had enough to stock a small grocery store when the convention ended. Since this was the Con Suite, it was usually very busy and very, very noisy. It was also a bit dark as, unlike the Fan Lounge, the window curtains were usually kept drawn. Nicki found out why on our second day there.

While sitting and talking with Dave Kyle in the Fan Lounge, she noticed an airplane. Downtown San Jose, it turned out, was in the landing path of the airport and there was a perfect view from the Fan Lounge of each airplane preparing to land. *Too* perfect, actually. As she watched, the airplane got closer, closer, closer, *closer*, and just as you could clearly see the landing gear coming down, the plane veered to the right and receded from view. Every few minutes the performance was repeated; it was all a bit unnerving. Nicki eventually decided it was time to either sit where she couldn’t see the planes or go watch some programming.

Five days for a worldcon seems a long time, but it usually goes by in a flash and ConJosé was no exception. The last major event of the convention was the Hugo Awards; we had been nominated in the Fanzine category, for *Mimosa*, for the twelfth year in a row, but lost by 19 votes to Dave Langford’s *Ansible*. We weren’t really expecting to win, as it’s been a few years since the last time we had, but we were a bit surprised that *Ansible* was the winner – California resident Mike Glyer, who had won the award (for *File 770*) the past two years, had seemed the clear favorite.

There are many memories we’ll keep from ConJosé. Patrick Stewart’s unpublicized event the Friday night of the convention was one of them; he came to ConJosé primarily to promote the upcoming *Star Trek: Nemesis* and *X2: X-Men United* movies, but the 45 minutes he was on-stage showed him to be engaging and entertaining – somebody who was much more than just a talking head. Another was the Bruce Pelz remembrance event – Bruce wasn’t a religious person and there was no memorial service for him after his death in May, so instead his friends held informal secular wakes for him at this year’s Westercon and also at ConJosé, where we had a final opportunity to say good-bye.

Saying good-bye to California is never easy to do, but after two weeks of vacation and convention, we were ready to come back home. The return trip was uneventful, but it was almost midnight by the time we got home and we both had to go to work the next day. By the time we’d gotten fully caught up with the real world, ConJosé had receded several weeks into the past and the only mention we saw of it was the occasional review in fanzines and online.

It came as a surprise, then, when a big cardboard box appeared on our front porch one day; when we opened it, we found... the suitcase! We’d left it with the United Airlines luggage service people in San Jose and had almost forgotten about it, but there it was, repaired and ready to go.

Maybe we’ll bring it to Torcon 3! ✨

