



*Seasons* #33

## SEASONS #33

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This *Seasons* is earlier than usual [the sense of Gotta-Get-Stuff-Done-SOON continues], but shorter than I'd like. I'm relying on the Oki's cartridge to hold out until I can clear up the feed problems on the Kyo. Just for the record, it's June 9th [found the mlg in the mailbox yesterday] and I'm hoping to get this out before DSC [which I hope to make]. Let's begin with

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**MAILING MISCELLANY AND ZINE ZUNDRIES --**

This COVER stock goes back a long way, but I couldn't decide which Season to use it for [and had other stocks for the most probable Seasons of the SFPA year]. Now it's finally getting used. The INTERIOR stock [gray] is from two different suppliers [Hammermill and Xerox], but if I manage to keep this short, I won't run into the do-they-match problem. We'll see. The BACKPOEM is nothing special — just seemed to fit the stock. *Traveller's Tales* is trivial, as you'll see, and I haven't found you all another THE HAIR OF THE SHAGGY DOG yet [be thankful for small blessings!], but I do have a short UNFASHIONABLE FICTION for you all this time — a story I've been meaning to write for a couple of decades that just sort of fell into place recently.

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**SUMMARY NEWS**

**Household** — I'm Still trying to empty the **basement** — it has to do with not having room in which to put further boxes brought up. I've gotten it down to (1) some heavy stuff, (2) about half-a-dozen boxes currently on the beams I want to use to make a rollway for hand-trucks to use with the heavy stuff, (3) some sheer trash blocking the way to the most ancient heap, (3) the most ancient heap [that came over with us when we moved in in '74 and, never unpacked, was hauled downstairs 2 years later], and (5) sundry odds and ends, including the hood of a '56(?) Chevy of Jimmy's, the extension ladder, and so on. I've made some progress with clearing space up here for the next load of boxes, but I don't know if I'll manage to haul any more this week. We'll see.

The **attic** still has its inhabitants — including, I think, the next generation — but now that the weather's getting hot, I'm beginning to hope they'll have moved out for the summer by the time I get the basement done and can re-assault that problem. I'm still looking forward to the day when, all this Major stuff done, I can tackle the much-desired **housecleaning** and **yardwork**, but one thing at a time, as the Bishop said to the actress. [Don't know what provoked that 'saint'-ism — it just seemed appropriate.] Anyhow, I'll keep y'all posted on the con-tin-u-ing sto-o-o-ry of the SFPAn who went to the basement - or attic - or wherever . . .

**JobHunting on the Net** — continues. I've got resumes out a bunch of places, including some found in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* [mentioned last ish], but so far the only nibble is from a company that Hopes to get a major computer-based training (CBT) project — but hasn't gotten it yet. I went looking for references for all this good stuff and can't locate [even on the Net] the people I did so much CBT and interactive CD-based training design and development with [the ones who went out of business], so I may not have a reference for one of my most recent and strongest bits of experience. Oh well, the right thing will eventually emerge, hire me for all the wrong reasons, and I'll work happily ever after.

**My Old Kentucky Home** — My **parents** are doing much the same. I didn't make it up there for the Derby, so they're agitating for a visit. Fortunately, my brother's been able to visit a few times. When I started job hunting, I did a rough count of the time I spent up there last year: over 120 days. Hmmm. Not suitable to a job schedule. Looks like I can't continue to go up there at the drop of a hat and stay however long. They don't like the idea, but admit it's necessary.

*NEWS SUMMARY* (continued)

***Similitude of Social Life*** — I'm definitely on shaky ground with the Hermits Guild. I've actually had lunch with an old GSU friend, been to a Memorial Day barbecue with some of the St. James' gang, spent a day with Pat Morell [on a brief in-town visit], and visited Viki in Opelika, since last we met. Astonishing! So let's get on with

***Traveller's Tales*** — Viki was going to have a yard sale, and I was going to join, so Helen offered to take her van, letting me carry more down there. We went down after she got off work Friday evening [sometime in May — I'm too lazy to look it up], talked late, slept a few hours, and were up at 5:30 to start setting up tables. Business was so-so. There was a "moving sale" going on a couple of miles away, so people stopped to ask us directions to it, saving their money for That sale instead of spending it with us. Still, I managed to sell a couple of boxes worth of stuff. The main benefit for me was getting to see what yard-saling [sounds like a new Olympic sport, done with kite-like sails tethered to front-porches] is like. Some of my prices were too high and some of Viki's were too low [so people wondered if there was something wrong they didn't know about], but it was a useful experience — and the first nearly-sunburn of the season, since it was a spectacularly lovely day. Supposedly, Viki's going to have another such sale one of these days, so I'll join in again. Mostly though, I hope to bring some stuff to Deep South Con. They're out of Dealer's Tables [had sold out before I found their web-page (thanks to the Copelands)], but I might be able to get a panel and/or table in the Art room for some of the art I want to sell and I can always use the back of my car. We'll see.

Can't think of anything else noteworthy at the moment [maybe something will occur to me later]  
So on to the Important Stuff:

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***MAILING COMMENTS on the 203rd***

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These will be brief, I hope, but here goes . . .

***The Southerner*** — Thanks for the SFPA e-mail addresses, DSC address, and so on sent since I got online!

***Refinement*** — Neat!

***It Goes On the Shelf*** — Here are all these nifty book reviews when I'm fighting to find/make shelf space just for the books brought up from the basement! Argh. Why is it that, even when overrun by books and no place to put them and no time to read them I still *yearn* toward books of so many kinds? I don't dare go near a bookstore — especially now that I'm trying to make myself sell some of the stuff I've got. Definitely an exercise in self-control.

I read *Cahena* a few days later, by the way, and am interested both by his [pseudo-?] historical basis for it and by some of the strategic/etc. stuff. I'd chanced to read a *National Geo* article on the Byzantine empire not long before, so I had coordinates on a lot of things Wellman used. The other point of interest was just the sheer difference from so much of his stuff I've read, as if he was trying to 'say something' instead of just tell a tale. I'm still considering that aspect of it and will probably re-read it before I try to put a review through SFPA. Thanks — a neat addition to the Wellman collection!

Thanks for putting *An Island in the Moon* through. How odd — i.e., how like Blake!

***The New Port News*** — So will the zine name change now that you're no longer in Newport News, or will you adhere to the Saki-esque principle that addresses are given us to conceal our whereabouts? Speaking of addresses, by the way, I trust the move went well and that, by now you're beginning to get settled into your new place.

*MAILING COMMENTS on the 203rd* (cont'd) — *New Port News* (cont'd)

Insects — with rare exceptions — I have no problem with destroying. I reckon if they're foolish enough to enter my house, they're bought-and-paid-for. I make exceptions for lightning bugs [one of my few unquestionably good deeds was freeing a lightning bug from a spider's web just outside the front door one time] and unusually large and nifty moths. The rest are out of luck if they come in here. Raccoons, however, are something else again. Even apart from the nuisance of disposing of the carcass, I grew up around raccoons — fed them at the kitchen window, etc., and helped raise three whose mother had been killed until they were old enough to be released. So they're less like 'critturs' and more like family. For that sort of reason, I'd rather have them Out but safe than dead — same sort of reason I don't eat frogs' legs, raccoon, or 'possum despite people telling me they're delicious: I prefer not to eat friends. Nonetheless, the desired adjective for these dudes [or preposition, if one wants to be precise, despite the ellipsis] is OUT. And [to add an adverb for emphasis] Permanently. Mind you, they did provoke me to do something I've rarely done — towit: read the manual on the mask (which is how I found out ammonia filters existed) — but that is small consolation for the Augean Stables aspect of de-raccooning the house. The blow-by-blow will continue [and, I trust, conclude triumphantly] once the basement's finished. [To Be Continued . . .]

*Slaves of Sleep* and *Jack of Eagles* were read, then stuffed into one of the boxes to be carried over to Steve's, so I don't know if he shelved them or disposed of them. If he still has them, he could provide publication details.

Once the wondrous kingdoms of Wahoo and Wombat had come into existence [since I didn't remember the names of the ones to which the Immortal Porpoise War was initially attributed] and our game-but-befuddled hero Sir G had made his appearance [for reason's of similar forgetfulness where the 'knight out on a dog like this' tale was concerned], it seemed only fair to add interest to injury by setting the ancient punchlines in a less familiar setting. Made it more likely that people would Read the idiocies instead of recognizing the tale in the first couple of sentences and skipping it. The problem, of course, is that it's been so long since such 'shaggy dog stories' were common, that I've pretty well run through the ones I recall. A few new ones are appearing — like the 'score tied, basses loaded' one a few issues back, which was passed along by my parents from *C&EN* or some other publication — but not many.

By the way [hideous proof that, after all these years, I'm still a neo-], would you mind defining 'Feghoot'? I've heard it/seen-it-in-print the whole time I've been in fandom and while it's possible, from context, to get a general notion of what's meant, I've never had the clear sense of meaning/reference/provenance I've picked up with other fannish terms.

Sure you don't want a Gestetner handcrank for the collection? Or [And/Or, come to think of it] the Thermofax companion unit and IBM billing typewriter? In trade for *Cahena* maybe? You're much more likely to have a use [or a market] for them than I am and it seems absurdly wasteful to discard them or give them to a charity that will use them as doorstops and then throw them away.

As best I can reckon it, from their taking Hubble's Law as the evidence of [as consequent on] the Big Bang, the Hubble Boundary would be at the distance from the locus of the Big Bang that it took to attain lightspeed at the rate of acceleration Hubble's observations showed. I find the surface-of-an-inflating-balloon explanation somebody else offers in this mlg excessive [hence, vulnerable to Occam's 'razor' (pop!)], since mere expansion from a central BigBang-like explosion would suffice; and I regard the drek [Einsteinian and other] promulgated about the impossibility of trans-light travel as well-meant but wrong. My interest in the possibility of a Hubble Boundary [and it's potential explanation of 'dark matter'] is that it could be used to demonstrate the error of treating translight-speed travel as impossible. But that's peripheral to what you mentioned.

As I envision it from their report of Hubble's Law, there was a unitary Big Bang locus from which everything is accelerating away. I'm uncomfortable with the hypothesis that Earth now occupies that locus, but without data to demonstrate variations in the rate of acceleration as observed from different sites, that's the natural conclusion.

*MAILING COMMENTS on the 203rd (cont'd) — New Port News (cont'd — re: Hubble)*

Consequently, the Hubble Boundary would form a ring [actually, a sphere] at a mostly [not wholly] uniform distance from that locus. Some objects, disrupted in their acceleration in various ways, would never reach it or wouldn't have sufficient energy to penetrate it; but any that continued to accelerate as Hubble's Law describes would eventually reach those speeds. While they might undergo a transformation of state in the process of accelerating to that point, they also might not — they might just out-run their light as a trans-sonic aircraft out-runs its sound. The process of crossing the Hubble Boundary might well generate something comparable to the 'shock wave' associated with trans-sonic flight [which, I suspect, could account for other phenomena that currently raise questions, though I'm too out of touch to have a list of such phenomena handy].

If we assume that Earth, with proper observational data, will NOT prove to be at the locus of the Big Bang [which should be the one central, unmoving point in an otherwise actively moving universe], we can envision the Big Bang site surrounded by stuff accelerating away from it. Some would have reached/crossed the Hubble Boundary, some would be *en route* toward the boundary [not there yet] and interacting in the ways gravity/etc. indicate with stuff encountered along the way to generate the celestial objects we observe. [By the way, this would suggest the outpouring of the Big Bang was non-uniform enough for gravity/etc. to start taking effect before objects were far enough away from the center [hence, from each other] to be in balance between such forces.]

The 'balloon' theory mentioned above would be okay if after the Big Bang, Everything accelerated away from it, leaving a growing void at that central site, but we have no observational data for such a void that I know of. Anything like a [by now quite large] void — air pocket, if you will — in the observed universe would have gotten some publicity. That, in turn, raises the related [and equally outre] possibility that the 'Big Bang' is still happening, at least in the sense that matter and energy are still pouring out into the universe at such outrageous rates from the same locus. Again, without observational data, it's hard to say.

Be that as it may, WITH a Big Bang, away from which everything accelerates, there has to be a Hubble Boundary. [Conceiving multiple Big Bangs doesn't prevent that — it just makes the Boundary less regular, due to interacting wave effects where Boundaries from two or more Bangs intersect; and guarantees that some particles/celestial-objects get an additional boost of acceleration from a secondary Bang near them. Just as there's no evidence I've heard for a void, so I've heard no suggestion of multiple Big Bangs.] But back to the initial point . . .

A Hubble Boundary is the natural consequence of continuous acceleration from a Big Bang site. From the astronomical equivalent of a flat-earth perspective, the Boundary would represent 'the edge of the world' — but I question flat-earth-ism in astronomy/cosmology as much as here on terra infirma. Near our side of the Boundary, interesting effects should be observable as objects went through any state-change consequent on attaining lightspeed; but we must be very wary of characterizing as genuine state-change changes in the observable radiation, since the extreme elongation of the waves [a sort of super-Doppler effect] as an object began to outrun its light would mean we "saw" something quite distorted. The fact that quasars and a few other unusual phenomena are near "the edge of known space" strikes me as potential evidence for such a transition/distortion. Worth looking into, at least.

Within the Hubble Boundary area, all sorts of neat things should be observable — and most of them confusing, given the limits of earthbound astronomy and the assumptions on which it tends to be based. I think the Boundary would be a range — maybe a lightyear or so thick — since some objects would have interferences of various kinds that would affect their acceleration in ways that, while they may be too trivial to be observed readily from Earth, could alter the precise distance from the Big Bang locus at which they attained and exceeded lightspeed.

From our perspective, anything Beyond the Boundary would look like "dark matter" — demonstrably there, but essentially unobservable. Its light, out-run at the Boundary, would be interpreted by us in various interesting ways because it would Appear to be at the point where the object left it behind. The fact that it would then need to travel  $n$  years to reach us would mean we'd be 'observing' the equivalent of its shadow long after it had crossed the Boundary.

**MAILING COMMENTS on the 203rd** (cont'd) — *New Port News* (cont'd — re: Hubble)

As for what the universe is like beyond the Boundary — or what We look like from there — I think we have to get there to find out. Since that's only possible if we get over this parochial insistence that translight travel is impossible [so we can travel at acceptable speeds to reach the Boundary and return in a meaningful time-frame], I've a considerable interest in any observations — such as those on which Hubble's Law is based — that argue for acceleration that must, of necessity, attain lightspeed sooner or later.

Yet prowling around this subject at greater length in this mc has also shown me the observational anomalies of the Big Bang theory as I've heard it presented. If it was a one-up incident, where's the void that should be left after all its matter/energy was hurled into space? If it's ongoingly pouring matter/energy into space [even at a greatly reduced or decreasing rate], where is that source of 'new' matter/energy? Most of all, Where is the locus of the Big Bang? If it's a unitary location, it should be locatable with sufficiently precise observations of the rates at which the contents of the universe are accelerating, even based on observations from a single planet such as ours. It would take looking for it — and perhaps more precise instrumentation than is common — but it ought to be possible to find it. Once found, other questions should be answerable. If it's Not a single-moment/single-locus phenomenon, but matter/energy are still pouring out from it, then what about Newton's 'opposite and equal reaction'? If the outpouring isn't balanced, it would cease to be a point source moments after the Bang started and would become a moving source — with suitably weird consequences.

[Or the dangers of giving me an excuse to mess with such subjects. What the hey — next time you're online to Hawking, you can get it straightened out . . .]

**(Title Goes . . .)** — Now that I'm online, I'll have to look up your web-site — for the travelogues even more than *Mimosa*, though I'm looking forward to the next *Mimosa*. You all always do such neat zines.

**Not A Minaczine** — Hungry-making. Definitely hungry-making. If I weren't so delighted to at least get to see/read the reports, I'd die of great green palpitating envy . . .

**Offline** — Thanks for the data and names on DTIC. It's been awhile since I rounded up a list of government openings [though I understand there's a hotline with useful features], but that looks like the way to go. Knowing about the hotline, I've looked around on Net/Web for listings [it seems like everybody else has online listings, so I'd think the U.S. Govt. would], but still haven't found anything.

I just might take you up on copies from a color master one of these days. I'll wait for something worth the trouble, but How Wonderful to be able to do a color cover [or insert] that wasn't an off-the-shelf [or -catalog] image! Thanks!

Buford Hwy. seems to be one of the most fannish streets in Atlanta. You're off South Buford Hwy, I'm off NW Buford Hwy [yeah, I know it's actually N or NE, but that doesn't seem to phase the sign-makers from the Highway Dept.], it seems to me weber's done time now and then somewhere along Mid Buford Hwy., and somewhere near my end of the road is where Stven Carlberg's father had a church years ago (before we knew Stven through fandom). Who knows? If a fan ever gets in charge of the DOT, maybe they'll bronze it . . . [more permanent than paving].

*MAILING COMMENTS on the 203rd* (cont'd)

*Spiritus* — When the [seemingly unending] raccoon saga finally ends, I'll have given SFPA a blow-by-blow along the way and will be able to edit it down to something under epic length to send along for *Challenger*. You're perfectly welcome to transcribe "Naked" from that issue of *Seasons*, if you're so inclined, on the usual terms: two copies of the final printed zine for my files.

Somebody remarked, in a later zine, that Lennon was shot at night — which I remember, too, sort of. I think it must have been the following afternoon that I found out about it and had that unexpected reaction to "Let It Be." By the time it happened, I'd been out of touch with the Beatles and post-Beatles stuff for quite a while — hearing occasional bits, but seldom even sure it was from one of them unless I happened to recognize a voice.

One thing about getting to jobhunt academia again is that I get to remember all the fun stuff about teaching — and the unfortunate fact that I've always found it an all-consuming job. I started [Logic, U. of Ky., Spring '68] treating it as 24-hrs/day, 7 days/week, and I never managed to break the tendency to let it become that. It's a trade-off for me. If I teach the same course for very long, it becomes lifeless [one reason I moved to industry from GSU was that it was starting to reach that point]; but if I don't get to teach a course more than once, I don't succeed in getting it to the level of polish I prefer. That's one hope I see in the prospect of 'online universities' in the immediate future: it would be possible to capture the 'best' version of a course — get it right, and then get it fixed for future students, so they don't have to deal with the days one is exhausted or distracted or any of the rest of it. Naturally, online courses also offer lots of other benefits, like the range of available reference material, but the ability to 'get it right' Reliably is a lot of the appeal.

As I once remarked to a fellow philosophy student, "Cosmology has already gone the way of Speculative Metaphysics." But seriously, I get a kick out of this stuff, mostly because habits of mind/thought developed in years of messing with logic and arcane philosophical theories apply to this stuff more than to most of the subject areas I get to play with. I mean, if one steps back from the equations and lingo they use to 'snow the rubes' and refuses to accept their assumptions about the impossibility of lightspeed just because they are very loud and firm about them [NObody's as loud and firm about something as a philosophy-type defending a demonstrably false theory!], it's real simple: if they want to have ongoing acceleration [which is what Hubble's Law claims and his observations seem to prove], sooner or later they're going to reach lightspeed, whether they like it or not. So far, I haven't heard of any of them even acknowledging this obvious consequence, much less addressing it. Since it has some interesting side-effects, I'm capable of meandering all over the cosmological carpet [muddy boots and all] pursuing them to see what they're made of. If you're curious about some more maundering meanderings on the subject, check out the cmt to Ned above.

As for humility, the secret is to admit [and, if it's too pesky, avoid] one's blindspots. We've all got 'em. If we're lucky, we at least know where some of them are. [Then there's the — I trust, mythical — book entitled "How To Be Humble"] . . . Bova's quasars-are-the-Big-Bang theory is a new one on me, but I'm still not satisfied that they've adequately explained some of the 'curved space' theories that underlie it and its kindred. [Or, harking back to another fragment picked up in those dim dead years in philosophy (a quote attributed to a semi-mythical 'Miss Sayanara' to her Logic professor): "YouHaveNotExplained,YankeePIG!"] On well . . .

*MAILING COMMENTS on the 203rd (cont'd)*

*Twygg* — Good heavens! From this picture, I might actually recognize you if we're ever in the same room! [The last one I saw, a more or less 3/4 back-of-the-head shot, preserved your incognito.]

Due to a change in routine, I actually got to read your opening natter this time. I thought I'd see what it was like to print pages as they were finished, collating at the time instead of doing it all at the end. There were enough snags printing the last page that I had time to read your sundry lead-in material this time. Interesting! I agree that Harold Ford, Jr., sounds like he has the makings of a very successful politician — I'm just not sure how much of that is a compliment to the gentleman. / I think all of us are reaching the point where we're losing those we value from the preceding generation. I'm fortunate that most of my relatives/associates who have died have done so at a sufficient distance in time, place, and/or relationship that I've been able to take it less personally than most; but that's just postponement. I have a number who will be fortunate to live out the next decade or so, so it's likely to hit me all at once just as it's hitting you. This raises two points that I shouldn't let myself think-on-paper about here if I'm to finish the zine [it's now almost 6 a.m.], but I'll just try to be brief about them.

The first is awareness of mortality — taking seriously the possibility of dying. In my case, it happened when someone I knew was blotted out in an instant by a drunk driver — someone just a few years older than I was. Realizing one can die oneself — Heidegger's being-toward-death, if I'm remembering the source of that theory correctly — changes one's perspective. It needn't change it any particular way [though some responses are better advertised than others, so more popular], but it does change it. This is different from having the anchors of one's experience die. I was fortunate that the first such anchor to die, my maternal grandfather, had travelled widely as a National Audubon screen-tour lecturer [with his color motion pictures of wildlife] in his later years [he died fairly young — around 60, on a guess], so I had the pattern of having him gone on trips of longer or shorter duration. Since I was young enough [10] that they didn't let me go to the hospital, having him die was less like having him die than like having him delayed in coming home from his latest trip. Much easier to handle. Since I rarely saw my great-grandfather and my paternal grandmother [both splendid people I remember fondly] due to the distance between our location and their respective homes, it was regrettable but acceptable when they died around the same time: it wasn't sensed as total loss, just a further delay before I saw them again. It's not the same when you're in ongoing contact with someone. When my maternal grandmother died some 20-odd years later, she had lived with us many of those years and I had visited her in her nursing home during her decline. She had become a daily part of my life — diminished by having lived here in Atlanta for about 10 years, so mostly out of touch, but still a more clear-cut part of what I took to be 'normal.' Her passing impacted 'normal' as the others hadn't, even though I felt closer to the others in various ways. I mention this because I think it's mistaken to treat all deaths alike. The effect on survivors has less to do with how genealogically close or distant the person was than with the person's function/role in what counts as 'normal' for the survivors.

The other point your remarks raise is dignity vs. longer life. This is the one that's given rise to the Kevorkian contingent, so it's grounds for all kinds of discussion. I still haven't made up my mind about a lot of the issues that grow out of all this. My personal preference is that my own death be sudden and unexpected, but I think each individual case is unique enough that the broad generalizations on offer all fall short of the mark. Not a subject on which I'd want to make a sweeping generalization, so I'm as uncomfortable with those who would force your friend's mother into a nursing home or hospice to guarantee life-prolongation through medical care as I am with those who would urge her to 'end it all cleanly' or would urge your friend to guilt trips for taking — or failing to take — some course or action or other on the subject. I think the closest I can come to a broad-based principle has to do with putting the wishes of the dying person as far up the priority scale as is at all reasonable/possible. If he/she chooses home over hospice or vice versa, that sounds like a good reason to attempt to arrange that. Unfortunately, choices are all too often limited by the pronouncements of insurance companies [for health care] or by the cost of different kinds of care. Oops — I've run through a page. Better get on with replies . . .



**MAILING COMMENTS on the 203rd (cont'd) — Twygg (cont'd)**

Since I'm on mindspring [and have less time to play with Net/Web than I eventually will], I've taken your advice in the *Afterburner* comment and postponed hooking up on Juno. Since my fax is a separate machine [yeah, I've got a fax-modem and software on the system, but I never use them if I can help it], I don't have to worry about the computer getting tied in knots about it all. The catch I have is phone-line based. I originally hooked the computer up to the line I use for voice traffic, then decided that it made sense for people to be able to get messages to me even if I was on the system and shifted over to the line I use for the fax. They're now both on that line, so if I'm online, incoming fax attempts get a busy signal. At least that tells anybody who knows the layout that they should e-mail me instead . . .

I had another shot at e-mailing you at the SFPA-listed address and think I must have just entered it wrong the first time, because it 'sent' okay. Did you ever get it? Which of your many e-mail addresses do you prefer I use? I still haven't found the scrap of paper on which I wrote down the assortment, but if you send them again — to embgh@mindspring.com — I'll use the one you find most convenient.

I agree: 'techno-shamanism' has a proper ring to it. Therefore, it's almost certainly been used by somebody already, probably trying to put down some aspect of technology they didn't understand. We lately had a classy example of Buddhist shamanism here in town, by the way. A bunch of Tibetan Buddhist monks went about 'correcting the imbalance in nature' that is El Nino by 'natural means', viz., a collection of elaborate butter-sculptures, beautifully shaped and highly decorated with colored something-or-other [sand? sugar? the newscast didn't say] which, upon completion, were ritually destroyed [scraped off into a fire, from what I could see on the news footage], with remaining bits and scraps packaged in plastic and distributed to the horde of onlookers. Reputedly, those who took them can put them on their plants and expect them to grow more enthusiastically or something. With overwhelming admiration for their sculptural skills and patience, I nonetheless find myself less than convinced that any change in El Nino will result from this shamanistic activity. Still, I admire their timing: it's about time for El Nino to end its cycle anyway, so engaging in some 'halt El Nino' ritual around now definitely improves the chance of being able to claim success. Which reminds me . . .

\* \* \* \* \* INTERRUPTION TO PASS ALONG ONE HELEN WAS SENT AT WORK \* \* \* \* \*

**The Truth Will Out Dept. — re: Barney**

1. Start with the given: CUTE PURPLE DINOSAUR
2. Change the Us to Vs (a la Latin) CVTE PVRPLE DINOSAVR
3. Extract all the Roman Numerals C V V L D I V
4. Convert to Arabic numeral values 100 5 5 50 500 1 5
5. Total the numbers to learn Barney's true identity: **666**

\* \* \* \* \* RETURN TO MAILING COMMENT \* \* \* \* \*

Love the tale of the psychologists' ongoing efforts to prove excess weight is an attempt to avoid sex — false assumptions die hard. [Their *next* step, of course, is to explain that the Reason overweight people enjoy sex more than average people is that its so much rarer an experience.]

Have you seen the note that they think they've found a gene associated with high IQ? No joke. They took a bunch of jr. high kids who scored in the 630+ range on the SATs and compared with a bunch of normal-age-to-take-the-SATs kids who got "normal" [instead of high scores] instead of the usual genealogical approach. Needless to say, they haven't let out What the magic gene is or started clinics to test kids and tell parents' their gene-pool is why the kid is so dumb, but Can Genetically-Engineered Genuises Be Far Behind?

Yeah, I remember the 'I'm an existentialist' line. It didn't work so well on philosophy majors like me, who were likely to ask who was the claimants favorite thinker in the existentialist school of thought and then haggle theories. Usually those using the line had heard the words 'existentialism' and 'Sartre' and [on rare occasions] 'inauthenticity' — all from an English teacher who'd been told by a colleague that existentialism was (then) what de-construction is now. Faugh.

**MAILING COMMENTS on the 203rd** (cont'd) — *Twygg* (cont'd)

So you've got a web-site? I'll have to look it up. At the moment, I'm tending to limit my online activities to checking out job listings [there's reputedly a government jobs hotline around here, so I keep Expecting to find Net/Web listings — so far, no luck], since I should be trying to get the house projects complete before I let myself play too much on Net and Web. One of these days, maybe . . .

Most of the other subjects I ought to be mentioning in this mc are covered in pre-existing mc's, so in the interests of finishing this zine, I'll quit here.

**Confessions** — With the comments already eating me out of house-and-home space-wise, I figure I should say thanks for not commenting — but somehow that seems backward. Oh well.

**Pirates** — Was delighted to see a pirate illo in this collection from the 'Complete Gilbert & Sullivan' section on "The Pirates of Penzance." How unexpected that there should be a PirateCon — and, at the same time, why should it seem unexpected, I wonder. Oh well.

**Peter, Pan, and** — The El Nino-based ad campaign is an opportunistic classic. I wonder if anybody came hoping for free accommodations?

You seem to buy into the line that our emotions have some elemental 'truth' to them and, consequently, are to be experienced — perhaps enjoyed — but aren't subject to choice. I used to think the same. I was wrong. Therefore, I think you'll discover, in due course, that emotions [of all sorts, not just anger] can be cut-off-at-the-pass, subjected to scrutiny, and experienced or not [or even revised] at one's will. It's the sort of thing that nobody thinks possible until they find out firsthand that it is; as I did by experimentation around the third time I heard that seemingly asinine claim. However asinine that claim may seem, however unrealistic or valid only for 'fake' emotions [if then], however otherwise unacceptable/impossible, *it's also correct*. Just thought I'd mention it.

I've seen 'hand' amulets for warding off the 'evil eye' — and even heard of people in some countries protecting their houses by marking the walls with handprints [using dye or paint or some such] — but I can't remember what I heard about the reason it was a hand or whether the hand was meant to fend off the 'blow' of the curse, catch it and throw it back, or what. I don't think I'd heard the suggestion that it was the hand of God, but certainly that makes better sense than the vague half-rememberings that I'm managing to dredge up.

Further comments on the Hubble Boundary notion are in an earlier comment, in case you're curious. Somebody, elsewhere in the mailing, attributes everything receding from everything else to a surface-of-an-inflating-balloon model, but that strikes me as having severe limitations — like there's no evidence I've heard of that there's a void around which the known universe is that sort of expanding 'skin.' More to the point, Hubble's observations [hence, law] only claim that stuff is moving away from US at a reliably accelerating rate. That's not grounds for the more general assumption that everything is moving away from everything in the same fashion as Hubble's data indicated everything is moving away from us [though I don't in the least doubt that they've tried to claim that generalization.] Like you, when last I came in on the saga [in anything but PBS form, at least in my case], quasars were the most distant objects known. I don't know if they have something beyond that yet. The reason I'm gnawing at this, by the way, is not only that it's an interesting intellectual problem — to conclude Only what the data support and imply, without the overburden of a set of pre-accepted theories — but because I think we've fallen, scientifically, into the trap of swallowing not only the soundly established parts of earlier work but some unproven beliefs that accompanied it, leading the cosmology community to view the events and data through the distorting lens of preconception. Too much that I hear on such subjects these days has an intellectual kinship to that splendid model of a geo-centric universe that somebody worked out in the days when it was unacceptable to conceive of the Sun as center of our solar system and our solar system as one of many in a much larger galaxy in a much larger universe. It's pretty, worthy of admiration, but unconvincing.

## MAILING COMMENTS on the 203rd (cont'd)

**Not A Minac (revisited)** — I *knew* there was a comment in here — it just took me this long to remember, find the zine again, and reread it. Sorry 'bout that.

One of the innumerable benefits of the prolongation of the basement siege is that it lets me re-gather my nerve for the raccoon wars. [Also, maybe they'll move out for summer before I have to tackle it again, making things a bit easier.]

Thanks for mentioning the online HTML tutorials. I'll have to look them up. I figure I'll start with HTML, then move toward Javascript and CGI. I've helped design and debug Pascal programs and have a passing acquaintance with C [though I haven't followed its development into C+ and C++], so I'm not particularly concerned about their being overlaid on programming language-like structures. Now that the XML/RDF standard is beginning to take shape [first issue now under review], I'll probably make a once-over-lightly pass on HTML to see what sorts of things have been introduced to deal with the changed environment and pay most attention to the others until XML [Extensible Mark-up Language] moves more completely off the drawing board. It is likely to be the one we're stuck with for at least the next 5 years [fed into by HTML and replaced by the Web equivalent of a higher-level word-processing package], so I might as well get up to speed on it.

The GML style 'language' is rather a soapbox with me, because it's wholly unnecessary — it stands in relation to a decent word-processing package much as a three-pass assembler stands to a higher-level language [or, more accurately, a fully written application]. I worked with the programmers at one printer company I used [years ago] to develop code that would translate the output of our three then-in-use word processing packages into the GML their system wanted; and it was dead easy — able to be done on the fly with no loss of time or accuracy — and let the writers Just Write. Nonetheless, there's a large part of the tech writing community who Worship GML and its descendants, from a mixture of 'baby duck syndrome' and the false pride of people who think they're 'programming' when they couldn't program their way out of an unsealed paper bag. It gets used like anything else that's needlessly complicated: as an excuse for shoddy, slow work, and as a one-up-manship ploy with people who haven't had to use it yet. I've yet to see a document in GML that couldn't have been done exactly the same, but more quickly, with fewer errors, and with better writing [due to less disruption] using any decent writer-friendly word-processing package — and I've yet to meet a printer who didn't have programmers capable of writing the simple translation program needed to convert any ordinary word-processing package's output into GML codes if the equipment was limited to GML or one of its descendants. [I warned you it was one of my soapboxes].

Anyhow, I confidently expect it'll only take a few years of widespread Web use before somebody [or some company, like MicroSoft] notices the folly of reverting to mark-up languages and brings out Word-for-Web, WordPerfect-for-Web, Corel-for-Web or the like that lets writers, graphic designers, etc., Just Do their writing or designing or whatever and leaves to the computer the task of generating the needed codes. That won't kill off the GML family, unfortunately; but at least it'll reduce the excuse for insisting on it.

I had a vague recollection of hearing Michael Rennie's name associated with *The Power* in movie form, but didn't know for sure. He must be their 'Adam Hart' character, since I gather George Hamilton or whoever it was got the 'hero' role. Rennie would be able to pull that off better than most. I'll definitely have to find a copy of it somewhere and see it.

**Box Scores** — In which I rise meteorically from 13th to 8th (huzza!). I won't make any Real progress until three more mailings have passed [to get that last 0 out of the mix] and my zine length will have to stabilize at something better than minac, but at least I'm braced for next mlg's plunge when the 24 pages in #197 disappear.

=====TIME FOR A BREAK: BREAKFAST AND SNOOZE — MORE ANON=====

===== [BACK FROM BREAK, BREAKFAST, SNOOZE — THE ANON IS NOW] =====

It's now about 4 hours later (about 1:30 p.m.) and I'm being forced to admit that the mc-rate on the first half of the mlg [above] is higher than I can let myself sustain if I'm to finish this before DSC and Also with time to sort, package, and price the stuff I need to bring over to DSC in hope of selling. That means I've got to be more concise about all this, especially if I'm to enter the UNFASHIONABLE FICTION (short though it is) after the mc's. So with apologies in advance for unseemly brevity . . . .

### MAILING COMMENTS on the 203rd (cont'd)

**Trivial** — Actually, raccoon removal is the easy part: I can chase them off [as I hope to] or give in and have them massacred entirely at my whim/patience-level/etc. The challenging part is what follows: de-insulating, cleaning, disinfecting, sealing raccoon-proofly, and re-insulating the attic. That's the one — particularly in weather hot enough to drive the raccoons to move outside — that is really offputting; but it has to be done quite regardless of how the raccoons are chased off. I sometimes accuse myself of taking civilized routes to raccoon-discouragement at least as much to postpone the day when I must tackle the attic task as from sympathy for the nifty critturs.

I had cable during the last Winter Olympics and was really disappointed. Instead of doing the desirable thing — live coverage of all possible events — and letting the 'prime time' and other broadcast coverage be a summary as well as the really popular events, they did the sort of thing you describe for this most recent Olympics: filler, filler, and more filler. Bummer.

Good point about carry-overs in a house from the former owner's personality. I'd quite forgotten that. Undoing such traces could require drastic — and expensive — alterations. [It's starting to thunder and lightning out — more when the storm's past!]

\* \* \* STORM BREAK \* \* \*

Good thing I stopped when I did! Less than 5 minutes after I shut down the system, we had a power fail [crackle!boom!]. It didn't last very long, but long enough to make me wary of coming back to this until there was no more thunder and lightning around! By then, I'd taken another short nap, had supper, and was flipping back and forth between the Bulls-Jazz NBA Finals game [Bulls won, bring the series to 3-1 in their favor] and the idiosyncratic 'Swan Lake' performance [Matthew Bourne's re-interpretation/re-choreographing] on PBS. Both had their points of interest, of course, but unfortunately it's now after midnight as I resume these mc's. Looks like I'd better hurry through and finish before I get totally incoherent!

**Marsh Creek/Wedding Photos** [later] — Neat zine (as usual)! Thanks for the reports and gorgeous wedding photos. Your all's honeymoon locale looks stunningly beautiful and it looks like you all did a lovely job with the wedding [despite the nifty parody of 'too-too' society reporters in some of the MCG coverage — how cool!] 'Free At Last' is good evidence of how two such reputedly-smart people as Steve and me could get faked into marrying: the only one-of-these-days ambitions that doesn't Also go back forever with me is designing a house — all the rest are on my list, too, and have been since before Steve and I met. Our mistake was thinking there was better hope of achieving them if we joined forces — BIG mistake. We cancelled each other out. I think you all have a Much better chance of achieving them — and the 'someday' ambitions Suzanne has on her list — and I wish you all the best in so doing.

Special thanks for the restaurant reviews. Anguilla sounds like a neat enough place that I'll try to get there someday, and it's always a priority with me to know good eateries in any place I visit.

**Comments** — Essentially, I'm giving the raccoons until I've had a chance to seal, clean, and reinsulate the attic. Since I'm not finishing the basement as soon as I'd hoped, that's pushing it into when they should move out for summer — which could spare me the hassle of chasing them out and Keeping them out during the work period. If I can't successfully seal the place against them, however, some serious re-thinking will take place. *One* siege of re-insulation I'll write off to my own folly in not recognizing the symptoms and taking action sooner; but one is my limit.

**MAILING COMMENTS on the 203rd (cont'd) — Comments (cont'd)**

Glad you liked the fiction and back-poem. I know what you mean about long gaps in one's ability to write poetry. Don't worry: it'll happen again. It just takes awhile to catch one's breath and discover one still thinks that way on occasion. Frankly, I'm really looking forward to when you start writing — you were always a superb writer when you'd let yourself, and maybe now you'll let yourself do one of the longer pieces you always wanted to. I think you'll get a kick out of this issue's 'Unfashionable Fiction.' It's a plot I mentioned to you, but couldn't write, back in the late '70s. All of a sudden the other day, it just sort of materialized, complete and intact. It probably needs some editing in the course of typing it into the end of the zine — in fact, it also probably needs the traditional couple of weeks 'cooling' time and re-assessment — but having had the idea lurking back there for a couple of decades, to have it fall into place so naturally gave me a [probably unjustified] confidence in it.

Thanks again for all your help. Needless to say, I'll let you know if anything else of interest turns up in the ex-basement stuff — and naturally, if you all see anything of interest in the stuff I bring to DSC, it's yours. I only want to sell stuff that neither of us can house or use or enjoy.

Wow! A whole re-entered zine! Gawd. With one zine already in the mailing and the deadline bearing down on you, that's worthy of the SFPA Dedication Citation [with black-and-blue typing fingers!]

**Souf'paw** — How amazing of you to catch up on back mc's! I did that once and have lacked the dedication and stamina ever since!

You're right about the episodic quality of *Billy Jack* [so far, I haven't seen the others, and admit I don't intend to exert any effort to do so after everybody's remarks on the other ones]. If they took almost 3 hours over *The Trial of Billy Jack*, it must be almost nightmarish in its self-satisfied preachiness. Yeesh. Seems to me somebody else mentioned the biker pre-quel that got the Billy Jack character going — and neither of you make it sound worth pursuing. I think the main nuisance, though it should be expected I guess, is Laughlin beginning to believe his own press releases on the 'cult hero' side. Once that happens, you can generally write off whoever it is because they'll be so busy living up to the 'image' that they won't do anything Real.

You got the wrong initial on *Spider Pie* for the record [it's an S. Hughes production, not a B. Hughes production — definitely I've got to get solvent enough to go back to my maiden name without the creditors getting antsy, so people won't have the needless confusion], but right about *2001's* hopeful assumptions about space travel progress. In those days, they had more basis. My astronomy professors were both involved with NASA to one extent or another [one was J. Allen Hynek of 'swamp gas' infamy; and another was Karl Henize, who became their oldest astronaut, lost out when the program was closed down untimely, hung in there and flew at least one shuttle mission, and died a couple of years ago in a way a lot of us wouldn't mind dying: on a NASA project climbing Mt. Everest], and they (especially Henize) told us a bit about NASA's agenda in the pre-Moon-landing late '60s. It seems NASA had it all mapped out for after the Moon landing. First, a series of landings to check things out and pick sites, then building a base at which people would stay up to a month at first and up to 3-6 months later. We were all expecting that after 4-5 exploratory missions, they'd start construction on a base up there. If they had, and if manned spaceflight had continued to grow based on those activities, *2001* might have been closer to the mark. Unfortunately, politics and the American people's ability to get bored with Anything after one run-through did in manned spaceflight at the time. I'm hoping for a resurgence now that they've found water-ice on the Moon — and I continue to urge anybody who'll listen [though that reduces the number considerably; and so far, none of them can do anything about it] that we should replace the 'space station' project with a 'Moon base' project, using much of the technology developed for the station in an environment where water might be available and repairs wouldn't require space-walks. Maybe someday . . .

**MAILING COMMENTS on the 203rd** (cont'd)

**Stomp Your Hat** — I actually chanced into *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* sometime in the past few months and it's fun and, as you note, sort of camp. Then, about a week later, I caught a fragment of what looked to be a sequel [with two 'slayers' since Buffy dying at some point had activated the next one] and what I saw of it looked like a less amusing cast and script so I didn't bother to watch the rest. You can probably tell me if the second one was a TV pilot [since it fits what you say about the TV version] or an actual (and not as good) sequel.

**Wedding** — What a gorgeous dress, Suzanne! And I'm really looking forward to seeing that ring at DSC — you guys seem to have done a wonderful job with it. Of course the Anguilla shots are most hungry-making to me. The place I've visited in the B.W.I. is St. Lucia [which I love] and the rich colors of the Anguilla photos look even brighter. Definitely a place of breathtaking color!

**Tennessee Trash** — What a Wonderful cover! [and I'm pleased to see they're the Braves, of course, though I'm annoyed with the Braves for trading away so many players I liked].

What awful news about Corlis' osteoarthritis! Good luck finding the right regimen to control it and, in due course, cure it. I understand there are some nutritional steps one can take to help with it, but am not knowledgeable enough about such things to make any recommendations except to find somebody who *is* knowledgeable!

I haven't had the sort of problem with raccoons your co-worker Lisa and husband did — but then, I don't feed them! When we were feeding them at the kitchen window when I was growing up [easier and a better chance to see them than when we put the food-scrap in the yard to keep them from overturning our trash-cans] they never tried to come in. They DID, however, discover that the front screen door had a strong spring but didn't close completely unless latched, so if they got hungry during the night, they'd come hook a paw under the screen door, pull it back, and let it slam — as many times as it took to wake us up! One did wander into the house via the front door at the time, but was easily lured back outside by pitching food [cookies, in that case] in that direction so it would eat its way back out of the house. Actually, your friend's husband would do well to have rabies shots [nothing like as awful as they used to be] if the coon's bite broke the skin. While it's not likely that the raccoon was carrying it, it *is* around in the raccoon population here and there and it's not worth taking a chance. If they aren't worried about rabies in the local population, the people who caught them would just release them somewhere. It's only if they've gotten scared — or a draconian regulation has been pushed past the legislature, as here in Georgia — that they have this thing about destroying them.

What bugs me is, there's a forthright contradiction between Hubble's *evidence* of ongoing *acceleration* and Einstein's *opinion* that matter can't exceed lightspeed. It leaves two clear-cut options: to explain what and how something happens contrary to the demonstrated acceleration that underlies Hubble's Law to prevent reaching or exceeding lightspeed [which would still be a Hubble Boundary, albeit of a different kind] and find comparable evidence for it; or to say, Gee, Einstein was wrong on this one [even Homer nods] and examine the data regarding 'dark matter' and the like from the perspective that, crossing the Hubble Boundary, objects would out-run their light [be infinitely red-shifted, as you say]. The latter seems more likely, and more fruitful.

From what I can tell, Hubble's Law is genuinely talking red-shift-measurable *acceleration* — and acceleration relates to speed. If we know a celestial object is accelerating, we don't need to be able to specify its speed *or* velocity at a particular moment to be able to say with confidence that it *will*, in a finite amount of time, attain/exceed lightspeed.

One reason the Hubble Boundary is of interest is that if we knew the distance at which celestial objects out-ran their light [becoming 'dark matter' from our perspective, perhaps], we could 'work backward' and say half that distance is half lightspeed [plus or minus], a quarter the distance is a quarter lightspeed, and so on. Unless somebody has observations to demonstrate and explain comparable *deceleration* or, at least, *cessation* of acceleration, there's no reason to suppose celestial objects check in at the Hubble Boundary for Einstein's approval.

**MAILING COMMENTS on the 203rd (cont'd) — Tennessee Trash (cont'd)**

That's one of the most intriguing things about Hubble's Law: if it's as true as claimed, it carries the seeds for disproof of Einstein's rejection of translight speed. For Einstein to be right [which I doubt], astrophysicists and cosmologists must jump through quite a number of hoops to show how he can be right AND Hubble's Law be as reliable as it seems. Anyhow, thanks for getting in on this one [and reminding me of the scalar/vector distinction — it's been awhile since I had to use it]. If curious, I spent a couple of pages on this sort of subject earlier in a comment to somebody else [though, off the top, I don't recall whom].

**Oblio** — Wow — hard to believe Scott's graduating already! Congratulations to him on his scholarship/grant earnings. I bet he's excited about escaping high school and going to college!

I know what you mean about the 'only yesterday' factor on graduations. At that age, all Events were memorable — vividly so. I sometimes wonder if it has to do with having fewer years of one's life to counterbalance. I mean, when you're 10, 5 years is Half Your Life; when you're 50, 5 years is demoted to a tenth — so, in retrospect, the earlier years would Seem longer, loom larger in memory, and so on.

I could rent live-traps for the raccoons, but raccoons are smart enough that once one was caught and they couldn't figure out how to free it, they'd avoid the traps. By the way, tell your friend that celery is to raccoons as catnip is to cats. We found that out by chance when we were raising the three young ones for the state when I was growing up.

You're right about John Lennon, of course, but I didn't hear about it until I flipped on the radio the following afternoon. One of those where we're both right.

I've been appreciating your centerfolds — a definite addition to any mailing. It's just that sometimes I forget to mention it. As always, good zine. Much to my surprise, I think I got all the Superhero trivia [inside back cover] right — one of the many things I learned in my association with Steve's comics pals!

**Northern Californian** — No real comment — sorry! It's 3:30 a.m. and I'm hurrying to finish. Maybe next time.

**Tyndallite** — Sorry about mis-attributing the small-format zines to you. It was somebody in Myriad from Stillwater, Oklahoma, I think [dredging my memory and getting up mostly junk]. I only remembered that after the zines were sent, so I figured I'd wait until this ish to correct the [repeated, no less] mistake. I wonder who it was . . .

Glad you liked the reviews. Actually, I was harder on *Slaves of Sleep* than I should have been — you're right, it is a nice little lightweight Arabian-Nights romp — but after all the L. Ron Hubbard hype I'd heard over the years, I'd really expected better (and certainly not the gross anachronism), so I kind of over-reacted. By the way, if Dianetics wants us to get rid of all our engrams [sounds like the 'cellulite' thing of a few years ago], I'd better ask, (a) Okay, Mr. Bones, What's an engram? and (b) Can it be that nobody like Greenpeace has started a 'save the engrams' campaign to counter this ruthless destruction? [Sorry — it *is* after 3:30 and it's starting to show.]

Love the tale of J.E. Hoover and Popov — how typical of Hoover to omit mentioning that Pearl Harbor was slated for attack in his effusive self-praise for catching Popov! Geez — and we think the country's in a mess Now! [It is, of course, from self-serving incompetence, which may well be worse. History, if we live so long, will tell.]

**Guilty Pleasures** — Yeah, I can see Celko checking out the romance web-site and contributing a plot for the heroic garbage worker. Actually, I'm surprised that was a problem, since one of the givens of the genre when I was checking it out was the person who 'wasn't what he seemed but something far better'. When I was considering trying to write for that market [but mostly for the Gothic side of it — now probably non-existent — I developed a whole slew of plots. Only drafted one of them, finding out I couldn't maintain the style and tone they needed for the duration of a book. If anybody wants the stray plot, give me an e-mail address and I'll pass them along.

**MAILING COMMENTS on the 203rd (cont'd) — Guilty (cont'd)**

Ah, yes — the First Speeding Ticket! I got my first one after I was 40 [also about 3 months after I got my RX-7 — somehow, I think the two are connected]. Not that I hadn't speeded before — I just hadn't been stopped and ticketed before. Somehow, if they catch you speeding in a little yellow GLC, they decide the radar gun isn't working right . . .

*The Usual Suspects* was one whose previews tempted me but I haven't gotten around to seeing. I'll have to rent it sometime.

How marvelous to have a place for your 9x13 Oriental carpet! I knew once you unrolled it and looked at it again it would say 'Find a place for me!' The good ones always do, no matter how much you may resist.

My main connection with the romance world is that a friend of mine from way back when, Elaine F. Palencia, got into that market for awhile. She did several for one of the series [maybe the Candlelight line?] under the pseudonym Laurel Blake, then did a few more under her own name, I think for another publisher. In recent years, she's mostly done mainstream short stories [and I think has a mainstream novel in progress], the stories getting publication in literary and 'little' magazines and a collection of them coming out a few years back under the title *Small Caucasian Woman*. I read her stuff just so I could comment on it meaningfully [as much so as somebody out of touch with the genre could!] and later, after getting into Georgette Heyer's delightful stuff, I considered trying to do a romance or two. I picked up an assortment of them to scope out the market [mostly Gothics, since I *knew* I'd never manage to write the more usual 'romances', having read Elaine's stuff], assembled some plots [which was really fun], drafted one, and decided, just in the mapping-out and drafting that I wouldn't be able to maintain the preferred style long enough to be marketable. I still think some of the plots were neat, but I also think they were among the stuff I pitched last time I was short of file-drawer space. Still, plots are pretty easy to remember, hence the 'if anybody wants one . . .' above.

What fun to be becoming a source of reviews and booknotes in the field! Have you gotten to the point where they send you review copies? I would think so, but if not, send them some of your printed reviews and you'll get on a Zillion review lists: theirs and anybody else's they give your name to. The issue of *Pan* where we used all those Wade Gilbreath Oriental-heroes-and-villains Steve reprinted a mlg or so ago got sent to a couple of publishers [it was thick with reviews, as well as short pieces on each of those characters and a few others] and we were still getting review copies 15-20 years later! Most of the books I listed to sell off a few issues back were review copies neither of us ever had time or interest to read.

***You're Not Pressing*** — Your 'creative writing' class sounds in a league with mine. It definitely convinced me that if I was going to learn to write, I'd have to be self-taught!

*Walking Tall* was another 'cult' flick I heard great things about and never got around to seeing. Maybe one of these days. So far, my main interest in 'cult' movies is to see what made them attract a cult-like following. *Billy Jack Goes to Washington* and the pre-quel [admitted or unadmitted] motorcycle one sound like they match or exceed *The Trial of Billy Jack* for being of Zero interest to me. Thanks to you and the others who commented on them for warning me off — I'd Hate to waste what little film-watching time I have on that sort of thing!

Since I've engaged in Hubble-harangue elsewhere a couple of places, I'll take the excuse of needing to get this zine Finished to conclude this comment to refer you to wherever in the zine those comments are.

Neat illos and thanks for type large enough to read even at this hour of the morning!

***Armadillo*** — Somehow, I definitely understand the de-junking effort! And the difficulty of remembering to get out a zine at a suitable moment . . .

Hope to see you all at DSC!

***C'est ne pas*** — For the sake of starting the Unfashionable Fiction at the top of a page, I'll just say thanks for the long comment and haiku book recommendations — and see you at DSC, I hope?



## UNFASHIONABLE FICTION

### House Pet

I knew the house had a personality before ever I moved into it. The other houses I visited with the real estate agent just had rooms — baths, bedrooms, kitchens, the usual — all in various arrangements. This house had spirit. Curiosity, eager interest, excited fascination seemed to emanate from it, as if it *just couldn't wait* to see who its new owner would be. I asked around, but there was no hint of rumor that it had ever been haunted. For one thing, it wasn't that old. But I did notice that it had changed hands often in its brief history.

The realtor, questioned about the parade of former owners, was uninformative. She had all the usual excuses why people move — job changes, needs for more space, social climbing — but she seemed secretly relieved that I expressed interest in the place. Checking the records, I found out why: it had been on the market for a year, standing empty since its former owners moved out.

Yet it didn't have the air of a place long empty. You could readily imagine that a young family, with a couple of enthusiastic, curious children, had just stepped out on an errand. Even empty, its rooms were full of life. I tried to figure it out, to attribute it to the way the sun came in the windows or the way the rooms were layed out, but I knew I was stretching for explanations that weren't there. Other houses had all that — indeed, some were more visually appealing — but this house was *alive*. I could almost feel its delight when the realtor and I would visit and talk about it — and its disappointment when we left. I've never owned a dog, but with friends' pets I've seen the whimpering sadness at the owner's departure and the romping delight at the owner's return — and that's what I felt here. A house can't frolic and dance with joyous welcome or lie down in dejected resignation, but that's what it felt like.

Finally, I couldn't take it anymore. I bought the place and arranged to move in. After the closing, I went over to the place by myself on the excuse of seeing how my furniture and books would fit — but actually, to break the news to the house.

Once I was safe inside where nobody could hear me, I said, "Well, Hausgeist — I've bought the place. I hope you don't mind."

An explosion of delight flowed around me. It was like being hugged by a dozen intangible arms, licked by an enthusiastic dog, and danced with jubilantly all at the same time. Suddenly, I didn't mind at all that I'd never be able to tell people without their thinking me crazy — I had gone out to buy a house and found, instead, a friend and ally.

Moving in was a stitch. I saw everything safely unloaded, paid off the movers, and went back in — to find some of the boxes open and in different places from where we'd unloaded them. Hausgeist was checking out my stuff. Sometimes, in my week of settling-in, I'd put something in one room and wake up the next morning to find it in another. Hausgeist had firm opinions about interior decoration!

It could all be explained away, of course. I could always tell myself I'd *meant* to move that piece of furniture, but hadn't gotten around to it. Or that I'd taken that chair back to the other room for something to stand on. But I knew better. Besides, I discarded the unused wall-paper samples neatly. When I got back from running an errand, one I'd thrown away was neatly centered on the floor — and all the rest were crumpled up and strewn around.

"Oh, Hausgeist!" I shook my head.

*UNFASHIONABLE FICTION — House Pet (cont'd)*

Hopeful enthusiasm surrounded me. I could almost imagine a dog with its head on one side, ears cocked, waiting to see what would happen.

I looked at the sample again. It *had* been my second choice, and a close second at that.

"Well, okay," I said.

Relief and delight flooded around me.

I did win a few. Hausgeist really wanted my den to be in the room I'd slated for a spare bedroom. After several days of moving my desk back into my preferred room after finding it in the presumptive spare bedroom, I decided something had to be done.

"Look, Hausgeist," I said. "The reason I want it in the other room is so we can have company. This room's to be the spare bedroom. It's closer to the hall bathroom and people will like its size and comfort. It's not that I don't *like* it for the den — it's that we need a room for visitors."

Awkward stillness. I could almost hear an embarrassed '*Oh*.'

When I got back from the hardware store, the desk was in the den — and the sleep-sofa I'd been hesitating to try to move by myself was in the spare bedroom! Wonderful! I thanked Hausgeist and spread the house plan the realtor had given me on the kitchen table. From now on, we'd be partners and work on things together.

Slowly and patiently, I explained what I envisioned for every room — what I'd use it for, what furniture would go where, all of it. If I got resistance, I'd explain further — or walk to the room in question and pay attention to the impression I got there. Hausgeist liked most of my decisions, but I accepted a few recommendations myself.

After that, things went smoothly. By the end of the week, everything was in place. There was one slip up, when Hausgeist tried to shelve some of my books without understanding about categories of subjects or shelving right side up by author's surname, but I was touched that he even tried. After I showed him the author's-name trick and what I meant by alphabetical order, the next book I needed to shelve was almost always right where I reached for it.

When we finished, I think we were both proud of the place. I warned him about being too obvious at the housewarming party I gave, but I didn't need to. He was the perfect host. The trays of nibbles were always exactly where they were needed and the music was never too loud or too soft. That one young friend, hoping to get drunk on my liquor, never could find the drinks tray after he'd had as much as was good for him I took for a sign of Hausgeist's good judgement.

And so we settled in to an unusual, but pleasant, life together. Hausgeist would be around during the evening news, but didn't fancy some of the sitcoms I liked. Now and then, I'd find the TV on a different channel and, looking through the listings, would find it had shown something about houses during the day. Hausgeist especially seemed to like the shows about castles and mansions, but not the way people watch celebrity shows — more like the way they watch shows about famous relatives.

Now and then, we'd play at a jigsaw puzzle, Hausgeist hiding or revealing pieces I was looking for, or putting a few together when I was out of the room to refill my coffee cup. He was a good companion, and if people thought me a trifle aloof and isolated, it was just that I was comfortable at home.

*UNFASHIONABLE FICTION — House Pet (cont'd)*

Then came the day of the tornado. I heard the warning on the noon news that Saturday. It looked like it was headed our way, so I warned Hausgeist to lay low and got my camera ready in case I could get a picture of it. I pulled on boots and a raincoat and went to the door as the storm blew in.

Wind-driven rain lashed down. The funnel cloud was a couple of streets away. I saw it clearly. Sure it would veer off, I went outside and clung to a tree in that awful wind, trying to take pictures.

It didn't veer off. It came straight toward us. It tore through a powerline, jumped a street, and was coming down right on top of us. Then, above the scream of the wind, I heard a cry I'll never forget.

"Noooooo!"

Flattened against the ground, I turned to face the house as the tornado was about to hit. There, struggling with the funnel cloud above the house, I could make out a shadowy figure, fighting and clawing and wrestling with that incalculable force of nature. Hausgeist was trying to defend the house.

For what seemed like a breath-held eternity, they swayed and struggled back and forth. Then the tornado leaped clear, to pursue its destructive path on other streets — and I heard a heart-rending moan of exhaustion and pain. I ran into the house, to the place directly below where the battle had taken place.

How do you comfort and heal and hug and help an intangible spirit? Yet I tried, feeling helpless and thankful and proud and brokenhearted all at the same time. Hausgeist had saved us — had saved the house and all its contents and me. In that moment, I would have given all that stupid tangible stuff for the ability to cradle Hausgeist in my arms and make him whole again — but it was too late. The battle against the storm had taken too much out of him. I think he knew my love, my thanks, my hunger to help him, before he expired. I hope so. In the timeless stillness trying to touch the intangible, comfort the invisible, I heard — or felt — at last a sigh, a long drawn out exhalation as life departed. And then the house was empty. Oh, the stuff was still there, but the personality that had made it wonderful was gone. I bowed my head as helpless tears ran down my rain-wet face.

That photo of the tornado above the house has won many awards, but that's not why I keep it on my desk — and over the fireplace — and in every other place of honor I can find. The experts and photo salon judges are impressed that stuff the funnel cloud was carrying (for so they explain it) should look so much like a person battling the storm. They're wrong. None of the beams and other objects they claim to see were picked up — or left — along the storm's path. I don't tell them the truth because they wouldn't believe me: that that's the only picture I have of the friend who saved my life. Rest in peace, Hausgeist.

See y'all next ish!

*Simple Pleasures*

*Bread, wine*

*Cheese, grapes — perhaps*

*Some sketching things and paints —*

*A kite for afternoon breezes*

*On a*

*Long green hillside*

*From dew-wet dawn until,*

*Golden dusk, with fireflies sparkling*

*Brighter*

*Than our candles.*

*Such gifts and moments fill*

*The only needful thing: a heart*

*At peace.*

