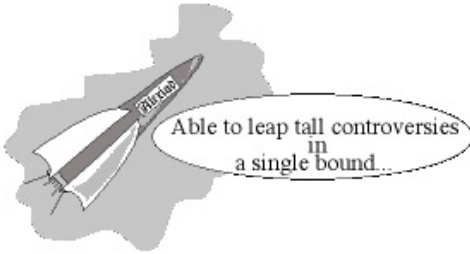


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**Letters, we get letters**


From: **AL du Pisani** December 8, 2010  
 945 Grand Prix Street, Weltevredenpark  
 1709, Republic of South Africa  
[du.pisani@telkomsa.net](mailto:du.pisani@telkomsa.net)

A short note, as I am running on empty.

It was shortly after I wrote my last letter to you that I crashed. Don't know why, but I just ran out of energy. Got to be so bad that I started falling asleep at work. Thankfully not while I was driving. (Although there is that incident earlier this year . . .

This finally got my working hours changed to accommodate the traffic patterns. I now have an extra hour a day for myself, and it is surprising how much I needed that. But I have also started cutting down on my other activities. Even so, I am a lot more tired than I should be.

Health wise I am still fine. Just getting into the zone where I am unpleasantly surprised by how much more basic medical stuff costs. I am starting to be terrified of going to the optometrist.

We are muddling through in South Africa. The incompetence is just starting to become a bit too much. But then, we have a much bleaker picture of Mama Afrika than outsiders have. More in the line of a heart in a thorn tree, dripping blood onto the dust. Not a nice place, but the home you cannot bear to leave.

Strange then to find an escape into Science Fiction. And that hour a day, it has given me a bit of time to read once again. Rereading Ian Esselmont, reading some JV Jones and Charles de Lint.

Even in the bad days, there was something to read. But my to read pile is bigger than ever before, and I am starting to lose hope that I am ever going to work it down.

Unfortunately part of the pile is the last couple of issues of *Alexiad* — I hope to get around to reading them once I am on holiday. Because this year I can take a holiday, and will be visiting my family over Christmas. And it is strange, although I know Christmas in the North happens in winter, I have ingrained in me the memory of summer Christmasses.

Ah yes Sinterklass inspanning with lots of presents for the good little girls and boys . . .

— JTM

Good luck and a good Christmas and New Year to all.

From: **Cathy Palmer-Lister** Dec. 12, 2010  
[cathypl@sympatico.ca](mailto:cathypl@sympatico.ca)

It's one of those Sundays that encourage one to read, think, and maybe write a bit. The day started with huge, wet snowflakes that blew around so much I could barely see the house across the street. Now it's freezing to the trees and probably to the ground as well. I've no intention of going out to test it! I had planned to take the dogs to be photographed with Santa, a good fundraiser for the SPCA, but a car full of border collies and freezing rain are not a good mix. I was thinking, well, there's always next year, but then realized two of them are eleven years old, so for them there might not ever be a photo with Santa.

Lisa talked of having to turn away cats; I wish my brother and sister-in-law had that much sense. They now have ten cats, since rescue number seven turned out to be pregnant and they can't bear to part with the kittens. They have good hearts, but Lisa is right — there does have to be a line drawn. Pets need individual care, and when there's so many that a cat can go missing for days without anyone noticing, you know you've too many.

I was very interested in the review of **Sherlock Holmes: The American Years**. Have you seen the television series that has Sherlock living in our modern world?

For (Mark) Gatiss, the "lightbulb moment" came when he was speaking to the Sherlock Holmes Society of London and discussing the fact that the original Watson was invalidated home after serving in Afghanistan. "It is the same war now, I thought. The same unwinnable war."

So, as in Conan Doyle, when Watson and Holmes meet for the first time the detective immediately deduces where the army doctor has just been serving.

I didn't expect to like it, but soon got caught up with how neatly the producers had fit the stories to our times. Watson keeps a blog, Sherlock uses nicotine patches and sends text messages rather than telegrams. I do hope we get more episodes shown here, it's so much fun to watch!

I missed the deadline I set for *WARP 76*, so it's looking like the autumn issue will be published in January. Sigh. I feel like I'm on a carousel, always galloping along but never actually catching up. BTW, I did some more work on *WARP 75* to make it a lot easier to download.

For fanzines, that's early.

— JTM

From: **R-Laurraine Tutihasi** Dec. 12, 2010  
 Post Office Box 5323, Oracle, AZ  
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<http://www.weasner.com/>

It seems as though I'm forever catching up.

To start Lisa refers to Canadian geese. They're Canada geese, not Canadian geese.

What kind of video camera did you get? I had the idea they were no longer very expensive. I paid \$2000 for the one I bought eleven years ago but expect to pay a lot less for its replacement whenever that happens.

I thought marriage between first cousins was prohibited in all of the United States.

No, only half of them. Arizona allows first-cousin marriages, if both the cousins are over 65, or one is "unable to reproduce" (which covers a lot of factors). First-cousin marriages are also permitted in Europe, in Canada, and in Mexico. My notorious cousin's father was the product of a first-cousin marriage.

— JTM

In reply to Darrell Schweitzer's LoC: Yes, Nixon was progressive. He suggested the negative income tax. My understanding (from regularly reading *Business Week*) is that China, if not others, is already riding the "green" bandwagon, at least to the best of their ability.

With regard to Taral Wayne's LoC: I received *Julian Comstock* for review and was highly impressed. I wrote up a positive review for the N3F zine, which I believe is posted at [efanzines.com](http://efanzines.com). I have read all of Wilson's work nominated for the Hugo. *Spin* was the first book of his that I really liked, but *Julian Comstock* blew me away.

I won't promise to do better with LoCs in future, since I haven't been doing very well so far with my attempts to catch up; but I really am trying to catch up.

From: **Milt Stevens** December 15, 2010  
 6325 Keystone Street, Simi Valley, CA  
 93063-3834 USA  
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In *Alexiad V9#6*, Joseph mentions the possibility of having thousands of contacts worldwide and not knowing anyone in my own city. I'm pretty much in that situation. I don't know anyone in Simi Valley, and it doesn't bother me in the slightest. When I want to socialize in person I go over the hill to visit my homeboys and homegirls at LASFS in North Hollywood. In modern cities, communities are intentional groups rather than geographic areas. Intentional groups can be anything from a church to an outlaw biker gang.

I've thought about how we organized socially back when I was a teenager in the suburban San Fernando Valley. Males formed groups and females attached themselves to males and secondarily to the groups. We didn't have any social theory. This was just the way we did things. We liked hanging out in coed groups. I understand things have been different in other places and times.

That you have only gained one new letter writer from posting online is a little less than I

would have expected but not much. I would be interesting to poll other people who have zines on eFanzines to see how they are doing. If everyone is getting little to no response, that form of distribution will soon go away.

I came across a food item that may be stranger than a sandwich with doughnuts for bread. I noticed my local market is selling organic milk. It's kept right next to the regular milk. I didn't feel any desire to buy the organic milk just to see what it was. I mentioned to the people at the check out counter that I thought organic milk was a little curious. They didn't think there was anything strange about it. I recalled a movie where the aliens wanted us to drink their milk and eat their graham crackers in order to change our DNA. It couldn't be anything like that.

I'd really like to know what inorganic milk tastes like.

—JTM

Len Moffatt was my longest time fannish friend. We met at my very first LASFS meeting back in 1960. At the time, he was 34 and I was 17. It's funny how much I remember about that first meeting. It seems like some part of my mind knew that was going to be a life changing event.

From: **Brad W. Foster** December 16, 2010  
Post Office Box 165246, Irving, TX  
75016-5246 USA  
[bwfoster@juno.com](mailto:bwfoster@juno.com)

Last issue of 2010 in the mail this week, thank you so much. I've only got one small fillo on hand to send this time. Hoping to change some of the sketches and doodles piled around here into some finished artwork in the next month or so, to have material to send out to zines again. In the meantime, have a pie!

Usual mix of interesting titles reviewed here, I think I'll be putting *The Bookman* on my look-for list. Right now I'm in the middle of reading *The Dante Club* by Matthew Pearl, murder mystery in post-Civil War Boston, with Henry Longfellow, Oliver Wendell Holmes and James Lowell all teaming up to solve the literary-based series of brutal murders. I've got a soft spot for a well-done mixing of real historical people along with fictional folks into a new novel. Lots of bad ones doing this, but the good ones can be a real joy. *The Bookman* sounds like one of the fun ones.

Also will keep an eye out for O'Rourke's *Don't Vote*. Big fan of P.J., I think I've gotten most of what he has put out over the years.

The Spectator liked the book.  
(The one @ [www.spectator.co.uk](http://www.spectator.co.uk)  
not the one @ [spectator.org](http://spectator.org)  
though I suppose they did too.)

— JTM

Regarding Lisa's comments on Shoes, she ended with the old joke about the guy falling from the skyscraper saying as he passed each floor that "So far, so good!" Have heard that

joke many times, but first time I've realized it can apply to everyone, since what, after all, is our life but a series of moments that are "... so good ...", until the inevitable splat?

Oops, outta here. Just saw the time, have to go pick up a little feral kitty we lured in the other day and dropped off at a local charity group to get her "fixed" up before letting her go again. Rather do this once in a while with the strays in the neighborhood, than have to put up with dozens of hungry cats hanging around. Spay and neuter folks!

From: **John Thiel** December 16, 2010  
30 N. 19th Street, Lafayette, IN 47904-  
2950 USA

Seems man's mightiest instrument, the pen, has almost been phased out of human consciousness by now; but I'm resorting to a pen in my general correspondence because I don't feel like using the electric typewriter with its computer system after doing my regular work on it.

Your notes in the December issue struck my interest because your thoughts are very much like mine; I think lack of natural communications is one of our greatest problems in the world of today.

Also I have a similar experience with the net. Although my ezine is clearly drawing hundreds of viewers with every issue, I have hardly ever gotten any email of the letter of comment variety. Instead of e-mail I get manuscripts. So I'm glad to see someone mention these things.

From: **Joy V. Smith** December 19, 2010  
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0341 USA  
[Pagadan@aol.com](mailto:Pagadan@aol.com)  
<http://pagadan.blogspot.com/>

Thanks again for all the book reviews, some of which I'd rather read about than read ... And I enjoyed the title of *Don't Vote: It Just Encourages the Bastards*. Is that a bumper sticker yet? The Laundry Files series sounds intriguing, but in browsing reviews of the *Fuller Memorandum* on Amazon, someone said it had a gory conclusion, as I recall. How gory is it — and the series?

I enjoyed the review of *Cryoburn* also, which I've already read and reread. Good last line, Grant — "This book shows us Miles as an adult, where it Counts." The Joy of High Tech was an informative article. Interesting review of *Pacing the Void*; I liked the names of some of the Chinese constellations — Star Chronicle, Murky Hollow, and Loggerhead Turtle — and meteoric fireballs — Heavenly Dogs.

The review of *Sherlock Holmes: The American Years* really intrigued me, and I've ordered it. I love a good theme anthology, and this reminds me of *War of the Worlds: Global Dispatches* (Bantam Books 1996, edited by Kevin J. Anderson). It also has stories involving historical figures — and some great stories.

Thanks to Johnny Carruthers for telling us

about all those wonderful candy bars, such as the Skybar. (If it has caramel, I want it.) The Maple Ice Mints sound worthwhile also. Lots more info in the LOCs; and I enjoyed The Door into Barryar — good use of ice references.

And nothing about *Gladiator-at-Law?*

Thanks for the lovely bookmark.

— JTM

From: **John Purcell** December 26, 2010  
3744 Marielene Circle, College Station,  
TX 77845-3926 USA  
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Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, Joe and Lisa!

'Tis the day after and my car door smushed left index finger is feeling better, so I'm up for typing a letter of comment to you folks. This is my kind of physical therapy.

I see you ran my book review; as soon as I saw that book on the recent additions shelves at the local library, I thought of writing about it for your fanzine. It is a natural reaction, knowing your love of Holmesiana. Thank you for pubbing it.

Since it is early in this loc, I think it is only fair to say here that the next issue of *Askance* is on hold until our updated Office Word package arrives. It should be here here Real Soon Now so that I can get onto the zine (again) while it's between semesters. That would be ideal, of course, so I don't want to hear anybody out there rattling off Murphy's Law or any of its corollaries. So *Askance* #22 will most likely rear its mangy head in January, 2011. \*sigh\* I guess I shall have to deal with it.

Back to the zine at hand. Lisa mentions turning away 66 cats? That's not too many ... Thankfully, I read on her opening paragraph and realized you folks only have five cats as permanent residents. We have you beat with our nine. That number will be going down if we can find good homes for two of them in relatively short time. By Springtime — which in Texas means late January — this might happen. We shall see.

Joe, you ask the tired question, "Where are all the e-locers?" The simple answer is that there aren't that many of them, and that's the truth. Your zine will get a wider distribution being posted on efanazines.com, but the proportion of responses will dramatically drop in comparison with responses to mailed hardcopies. It is a sad fact, one that is reflected in the lettercolumn in my latest issue (see above for projected date of release). It's pretty lean this time around. But as many folks have noted in fanzines for the past few years, since people can read a posted fanzine literally for free, they feel no true obligation to respond with a letter of comment or artwork. The people who write locs to *Askance* will write them to paper and electronic zines. People like Lloyd Penney and Taral Wayne are gold to me, and I thank them profusely. So the bottom line is that the electronic readers are Out There, they just simply don't feel obligated to write.

In other words, the transition from participant to consumer; the same thing as why fan-run cons are shrinking while big organization cons are becoming THE event of the year for so many.

A projection of this trend leads me to a not-so-startling conclusion: namely, that once all fanzines go electronic, the e-zine response ratio should go up. Not by much, I'm afraid, but I believe it will. There are fortunately enough people producing paper fanzines right now that such a reality is probably at least a generation away. I know that committed loccers — who should be committed anyway, but that's another conclusion for another fanzine article — will write to fan editors no matter what. Sometimes the topics in a particular issue don't spark much response; at other times, they do. Fans are fickle lot, y'know, so it really is very hard to predict their behavior. Now, mention the word "room party" and fans will crawl out of the woodwork like cockroaches descending on breadcrumbs scattered on the kitchen floor. That is, unless the dogs don't get to the crumbs first.

I digress, but you know what I mean. Back to some *Alexiad* comments.

*Colossus: the Forbin Project* (1970) was a good movie. I liked it. An eminently practical solution at the ending. I think that line was actually spoken, too.

Lots of book reviews by other folks this issue, Joe. You still win with the most, though — as if any of us out here read more books than you in a three-month period. Which is how many, anyway? I mean, there are 8 book reviews by you in this issue alone, and I assume that you read more than that since (do the math) that's less than three books a month. So how many books do you read between issue of *Alexiad*, Joe?

It's every two months, and I read a great many more than I review. One year I kept count and it was about five hundred, but now I spend a lot of reading time chasing Internet tropes.

— JTM

It is good to see Henry Welch back in print and fanzine production (I hope). Thank you for printing his new address.

After glancing through the lettercolumn again — and I am jealous at the ton of letters you get, but you actually MAIL these things out, something which I really have to do. It really does garner responses. Oh, well. With the new year I shall try to make printing copies to mail a proper part of my zine production schedule. This is not a resolution, mind you, but a reminder to self to simply do it.

Oh. Mighod. I am a living Nike commercial.

From: **Alexis A. Gilliland** Dec. 26, 2010  
4030 8th Street South, Arlington, VA  
22204-1552 USA  
<http://www.alexisgilliland.org>

Thank you for *Alexiad* #9.6, which arrived well before Christmas, about the time we had a dusting of snow. Then on the 20<sup>th</sup> we had a couple of inches, and since it has been pretty cold, there remained spots of white on the north slope and shaded spots of the lawn for Christmas day, even as early morning flurries tried to provide Washington with the legendary white Christmas. After unwrapping presents and dinner we went out to see *Tron*, because Lee had really liked the original. Sigh. A mediocre video game made into a not very good movie, loud to very loud (subtitles might have been useful) with lots of special effects but not much plot.

And I just cited Mike Resnick's "Why Carol Won't Sit Next to Me at Science Fiction Movies". I hate to think of what he did at *Tron* (either one).

—JTM

If my lost letter doesn't turn up, I can always print you another copy, assuming that my deathless prose could survive appearing in a later issue. Responding to a couple of comments, the first from Darrell Schweitzer, I was not aware that most of Egypt had been Monophysite, nor that Cyril of Alexandria, and his successors, had attempted to impose Orthodoxy on them. Which might explain why, when Islam appeared, the disrespected and persecuted Monophysite masses converted en masse to the new religion. Cyril was indeed Orthodox, but he was arguably Coptic or at least pre-Coptic as well; googling "Coptic church" shows it is currently described as Orthodox. This suggests that Egypt's Monophysite majority converted to Islam, while the Orthodox minority, as permitted by their Islamic rulers, clung to a faith that eventually became known as Coptic Christianity. After Cyril seized power in Egypt, (becoming its New Ruler, the original definition of Tyrant) the Pagan and Jewish elements of the trading community in Alexandria, moved to Constantinople, which if not exactly welcoming was at least less actively hostile. This left the now Orthodox trading community in charge of the grain trade, albeit a trade greatly diminished as Rome ceased to be a major market, though an increase in exports to Constantinople might have taken up some of the slack, until as Darrell notes, the grain trade ended altogether under the Caliphate.

The second comment was from George Price, noting that the numbers for the Permian extinction — 251.7 to 251.1 million years ago, seem unbelievably precise. There is a rather large error bar (which I couldn't find in the original article) on the absolute dates, but if the beginning and end are calculated consistently the difference of 0.6 million years is probably pretty accurate. Freeman Dyson provides an authoritative dissenting opinion on global warming, since his faith in human ingenuity leads him to believe that we happy humans can cope with global warming, regardless of how it came about. Maybe, maybe not, our reserves of fossil fuel seem sufficient to drive global

warming to Permian extinction levels, and whether we consume them in centuries or (with serious conservation) millennia, the rush of CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere will still be a whole lot faster than in the slow and leisurely Permian extinction, which was many times longer than the whole of human history. To the extent that humans can mitigate the Sixth extinction it will probably be to ensure our own food supply, making us a sort of universal top predator. Freeman Dyson to the contrary notwithstanding the fate of New Orleans does not lead me to think that we will cope well with rising sea levels.

What else? A sheet of cartoons is enclosed for your contemplation and possible use, and, of course Happy New Year!

From: **Sheryl Birkhead** Dec. 24, 2010  
(Happy Birthday, Joe)  
22509 Jonnie Court, Gaithersburg, MD  
20882-3422 USA

Well, pretty soon off with the old and on with the new. May 2011 be kind.

I took a realistic look at my (lack of) income, and current veterinary costa above and beyond routine. The picture was pretty bleak. So when I finally brought in a shelter kitten, I got insurance for his first birthday. Trupanion has *unlimited* lifetime benefits. I chose the \$250 deductible (per incident). He gets \$5 a week into a savings account and the \$20/month premium is on my credit card. I'd intended to get two, but the numbers just won't stretch — so he's an only child — with almost \$1500 put aside (NOT to be touched . . . I hope). You do what you must. Just yesterday and today I got a lot of pressure to take a year-old from the local referral practice (come in though emergency, "owner" said it was her daughter's cat . . . foreign body ingestion — finally signed an euthanasia consent — with the rider, that if a home was found, euthanasia was off, and the new owner would pick up the tab. Well they did the surgery, said it was a tennis ball sized mass of hair, rubber bands, and bits of material from a gem/jewelry making kit — but no way. I DID a lot of calling and located two people who would pay \$300 each — *BUT* no one as a home. Yeah, do what you need to.

Yeah — readers who are members of the Worldcon — start thinking of the nominations YOU want to make.

I've noticed, so often, that when there's a protest about a particular Hugo nomination, so many of those who make the protest aren't even members of the con.

— JTM

Ad — trying the vegan path — I merely skimmed the candy columns — Well, I (obviously) missed the timely wisdom of birthday greetings so need to finish this. NOW and into the mail while it still IS 2010.

Update — an employee at the referred practice who is newly divorced and now back at

home is adopting the cat. Her husband (now ex-) is allergic to cats and, while she always had cats before him, she has not had a cat in years. Employees get 75% of care for 2 pets. The original "owner" paid for the emergency visit and work up to the surgical procedures. The final bill (that I got covered by the above people) ended up \$383.87 (far cry from the original TOTAL over \$2500). A happy ending.

I am enjoying the new Sherlock "series" — different.

Sorry — not much of substance to relay — thanks for all the work you put into each ish.

From: **Taras Wolansky** January 10, 2011  
100 Montgomery Street., #24-H, Jersey City, NJ 07302-3787 USA  
[twolansky@yahoo.com](mailto:twolansky@yahoo.com)

I see I have several issues to catch up: *Alexiad*, August & October & December 2010: *Review of This Is Me, Jack Vance*: Where Heinlein wrote like mad for part of the year so he could travel the rest, Vance actually settled down in foreign locales and wrote while he traveled. A biographer may someday correlate stories and locations, so we know what influences there were. In general, I see now why Vance's work is full of peculiar inns and hostels. He took the same wry view of human foibles and selfishness in his real life as in his fiction.

The light, abstract tone of the memoir resembles that of his last two books more than the rich language of his prime as a writer, of course.

*Darrell Schweitzer*: "The story goes that Ace Books, having gone through all the trouble to acquire the works of [H. Beam] Piper, forgot to renew the copyrights." Could they run out so soon: Ace Books' Piper revival occurred in the early 1980s.

"The actual cause of [Piper's] death might be described as (so the story goes) terminal Libertarianism, meaning that Piper believed that everyone should be entirely self-sufficient and that an individual in distress should not seek help from others." Actually, libertarians differ from liberals in that they believe they may *ask* for help, but not *coerce* it. At the 1988 convention in Piper's honor, *Hostigos*, Jerry Pournelle said he would have been happy to give his good friend Piper a loan, if he'd known it was needed. Piper had told him he was shooting pigeons, but Pournelle thought it was for sport, not food.

"*Agora* (2009) . . . won't get much play in the US, I am sure, because of pressure from the religious right . . ." You've got to be kidding! Hollywood goes out of its way to attack the religious right. Devout Christians are routinely presented as fanatics or mean, nasty hypocrites or stupid and unattractive, or all of the above.

I remember when John Cleese was asked about the demonstrations against his film, *Monty Python's Life of Brian* (1979). His brief, but pithy, reply was: "They have made me rich." The demonstrations caused the studio to double the number of theaters showing the film.

Given the murders and persecutions of Christians going on today in many parts of the world, especially Egypt, one might consider *Agora* ill-timed — as if, in the 1930s, one had released a film showing Hebrews gruesomely slaughtering Canaanites. In fact, now that I think about it, it's almost a certainty that radical Muslims are *already* using the film as propaganda to inflame anti-Christian bigotry.

I don't think so. The movie is about a pagan woman thinking and acting independently, not the sort of thing radical Muslims want to see, even as a victim.

I wondered if the Nazis really had made any movies about the crimes of the ancient Hebrews, and so I looked over Wikipedia's filmography of the Nazi cinema (a creepy experience, by the way). The Nazis do not seem to have made any Biblical atrocity movies, but they did make historical films about Jews committing crimes against Germans. (Factually based, I think: it would be amazing if, over the centuries, such episodes had never occurred.)

It's possible that I may be the person responsible for leading a distinguished *Alexiad* correspondent toward thoughtcrime on global warming. A few months ago, I sent him a link to a discussion (of a David Brin article) I started on the Skeptic magazine website:

<http://www.skepticforum.com/viewtopic.php?f=65&t=13412>

There I make reference to a jaw-dropping BBC interview with Prof. Phil Jones of the University of East Anglia, a global warming hardliner. He was at the center of the so-called "Climategate" scandal when, among other things, he was caught conspiring with other climatologists to destroy emails about the 2007 UN report, so they could not be obtained via FOIA requests.

Perhaps because his scholarly integrity had been (rightly) questioned, Jones is more forthcoming than usual in the interview (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8511670.stm>): no statistically significant global warming since 1995 (!); a cooling (!) trend since 2002, also not statistically significant; the Medieval Warm Period (when the Norse raised cows in Greenland) may have been as warm or warmer than today.

Now, as I recall from the Nineties, global warming was supposed to be accelerating, not stagnating. Unfortunately the climate modelers are much better at postdicting than predicting. That is to say, they make predictions; the predictions turn out wrong; they tweak the models and make more predictions; which turn out wrong; etc., etc. They are unable to account for the current climate situation. For that matter, even the supposedly settled question of the 1940-1975 global cooling has recently been reopened (according to *Science Daily*).

You mean like when someone ran the Club of Rome computer simulation backwards and

discovered that the environment had collapsed in, I think it was, the seventeenth century?

What's going on? Possibly the global cooling theorists of the 1970s and the global warming theorists of the 1990s were both right. That is, the Earth is trying to cool down, following the ice age cycle, but anthropogenic CO<sub>2</sub> is counteracting that trend. It's like that comedian who says he wants to put a humidifier and dehumidifier in the same room, and let them fight it out.

"That last winter was the coldest Britain has experienced in 17 years . . . is something predicted by global warming models. . . . The Gulf Stream is starting to fail, just as predicted." Well, not exactly, if Wikipedia is to be believed. Not only is the Gulf Stream not failing, but warming may *strengthen* it.

Most likely, you encountered an article that was carefully worded to mislead, without lying outright. This is quite typical of warmist articles: they begin with a *fact* that appears to contradict global warming (e.g., Antarctic sea ice is expanding); then proceed to a *hypothesis* that attempts to bring the fact in line with the theory (warming is increasing snowfall on the Antarctic Ocean); then to a *prediction* (more warming will eventually overcome this effect). But they try to make the distinctions between fact, hypothesis, and prediction as blurry as possible, so that incautious readers will mistake hypotheses and predictions for facts.

A currently dominant scientific theory, like anthropogenic global warming (AGW), should be considered analogous to "the fastest gun in town". That is, it may be the fastest gun that will ever show up in town — or a faster gun may walk into Miss Kitty's Saloon right now. Furthermore, the fastest gun may not be objectively very fast. For example, in a Larousse Encyclopedia of Astronomy from the late Sixties, I discovered the amazing fact that the lunar craters are not impact craters at all, but rather popped volcanic bubbles; presumably the dominant theory at the time, in France at least.

By the way, it's a little distressing to read someone describing Ronald Reagan as a "brainless fool", at this late date, given that (now that it's no longer politically necessary to tear him down) liberals routinely admit he was a political genius. One of the first was Chris Matthews, Democratic Speaker Tip O'Neill's chief of staff, in his 1988 book, *Hardball*. He describes O'Neill as the best retail politician in America; and Ronald Reagan as the best wholesale politician. According to Matthews, who was in a position to know, Reagan repeatedly outmaneuvered the Democrats and stole their issues. (And that's all aside from what he did to the Soviets!)

*Alexis Gilliland*: "Henry Ford, notoriously anti-union, hired Negroes to use as strikebreakers against the white unionists . . ." A capitalist hiring *Negroes*, how shocking! BTW, "strikebreaker" is here a dysphemism for "competitor". White unionists in South Africa created apartheid precisely to maintain their monopoly on all the good jobs. White unionists

in the U.S. achieved something very similar by other means.

**“The arctic ice has cleared enough in the summer to open the Northwest Passage.”** Maybe; but down south, Antarctic sea ice is expanding (according to *Science Daily* a couple of months ago).

**“The present cause for alarm is that [the Earth’s climate] may be changing to be somewhat less suited for human survival.”** Probably the other way around. As Stephen Jay Gould said, when paleontologists hear of global warming apocalypses they smile to themselves, because they know just how warm and verdant the Earth has been in the past. It’s not normal for the Earth to have icecaps: it’s just that we’re currently in the middle of an Ice Age. Of course, we’re used to it, and have built cities on what are really continental shelves. (Not that a projected 20-inch increase in sea level over the next 90 years is very apocalyptic.)

**Lloyd Penney: “If [global warming] doesn’t exist, still we should clean the air and bring temperatures down.”** Bjorn Lomborg and other economists, who accept the existence of anthropogenic global warming, make a devastating case that the costs of reducing carbon output are so out of line with the benefits as to make the policy not just inefficient but bordering on insane. Interestingly, at Aussiecon, I heard warmists attack the science of economics.

**Sue Burke:** While perhaps not “barbarous”, it is certainly counterproductive to force American high school kids to read *Moby Dick*, which was the practice in my day. Decades later, when I came to the book myself, I was ready to appreciate this great 19th century SF novel.

**Christopher J. Garcia:** About China Mieville’s *The City and the City*, Gordon R. Dickson’s *Delusion World* (1960), half of an Ace Double, seems to be presenting a similar idea. Two populations of the same world define perceiving a member of the opposite population as insanity.

**Dainis Bisenieks:** One of Lois McMaster Bujold’s last “Vorkosigan” books — the one with the butterbugs — sort of turned me off for the whole series. But I perhaps I will have to see where the story went after that. I certainly enjoyed her “Natty Bumppo vs. Cthulhu” series (as it is sometimes waggishly called).

Strange, I thought the very uncivil final chapter of *A Civil Campaign*, counterpointing the comic butterbug battle of Mark and his associates with Miles’s deadly serious defense of himself in the Council of Counts against the charge of having murdered Ekaterin’s first husband was a splendid bit of writing.

— JTM

From: **Martin Morse Wooster** Jan. 6, 2011  
Post Office Box 8093, Silver Spring,  
MD 20907-8093 USA

[mmwooster@yahoo.com](mailto:mmwooster@yahoo.com)

**Lisa:** You are quite right to draw the line on cats. I once stayed in a male friend’s house where he had 12 cats. I like cats, but I’m allergic to them so I barely survived. The idea of a cat on your lap, a cat on your shoulders, and two cats fighting each other on the floor to push one of the more favored cats aside was not my idea of fun. I think a good rule is that there should be one more pet than the number of people in the house. So two people can have three pets. Five is a little high but you are right not to have any more.

Since **Joe** revealed that I did indeed have a Krispy Kreme Burger at the North Carolina State Fair, I suppose I should review it. You have to understand that in the rich liberal county in which I live, we have all the bad food laws that New York City and San Francisco have. Why, mere *possession* of a donut burger in my county is punishable by a \$50 fine and 100 hours of community service. (Coming soon: concealed carry laws for donuts.)

In any case, your cousin is mistaken. The Krispy Kreme Burger is *not* two donuts, but only one, sliced in half to form two halves of the bun, which holds about a third-pounder. There’s a lot of good food at the North Carolina State Fair — I very much enjoyed fried chicken, field peas, barbecue, and ice cream from the North Carolina State University dairy — but I have eaten my lifetime supply of donut burgers. (I also avoided the “chicken-fried bacon” and “stimulus green” candy apples.)

He posted a picture and it looked like two to me.

— JTM

**Richard Dengrove’s** comment that I’m an “old fan” nearly caused me to spit out my dentures! (For the record, I’m 53 and don’t wear dentures.) I wish, though, I had remembered the logical fallacy he commits in his argument. I repeat: the U.S. in the 1980s was funding anti-Soviet groups in Afghanistan. Bin Laden was funding *different* anti-Soviet groups in Afghanistan with his own money. There is *no* evidence that U.S. funds went to bin Laden. Dengrove is connecting dots that shouldn’t be connected.

I didn’t know until I read Rodford Edmiston that pink bismuth protected you against ulcers. I remember from a *New Yorker* article about 15 years ago that the “cure” for ulcers prior to the discoveries of Drs. Warren and Marshall was bland foods and time. I remember it wasn’t until one of the two Australians downed a flask full of *Helicobacter* at a medical conference and got ulcers those other doctors realized he was right.

From: **Rodney Leighton** Sept. 3, 2010  
11 Branch Road, R. R. #3,  
Tatmagouche, Nova Scotia B0K 1V0  
CANADA

The first day of September brought another day in the current heat wave; afternoon temps

running around 40 C. Mail brought the latest *Alexiad* once again under *The Hockey News* and *Sports Illustrated*. That one is wrapped up in a cover which says “Send back the attached card or risk cancellation”. Well, given I haven’t found anything at all that I wanted to read in the last half dozen issues . . . I hope that doesn’t mean they are going to cancel my sub without sending the annual hockey forecast issue; that was one of the things I tried the deal for.

I noted in my letter that I apparently stuck in email might get some response in such a manner that it looked like the address; no, the email address or whatever the proper term is for *Porcupine Rag* is:

[pp@porcupinerag.com](mailto:pp@porcupinerag.com)

I know this because I still have the thing sitting on my desk thing.

I did go and buy a new truck. Increasing problems with the old one and I went to get some things done and found the guy who ran the garage I used had sold the place and the new owner was not doing any mechanical work so I was faced with trying to find a competent mechanic who could and would work on the old truck or buying another one and Ford has a sales thing on called employee pricing so I went to the local dealer and looked at prices for a Ranger and bought one.

It struck me how silly it was to write to someone who is as computerized as you who also reads as many books as you do mentioning how it seemed intriguing that a computer place would be selling books. Foolish notion; everyone I know who is into computers . . . I was about to write also reads a lot but it’s not true; I know a couple of people who never read anything; one guy who used to write books told me he hadn’t read a novel in 2 years. BUT most people I know who use computers a lot also read a lot.

Going to take this day off and do a bit of work around here; put in some wood. Hurricane Earl is forecast to fly over my head tomorrow.

October 26, 2010

Oct. issue arrived some time recently. I was amused when, having read your opening comment about proof reading and Dainis Bisenieks opening paragraph about same to see in his letter “nto”. Twice. OK; it’s easy to do and I certainly make lots of typos and I am not complaining. I just thought it funny.

December 25, 2010

Latest issue of *Alexiad* arrived on Joe’s birthday which seems like an inversion of custom.

I noted that you have had snow. Also lots of the stuff in the U.K. and Europe and other parts of the U.S. and Canada. None here so far; quarter of an inch, maybe. Big blizzard predicted for Monday. End of my work for a few months if it comes.

I just started a project of sorts denoted as 100 (or so) Books, idea being that I would

number each book I finish reading, type in some brief comments and if I get to 100 I can read it over and perhaps make a few copies to send to interested folks. God knows how long it would take. Being me, I just did that for 3 books and I see I forgot to number the third one. Sigh. Hey, Joe, how long would it take you to reach 100 books read? # weeks?

With an ordinary schedule, I'd say about ten weeks. If I put myself to it — budgeting to buy books, going to Book Broker (which sells paperbacks for less than a dollar) in Evansville, and hitting the libraries aggressively, not writing — perhaps half that.

— JTM

If I am laid off for the next few months I will perhaps get there by spring. Thinking about doing . . . 3 weeks, damnit! . . . a similar thing with zines. Likely take me about 4 years to reach 100 zines read.

That book is entitled *Tiger Daze* by Lyn McConchie and is tales of some of the antics her late lamented Ocicat Tiger used to get up to with a few bits about another one named Dancer, a Siamese named Chang who used to come visit, and Fluffy the barn cat. I thought about trying to do a review to send to you, cat lovers that you are, and besides this book has lots of SF fannish connections. But, it was published by Avalook Publications, edited by Jean Weber, and I think I read somewhere that she and Eric had moved. Well, he's easy to find on the Web. I was intrigued to note while reading the book that every person involved who is named has a pseudonym. Except Eric and Jean. Huh. That's all the names they get. For the first time, thinking about doing something like a review, I looked at the page with all the legal stuff. Edited by Bruce Gillespie and Jean Weber.

I find that sometimes I reach a point at which something in me says something like: "No way I can deal with this machine anymore right now." Just reached that point.

So, I went and had a boiled egg and a chocolate macaroon and a bunch of puffs on the pipe while watching an episode of *Foyle's War* which is a very good cop/mystery thing based in England in 1940 which I think was a TV show which I received yesterday on DVD.

See, I can't write any longer. Can't do reviews any longer. Don't want to. Lyn is a fan who has been to lots of cons including one of those worldcon things somewhere in the U.S. after which she visited various folks including the person formerly known as E. B. Frohvet, now gafiated, I guess. Eric is Eric Lindsay for anyone who doesn't know. It's a good book which cat lovers would likely enjoy very much. All of these folks are computerized. Some of them can tell you how to get a copy for yourself.

Here's a fannish tale: back many years ago Steve George, one time BNF, now totally gafiated, used to send me fanzines he got. Tons of them. *FOSFAX* for one. One was *Weber Woman's Wrevenge*. It contained a column by

Lyn about her life on her little farm and some writing. Back then I used to write letters to lots of folks. Wrote to her and she answered and we became friends. Lots of changes over the years; she doesn't farm as much; has had a number of cats; lots of books published by various publishers; *FOSFAX* has changed greatly; Steve no longer gets many fanzines and doesn't write to non-computerized fools like me. And my own writing has diminished to near opacity.

I have a Christmas present, from my aunt who has been buying me presents for this day for 62 years. For the last 7 years I opened them the day they arrived; this time she had a smiley face on the package with 'Open Dec. 24 or 25.' I must go see what it is.

From: **Lloyd Penney** January 11, 2011  
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<http://lloydpenney.livejournal.com/>

I do indeed have *Alexiad* WN 54 with me, and I will get a letter of comment on the go. It has been a bit of a crazy time right now, with the jobhunt now consuming both of us, but bit of time arise. I might get caught up one of these days. . .

As much as we love cats, we don't have any, or any pets at all. It would be nice, but our lifestyle is such that having a cat wouldn't be fair to anyone, especially the cat. I wouldn't want any pet to be neglected on our account.

The time-honoured linear zine model seems to provide for its consumers to understand it, and of course, space to respond to it. We're all told that feedback is the heart of fanzine fandom. But then, other products like podcasts don't seem to provide the opportunity for feedback. The zine can also carry the feedback in a local, but I believe the podcast and its feedback, if any, are produced separately, and are not joined together the way the zine model is. You're also right about how the pro-run cons erode fan-run cons, and will leave nothing in their wake should they fail. Local conventions here have various relationships with the pro-run conventions, and besides the locally based Hobbystar Conventions, we now must also deal with Wizard World and now the return of Creation Conventions.

I hope that a superior human being might arise soon, for they might think of ways to get us all out of the various problems we have today. The smarter might inherit the earth . . . I suspect some of the solutions to the problems might entail suspension of basic human rights, but that might have to happen for the survival of the species. Yes, wish we'd all bred for brains, but in this society in which popular culture is so important, it's never been uncooler to be smart or wise. Our inner dumbness, encouraged by consumer businesses, may be our ultimate downfall.

Maple Ice Mints . . . it is possible that this product, made in Canada, is made exclusively for the US market, and may not be available here at all. We've found lately that there are a number of products made by Kraft that are

made here, a short distance from where I live, in fact, and are products, a couple of brands of cookies, that are not available here.

Rich Dengrove suggests another Hugo category for podcasts and other electronic media. I would agree, but I have also seen the usual arguing, screaming and whining on various e-lists. I think they're more interested in the arguing, etc. than in actually changing anything, and they often declare that they won't participate in the Hugos any further, which only adds to the problem. I will nominate and vote for the Reno Hugos, and increased participation on our part will outdo the various campaigns in any of the Fan Hugo categories.

I expect that the response to Chris Barkley's proposal for a best Juvenile/YA Hugo will be on the order of "it will make the awards ceremony too long". Remember the long processions of presentations giving every other award that share the stage with the Hugo?

— JTM

Sheryl Birkhead says that most non-US host countries fail to nominate their own when it comes to the Hugos. I was pleased to be on the Australian Hugo ballot, and came within a single nomination of being on the Montréal ballot. I think we will have Bruce Gillespie on the Reno ballot; the domestic members of Aussiecon should be reminded that they can at least nominate for the Reno Hugos.

Right now, I am feeling a little warm, my sinuses hurt, and my eyes are swollen. Still, I have to go out to my evening job tonight. I need to pick up some medication, like perhaps DayQuil/NyQuil, and take some time to lie on the couch and be a sickie. Hope you're both feeling a little better than I am, and winter can't last forever . . . can it? See you next issue.

From: **George W. Price** November 14, 2010  
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December *Alexiad*:

Joe's report on surviving veterans cites an article on one Pearl Harbor survivor, and says "there were only some two thousand survivors of an original 300,000." Is that a typo for "30,000"? It's hard to believe there were anywhere near 300,000 at Pearl Harbor during the raid, unless you include the civilian population of Honolulu.

\*\*\*\*\*

Joe comments at length on *Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There*, by David Brooks, noting that "Bobos" means Bourgeois Bohemians, "people who combine progressive politics with capitalist entrepreneurial efforts to spread Good and Beautiful Ways with plenty of cold hard cash." I haven't seen the book; does Brooks mention that "bobo" is Spanish for "fool"? (Which may

be why Heinlein used the name for a moronic character in "Universe.") Did he intend "Bobo" as a subtle criticism? Even if Brooks didn't know the Spanish meaning, and the acronym is mere coincidence, it is accurate. For what else but fools can we call middle-class "progressives" who use their money to undermine the system that provides that money? Without capitalism, they wouldn't be bourgeois, they would be peasants toiling on some nobleman's estate. Bobos indeed!

Since he seems to approve of them, probably not.

— JTM

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In his comment on Darrell Schweitzer's letter, Joe says that an oil tanker "traversed the Northwest Passage in 1969, but took so much damage they decided to build the Trans-Alaskan Pipeline instead." This reminds me of an article I saw in an oil and gas industry trade journal not long after the TAP was finished (sorry, don't have a citation).

In the long stretches where the pipeline crosses permafrost, it was built aboveground, because if it had been buried the relatively warm oil would melt the permafrost and leave the pipe swimming in mud. The pipe, about a yard in diameter, sat on wooden trestles. The pipe was too close to the ground for caribou to walk under it, so the builders put in earthen ramps every half-mile or so to allow the animals to cross over. But they weren't sure if the caribou were smart enough to move along the pipeline to the ramps. So when that part of the line was finished, they sent out a plane to take photographs. To their dismay, the pictures showed a herd of caribou just piled up against the pipeline, not moving to a ramp. It looked like the line would have to be rebuilt with much higher — and far more expensive — trestlework to allow migrating herds to cross under. To check before making such a costly decision, they sent the plane to take more pictures. Sure enough, that herd was still there, huddled up against the pipeline. And then somebody noticed that this time the herd was crowded against the opposite side of the pipe. With great relief, the engineers realized that the caribou were indeed smart enough to find and use the ramps. In fact, the buggers were using the pipeline as a windbreak, crossing back and forth as the wind shifted.

\* \* \* \* \*

I generally agree with Grant's comment further along in the Schweitzer letter. But the comment's typography is painful. This is entirely subjective, of course, but I find that typeface distractingly hard to read. Within each word, the letters are spaced much too far apart. That means fewer words on a line, making many of the spaces between words very wide. I suggest that Grant use a font such as Arial sans-serif, a much tighter face that is also distinctively different from the fonts that Joe and Lisa use for their comments.

Speaking of typography, you might consider hyphenating all the text in *Alexiad*. That would avoid the unusually wide spaces between words caused when all of a long word must be dropped to the next line. To be sure, this has the drawback that you must check all the hyphenations to make sure the program did it right. (God help us all, there are programs that imagine that "between" should be broken as "bet-ween"! ) Still another alternative is to use "ragged right" and not have to space the words out to justify the lines.

And don't get me started on the typographical horrors found in many professional publications since computerized composition replaced Linotypes. I read both the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Chicago Tribune*, and it's obvious that their composition programs have built-in rules that give some dreadful results, apparently with nobody noticing. Or is it just that nobody gives a damn?

From: **Jerry W. Cooney** January 15, 2011  
Longview, WA 98632

Someday, when I get time (right now struggling with a deadline for a book), I will try to get to *Alexiad* a short note on the peculiarities of NW candy. We still have some regional differences.

Hate to say it, but I am finding that the better, and more interesting, writers are in the fantasy field right now. For a person weaned on Heinlein, Asimov, etc., this is disappointing.

Hope all is well with both of you. I know how you feel about all the poor cats without a home. I try to get a sack of cat food to the Humane Society every month, and every time I go in, they are quite grateful, but then they try to seduce me with offers of very nice cats who need a home. I also don't want to turn into one of those batty collectors.

Love that Global Warming, don't we???

From: **Darrell Schweitzer** January 20, 2011  
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19149-2128 USA  
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You ask me to name ONE thing which, if it were proven, would make me admit that "Anthropogenic Global Warming is false."

This is a fair question which deserves a fair answer. I can think of three things:

First, you would have to prove that the Greenhouse Effect itself is false, i.e. that certain gases do not actually trap heat in the atmosphere the way glass does in a greenhouse. Prove that it doesn't work, and I will concede your point.

Or you could prove that the sharp global increase in warming over the past century — more than in the past thousand years — is just a coincidence, and has nothing to do with human industrial activity.

And I would also ask you to demonstrate why the vast majority of climate scientists are wrong and you are right. No conspiracy theories allowed. I would also ask why it is that AGW seems to only be doubted by persons of a Conservative political stance, which suggests to

me that ideology, not science is behind the denials.

In any case, I should point out that the cause of global warming should not be our primary concern right now. That is a matter of assigning blame. If your house is on fire, it is one thing to ask "Who set the fire?" but the more pressing issue is how to put the fire out. The real question we should be asking is whether human activity, such as cutting down on carbon emissions and avoiding environmental degradation generally can *avert* further global warming before our coastal cities wash away. Never mind the cause for the moment, ask, "Can we do anything about it." What have you got against cutting down on air pollution anyway? The extreme Republican anti-environmental position seems to be "To hell with the future, any regulation is bad for the short-term profits of our corporate sponsors." The Ronnie Reagan position seemed to be "The Second Coming is right around the corner so there is no future anyway." I continue to believe that the Republicans' anti-environmentalism is going to come back and bite them, if only because all children today are being brought up to have more respect for the environment. The next generational shift in the voting public will put Republican anti-environmentalists and global warming deniers at a big disadvantage, particularly if the disasters which are already happening as a result of global warming continue to accelerate.

You may recall that bit on TV during Hurricane Katrina when one of the Bushie idiots was on camera denying that anybody in New Orleans was taking refuge in that sports stadium. As he was denying it, the screen split, to show the crowds in the stadium. At some point, the facts become impossible to deny no matter how hard you lie. The next time New Orleans is inundated (possibly for good) I am sure there will be deniers claiming it is not happening. We will have another such moment, on a much larger scale.

But as I said, I think it IS going to take a major disaster to the United States to turn anybody around. Disasters in places like Pakistan or Russia do not count, not to the American public, which hardly knows the rest of the world is there.

Regarding your commentary on BOBOS and Children of the Atom, etc., I think you are overlooking the obvious, which we can observe in daily life. First of all, the reproduction age among educated people seems to be later. I am sure any number of studies will bear this out. People who have children under the age of 25, particularly under the age of 20, tend to be poor and/or uneducated. I don't mean the illegitimate issue of slum-dwellers either. People from blue collar backgrounds often marry right out of highschool and have their first children much earlier than college-educated people do. My cousin, a farmer's daughter, married at 18. This was quite normal in her community.

By contrast, when I went to my 10th year highschool reunion — it was an expensive Catholic prep school — I found that all my classmates (now aged 28 or so) were successful

in life, and had become doctors, lawyers, etc. But only about a third of them were married. I don't know how many had children. Of course they were from fairly rich backgrounds, which helped them be successful. But in their social class, it was quite acceptable to be single at 28.

The pattern in our society among educated people is that you establish your career and financial security first, then marry and have kids. In many professions, this takes until about age 30. But what you're overlooking is that for a lot of people, it simply never happens. They never quite *do* get established. It's common for writers all the way back to Edgar Allan Poe. Never mind Poe's individual peculiarities. He otherwise fits into the familiar pattern of the writer who lives such a marginal existence that he ultimately marries for security, not out of any hope of having children. (In Poe's case, the maternal figure who provided the security was not his wife but his mother-in-law. But never mind that.) Of the celebrated Three Musketeers of *Weird Tales*, Lovecraft, Howard, and Smith, only Clark Ashton Smith managed to marry at all, after having lived a hand-to-mouth existence well into middle age. Then he married for security, in what I would call a "post-reproductive marriage." If you start checking out biographies of writers and artists, you will find this is a pretty common life strategy for creative people, whether it was what they actually planned to do with their lives or not. It very often works out that way.

Sonia Greene? (HPL never did sign off on the divorce papers.)

Then, I think of the disturbingly large number of people I know in fandom who are homeless or borderline homeless. "Borderline homeless" means they are more or less supported by charity, sometimes able to rent a room for a short while, sometimes sleeping in a car or on someone's floor. Now I am aware that, overall, there are lots of homeless people who are illiterate, unskilled, and have drug problems, but I don't move in those circles. The homeless people I know tend to be middle-aged, usually male but not always, from middle-class backgrounds and college educated, and often trained as computer professionals or technical writers. These people are just long-time unemployed. There is significant age-discrimination in such fields. If you're fifty and out of work, you are likely to stay out of work. Once you are out of work for a few years, you fall behind and become unemployable. Even if you haven't fallen behind, it is assumed that you have.

Because they have no children, they can't get welfare. The reason they have no children, overwhelmingly, is that they simply never got established well enough in life to marry and start a family. The other variant of this is that they never got established well enough to move out of their parents' home, even in their forties or fifties. When the parents die, they either inherit the house or end up on the street. I know someone who could well be headed in this direction now. A former technical writer

retrained as a librarian, whose job has been cut back to part-time of late. He is obviously hovering right on the edge of disaster. I know somebody else who worked in a Barnes & Noble for many years, but lost his job about 3 years ago. Fortunately he inherited a (presumably) paid-off rowhouse. How he pays the taxes and utility bills, I do not know.

This is the flip-side of what you are describing. It isn't that these people worked so hard that they had no social life and developed to interests and are determined to take over the world. It's more a matter that they never got beyond the level of day-to-day survival. You always planned to have 2.5 children and a house in the suburbs, but your life slips away and it never happens. I wonder if anyone has ever done a study of downward social mobility among Baby Boomers, showing how that generation often failed to achieve the level of success of their parents. This leads to a significant number of the children of college-educated Baby Boomers who themselves do not go to college, because the money is not there. And so on, ever downward.

The reality of the situation is that a lot of people never get the chance to become BOBOS. They're not superbeings at all. It's not a matter of their lacking imagination, or being utterly conformist. It just didn't work out.

Well, yeah, instead of the Japan Inc. executives in kimono and daisho running quintillion-yen enterprises in space that we used to see in Bova's Analog, what we have there is hikikomori kids, people with advanced degrees who are unemployed and spend life 24/7 in their rooms alone playing video games.

To **Richard Dengrove**, I will remark that the only one of the ancient historians who accuses Livia of doing anything wicked is Cassius Dio, who was writing in the early 3rd century. (He is a contemporary of Caracalla and Severus Alexander.) He tells the story of Livia painting the poison on the figs while they were still on the tree to dispatch Augustus. He admits it is a rumor. Not only did Livia allegedly commit all her murders when nobody was looking, there is no serious evidence that she committed them at all. I suspect that Robert Graves had a flash of insight when studying this material, noting how many would-be heirs of Augustus kept dying off inconveniently. Of course there was no real medicine in those days, and food-poisoning was a serious hazard, particularly in the summer. But it came to Graves: "Livia poisoned them all, of course!" Then he had a plot, and he could give *I, Claudius* a coherent and dramatic shape.

I'm not really familiar with the alleged Tang Dynasty clichés. I've seen *The House of Flying Daggers* recently, which involves oppressive Tang officials, secret rebel societies, etc., but it was generally true that *all* Chinese dynasties, particularly when they began to run out of virtue and their grasp on the Mandate of Heaven

became uncertain, became oppressive, dealt with rebellions by secret societies, etc. These are hardly unique to the Tang. The Tang Dynasty began strongly, as most do, but its power was broken by the An Lu Shan Rebellion in the 8th century. Eventually the rebellion was suppressed, but the central government was never strong again, and the inevitable process of decay set in.

It may be that the Chinese equivalent of romantic pulp fiction is often set in Tang times because that is far enough in the past not to have any contemporary political resonance. This also works even further back. *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* was set during the Warring States period and it seems to be mostly escapist romance. (By contrast, movies about the founding of Qing, such as *Hero*, are intensely political in their subtext, because they deal with the subject of national unification.)

As for another depiction of the Tang Dynasty, there was the Korean TV serial *Dae Jo Yeoung*, about a hero of the late 7th century who established the Bahae Kingdom in what is now northern Korea and Manchuria. The villain of the early episodes is none other than Li Shimin, the 3rd and most successful of the Tang emperors, who is depicted as a snarling megalomaniac. (Last I looked, these episodes were still on YouTube. They are worth watching.) It *is* true that for all his enlightened rule of China, Li Shimin invaded Korea and was defeated. The Koreans are apparently still proud of that. The villainess of the later episodes is Empress Wu Zeitan, who reminded me a little of Servilan from *Blake's Seven*. But there was also a noble and heroic Tang general, Xue Rengui, who is apparently the subject of dramas and operas in China. It was a very good characterization of a decent, even great man with the bad luck to be on the wrong side, but it was also a bit anachronistic, as the real Xue Rengui died about twenty years before the show says he did.

And HBO's Rome has the character Atia living well beyond the time at which the real Atia Balba Caesonia died (AUC DCCXI [43 BC(E)]). Dramatic needs will do that.

— JTM

From: **Grant C. McCormick** Feb. 4, 2011  
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40204-2040 USA  
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In my comments last issue to Darrell Schweitzer on Global Warming (and, particularly, **Anthropogenic** [human-caused] Global Warming [AGW]), I asked him what it would take for him to declare that AGW was false. I see that he has responded.

His first offer is that he would so declare if the Greenhouse Effect itself were to be proven false. This is a bit of a strawman, since the Greenhouse Effect is pretty solidly proven, almost as well established as are Darwinian natural selection or the Special Theory of



Relativity. Also, it is irrelevant, since my question only concerned *human-caused* Global Warming, not Global Warming in general — I have no quibble with the fact that A.D. 2000 was considerably warmer than A.D. 1900, which in turn was much warmer than A.D. 1800, which in turn was warmer than A.D. 1700.

His second method would be to prove that the last century's warming had nothing to do with human industrial activity. This is closer to a real response, but still not quite on the mark even now. The real question should be, "How much of this warming is the result of human activities, particularly the result of the CO<sub>2</sub> released into the atmosphere by human technology; and how much is the result of other, non-human-caused effects?"

Human-produced CO<sub>2</sub> might indeed be (and in fact certainly is) producing *some* of the Global Warming — and still might be an insignificant factor overall. A bug splatting herself on your automobile's windshield as you drive along is slowing your car down, but by an amount that is too small to measure without the most sensitive instrumentation, and is almost certainly *not* the main reason why your car is slowing down. After all, this warming spell has been going on for far longer than we have been producing any significant CO<sub>2</sub>. And why has there been no significant warming since 1998? The CO<sub>2</sub> has not stopped being produced, but the curve has leveled off since that year.

The problem, as I see it, is that nobody really knows the answer to these questions. We have a halfway (but barely halfway, if that much — see Pournelle's website for a discussion of why) handle on what the global temperature has been in the historical past, but with no successful theory or model that explain these temperatures and can predict future temperatures. The theories and models that I have seen to date have been much like books on Nostradamus: very successful at *post*dicting past temperatures and climates, but no better than random chance at *pre*dicting future temperatures and climates.

Finding the true and underlying cause or causes of Global Warming is the *most* important thing that we can be doing right now, before we do anything else. As a better analogy, we as a planet are in the position of a patient with a sore on her foot, with a doctor trying to decide the right treatment. What tests should she run? Should she apply an ointment and a bandage? Should she prescribe an antibiotic? Should she operate and debride? Should she prescribe special shoes? Should she amputate and remove the foot? Any one or some combination of these might *ultimately* be the right answer, but the *first* answer should *not* be to amputate, particularly before the results of the tests are in! Yet that is the effective position of most of the AGW True Believers to date, calling upon the industrialized West (China and India were and are both exempted from the Kyoto Protocols, even though China produces more CO<sub>2</sub> than does the U.S., and India is among the major emitters) to halt and then cut back CO<sub>2</sub> production.

Darrell asks why most AGW deniers are Conservatives politically, an observation with which I would agree. Part of the reason is that most of the proponents are Liberals (Al Gore, Obama, Greenpeace, college professors, etc.), and anything that these groups are *for*, we Conservatives reflexively tend to be *against*. Part of it is that the proposed solutions tend to be both draconian and procrustean, and tyrannical to boot — that Audi "Green Police" advertisement was so funny because it rings so true. Part of it is that we want better evidence than we have so far been presented — the recent Climategate emails leak certainly shows that many of the pro-AGW climatologists are capable of hiding, massaging, cherry-picking, manipulating, and falsifying their data (three *atypical* trees from Siberia formed the basis of one crucial tree-ring datum?).

I don't think that it is a Conspiracy that many climatologists are pro-AGW. I do think that it is self-selection, self-interest, and peer pressure. Most of those active today were educated in the post-*Dune* climate (pun intended) of Ecology, Environmentalism, and Saving The Planet of the 1960s and 1970s. Much like the post-Watergate journalists of the same era, they wanted to Make A Difference. Reaching a conclusion that what is happening in the climate is just natural variations on a long-term trend that humans did not cause and cannot stop is a quick ticket to nowhere, career-wise. But coming up with "Disaster, Doom, Death, and it's all the fault of General Motors and *YOU!*" means fame, grants, interviews, funding, tenure, and appearing as a guest on late-night and early-morning television shows. It means that You Matter!

As for the religious arguments, I certainly have never cared — I'm an agnostic who is functionally an atheist. Some may feel that way (Watts did, after all), but I have heard *no-one* among the deniers in recent times say this.

There will be future environmental disasters — they have always been there, and will continue to be there as long as there is an environment. But there will be future economic disasters, and these can be just as deadly if not more so to individuals, societies, and governments as anything that the environment might throw at us.

I don't think we should cut off our foot just because we *might* be running a bit of a fever.

From: **Robert M. Sabella** January 21, 2011  
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Hi Joe and Lisa,  
I was determined when I retired to become a good loccer, but after 6 months I have only written a single loc. But I'll keep trying...

I understand your cat situation. They're so cute, and it's really difficult to resist one that needs a good home, but I have a friend who *never* turned a stray cat down, and ended up moving out of her house to devote it entirely to her three dozen cats. She moved in with her father, and stopped "home" each day to care for

the cats. No thanks.

*There has been one new loccer to this fanzine since I started putting it on efanzines.com. I've been posting VoP there for nearly six years now, and I can only think of 3 loccers who found it there. Other people might actually be reading it there but, if so, I have no idea who they are. I agree with you that a little more interaction would be good.*

*I don't think the people who read things on line quite get the concept that this is something that can be participated in. Or, they put their reactions on their LiveJournal or blog or FaceBook page or Twitter feed . . .*

— JTM

*NaNoWriMo.* I never tried to participate in it while I was teaching, knowing the futility of finding writing time during the school year. But this year I did so, and kept going into mid-December, by which time I had completed a first draft of 68,000 words. More importantly, I liked what I had written and, after letting it percolate awhile, will go back and do a second draft. Most importantly, the discipline of participating has gotten me into the writing routine that I had hoped to do after retirement, and I am still writing at that same pace, so it was a very successful endeavor overall.

*The Fuller Memorandum.* Most of what I read by Charles Stross was his *Accelerando* stories in *Asimov's* near the end of my subscription to it, and in Gardner Dozois' *Year's Best Science Fiction* series. I did not like those stories at all; too much densely-packed technological discussion which seemed to have no real plot or even point to it. I think I've only read a single story of his since, and it was better, if not great. But both his *Laundry Files* and *Merchant Princes* series have gotten regularly strong reviews, so I've added them to my "wish list," and hopefully will try one of them sooner rather than later.

*George Price.* If you search the SFBC website, it not only finds books that they offer, but books offered by their many "sister" clubs, so it is likely that the Turtledove books you located were published by one of those other clubs, rather than the SFBC itself. I've gotten large discount e-mail offers from the History Book Club (which I belong to), and I invariably use those discounts to find books published by the SFBC instead, which the History Book Club happily sells to me at SFBC prices using HBC discounts.

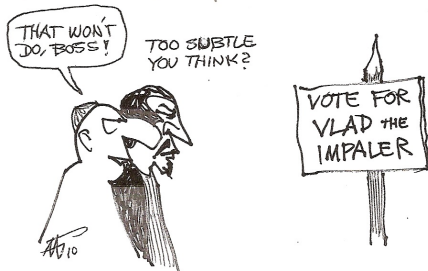
From: **Robert S. Kennedy** January 21, 2011  
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Thank you for Vol. 9, No. 6. Nine years! Where does the time go?

I finally received *The Shiva Option* by David Weber (2002/2003) in paperback from Interlibrary Loan. It's quite long — 753 pages. It's a good read.

I read *Wireless* by Charles Stross (pb 2010). There was only one story that I could not finish. Also, I can use some help with another story. "Snowball's Chance"—Maybe I'm dense. But, I did not understand the ending. If anyone has read this story will you please explain the ending to me.

*Out of the Dark* by David Weber (2010) was obtained from the SFBC. It is an interesting read. But, **Spoiler Alert**—Vlad the Impaler saves the Earth? I thought that his head had been cut off.



I watched the Third Reich series on the History Channel. Given the time allocated they did a rather good job. I had just one complaint. At no time did they mention the Hitler/Stalin Pact. Not when Hitler invaded Poland and divided it up with Stalin. (They didn't even mention that fact.) Not when Hitler surprised Stalin and invaded the Soviet Union. Purposeful? I don't know. But, it was a very huge item to not receive any mention.

*Extraordinary, Ordinary People* by Condoleezza Rice was obtained from the library. It is mainly about her parents and extended family who were certainly extraordinary people. It also covered her own life up to her becoming National Security Advisor. Hopefully, she will someday write about her time as National Security Advisor and Secretary of State. Condoleezza Rice herself is an extraordinary person. Since she is without children her genes end with her—A tragedy.

Thanks for the mention of Martin Morse Wooster's updated book *Great Philanthropic Mistakes*. Also the review of *DON'T VOTE: It Just Encourages the Bastards* by P. J. O'Rourke.

Being retired I like to go to early movies (like 11:00-11:30am.) That not only gets a movie out of the way early, there are also usually very few people in the theater. On January 20, 2011, for the 9<sup>th</sup> time I was the only person in the theater for a movie—*The Green Hornet* (in 3D). It wasn't worth the money.

After seeing Seth Rogen's face on the posters for *Knocked Up* (2007) I had him pegged as a oaf boy type — chubby-cheeked, fuzzy-faced, and immature. That seems to be the only type he can play, which perhaps made him less than the best choice for Britt Reid/*The Green Hornet*.

— JTM

**Grant C. McCormick:** I've read *The Fuller Memorandum—A Laundry Files Novel* by Charles Stross. Also, his *On her Majesty's Occult Service*. (Both from the SFBC.) So, thank you for your review of the first and mention of some others. Your review of *Cryoburn* by Lois McMaster Bujold makes that book look interesting and I'll try to obtain it from the library.

**Rodford Edmiston:** Thanks for another interesting "The Joy of High Tech".

**John Purcell:** Your review of *Sherlock Holmes: The American Years* spiked my interest and I'll try to obtain it from the library.

**George W. Price:** You're welcome.

A note about our Camarillo Public Library. The Camarillo City Council took it from the control of the Ventura County Library System and it is now the City of Camarillo Public Library being run by an independent firm that runs a number of libraries throughout the country including at least one other in this County.

From: **Richard A. Dengrove** Jan. 28, 2011  
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Enjoyed your *Alexiad*, Dec.2010 and have my usual set of comments.

Lisa, I can understand why you are losing weight and exercising. One word – diabetes. Diabetes got me into exercising. I don't know about losing weight. I did lose a lot of it. However, while I have been eating more healthily, I really haven't been restricting my intake much.

With you, Joe, I'm going to take a different perspective on health.. P.J. O'Rourke's from *Don't Vote*. Of course, my comments on him will show me for the killjoy I really am.

I note he makes a joke about a little boy and little girl playing doctor in the new era of Obamacare, i.e., playing health care provider. They sat fully clothed filling out toy forms.

What killjoy things do I have to say about it? The most not-get-it comments possible. For instance, of course, doctors don't fill out forms right now. Insurance forms, for instance. No, they can immediately get down to doctoring. Right? Which, since the kids are a model, entails feeling their female patients up. Right?

Actually, I wrote that only to show that the joke makes no logical sense at all. Nonetheless, it is probably more effective than a 1,000 ads talking about death panels, government takeovers or job killing laws. In short, full to the brim with buzzwords. Even I as a certified Liberal laughed out loud at O'Rourke's joke. And said to myself "He's good!"

O'Rourke did much better than the skeptics and believers did in fighting the War of the Fish. Some Evangelical Christians have been mounting the outline of a fish on their cars, which has symbolized Jesus.

Skeptics decided to have some fun with it; so they mounted a fish symbol with legs. In short, blasphemy for said Evangelical fish symbolers. They couldn't have found it all that

funny.

On the other hand, an Evangelical woman decided to puncture the air out of the skeptics. She said that was stupid; fish don't have legs. Unfortunately for her, that was the idea skeptics had in mind: the fish had evolved.

In short, unlike O'Rourke, the war insulted both sides rather than than reaching out for amusement.

Unfortunately for some people, the fundamentalists are quite serious. They believe what they believe, not what the skeptics find convenient for them to believe. I have seen "dead Darwin fish" emblems – which the skeptics don't get.

— JTM

On the other hand, I suspect that a David Ickes was out to anger British Conservatives and puzzle Americans in claiming the royal family are reptoids. That has been his objective, a put-on. We might just doubt that if, even though they are the most innocuous rulers in the world, he only said the royal family are reptoids,. However, he then claimed Kris Kristofferson and Boxcar Willie were, and put himself at squarely at the laugh track end. .

I know he has been a fellow who, as a spokesman for New Age spiritualism, has a reputation for weird views. However, I think we should re-examine those views for put-on's too.

Before I go, Joe, I hope you and Lisa had a very happy 20th Anniversary. You may yet get to your 50th.

From: **Dainis Bisenieks** January 26, 2011  
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Well, now we know exactly how cats drink; the underlying principle of physics. The research was widely reported in science magazines; the Nov. 26 *Science* even had a photo of the cat on the cover. The fannish thing to do would have been to add a thought balloon: "The things we do for science!" Nothing that I read revealed to me the cat's name, a regrettable omission.

Some cats like to drink from a dripping or trickling faucet, with no doubt the same instinctual motions but different results.

Recent reading has included *Rommel the Desert Fox* by Desmond Young and *Ploesti* by James Dugan and Carroll Stewart, both superbly researched, with all possible interviews; told with verve and wit; and, not least, thoughtful: reflective. I don't feel like telling of their merits at length. But I would have liked to know more than was relevant to the story of the Romanian Prince Constantine Cantacuzene (names spelled elsewhere with -o, where he is cited as his country's top scoring ace). After Romania switched sides, arrangements got underway to evacuate the POWs, and Captain Cantacuzene volunteered to fly an American officer to an Allied base in a Bf-109. He then led a reconnaissance flight in a Mustang. I can just

imagine the delight he had as a pilot. He then drops out of the story; he could easily have returned on the evacuation flight. But what then happened to him and to others who were so good to the Americans (for openers, keeping the Germans from carting them away)? After the war, Stalinism descended on Romania, and no good deed went unpunished. I can well imagine that in the past twenty years the memory of those days has been revived, but to find a well-read Romanian who knows English and who could give me the gist of the story is not likely to happen.

Though some neat coincidences have come my way lately. I got a copy of the memoir *Hons and Rebels* by Jessica Mitford (U.S. title, *Daughters and Rebels*), taking her story up to her first year in America, 1939-40. I got to wondering about her youngest sister Deborah, who ended up as Duchess of Devonshire; the younger son whom she married inherited after the death of his brother. Was there a book? Now there is: I opened a magazine at the library, and there was a review! The main title is *Wait for Me!* (subtitles differ between US and UK) and the byline in the US is Deborah Mitford. Just to top things off, I saw mentioned the ducal estate Chatsworth in a magazine article on the endangered banana. It appears that the variety grown for export since the late 19th century was done in by a microorganism (the usual fate of monocultures, especially of clones), and its replacement, now also in danger, was discovered before 1950 in a hothouse in Chatsworth.

**The older brother who died was married to Kathleen Kennedy, Joe's oldest daughter. Their aunt, Lady Dorothy, was married to Harold Macmillan, so one could say that the Special Relationship was of relatives. Her Grace writes for The Spectator as "Deborah Devonshire".**

A quote from Jessica; "Boud" is Unity Mitford, the Nazi groupie.

I still loved Boud . . . I had a sad and uneasy feeling that we were somehow being swept apart by a huge tidal wave . . . that from the distance a freezing shadow was approachign which would one day engulf us. Sometimes we even talked of what would happen in a revolutionary situation. We both agreed we'd simply have to be prepared to fight on opposite sides, and even tried to picture what it would be like if one day one of us had to give the order for the other's execution.

It gives one to think. One may, of course, think of Voltaire's declaration of the principle of tolerance, you know the one. I have not been paying much attention to political discourse in the U.S. today, but observers agree there is severe polarization.

A promising book find has been *Mr.*

*Loveday's Little Outing* by Evelyn Waugh (1936). I await *One of Our Thursdays Is Missing* by Jasper Fforde, scheduled for March.

95% of authors' names mentioned in *Locus* are unfamiliar these days; their output, prejudging in many cases from the titles, appears to be fantasy product, and is not found worthy of being reviewed. Given the sheer quantity of available reading, prejudice is as good a way of as any of sorting things out. I recall my prejudice against the stories in the pulps of the 1940s, which I nonetheless for some years collected. I didn't miss much by not reading them, did I? I did read the current mags of the 1950s, but in time mediocrity and downright badness wore on me. I am fond of citing as the nadir the two versions of the wheelbarrow joke which appeared in the same year.

**Not only is it fantasy product, but it's generic vampire slayer product, with hot young women in leather trousers finding there is after all one vampire they can wuv . . . The era of the fifties eventually gave birth to Earl Kemp's Who Killed Science Fiction? That was a relic of an era when the field was connected.**

— JTM

From: **Sue Burke** January 30, 2011  
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The new year began with some changes. First of all, Spain outlawed smoking in all enclosed spaces, including bars and restaurants. Smokers and some bar and restaurant owners have ranted catastrophically, but the rest of us are delighted. I plan to go out more now.

Second, the Spanish Royal Academy, whose job it is to "clean, fix, and give splendor" to the Spanish language, came out with a new spelling guide. The 1999 guide had 162 pages, but this one has 745 because every single decision is "exhaustively" explained, as its coordinator boasts. The Academy decided to eliminate the letters "ch" and "ll" from the alphabet, made quite a few technical changes in rules including capitalization and accent marks, but the big debate is over the spelling of foreign words. They will now be spelled as they are pronounced — in Spanish.

This means that "judo" is "yudo," "sexy" is "sexi," "piercing" is "pirsin," "meeting" is "mitin," "whisky" is "güisqui," "Qatar" is "Catár," "gay" is "gai," "manager" is "mánayer," "beefsteak" is "bistec," "baseball" is "béisbol," "cruissant" is "cruasán," "water" (as in "water closet" or toilet) is "váter," "tweet" (as in Twitter) is "tuit," and "jazz" is "yas." This has led to many jokes which are hard to translate, let alone spell.

Third and finally, my husband got a new

computer with a Windows 7 operating system, and because he is an "informático" (computer technician), he got some very fabulous manuals via his employer and proceeded to actually read and understand them. I have Windows 7 too, and this has been helpful, but the "Libraries" still seem redundant and annoying, even now that I know how to use them.

In fact, during one discussion, I said, "I hate Microsoft."

He said that was good for Microsoft. "If you hate it, that means you're using its products. Otherwise you won't care."

By the way, I have learned that in 1567, Pope Pius V issued a bull, "*Bullarum Diplomatum et Privilegiorum Sanctorum Romanorum Pontificum Taurinensis editio*," which calls for perpetual excommunication for anyone who attends a bullfight and which denies holy interment to anyone who dies in one. Despite being irrevocable, this decree seems to have been forgotten by everyone, because even King Juan Carlos I goes to bullfights — and attends Mass with the Pope whenever His Holiness is in town.

**And I thought the bull of Hadrian VII, The Bull Against the Enemy of the Anglican Race, was strict. It forbids Catholics from reading the Daily Mail.**

— JTM

Speaking of the King, his mobile phone ringtone is a baby laughing: he's such a doting grandfather. He forgot to turn off the phone during a televised state event.

My football team, the Packers, play in the Super Bowl on February 6. My husband and I plan to watch at a local Irish pub that shows BSKyB Sports, so I won't see the U.S. ads and probably not the half-time show. Kickoff is at 12:30 a.m. local time.

#### WAHF:

**Lloyd Daub**, with various items of interest.

**Pat McCray**, with thanks.

**Alexis & Lee Gilliland, Guy & Rosy Lillian, Cathy Palmer-Lister, Marc Schirmeister, Tom Sadler, George W. Price, Ed & Katherine Cayce, Gary & Cora Flispart**, with Christmas cards.

**Evelyn Leeper, Rod Smith, Bob Kennedy, Joel Zakem, Mike Resnick, Jason Burnett, Chris Garcia, Andrew Murdoch, R-Laurraine Tutihasi, Johnny Carruthers, Steve Silver, Cathy Palmer-Lister, Tammi Harris, Ben Schilling, John Purcell, Tony Ubelhor, Julee Johnson-Tate, and Chris Barkley** with birthday greetings.

**Henry "Knarley" Welch**, who had read the issue but had no comment.

## A CLASH OF DESTINIES

... all my industrial efforts were up and running, and I was minded to take a flyer into some naval matters when there came an interruption.

The King had summoned his knights to one of his regular banquets, where they swapped brags about the latest maidens they had rescued and dragons they had slain and suchlike, when there was an emissary announced.

This was a man from down south, around Greece they said, by the name of Argyros. He was wearing quite a number in gold and embroidery and fancy cloth, and I could see every woman in the banquet hall figuring how she could get something like that made for her.

He approached the King, made a little nod of his head as if acknowledging there was mud on his fancy shoes, and passed him this letter.

The King read it through, moving his lips, gave out a great shout, and ordered all the knights to prepare for battle forthwith.

I later got my hands on it. Now this was no ordinary letter. It was a fine letter, an illustrated, gilt-edged, tree-calf, hand-tooled, seven-dollar Friendship's Offering of a letter, with great self-importance and dignity and all the things properly pertaining to a diplomatic missive, far beyond the diplomatic messages I knew of. This Roman Emperor, which I didn't understand since he wasn't in Rome, had said:

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, our one and sole true God, Justinian Emperor of the Romans, faithful to God, to Arthur distinguished King of the Britons, desired spiritual brother.

Our holy endeavor to recover for the Empire the provinces of Western Europe, which belonged to Our forebears and rightfully belong to Us, requires your most respectful attention.

And he wanted the King to attack this King Urias, or whatever, in southern France. I could tell that it would be quite a battle, and I wanted to be as far away from it as possible.

Along with the message came a big batch of titles for various people of the court. I had a suspicion that someone was well informed. The King was granted the title of *Exousiokrator* by the Emperor, but Sir Lancelot was made a *Stratarches*, while I, Hank Morgan, also known as Sir Boss, was made a *Megalodoxos*. I never did figure out what these meant or who was supposed to be top dog. Those who didn't get these fancy new designations sort of moped around the court for the next few days.

That emissary, Basil Argyros was his name, stayed around a few days to get the King's answer, while looking over my factories and facilities with a far too attentive eye, I was thinking . . .

... Padway was more than a little relieved that Justinian had been quiet for the past year. His shipbuilding plans in Ostrogothic Spain had finally come to fruition — he couldn't go there himself, and had spent a considerable amount of time worrying that, as usual, the people he assigned to do it couldn't do their job unless he stood over them every minute of the day.

The past year had been quiet. There had been reports of some new conquests in Gaul, north of the Burgundian lands, and he had spent some long nights cudgeling his brain for what had happened there then. Hadn't that era been when the Angles and Saxons had moved into Britain? And then there was —

"Boss you have to see this!"

He would have to stop people from running into his offices out of breath. Padway grabbed his hat and coat to go out to where the "you have to see this" was.

When he saw the ambassador's camp outside the walls of Florence he said, "No." It wasn't the big tents, more like circus tents, with the many colored pennants that made it so hard to believe. It was what the men were wearing: rolled-plate armor. Padway's head was in a spin, wondering how they made it and where they were from.

He saw a procession heading towards the court and his jaw dropped. The man in that armor leading it was mounted on a horse that would do a decent job pulling a coach, a cart, or a plow. That wasn't the problem.

The problem was that some of his escorts were riding bicycles. Rather rough-riding ones, without rubber tires, but indubitable bicycles. Something was going on. Had there been . . .

"Martinus, the King requires your presence!" Another man out of breath with an urgent message. By riding hard he got past the strange procession.

Urias was sitting on his throne, looking as bewildered and confused as Padway felt, and he said so. "What the hell is going on?"

"I'm as confused as you are."

Now he looked very desperate.

The emissary was announced, with an ear-shattering fanfare of trumpets. "Sir Kay, Seneschal and Ambassador of King ARTHUR!"

Padway began to wonder if he had somehow gone sidewise as well as backwards in time. Then the emissary — "Kay?" — threw down a metal gauntlet, which rang on the floor and left a crack in the stone.

"The King demands that you submit forthwith to your lawful sovereign, the Emperor Justinian, or I call you false, and defy you to battle in the King's name!"

— Not by Lyon S. de Camp or S. Langhorne Clemens, much less Dan Chernenko, Eric G. Iverson, H. N. Turteltaub, & Co.

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**Art:** What we are mainly looking for is small fillos. Your fillo will probably be scanned in and may be reused, unless you object to its reuse.

**Contributions:** This is not a fictionzine. It is intended to be our fanzine, so be interesting.

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## ALEXIAD

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