





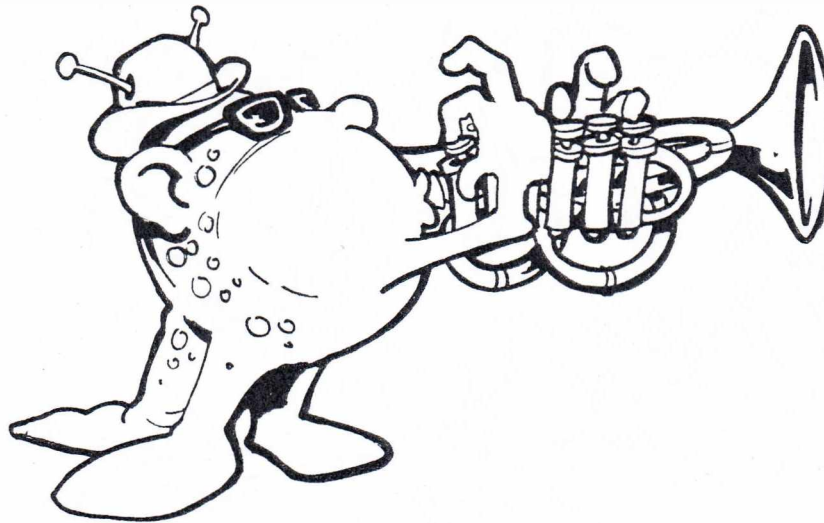
spring 2001

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Covers by Marc Schirmeister

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Dany Frolich

# CHALLENGER 14

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SEPA EDITION

# CHALLENGER #14

## — SFPA PAGE

A special abridgment for the Southern Fandom Press Alliance

Guy Lillian III

P.O. Box 53092 New Orleans LA 70153-3092

GHLIII Press Publication #918

10-25-01

Many members of the Southern Fandom Press Alliance saw the full version of **Challenger** #14 when I published it in June of this year. So why run a special edition for SFPA? It has to do with the 2 cent copies being offered at the Mail Box outlet in LaPlace, where I work, in the month of October. I realized that the 14<sup>th</sup> **Challenger** is the only issue not to run in some form or another through SFPA, and that I could not pass up such cheap printing, and so.

Needless to say, this edition is not the whole zine. You have with you selected articles, and are missing the letter column, my zine reviews, six pages of Mardi Gras photographs and a piece on police interrogation of a murder suspect. Hey, the glass is either half empty or half full. This is half of **Challenger** #14. You decide.

And watch for **Challenger** #15 ... possibly in this very mailing!

### SPEED BUMP



THOUGH NOT AS HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT AS THE HUNS AND THE VANDALS, THE NORONS WERE EVERY BIT AS DESTRUCTIVE

# ! - an EDITORIAL

April 18, 2001 ... almost 7PM Central Time. A few minutes ago, just as I finished a call with my beloved fiancée, Rose-Marie Donovan, my phone rang again. "Is this Guy H. Lillian III? The editor of **Challenger**?" Ah, I thought. A fan in search of a copy. But no. It was Saul Jaffe of Millennium Philcon, this year's World Science Fiction Convention, with news.

For the second time, **Challenger** has been nominated for the Hugo.

I am supposed to keep the news secret until the first of May. T'was okay, said Saul, to tell Rosy ... and I'm sure he won't object to my informing my brother. (Lance likes SF - especially Stephen Donaldson - but he's not a fan.) Beyond that ... Can I resist? Can I resist e-mailing Rich Lynch with a "?" in hopes he'll reply with a "!"? When I next speak with Mike Resnick, how can I not trade our great news, since I'm sure he's been tapped for "Elephants on Neptune". And what about my local mates? How can I keep this from Bryan Norris or Dennis Dolbear? **Chall** is a Hugo nominee. How can I keep *that* news to myself?

By the time you read this, May 1<sup>st</sup> will be long past, and all of the Hugo nominations will be public knowledge. So as I giggle and shriek tonight, all but alone with this exquisite news, I can only imagine sharing my pride and my gratitude. Thank you, **Chall** pals, who wrote and drew for this project, and thank you, **Chall** pals, who encouraged me with your kindness ... and your examples. A lot of wonderful fanzine editors have never gotten a call such as I just got. A lot of terrific fans have never known this bone-deep excitement and pride. Guys, ladies ... *this is for you.*



May 1<sup>st</sup> is now, indeed, long past. It is June, in fact, as this **Challenger** goes to press and to post. Before I move on to other matters, I have a convention to chat about briefly, the small but feisty **DeepSouthCon** in Birmingham, Alabama. It was a thoroughly enjoyable event, replete with friends from Southern fandom and my home apa of 30 years' standing, the Southern Fandom Press Alliance. It began with Grecian ballet (no, the troupe was *not* called "the Fire Maidens from Outer Space") and bagpipes (our athletes should march in to "Scotland the Brave" at the first intergalactic Olympics) ... and a close encounter.

The first fan to greet Rose-Marie and myself when we walked into the 2001 DeepSouthCon was a nice-looking yuppie dude in a white shirt and tie. "Hi," he chirped, "my name is **Cary Guffey**. I'm an *alien abductee*."

"Hi! Nice to see you! Beautiful weather we're having!" I squeaked around my suppressed grimace, and carefully backed my precious and myself away.

It was Meade Frierson who clued me in. "Take a closer look. *That's the kid pulled through the*





*doggy door in Close Encounters of the Third Kind."*

I ran back to the yuppie abductee (almost rhymes, doesn't it?) and took that closer look. "Damn!" I exclaimed. "It is you!"

It was him. No longer in the movie business, though he shows for CE3K reunions, Cary's now a Merrill Lynch financial planner, living in Birmingham. He'd read about the DSC and simply showed up, bringing not only stills from the movie, but the tiny little shirt he'd worn as aliens yanked him from Melinda Dillon's hands – Melinda Dillon: *ooooohh ummmm* – and dragged him through the doggy door.

"Did Spielberg really have a guy dressed as a clown off-camera to get you to smile?" I asked.

"Actually," he said, "it was Snoopy."

It was the first of many pleasant surprises about DSC 2001. Another was **Catherine Asaro**, the Guest of Honor. *Class act*, people, a brilliant (physics degree!) and lovely lady and fine writer, who came within a sliver of winning a Hugo at Aussiecon. Get this: the frightened 14-year-old daughter of an exec with the Atomic Energy Commission, she was in Berkeley in May, 1970, and witnessed the pitched street battle that followed the Kent State massacre. When she said that she remembered watching some people try to upend a police car, I realized that she and I were within a hundred yards of each other on that terrible May 5, 1970. Interestingly, we had our conversation on May 5, 2001. One of us, anyway, had come a long way.

The passage from this planet of **Gordon R. Dickson**, genial SF genius and all-around splendid fellow, has been long noted within the science fiction community. I will add only my own pleasure at his acquaintance – in 1969, when Quinn Yarbrow handed me the impossible task at St. Louiscon of waking the dear gentleman, and he forgave the starry-eyed neo who pounded and screamed outside his door for the interminable time it took to rouse him, and in 1981, when we shared a dais as Guests of Honor at a delightful Knoxville event called Satyricon, and he forgave the raving blowhard whose egomaniacal oration practically ended the practice of allowing Fan Guests to speak. (I apologized, but he only chided "C'mon, you know you were a hit!") Gordy was a wonderful, funny, generous guy, well-loved, well-respected, much honored. Let's lift a toast to his spirit ... if possible, in tequila at least a hundred years old.

One of the best things about science fiction nuts is that we value what we read, and share it. In this time of mostly-happy upheaval, I've been churning through popular paperbacks. But popular has its rewards, and among them is **Purple Cane Road**, the latest Dave Robicheaux novel by James Lee Burke. It is, like all of Burke's novels set in southern Louisiana, a wonderful and terrible experience. Burke is a profoundly sensuous and passionate writer – they aren't the same thing – moral and real. The brutality, hypocrisy and obscenity of life in this society don't escape Burke, but neither do the compensations of *caring*, about people and about ethics. There are flaws to his characters – Robicheaux is a violent, furious drunk, who nevertheless affects a ponderous political correctness – and occasionally, alas, to his stories – **Cimarron Rose** contained a cross-examination that would have been tolerated in no American court, and the statue of Robert E. Lee at the base of St. Charles Avenue is *not* equestrian. But Burke sees the world I walk in daily through deeper, braver, more observant and resonant eyes, and for that, he is invaluable.

Whatever would he write if he wrote science fiction?

I recently blundered onto **Classmates.com** on the Internet, and looked up Ygnacio Valley High School, Concord, California, class of '67. Their listing was loaded with names I recognized, and one or two I loved. Kathy Ericksen, now Kathleen Corrick, was a lively and crazy and utterly adorable girl who once sat me down and lectured me about being arrogant and distancing. She's now a geriatric nurse in D.C. Jan Grogan was tall, elegantly beautiful, and a good ten years more mature than the goofy teenagers she had to hang with. She was also the first girl I ever kissed – and boy, was I terrible at it. Hit her nose. Now she lives in Atlanta, of all places. On the male side, Mike Langley, Mr. Van Daan to my Otto Frank in our senior play, **Diary of Anne Frank**, and one of the souls I respected most in my three years at that school, and Steve Bishop, another YVHS alum who went on to Berkeley and who has \*God almighty\* *grandchildren* now.

It's a delight to be in touch with these people again, and I hope we'll stay that way. But hearing from them now is also daunting. Bishop, like I say, is a grandfather. Grogan has put nearly 30 years into her

profession. Another pal from those days, Frank Bosche, was a Gore delegate at last year's Democratic convention. Kathy's son is an attorney. It's those old high school reunion blues. Back then we started out at the same point, and we can judge our passage through life by how well these others have done. They've done pretty darn well.

But comparing resumes isn't the point of "seeing" my classmates again. For I had a question for them, one I've mulled in these pages. Columbine's anniversary passed shortly after we got back in touch. It still haunts me. I've long since decided that Klebold and Harris went on their rampage not merely because they were bullied and ostracized, but because they were criminals at heart – sociopaths lacking in fundamental empathetic humanity. But they were neither the first nor the last kids to strike out against their oppressive environments with violence. We never did that. *Why not?*

It's not that anything is much different. SFPA Brother Mike Weber recently brought up the story of a girl who, citing high school's hideous social pressure, hanged herself. 30 years ago, I wrote a controversial editorial for Ygnacio's newspaper about Thomas Tawser, a Bay Area kid whom school taunting drove to – and over – the railing of the Golden Gate Bridge. (He survived, by the way.) That facet of the nightmare hasn't changed. What is different now? What was our advantage?

It's what I asked my fellow Ygnacio Boomers. It's what I ask you.

The most powerful and important work of art I've encountered in the last few months is also the most difficult to write about. **Open Fire** was a play put on by Loyola University's Drama and Speech Department, 65 minutes of Hell on Earth, and while I was stung through by its passion and presentation, my feelings on it are almost inarticulate. I have grown old enough and seen enough of life to where the agony of high school – subject of Howard Burman's vivid play – is at least a little bit foreign. Certainly, when I was suffering through that ghastly period, that transition from family child to society digit, our problems weren't so terrible. At least no one thought to solve the eternal quandary of cliques and rejection – the sour inevitability of that time of social caricature – with guns. No, my generation withdrew into the self, found solace in dope or politics – or fantasy – and didn't *act out* on our anger. Thank the Lord.

The five kids in this production do act out their anger. The play begins with the gentle music and sparkling light of a high school prom. Enter Brandy, in her prom dress, awkward, beaming, beautiful, amazed at the beauty about her. (Remember the name *Becky Johnson*.) But the sparkles on her cheeks are incipient tears, as the dance with her date is overwhelmed by a building drum beat, and terror and hatred and fury assume power in their lives. Brandy, you see, is part of a cadre of four alienated teenagers who intend to bring vengeance, not valediction, to their prom. They rave, they rant, they strip their rented tuxes and gowns away to reveal the garb and weaponry of warriors – out for revenge for the humiliations high school has mashed upon them. They're videotaping their last testaments for posterity – and fame – before bringing a dose of Columbine to their all-American school.

Two sensory impressions survive. One is the anguish and fear the play brings forth. Brandy's plea to her mother for understanding is a cry from the heart of American adolescence ... a cry for understanding, and comfort, a plea for hope. If that cry is not answered it is our most grievous and unforgivable fault. The other is the furious percussion these kids beat out on the corrugated set to accompany and sustain and embolden their rage. It is a deafening, desperate, undeniable march to oblivion.

This winter it happened again. And what's our answer, what do we tell our progeny? We tell them, *Inform*. God, we are such sick and selfish fools.

But the true solution is also obvious from **Open Fire** – one reason I hope the play finds a wider audience. We Boomers are a generation that has never feared to speak its mind. Okay – now we must show that we are not afraid to *listen*.

*Omnium Challenger en tres partes est.* Meaning that this is a *trifurcated* issue – like Gaul, it's split in three. In early pages, the usual eclectic mess obtains – well-turned articles on a variety of unrelated topics. In the second ... *laissez les bons temps roulez!* As should be evident from Marc Schirmeister's brilliant cover, its theme is the turf beneath my feet – *New Orleans*. Then, following the lettercol, our theme shifts again, to the minor \*kof\* changes in my life which summer, 2001 betokens. All I can say is that Kubrick didn't know the half of it. So: read, enjoy, respond.





# "Getting It Right":

## A Reflection on Titans and Technologies

Gregory Benford

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In the twentieth century, as others note, the Western world broke the close link between art and science, as prevailing currents flowed away from external nature to internal feelings – a big factor, I believe, in what C. P. Snow argued was a growing divide between "the two cultures." Scientists studied nature, artists studied themselves. They also showed the modernist shattering of consensus reality, rendering experience through abstraction, surrealism and stress on the non-natural ways of seeing (cubism, for example).

Space art can rebuild the bridge between these two cultures, celebrating nature on the broadest canvas, reflecting both scientific and aesthetic values.

My interest in space art was first sparked by the works of Chesley Bonestell, so I was thrilled, in 1969, to visit the artist at his home in Carmel. To recapture that moment, let me begin by reprinting a short essay I wrote as a fan in 1970 after that meeting, entitled "The View from Titan."

To get to Carmel and avoid the neon jungles that infest the northern and southern California coasts, you must travel on the sheer coastal route, brave the fogs and curves, you must take Route One. Carmel is an appendix to Monterey, an afterthought of summer cottages and organic food stores. There are a lot of writers and artists there and they are to be seen avoiding work in the afternoons, sipping coffee in the Tuck Box or thumbing paperbacks in the small book store.

To reach his house you turn off Route One in the geometrical center of town, the bisection point, and travel but a block up a dead end street. His house is cloaked in pine and wisps of the fog that pursued you down from Santa Cruz. It looks warm and cozy; orange splashes signal to you through the windows. You wonder why reading lamps seen through windows in winter seem to glow with a sun warmth, kindling meaning, while in the summer they are just reading lamps in the distance.

His rug muffles your inward step. A cat melts away at your entrance. His wife makes coffee in the wide kitchen. You and he sit in deck chairs. Feeling of being a movie producer; look for your name on the back. But he has been there, you have not; he worked for Disney and Pal. Just a chapter in a long life.

There was a portrait of him on the cover of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* in the early 1950s, but you do not remember it until an hour later, finding it in an odd corner of his work room. He has not changed from those days. He is over eighty now and his face carries a weight behind it while still retaining its walnut-brown look. A smile crinkles everything.

Here in the house, sipping tea in green Japanese mugs that warm the hands, you see the work for which he is not known. Oriental prints. Portraits, belying the common judgment that he cannot render the human figure and make you feel with it. Delicate pencil work. Architecture, stress and design, massive stones balanced in a fine grid of lines. "I see the patterns first, then the rest. I was an architect, you know, before the first world war. I designed the ceiling of the San Francisco opera house."

After that? "I traveled. I saw the world. I lived in New York and Paris and London and finally Los Angeles. Designing buildings and then movie work, backdrops, special effects. Disney did a lot of innovation in special effects, but it required someone who could draw and paint with such detail that the film viewer wouldn't catch an error. Things had to be real. I learned much that way. We were very well paid; that was Los Angeles."





Steven Fox



There are no astronomicals inside the house. To see them you must go outside, up an exposed wooden staircase, into the study. There they crowd the room in the heady smell of fresh paint, rags, stretched canvas. A congress of infinities.

Does he ever read the things he has illustrated? No, he doesn't like science fiction very much. Not enough solidity, perhaps. He rarely if ever willingly puts a human artifact into his work, a spaceship or a pressure dome, or a space-suited figure. He doesn't have any idea of what the future will bring and feels awkward trying to visualize it. But stars and planets, yes, the astronomer friends he has can give him descriptions of how things must be there and he can see it, too, in some closed mind's eye, so that it comes out right. Most science fiction is quickly outdated, anyway. Look at all the fins on space ships, and the cloudless Earths. Better to stay away from it.

Someone in Palo Alto has made prints of two of his oils. One is of an expedition that has landed on a dry, rust-orange Martian desert and is deploying equipment. It seems oddly out of balance and unconvincing, not his best work. The other is better: Saturn from Titan. His classic signature piece. Wrong, of course, since we now know that the methane atmosphere there blankets everything. But it was right when he painted it, the way any scientific theory is correct as an approximation of the truth which is never fully known, and that is all anybody can ask. He has a few prints left. We should not feel that it is necessary to buy anything, of course. We take the Saturn. There is something awesome in the mass of the planet even at this distance, a cold white with a hard curve to it. Looking at it you believe in your soul that planets are gods and men but pawns.

There are stills from motion pictures he has done. George Pal, worlds colliding, rockets, **The Day The Earth Stood Still**, a Groucho Marx hanging from a 20<sup>th</sup> story window against city lights done in oil, but the distant car headlights moving. Stop-motion. Planet-wrecking. It was a lot of fun and a lot of money but his reputation will probably rest on the astronomicals displayed in Boston and New York and San Francisco. Double stars and novae and howling unseen storms in deep atmospheres. A sense of the infinite.

At the center is craft. A view of Saturn at dawn from the Grand Tour probe: it stands dead upright on the easel, half-finished. "Black is very difficult. It is so hard to get the absolute pure black in comparison with the soft color of an atmosphere or a star's envelope. Almost impossible, I think, unless one practices a great deal. I have seen very few painters who can handle it, even in abstracts."

He shows us a few abstracts he has done and they are very good, though none uses very much black. He has tried everything and mastered many techniques, though he has sold very little of it. Most of the good oils he keeps for himself; he can afford to. For a while there was a rush to buy his astronomical oils and he nearly became a factory, turning them out faster than he should have, but that is past. Most sold to aerospace engineers and now they have less extra money and perhaps it is just as well.

He works hard and keeps a regular schedule but he cannot keep up with the load of work. Today arrived an offer from *Playboy* which he will accept for a three page oil, even though it will mean disturbing his schedule. His agent is trying to get him to do another book of the sort he did with Willy Ley, but there is no time. Perhaps next year.

You speak of working together on a book. He thinks **Profiles of the Future** is a good title but you tell him Arthur C. Clarke has already used it. Well, something else, then, but keep in touch.

(Connections: the book doesn't go through because you are too busy to finish the chapters that year, and then you move to the University and there are years of intense physics after that. But he gives you a name of a friend, just a boy who he knows does good work but has had few opportunities – after all he is but eighteen yet, give him time. In a few months you hear from him – Don Davis – and then you sell a novel, **Jupiter Project**, the first one worth a damn and as true to the Jupiter we know as you can get it. Don Davis does two oils to illustrate it. The next year it is published and prompts a letter from Robert Heinlein, which is as much as anybody could ask for. A friend praises it too, exclaiming that you were so lucky to get someone so like Bonestell to do the cover. The whole set of principles is now a tradition and it came mostly out of this one man. Connections.)

The only science fiction person he sees these days is Heinlein, he says, who lives an hour away on the coast. He likes the Heinlein approach; it seems more honest somehow, closer to the

tenuous facts of science. And the Heinlein futures have a lived-in feel. "He's the titan of the field," the old man says reflectively, never remarking on his own stature in the landscape he and the writers inhabit.

He does not see many artists. Carmel is a center for them but they are mostly dabblers, amateurs. He does not have much interest in the young: he thinks their technique is poor. They do not see how important it is to get it right. The test of learning to draw a cow is not in the fingers but in the eye: you must learn to see the cow. Few do this today. "Once having seen it, you must draw or paint so that others can see it. Not the thing itself, but the way it seems, that is art. What else is there?"

Though we exchanged cards afterward, I never saw Chesley Bonestell again. Soon, however, I became aware of a different style of space art – Soviet space art – which, while often impressive, appeared to display very little interest in "getting it right." However, the stereotypes were shattered when I became acquainted with Soviet painter Andrei Sokolov, who was working in his own way to fulfill Bonestell's agenda.

In general, several features distinguish Soviet space art from the American version. Instead of erecting theoretical frameworks to explain these differences, I prefer a painterly approach, not a critical one. When I think of the many Soviet-era space paintings I have seen, both in the US and in Soviet galleries, I remember fuzzily painted groups of indistinguishable figures striding toward the unknown. American sf and astronomical art, in contrast, usually featured traditional lone figures against immense landscapes.

In US SF and space art, realism rules. This is part of the hard sf aesthetic, the Bonestellian "rocks and balls" school as some Russian painters have described it. Such reality was the stuff of **Astounding Science-Fiction**. To illustrate its value, William Hartmann, a space scientist at the University of Arizona who has a parallel career as a painter, recalled to me how he had depicted pedestal formations on comets, setting up and painting at a specialist comet meeting. Several astrophysicists, including David Brin, had theorized that rocks on the surface would shield the snow and ice beneath them, so that the rest of the landscape evaporated during close passage to the sun. The comet would then literally "grow" toadstool-like formations. Hartmann drew this, and soon enough, the effect proliferated into NASA brochures. (Yet when the prediction was stated in a paper to a journal, it was rejected. Now it is the conventional wisdom, based finally on direct observations.)

In contrast, the USSR's state artists preferred symbolism, with European SF artists often falling somewhere in between these poles. Such moody, symbolic work usually appeared in US SF only in magazine illustrations like those of *Galaxy* magazine, to portray social SF. (Marx spoke of scientific socialism, but the Soviet tradition, even when literal in appearance, invoked social goals, not scientific ones.) Referring to this moody school as "symbolic-fantastic", Sokolov said, "The theory of relativity might yield images that could be shown only in emotional, artistic form. It could be a symbol, a fantasy, a dream." Contrast this with attempts to show the relativistic Doppler effect, as observed from a starship, called by Frederik Pohl the "starbow."

Portraits of "courageous pioneers of space" were sanctioned by the Soviet space program, so realistic work did have a place. Cosmonaut portraits were in great demand for offices, regional galleries, public buildings.

As someone keenly aware of the value of such representational art, Sokolov was an oddity in Russian space art, a realistic worker who had direct access to astronauts. He could remark from inference, "Landscapes seen from an airplane are vague and colorless, because we observe them from inside the atmosphere with the light scattered from all around. Cosmonauts are not impeded by the scattered light; they see the Earth in all its magnificence."

He had an immense advantage. Necessarily, Americans did not, since even today no professional artist has flown in space – though several astronauts have turned to art later. So Americans concentrated on photographs. Soviet cosmonauts studied Earth with color-sample atlases and color-measuring viewers, confirming that perceived colors are remarkably more vivid than views from aircraft. Our eyes discern details twenty times finer than a typical camera and two hundred times better than a TV image. We also have far more subtle color perception. For the first time, an artist with the Soviet era readings could compare nighttime clouds lit by city lights, by lightning, and by



moonlight. Peculiarities emerged: no up or down, no atmospheric perspective, sharp contrasts of light and dark, arriving suddenly.

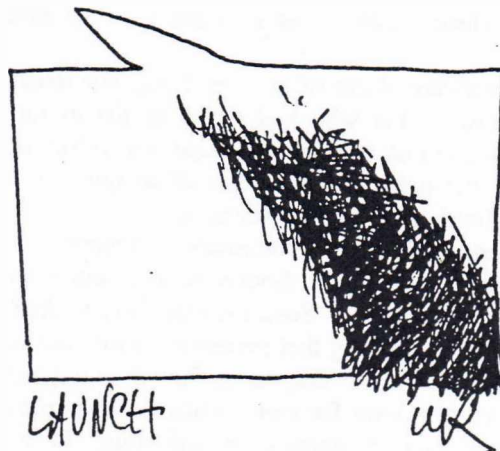
Sokolov had cosmonauts compare his sketch with the real scene as it passed below, writing comments on the sketch about color, form and lighting. (Alexei Leonov, the first space walker, has done primarily realistic paintings and sketches, using his own experience and Sokolov's data.) Using frequent interviews with cosmonauts, he gave this vivid description:

"At the terminator, when valleys sink into darkness and a chain of snowy mountains is shining in the background. Late in the evening, just beyond the terminator, the very high mountains glow red-orange, like live coals .... Mountaintops cleave the clouds, leaving a wake like that of a ship. Tropical thunderheads, lit by lightning flashes at night, recall the blooming buds of white roses .... The shining constellations of cities at night, enmeshed by a glittering web of highways is also very lovely. One's heart fills with pride at our accomplishments when one recognizes from orbit artificial seas and water basins, and cultivated fields, particularly in virgin lands." In this passage we see how much of Soviet society retained the pride common in 19th century America about the domesticating hand of humanity upon the untamed wilderness.

Not all decisions on either side of the cultural divide came from aesthetic ideas. The Soviet Artists' Union was ordered from above to produce art heralding the great space achievements, so there was work to be had. Landscape painters migrated in, symbolists found ready employment ("Most of it looks like Russian music sounds," American Jon Lomberg remarked to me). Even the most highly regarded "space artists" cared little for the facts of their subject. On a rare junket to the west, at Voyager's Neptune encounter, as a body they skipped the Jet Propulsion Laboratory tour prepared for them, in order to go to Disneyland! (Sokolov apologized for them.)

Contrast this with Bonestell, the father of the American school. He painted his classic "View from Titan" in 1944, soon after Kuiper's measurement of methane in the atmosphere of Saturn's major moon, Titan. Saturn hangs clear and cold above a frosted landscape. But by the 1970s further work showed that Titan's atmosphere was very thick, so that at its surface the pressure was even higher than one Earth atmosphere. Saturn would be forever shrouded by the opaque methane clouds. So Bonestell painted later views, accounting for this. He did not scrap the earlier work, just updated his views to those of the scientists. In honor of this, astronomers began in the 1980s to call the blue-sky layer above the methane haze, where perhaps one could peer out at Saturn, not the Titan Stratosphere, but the *Bonestellosphere*.

I think this contrast of aesthetics, the presence or absence of that hard-sf commitment to "getting it right," is the principal difference between the American and the European/Russian temperament. No doubt, both schools of space art have their virtues. However, as a hard SF writer who strives for scientific accuracy in my stories, I have a natural fondness for artists who strive for scientific accuracy in their depictions of space. It is such artists – like Bonestell, Hartmann, and the idiosyncratic Sokolov – that I most admire.

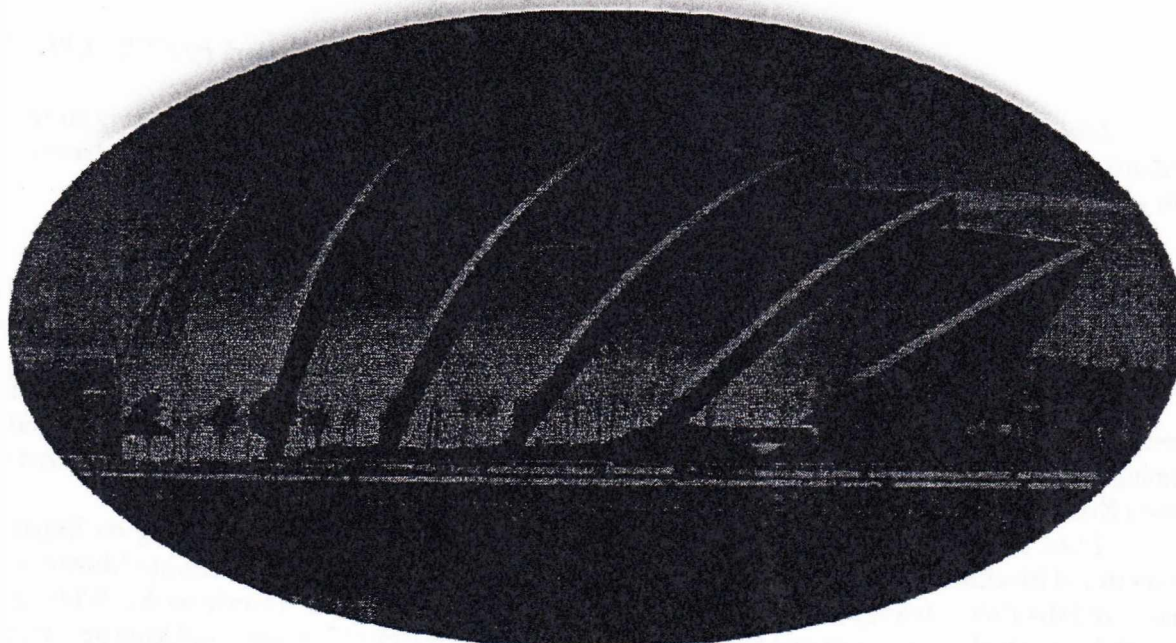




# UK IN 2005

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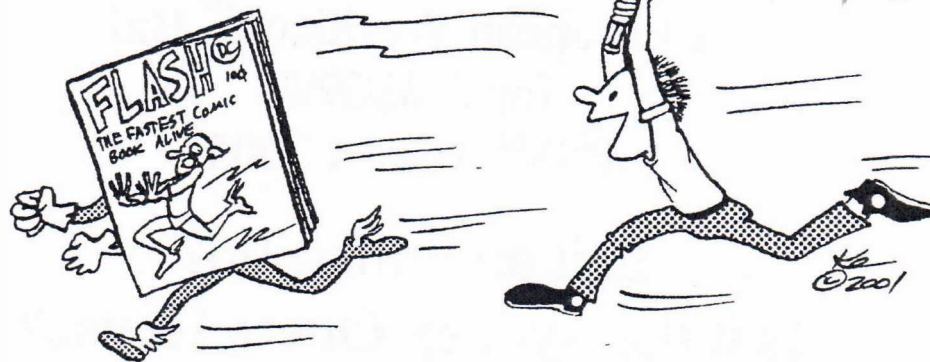
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Every comic fan in the world has a version of this story – and Gary tells it so, so well ...

## *The Chase* By Gary Brown



Artwork by KURT ERICHSEN

*Like solving a mystery, every comic book collector has spent countless hours searching stores for a certain title or issue. Failure brings frustration, but success is like finding a pirate's treasure chest overflowing with gold.*

"The Chase" is what drives most collectors.

It's not just the attraction to an item or its value, but searching for it, finding it and claiming it as your own. It's like following a pieced together map and discovering the pirate's buried chest of gold and silver – only much more difficult.

My lifelong chase for comic books began on a Sunday in early 1959. I clearly remember the circumstances. I was 12 years old and we were visiting my cousin during a family gathering. Exhausted from running around in the backyard, teasing the girls and eating German sausage and potatoes, we retired to my cousin Ken's room to talk and read books.

I had been collecting comic books for about two years at the time, concentrating on **Superman**, **Batman** and **Blackhawk**. That year, my interests were beginning to expand. I bought titles like **Showcase**, **The Brave and the Bold**, **Strange Adventures** and a variety of the Dell cowboy and movie books. While looking through his stash of funny books and being unimpressed with their lack of number, I suddenly got stopped in my tracks. There it was, **The Flash #106**. The second issue of the Scarlet Speedster's return to the comic books racks of America.

"Where did you get this?" I asked.

Ken shrugged and said he bought it at the store.

"No, what store?" I insisted while paging through the book.

He didn't know.

He didn't know? Why not? Think man, I've got to get a copy of this comic book. "Let's go play in the sprinklers," someone said. And off, everyone ran, including me. But the words kept beating in my head: "I've got to find that comic book; I've got to find that comic book."

The next day, I was off to school on my Schwinn bicycle. But good cursive writing and cute little Donna Pagnota were not on my mind. All I could think of was how I'd visit the three important comic book sales stops in my limited by-bicycle world, looking for **The Flash #106**. It would be there, ready for my dime

(plus a penny tax). I had no doubt. After school, I headed straight for the Rexall Drug Store about a block from the school. It was fairly new and they kept a neat rack of comic books and magazines, but their selection was not always the best. I left my bike outside and walked straight to the comics.

Spinning the squeaky rack slowly, I scanned the rows for the pink cover. It wasn't there.

I went through again, flipping each section in hopes a spare copy of the treasured book had lodged between **The Fox and the Crow** and **Journey into Mystery**. Nothing.

Worried, but determined, I hopped back on my bike and headed to the second Rexall Drug Store. The one was on Fourth Avenue, across "the canal." Until recently, I was not allowed to ride my bike "across the canal" for any reason. Traffic was bad and I was, of course, just a kid.

But I started to break that rule in an effort to get my weekly fix of comic books. Not telling my parents, who assumed I was safe and secure on this side of the canal. The second Rexall was older and had a great comic and magazine section. They had a lot of books the other store didn't carry. Surely, I'd find **The Flash** #106 there.

Strike two.

I started sweating. I've got to find it, I thought. I can't let the day go by without it. So, I headed to what I considered the minor league comic outlet. It was a convenience store called U-Tot-Em. Located on 49th Street in Hialeah, Fla., it didn't treat comics and magazines with the reverence that could be found in the Rexall stores.

Their comic book racks routinely were stuffed full. Some ripped copies could be found on the floor and it was not unusual to find a comic three or four months old there.

I pedaled back across the canal, down behind the Royal Castle and to the U-Tot-Em, which sat smack in the middle of a strip shopping plaza anchored by Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.

Tired and pessimistic, I passed the Twinkies shelf, soda coolers and stacks of oil cans to the back corner. There I found the rack of comics, wheezing and bloated like Porky Pig after a battle with Daffy Duck. You couldn't spin the comic book rack at the U-Tot-Em. You had to use all your strength to move the entire stand around so you could look at the back side.

Suddenly, after going through a few of the sections, something caught my eye. Glory be, it was **The Flash** in all its splendor. **The Flash** ... #105.

Number 105? Hey, this wasn't the comic book I saw at my cousin's house. It was another one. It was the previous issue. I didn't have it. But I still didn't have #106.

However, there in the bottom row, just barely sticking up was the pink cover of my Holy Grail. It was ... yes, it was **The Flash** #106. Not only had I found the comic book I wanted, but I located the previous issue, which was the first in the series. *Victory*.

I rode home a proud conqueror, clutching my four-color fantasies firmly and happily thinking about reading both books after dinner. But little did I know that the obsessive behavior I had displayed over that 24-hour period would stick with me the rest of my life.

It was about this time that I started to pay attention to when certain comic books were put out for sale on the racks and about how long the stores allowed them to remain there until they disappeared into who knows where. If I was going to collect comic books, I certainly had to understand how to get the ones I really, really wanted.

Comic shops did not exist and the only way to get back issues was to trade with friends. If you missed an issue off the drug store or newsstand racks, you were out of luck.

My first realization was that new comic books we placed on the stands (at least in Florida) on Tuesdays





and Thursdays. How I figured this out, I'm not sure, but I suspect it was making daily trips to the Rexall in search of an advertised book.

However, most of the stores I frequented had employees put out the magazines when there was time. Comic books, of course, were usually the last thing they did because they were the most trouble. But on most Tuesdays and Thursdays, I usually found the new comics in the spin racks by the time school was out.

This was not a good thing in the summer months, though. Many mornings in June, July and August, I'd ride up to the Rexall only to find the bundles of comics still sitting there. Once, I tried to look through the tightly bound stack, but was told to "leave them alone!"

So, there were wasted hours or trips, when the employee assigned to set out the comic books didn't get to them until the afternoon. My young patience was tested often.

At one point, I noticed in the house advertisements for National Periodical Publications (DC Comics), they often would encourage readers to "Reserve Your Copy at Your Favorite Newsstand Today!" Wow, what a great idea. If I could reserve a copy of the comics I bought, I'd never have to worry about missing an issue again.

So, I walked into the Rexall one day with a list of my "reserved" comic books. I packed an extra dollar, just in case I had to put a deposit on my order.

"Ma'am," I nervously started. "I'd like to talk to someone about reserving some comic books."

Puzzled, the woman behind the counter looked at me and asked for clarification.

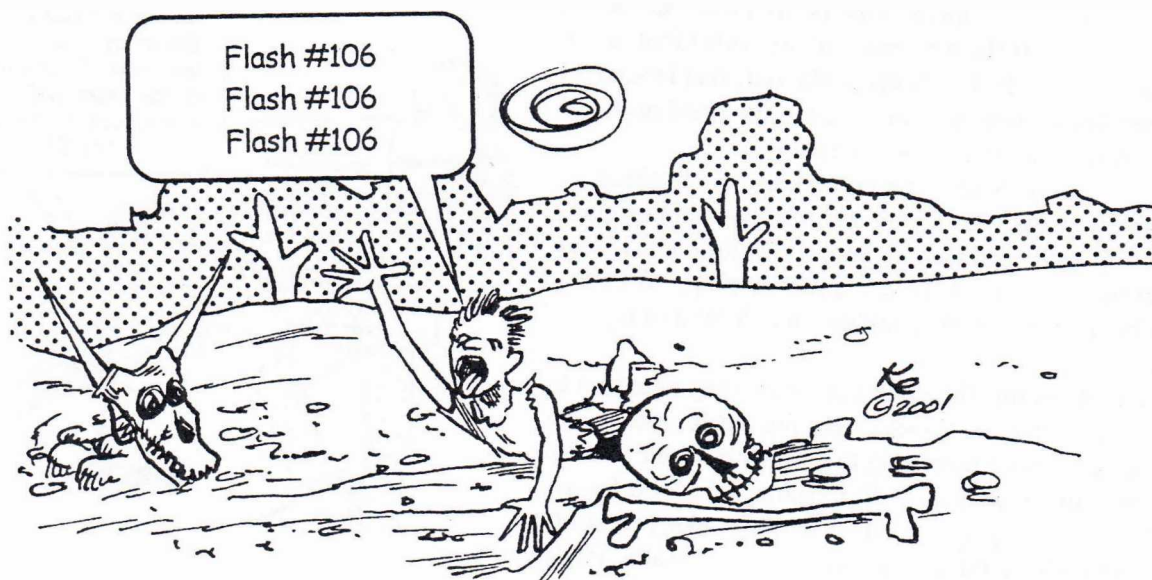
"Yes, I'd like to give you a list of comic books for you to hold for me each week," I stammered.

Suddenly, the woman's face turned into a smile and morphed its way into a sneering cackle.

"Ha, ha, I don't believe it," she said loudly. "We don't reserve *comic books*!"

Reduced to what seemed like about two-inches tall, I quickly shuffled out of the store and didn't return there for weeks, fearing I would be pointed out as "the kid who tried to reserve *comic books*" and laughed at repeatedly. When I did muster the courage to return, I avoided the female employee at every turn, even paying for my comics at the perfume counter to avoid embarrassment.

After my self-taught lesson in how comic books appeared on the racks, I fell into a routine of going to the stores each Tuesday and Thursday. There was, of course, a degree of worry if I couldn't make it to the Rexall on either of those days, but I learned to become more aware of when certain favorite comic books came out.



**Action Comics**, for instance, was always at the end of the month (or the beginning, I'm not quite sure). It was published monthly. **Adventure** and **Detective Comics** also were monthly and came out on subsequent weeks. The bi-monthly books presented a slightly different problem, but I realized that if I wanted every issue

The biggest problem were comic books like **Superman** and **Batman**. At that time, they were published “eight times a year”. That meant I might get new issues of **Superman** from one month to another, then nothing for two months. The publishing information usually would give what months the book was published (or not published) and that helped in figuring out when to expect something.

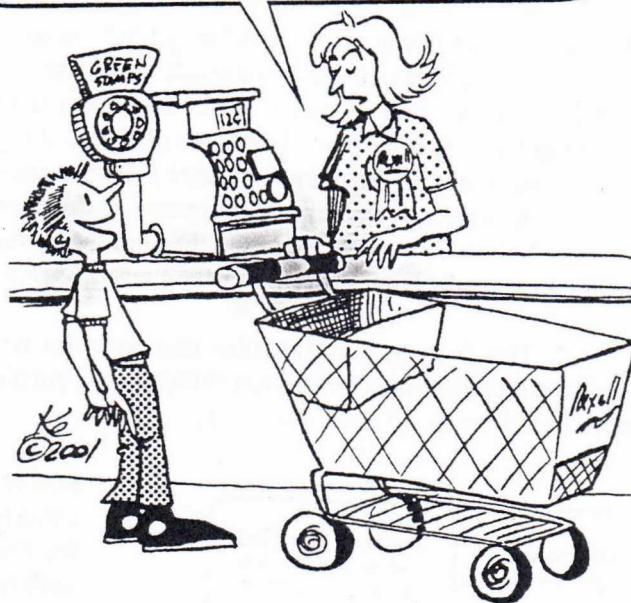
I later learned that comic book companies did that so their books wouldn't look outdated on the racks if they sat there for two or three months. I mean, kids don't want to buy a comic dated May if it is June. That must mean an "old book." And lord knows, no one is going to buy old, outdated funny books.

So, just when I figure I have everything under control in terms of my comic book buying habits, a curve ball was tossed my way: A G.C. Murphy Department Store opened at the new Palm Springs Shopping Center.

While their title selection was a tad limited (they had all the **Superman** and **Batman** titles and the romance books, but didn't sell **House of Mystery** or **Challengers of the Unknown**), it gave me a sense of accomplishment to buy comics on Wednesday, thereby owning certain books a day earlier than the rest of the world. And to make things a little more complicated, occasionally Murphys would get books a week in advance. This routinely happened with the 25-cent annuals.

As I grew older, my world expanded and I was able to search more and more places for new comic books. There was a small Mom and Pop store near Hialeah High School that sold comics. *Old* comics. Sometimes as old as a year or two. This was a revelation to me and I talked my Dad into stopping there every chance I could.

Why certainly, sir. I'll be glad to call you whenever a new funny book comes in. Would a 5¢ discount per book be acceptable? Why don't you ask for a date with Marilyn Monroe while you're at it? She can read *Superman* to you.





The strangest part of the Mom and Pop comic rack were the coverless comics. They were not coverless, so to speak, but had a white cover stapled on them with the words "Comic Book" in big blue letters on the front. I was fascinated by these for a while, wondering what the covers looked like and how they became coverless.

But as I got more serious about collecting, I frequented this shop less and less. Who wanted ripped up, coverless comics. Not me.

I also found there was a newsstand in downtown Hialeah that sold comic books and a wide variety of magazines. Some of them, behind the counter, featured topless women and promises of "bare all" photos inside. When I went into this newsstand, I tried not to stare at the men's magazines behind the counter (for fear of being banned from the shop), but I did catch a side glance or two when the owner wasn't looking. But at that age, my sexual jollies had to be confined to photos of women in bikinis in **Skin Diver** magazine. (In fact, for about a year I bought every issue of **Skin Diver**. My parents thought I had developed an interest in the sport, so I was allowed to take diving lessons at one point. Little did they know that I wasn't as interested in going below the ocean as I was meeting those tanned women in those little bikinis.)

He had a nice selection of comic books. I remember buying the first **Captain Atom** story there, as well as many of the DC war books. It's funny how you associate certain stores with certain "key" comic books in your life. For instance, there was a small drug store on 49th Street (next to the Kentucky Fried Chicken) that had a small selection of comic books and paperbacks. It was there I found the Mad magazine paperback featuring "SuperDuperMan." For some reason, I always visited that place to look at their thin selection of books – no doubt hoping sooner or later I'd make another find of equal value to me.

As a college student, I'd frequent the downtown Hialeah newsstand as often as I could. Once while crouched down in the back, looking through the comic books, I heard the owner on the back phone. He was taking bets on the horses. My newsstand was a *bookie joint*. Cool.

The Tuesday and Thursday sale dates for comic books remained for decades, finally disappearing amidst circulation and distribution changes. As I got older, though, the twice weekly visits to the nearest comic book seller remained a ritual with me.



When in college, I learned the Miami Airport got there new comics in on Sundays. So, I'd often visit the airport when I was home (parking in the Eastern Airlines employee parking lot, thanks to my Dad getting me a parking sticker), sometimes with friend Wayne DeWald.

But times have changed. Buying comics these days is easy – I place my order with the local comic shop and pick them up each Wednesday. No more worries about missing an issue or getting a crumpled comic.

My two Rexall Drug Stores are still there, but they don't sell comic books anymore. Both have Hispanic owners and cater to the dominant Hispanic population in Hialeah.

G.C. Murphy burned to the ground several years ago. It had stopped selling comic books long before.

The airport no longer carries comic books.

And the newsstand in downtown Hialeah is gone, replaced by a 10-story condominium.

But nothing can replace that feeling of buying the brand new issue of your favorite comic books and flying home on your bike to read them. Treasures found and enjoyed. A lifetime of searching for the pot of comic book gold at the end of the rainbow – every Tuesday and Thursday.

Once again Rich Dengrove sails into the past and returns with a wise, informative article.

# CYRANO DE BERGERAC

## WAS A REAL PERSON AND HE WROTE SCIENCE FICTION

Richard A. Dengrove

*I derived most of this essay from Richard Aldington's **Voyages to the Moon and Sun/Cyrano de Bergerac** (1923). I have a 1962 edition. Another printing came out in the '90s, which apparently is very expensive.*

Cyrano de Bergerac was a real person, but that was not his real name. His real name was Savinien de Cyrano. That was his name when he was born in 1619 to a wealthy but non-noble family.

The Cyrano family did have a coat of arms, it is true, which I have chosen to reprint. But it tried to make a claim of nobility twice, and the authorities rejected it both times. And fined them. Once in 1668. Then Abel de Cyrano, Cyrano's brother, was fined 300 livres for claiming nobility. And in 1704, a cousin J.D. de Cyrano was fined 3,000 livres for it.

Cyrano's offense should have been much greater. He claimed to be of noble Gascon blood. Bergerac is best known as a town in Gascony. Cyrano did not come from Gascony but from around Paris. It is true Cyrano's father had a small estate called Bergerac, which he sold in 1637; but none of the family claimed to be related to the old de Bergerac family. And there is no proof that the small estate served as more than an inspiration.

There is another way of looking at his name, however. Cyrano fought in the Gascon company of de Carbon de Casteljaloux. At least some one among them must have known he was a pretender. In fact, I am sure all knew. But it would not do to have one of their best swordsmen not a noble and not a Gascon. So maybe Cyrano de Bergerac is Cyrano's real name and Savinien de Cyrano is merely a name he was born with.

The real Cyrano differed from the legend in another way, his nose. It was large, it is true, but not a monstrous nose. As contemporary prints of Cyrano show.

While they may not look like the same person, drawings of myself do not either.

Cyrano was well aware he had a large nose. But rather than causing the inferiority complex of Rostand's Cyrano, he took his nose in ribald good humor. At least in his **Voyages**.

He said that, in a land on the Moon, children with too short a nose are castrated. The



Coat of arms claimed by the Cyrano family.

reason is a large nose shows "a witty, prudent, courteous, affable, generous and liberal man." A small nose shows the vices from being just the opposite.

At another point, Cyrano has a jailor in Toulouse comment on what a lovely nose he has – and then throws him in prison.

I suspect the legend of Cyrano's nose started with the tale of the Battle of Brioché's monkey. It originally was based on an anonymous work almost certainly written by a friend with whom Cyrano had quarreled, one Dassoucy. In short, not a credible source.

When Cyrano went to see Brioché's



monkey perform, a mob of thirty or forty decided to make trouble for him and made fun of his nose. One actually flipped it on its end. And that, I believe, was how Cyrano got his reputation for having a large nose.

By the way, out came his sword and, being a great swordsman in fact as well as myth, he drove the mob away. And killed the monkey by accident in the process. But that is another story.

The 19<sup>th</sup> Century French romantics not having any more of an idea what Cyrano looked like than we do, I believe, hopped on this story. And his nose grew and grew like Pinocchio's. As Theophile Gautier wrote in 1844 in his *Les Grotesques*:

"This incredible nose is settled in a three-quarter face [portrait], the smaller side of which it covers entirely; it forms in the middle of a mountain which in my opinion must be the highest mountain in the world after the Himalayas; then it descends rapidly towards the mouth, which it largely obumbrates, like a tapir's snout or the rostrum of a bird of prey; at the extremity it is divided by a line very similar to, though more pronounced than, the furrow which cuts the cherry lip of Anne of Austria... This makes two distinct noses in one face, which is more than custom allows."

This is of a piece. Aldington says that Gautier's book is filled with every conceivable misstatement of fact about Cyrano.

Of course, this is where Edmond Rostand got the information for his play. Which is why there is so much misinformation in it.

Another way the real Cyrano differed from the legend was in love. Richard Aldington, goes too far. He has read Cyrano's love letters, and claims that they are made of "clever and wholly frigid conceits, which glitter and clink like chains of icicles." The very opposite of feeling. And thus Cyrano was no lover.

That does not necessarily mean Cyrano was no lover, although certainly not the serious, passionate lover of Rostand's play. Ironically, his clever conceits may have attracted women. He may have made them laugh and given them some excitement. If the real life Cyrano was anything

like his *Voyages*, he certainly would have.

This attitude is certainly found in his book. In the voyage to the Moon, Cyrano is describing a topsy turvy society, a lampoon on utopias. There Noblemen do not parade their swords, but their phalluses. They make love not war.

Also, chastity is not considered a virtue there and any man can take any woman. In fact, he has one Moon man say that virginity is against nature. And wonder why God did not cause humans to be born like mushrooms.

In his voyage to the Sun, Cyrano lampoons the Precieuse school of drippy sentimental writing. The tears of a woman's ex-lovers cause a flood. And, on one ex-lover's suggestion, she almost rips out her heart to use as a boat. The ex-lover is sentenced to exile for wrongful use of metaphor. Etc., etc.

In one area, however, the real Cyrano did not differ from the legend. He was a great swordsman. In one anecdote, Chevalier de Lignieres, his good friend, had chided a noble about his marital problems. Not a wise move. The noble sent armed men to crop his ears on the public highway, a hundred of them. At Porte de Nesle, they ambushed Cyrano and Lignieres. It was oft' cited, even by enemies, that Cyrano sent them packing. Richard reputation uppermost in his mind, admitted only to a crowd, not a hundred.

Because of his swordsmanship, Cyrano was named second in a hundred duels. In those days, the second had to join in. Military virtues were above all else. Cyrano was so good at being a second that he was offered a commission in a Gascon company. And in effect Gascon nobility.

Apparently they were a bunch of daredevils. Cyrano was called on active duty in 1638. By June, he had been shot through the body in Mouzon. Next year he was wounded by a sword thrust through the throat in Arras.

Which brings me to another way in which the real Cyrano differed from the legend. He acted very sensibly and resigned. And attempted a life much more conducive to longevity, of letters.

Also, he became sanguine about war. It is true he writes that, on the Moon, old men should bow to youth because youth are brave. However, he had war on the Moon being fought by armies made utterly equal. Including equal in bravery.

Cyrano showed he was not a total hothead

in another way. While he fought others' duels as a second, he never challenged anyone himself. This was verified by both friends and enemies.

So much for Cyrano being real. I said he wrote science fiction. I admit most of his works are not but his **Voyages to the Moon and the Sun** certainly is. Some may argue that it cannot be science fiction; because it contains fantastic ideas, satire, and humor. Of course, they have not been foreign to modern science fiction.

On the other hand, his novel meets my definition: It has something to do with science. Among other things, it advocates the Copernican theory. Cyrano advocated Copernicanism merely by claiming there were other planets like the Earth. Under the Ptolemaic theory there would not be.

He does this at the very beginning of the novel. He shows many examples, witty then, of men not believing the Moon is a world. He is returning from a party with four companions. One likens the Moon to a window in Heaven through which "the glory of the blessed might be faintly seen." Another imagines that Bacchus keeps a tavern in Heaven and has hung out the sign of the Full Moon. Another says it is the block where Diana set Apollo's ruffs. Another still says it is the Sun itself who has put down his rays and is watching through a hole.

Cyrano alone is an advocate of Copernicanism. He ventures that the Moon is a world like ours and our world is the moon to them. When someone laughs, he says at this moment the Moon men are probably ridiculing people who believe the Earth is a world like theirs.

Of course, his novel is about the men, animals, spirits and other beings that inhabit the Moon and the Sun.

In addition, Cyrano advocated the Copernican system outright, in a long dialogue. Which would be boring to us but people then could not, it seems, get enough of them. And there is some wit there. He uses standard arguments but then compares the Sun to a man's genitals

The Copernican system must have been on Cyrano's mind at the time. He went to study with the priest Pierre Gassendi. Two years prior, Gassendi finally proved Copernicus' theory that the Earth moves around the Sun.

Tycho Brahe in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century had said that the Solar System looked very much as

Copernicus claimed. And all the planets went around the Sun, except for Earth. When it came to the Earth, it was the Sun going around the Earth. If this were not the case, then Aristotle's physics would be violated. And we would be flung off the Earth, either by its revolution around itself or around the Sun.

Galileo had first suggested the experiment to prove we would not; and, in fact, we would not even know if the Earth were moving. But this remained a thought experiment, just like a lot of Galileo's hypotheses. It took two members of Catholic Holy orders to test it. In 1634 the Minorite Friar Marin Mersenne, who worked with Gassendi, had a friend make the experiment on board a ship. But the results were never published.

In 1640, Gassendi finally did the experiment and published the results. He made it using horses and chariots. However, he had to have it done with a ship since the Copernican theory's opponents used that as the prime example. He had the experiment done on a naval trireme.

All the results proved we would not know if the Earth were moving, and thus they proved the Copernican theory.

Of course, Cyrano's long proof for Copernicus had nothing to do with Gassendi's experiment. His arguments are more Classical than scientific. As was people's want then. In fact, his arguments for the Earth going around the Sun go back to the first ancient Greek who proclaimed that, Philolaus of Crotona. He lived in Plato's time.

In effect, to both, the Earth must be going around the Sun, and not the other way around, because fire is superior to earth. Cyrano says the Sun is the central fire just like the Sun was Philolaus' central fire.

In fact, I suspect the events preceding this in the novel would go completely against Gassendi's principles. Cyrano's hapless space traveler headed for the Moon fails to move with the Earth. When he cannot reach the Moon, he ends up in French Canada.

Did Cyrano misunderstand Gassendi's ideas? Very possible. Or was he making jokes? Having read his novel, I have to believe that is very very possible. He plays a lot of jokes in it. At one point, he claims An acquaintance, Tristan L'Hermite, was the greatest man of his age. And in





Sketches of Cyrano presumably drawn from life. Not a small nose, but not monstrous.

a spiritual sense. Aldington quotes someone, maybe Cyrano, to the effect he was "an epicure of the cabarets, a hare-brained duelist, a gambler, a libertine, a beggar." Also, he was in exile for killing a man.

Now that I have proven my point, that Cyrano wrote science fiction, I should stop here. But some gems about Cyrano's novel make me keep going. So I hope you are dying to know how Cyrano had people of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century fly to the Moon and the Sun. The hero does tie bottles of dew to himself, like I have been told numerous times. The dew having 'occult virtues' that attract it to the Moon. However, the commentators on this are wrong; he does not get to the Moon this way. He ends up in French Canada.

How does he get to the Moon? He uses a Aldington, his scholarly poorly described device that seems to be powered by rockets.

How does the hero get back? His host is blasphemous, and the Devil comes and takes him to Hell underneath the Earth. The hero tries to

keep this from happening, but can only hang on as far as Italy.

Here is how the hero goes to the Sun. He is in jail and his friends give him the tools and supplies he requests. He builds what he calls an icosahedron because of its shape. In effect, it is a solar powered jet. Air flows in it to fill a vacuum, and the solar heat of several large glass lenses forces it out. The hero uses it to get out of jail and to the Sun.

Others jet off into outer space besides the hero. On the Moon, the hero meets the hero of Bishop Godwin's 1638 novel, **Man in the Moone**, the Spaniard Domingo Gonzales. He had hitched himself to some geese and they flew him there.

At one point, Cyrano burlesques the Biblical Genesis, and there are some techniques in that. The original Adam had such a strong imagination that he could fly to the Moon. Noah's Ark reached the Moon. Enoch reached the Moon on bladders filled with the burnt sacrifices of the

righteous. An Elijah, apparently not the Biblical Prophet, reached the Moon sitting in a chariot and throwing a loadstone. Which would attract the chariot to it.

In short, his methods of reaching the Moon and the Sun are as witty, irreverent and off the wall as the rest of this novel. It is no fault these methods are often described in the vaguest terms possible. Sometimes even contradictory terms.

Having said that, now I hope you are interesting in whether Cyrano influenced other authors. He did a big one, Jonathan Swift in his *Gulliver's Travels* better. Of course Swift exudes an air of common sense and an illusion of reality, while Cyrano revels in being a fantasist. But it is obvious he did influence Swift.

Swift does not actually plagiarize, but he does take ideas and scenes. Obvious borrowing is found in the utopia he describes for Lilliput, the land of the little people. And at a number of points in Brobdingnag, the land of the giants.

Also, Richard Aldington believes that the land of the Houyhnhnms, where enlightened horses rule over rather bestial men was inspired by Cyrano. Cyrano always has man being shown to be inferior to the beasts.

For some reason, Aldington mentions how a Tom d'Urfey plagiarized wholesale for his *Wonders in the Sun or the Kingdom of the Birds* (1706). Which, I think, was an opera. Opera or not, who in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century has ever heard of Tom d'Urfey?

It takes wholesale from a neat scene, however. On the Sun the hero is put on trial by the birds for being a human. Birds of course can fly to the Sun. And humans, of course, are their enemy. And they also regard them as the enemy of all the animals and of reason. The latter a great crime in this era so near the Age of Reason. Cyrano's hero is sentenced to be pecked to death when a reprieve comes. A parrot had testified that he once let him out of his cage.

I wonder if a 20<sup>th</sup> Century puppet show borrowed from Cyrano too. I remember it from my '50s childhood, "The Kaboosta Kid in Outerspace."(?). It was on one of the Ernie Kovacs morning shows. There, the Kaboosta Kid had been jailed so he sent away mail order for a kit to build a rocket ship. Which he puts together and uses to escape from prison and into outer space.

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### The Last Morning

These are the photographs  
lying in their undeveloped potential  
in the camera, flashes of life.

The sun sheds its morning glow  
on the marshy lake, sweet with birds.  
Your ashes fly from the canister, riding  
the breeze, white swirls like the sea  
in tempest, or snow in winter's naked rage,  
gusty as your life.

On the edge of the murky shore  
José and I pose, arms encircled,  
as giddy as the water is flat, watching  
flurried ashes melt into primeval muck  
as the past blends into the present,  
a developing continuum.

Birds cry as if one of them  
is home at last, the one gone too long,  
the journey that seemed endless until it ended.  
Wings settle in the cool morning,  
but for those probing the depths,  
diving, again and again, for fish.

The sky broadens, the plain flattens, the grasses sway,  
shades of gold, orange and green,  
the colors of the sun, the colors of life,  
your favorite colors. The birds seem black  
and white, the colors of death and mystery,  
of light and spirit, of art, of you.

When the pictures join the rest  
in the albums, on the shelves, in the drawers,  
we will smile from them, because we found  
peace on wing, in muck, in glory,  
as companions in your world of  
the ever changing ever green River of Grass.

These are the photographs  
lying in their undeveloped potential  
in the camera, flashes of life.

-- Rose-Marie Donovan



*The last worldcon was a fan's delight ... and a  
pro's. Viz:*

# Chicon 2000

*a report by*

**Mike Resnick**

## Food highlights:

Dinner at the Greek Islands, our favorite Greek restaurant, with Nick DiChario, Mary Stanton, and Jay Kay Klein. Great pastitso, dolmades in a thick lemon sauce, flaming saganaki.

Dinner at the Parthenon, Chicago's second-best Greek restaurant, with Rick Katze. Same meal as above, good but not -as- good.

Dinner at the Ritz-Carlton with Eleanor Wood. Great venison steak in a cream sauce, very nice chocolate souffle for dessert. Only other con member we saw there was Bob Silverberg.

Dinner at Lawry's The Prime Rib, with Greg Benford, Dick Spelman, Tony, Suford and Alice Lewis, and Kristine Kathryn Rusch. Best prime rib in the city, plus wonderful Yorkshire pudding.

Dinner in the hotel at Stetson's, with Beth Meacham. Much better than I'd anticipated. I had a 18-ounce filet mignon.

Best meal of all: Dinner at Eli's, with Anne Groell, my Bantam editor. Chopped liver appetizers (free, and all you could eat) and shrimp de jongue, one of my favorite dishes and all-but-impossible to find these days.

Brunch with Gardner Dozois and Susan Casper. The company was better than the food.

Also had gastronomically-unmemorable business lunches and breakfasts with Shayne Bell, Josepha Sherman, Marty Greenberg, Kris Rusch, and Beth Meacham.

## Business highlights:

Beth Meacham and I have agreed on the next book I'll do for Tor. Only question now is whether I want a one or a two-book contract; I'm leaning toward one.

Anne Groell wants another book from me at Bantam; we're still trying to work out which it'll be.

Gardner Dozois bought "Old MacDonald Had

a Farm" from me at our brunch. He'd received it the day before he left for worldcon and actually brought it along to read, something -I- would never do at a worldcon.

Greg Benford assigned me a story for a non-science-fiction anthology.

Met the guys from Frequency Audio Magazine, picked up my CD (their first "issue" has pro actors reading the 5 short story Hugo nominees). They want more stories from me, so I'm going to spend a day trying to figure out what will read well aloud and then send it to them.

Decided it's time to get some more newcomers and semi-newcomers into print, so I had lunch with Marty Greenberg and gave him 8 or 9 anthology ideas. I told him I would only edit one a year, but I was willing to commit to 3 in the next 3 years if he could sell them now.

Had a long meeting with Josepha Sherman. Years ago I wrote the first 40 pages of a Young Adult sf novel called THE HERO, and had no luck at all placing it. Since Jo writes YA books, I showed it to her a year ago and asked for some input. She offered to collaborate, I agreed, and evidently she's got some editor so hot for it that the woman has begged us to give her a 3-book outline/synopsis, which is what we came up with over an extended lunch.

Got an assignment from an anthology and made arrangements to collaborate with M. Shayne Bell on it. We had breakfast and came up with the plot.

Believe it or not, someone who isn't Marty Greenberg has asked me to edit an anthology. I can't give any details until I decide whether or not to do it. (I'm leaning against, but I'm getting a lot of pressure for; you'll understand once I can discuss it.)

Got a green light to keep writing GalaxyOnline columns, only to find out shortly after arriving home that they're giving up buying new stuff for the web page and concentrating their efforts on Amazing, which they just purchased.

I was approached by DUFF -- the Down Under Fan Fund, that sends a fan to Australia every year -- with an interesting request: would I be willing to Tuckerize (i.e., write someone's name into a story) the high bidder for the right to be Tuckerized By Resnick? I said sure, and a new groom paid \$650 for his wife of 6 weeks to be

written into a story. (Harry Turtledove got \$665 for the same thing; highest of all was Lois McMaster Bujold, who offered the same service for the SFWA Treasury, and got \$1,000.) The story's already done; I had a major female character in the story I just sold to Gardner, and he had no problem with my changing it to the auction winner's name.

Did a TV interview with Joseph Formichella and another with Donna Drapeau. Did 3 radio interviews, I have no idea with who or for what stations. Oh, and a long print interview with Frederique Roussel, a lovely Parisian; the French seem to have staked a claim on me this year.

#### Parties:

The most fun I had was at the CFG Suite Sunday night. We played two hours of the most hilarious Broadway musical trivia anyone's ever seen, and then a couple of more hours in which we had to identify opening and closing lines of sf stories and books. I don't know why that 4-hour stretch was so enjoyable, but it was.

Also had a great time at the Resnick Listserv party, which drew a hell of a lot more of us than I thought would be there. At one point Brad Sinor tried to cram us all into one photo; I'm dying to see how it came out.

Tried the SFWA suite a few times, as usual; it was so crowded that I never stayed more than 4 or 5 minutes tops, as usual. Tried the Tor party; it was so jammed I didn't even make it 3 minutes before I gave up on it and went out into the hall for some fresh air -- where I bumped into Mr. Tor himself, Tom Doherty, who couldn't stand the crowd and was out there, hiding from his own party, in splendid isolation. We talked for a few minutes, and one by one were joined by Ben Bova, Bob Silverberg, and a couple of others who couldn't take the noise and the jostling. It was a nice "rump party", though I didn't stay too long even in the hall.

The Frequency Audio boys put on a nice one, and Boston, as always, threw a pair of very enjoyable bid parties. I stopped in at the Toronto and Japanese bidding parties, skipped Charlotte and Con Jose, hit Minneapolis-in-73 and the Bucconeer thank-you party.

And, as I've done just about every night for better than 20 years of worldcons, I wound up

each evening in the CFG suite, usually arriving about 12 or 1, and staying until they closed up at 4 or 5 in the morning. This is still the place where most of my friends, most of the old-time fans and pros, come to gather -- and we owe Linda Dunn a huge thank you -- she was in charge of the SFWA Suite and didn't want to cart home all the unfinished booze, so she made a present of it to CFG. (That's Cincinnati Fantasy Group -- my home club -- for the uninitiated. We're not bidding for anything, we're not running for anything...but we've had a hospitality suite about 90% of the worldcons during the past half-century. It's where trufen and fannish pros like Robert Bloch and Bob Tucker in the past, and me and George RR Martin and Josepha Sherman and Jack Chalker and Joe and Jack Haldeman in the present, gather late each night at worldcon to visit and unwind a bit. Stop by at 3 or 4 in the morning, and you can usually find Bruce Pelz, Craig Miller, Tony Lewis, Rick Katze, Joe Siclari, Tom Veal, and others of that ilk deciding the fate -- and location -- of future worldcons.)

Oh -- one other party I forgot to mention. My daughter will recognize it, because she's experienced it before. Once per worldcon the Japanese put on a private, invitation-only party, and never invite more than a handful of guests, almost always writers or editors. You show up and realize that you are outnumbered about 4-to-1 by your hosts, who do -everything- for you. You look around for a chair, they rush over and carry it to you. You look thoughtfully at a food tray and it is instantly brought to you. You sit down, and are quickly engaged in conversation by some member of the hosting party who has read every one of your books and stories and can discuss them intelligently. If another guest sits down and starts talking to you, the host who -was- talking to you discreetly vanishes (but stands at the ready to talk to you again the instant your new companion departs.) It is quite an experience, let me tell you. This was the fifth or sixth year in a row I've been invited; over the years I've run into Connie there, and Silverbob, and Greg Benford, and David Brin, and Nancy Kress...but the only person I see there year in and year out is Rob Sawyer, who just happens to also be a Seiun winner.

Programming:



I did a really dull (I thought) panel on collaborations, a surprisingly interesting panel on all the writers and artists who had lived in or passed through Chicago over the course of the last century, a well-attended and active panel with Kris Rusch called "Ask Bwana" which included repeats of all the questions I've been answering for years in the Ask Bwana column, and an okay panel on writers who were too good to be famous or too famous to be good or some such thing.

It was when someone complained that I didn't spend as many hours talking to newcomers as I had at some worldcon 10 or 12 years ago that I pulled out my schedule to find out why – and that's when I realized just how hard they work the pros, at least the more prominent ones, at a worldcon.

I had 4 panels. Doesn't seem like much. But I also did an "official" one-hour autographing, and two unofficial ones – one at Larry Smith's table, one at Asimov's. I led a tour through the History of Worldcon exhibit, which was another 75 minutes. And I did 2 TV interviews and 3 radio interviews and a print interview; there's another 6 hours. I won't even count the two photo sessions, one for Locus, one for a French magazine. I did a half-hour online chat. I showed up for the Hugo "rehearsal" because as a presenter I needed to know where to pick up the envelope and the Hugo. I went to the pre-Hugo ceremony, and I attended the Hugos; there's 3 more hours. I did a 75-minute kaffeeklatsch. I did a 75-minute reading.

When the dust had cleared, I figured that I was onstage or obligated or call it what you will for over 21 hours, not counting all the time it took to simply get from one venue to another – and that doesn't include 4 business dinners, 2 business lunches, and 2 business breakfast/brunches, which had to take another 16 or 17 hours. I'm not objecting, mind you – I loved every minute of it (well, except for the two minutes when I lost two more Hugos), but it does explain why I had so few blocks of time available before the late-night parties.

And I'm not unique; I can think of a couple of dozen pros who worked as hard, and poor Harry Turtledove probably worked considerably harder, given his Toastmaster duties.

The Eisenstein Art Exhibit:

All during the 1960s and 1970s Alex Eisenstein (husband of author Phyllis Eisenstein) spent the bulk of a major inheritance on science fiction art. The public finally got a chance to see it at Worldcon: he had a large room in the display area, and had most of his stuff hanging there. (Not the Frazettas, which were too valuable.) He had almost 100 paintings by Emsh; another 30 or so by Kelly Freas (including the wonderful **Martians, Go Home** cover), a bunch by Schoenherr, some Virgil Finlays, a lot of other stuff. A truly wonderful exhibit.

The Art Show:

Not all that impressive this year. Nothing by Whelan, Mattingly, Rowena, David Cherry, Frazetta, Gurney. The only major artists represented were Bob Eggleton and Don Maitz.

The Huckster Room:

More books than usual, but I only bought two the whole weekend. Usually I go there hoping to find some new specialty editions or fanzines and semi-prozines that I hadn't previously seen, but this time they just weren't there. NESFA had a phenomenal weekend, selling close to \$30,000 worth of books from their single table; and Larry Smith told me he had a record weekend. Some of the other dealers weren't as happy.

I had some new books out: **Putting It Together: Turning Sow's Ear Drafts into Silk Purse Stories**, from Wildside; **The Branch**, from Wildside; **In Space No One Can Hear You Laugh**, from Farthest Star; and Fiona Kelleghan's massive **Mike Resnick; An Annotated Bibliography and Guide to His Work**, also from Farthest Star. Farthest Star missed the con with my 4-in-1 **Compleat Tales of the Galactic Midway**, which will be out in September; and Obscura Press missed the con by less than 2 days with **Magic Feathers: The Mike and Nick Show**, a collection of my 11 collaborations with Nick DiChario. As it was, I think I signed over a thousand books, including the ancient ones that always come back to haunt me at worldcons.

The Fan Lounge:

A wonderful idea. Huge room, divided into fan

history and fan lounge. The lounge had tables and chairs, sold old magazines and fanzines (and I bought more fanzines there than books in the dealers' room). Dozens of Hugos and program books and photos and ribbons and badges from different years were on display. A very nice place to relax, located on a level between the restaurants and the dealers room. It was run by Janice Gelb and Pat and Roger Sims, and a lot of CFG members volunteered their time in various capacities.

#### The Hugo Ceremony:

I lost another Hugo to the Female Person From Colorado (so what else is new?), and one to Michael Swanwick. I had the pleasure of handing out the Best Novelette to my good friend Jim Kelly, a most deserving winner. And I picked up the Seiun (Japanese Hugo) for Best Novel. I was sure I was going to say "Domo obligatto" rather than "Domo arigato", but I got it right; I also spend most of the time thanking my Japanese translator, Masayuki Uchida, for without him I'd never have won the Seiun, any more than I could have won the Prix Eiffel Tour last June without my French translator, Pierre-Paul Durastanti.

Leslie What also made me a beautiful little trophy that I just love, so much so that it's sitting beside my four Hugos right now. It's a tiny lucite mountain, with two miniature spaceships, shaped exactly like Hugos, crashed into it, and engraved at the base of the mountain is "Chicon 2000: You wuz robbed!"

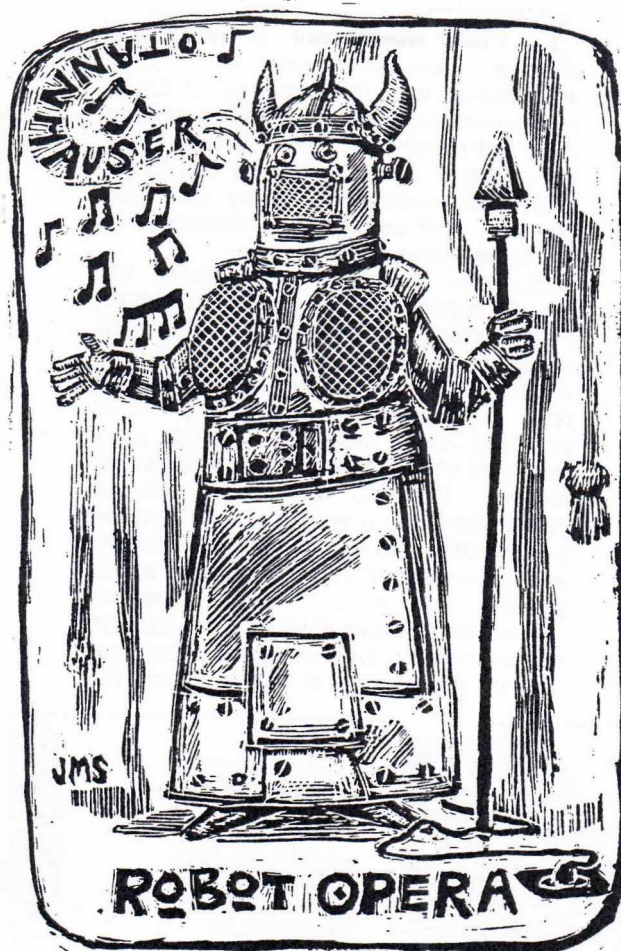
OK, that's a preliminary overview of the worldcon. I averaged about 5 hours of sleep a night, ate like a king, and, as I do at almost every worldcon, had the most fun I'll have all year.

The same, alas, can't be said for Carol. We went to the Field Museum Wednesday, and did some shopping in the Loop on Thursday. Then, Friday morning, as she was showering just prior to going to the Art Institute, she slipped, and as she was falling, she came down hard on the little metal extension atop the water nozzle that activates the shower, and tore a goodly piece of flesh out of herself. We patched her up, cleaned the wound a few times each day, and while it didn't prevent her from going to the Art Institute Friday or the Aquarium Monday or any of her

duty dances such as the Hugos, or meals with editors, she was understandably uncomfortable for the last 4 days of the con. First thing we did when we got home was take her to the doctor, who cut off some flesh but pronounced the wound Uninfected and Healing.

The Babes for Bwana t-shirt craze seems to be catching on. Kris Rusch wore one (with "President: Oregon Chapter" printed on it) to our 'Ask Bwana' panel (and BJ Galler-Smith and Ann Marston were in the audience wearing theirs), and Carol wore hers ("International President and Founding Member") to the Listserv party.

I realize I was (purposely) vague about some of the books and stories I sold at Worldcon. As I sign the contracts and make them official over the next few months, I'll be happy to announce what they were. In the meantime, I think I'd better end this report and see if I can't produce something for next year's Hugo ballot.





*John Berry returns with another tale of his career in forensic fingerprinting, as originally told in  
Fingerprint Whorld ...*

## **"But I REALLY Believed Him!"**

*John Berry*

Fingerprint experts who have made a positive fingerprint identification, have had it checked by another expert and passed the information to the investigating police with its evidential status. duly file the papers and forget about the case. We presume that the investigating police are completely confident of the identification and will interview the offender knowing that unless a defence of legitimate access is proffered and accepted, a prosecution will invariably follow because fingerprint evidence does not require corroboration.

But I have occasionally been involved in cases where the offender, when being interviewed, is so emphatic in his denial of involvement that some police officers (and not necessarily inexperienced ones) are clouded with doubt and reluctantly find themselves swayed by the utter sincerity and bewildered demeanour of the interviewee.

Recently, I identified a superb left thumb imprint on an interior car mirror, after search. The same person had also made marks on a 'soft-drink' can found on the back seat of the vehicle, which had been involved in a road traffic accident whilst stolen. The police were informed of the availability of evidence of identity. Because the case was so straightforward, it was given to a young policewoman to deal with. The offender was interviewed in the presence of his parents, and in an hysterical manner denied that he had ever been in the car, either with or without permission, and had no knowledge of the accident. His

parents, being very respectable people, were deeply distressed by the accusation, stating their son was always at home at night, was extremely well behaved, and couldn't possibly have stolen the car or crashed it. The policewoman admitted that she found herself in an impossible position . . . she believed the fingerprint evidence, but she was also convinced of the youth's innocence . . . something, she said, was 'terribly amiss'. She temporarily solved her dilemma by taking the youths finger impressions and submitting them for re-checking against the 'scenes of crimes' marks. Of course, the marks on the vehicle were made by the person she had fingerprinted. She was instructed by her guv'nor to charge the youth with various offences associated with the theft of the vehicle. I gave evidence of identity at the Magistrates Court, and the youth was convicted despite strenuous denials of involvement. Counsel asked for bail for appeal purposes but the appeal was not pursued.

It is understandable that an inexperienced police officer can be psyched into believing false but well-acted protestations of innocence, but a dozen years ago a very experienced police officer felt that the fingerprint system had seriously erred.

A man had forced an offertory box in a Roman Catholic chapel, and had thrown brass candlesticks all over the place, and

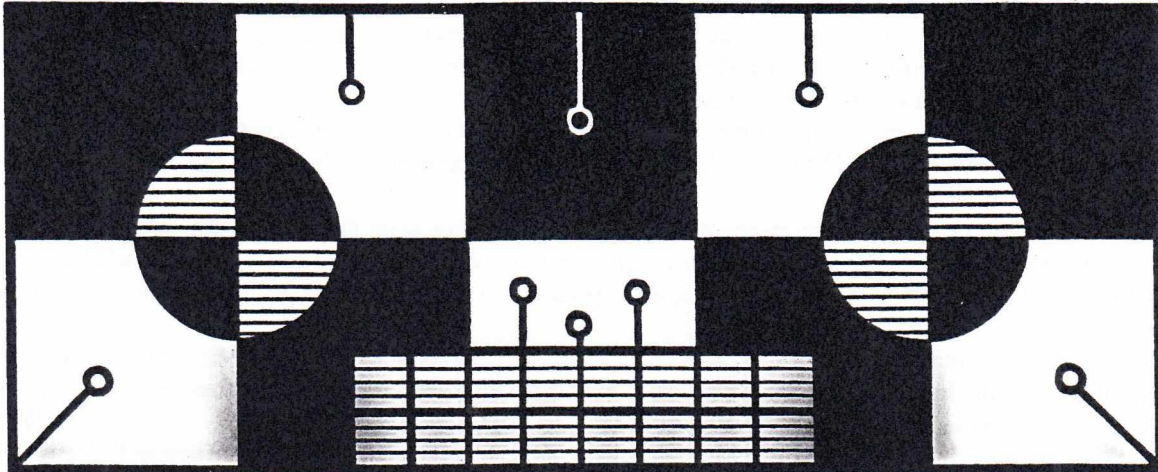
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*Call this an op-ed piece, Gene's opinion, not necessarily Challenger's.*

# HUMAN VS. ROBOT: A BATTLE OF WORDS

*Gene Stewart*



*Sean Russell Friend*

Print fen can write coherently, even persuasively. They can spell. They can think, of all things. They hold opinions that have been thought out, and they articulate them in an orderly way. They can spell. They understand basic grammar, know many obtuse and wonderful things, and embody the saying that All things are known in fandom. They can collect, edit, collate, and distribute beautifully published zines and keep arguments straight for decades. They can spell.

Electronic fen can do none of the above consistently, few of them for even brief stretches, and only one or two of them with any hope of inadvertent success.

There are some electronic fen who began in print. Often they lose skills in the exchange. They hop from careful print to careless, hasty chat and the many shortcomings they managed to cover up with patience and time are revealed. Spell-checkers don't help much. They learn the joys of flaming and forget cool manners and cold logic. They get carried away with instant feedback and imagine that they're communicating, when all they're doing is echoing the chaos.

There are email discussion groups and message board forums, too. These lie somewhere between the artistry of print and the squalor of chat. Sloppy is the best description for what one finds here. Sloppy expression of sloppy thinking, sloppy typing, and sloppy adherence to any traditions that might try to apply some form or order. Exchanges in these forums can be better than those in chat, but as often lead to decay and decline, even flame spats and huffy exits.

Print demands more, perhaps due to its illusion of permanence. People tend to take more care with writing destined for print, and they tend to look it over before sending it out. Some even write more than one draft; imagine that.

In electronic exchanges, it can appear on the other's screen the instant it's typed. First drafts are the only drafts and everything scrolls off the margins. Anonymity's built-in. This leads to the mask effect. It's as if one wears a mask. One can become anything or anyone, and hide behind a persona, or a dozen, without apparent consequence, because the screen keeps changing anyway and no one bothers looking back.

While it's true there are pen names used in print, there is no mask effect in print that comes close to the one pertaining to electronic communications; a pen name in print offers some anonymity, but it's



traceable. One cannot change one's nom de plume instantly, or rotate through a list of them inside a minute, or claim to be from anywhere in the world with a postmark staring the recipient in the face.

In electronic battles of the witless, anonymity's a given. Multiple identities allow cluster-flaming and topic threads tangle as more pile on. And no one can effectively be traced, so pointless hit-and-run trouble-making thrives.

One glance at an average chat room's contents at any given moment suffices to demonstrate its low level of intellect and communication. Now contrast that glimpse with a look at the message boards and email digests. While there's a good deal more information being swapped, the attitudes and stances remain at a low level, as does the spelling.

A look at any page of the average print zine shows a density and polish the other forums cannot aspire to. And a look into the letter columns will reveal discussion, discourse, and correspondence on a level unreachable by the other communications.

Some compare email to letter writing, but it's closer to a miscengenation between telephone and telegraph communications. While they're one-sided like a telegram, they're fairly fast and easy, like telephoning.

And yet in letters more is revealed – would Grandma save bundles of old telephone call transcripts in her dusty cinnamon attic? Do people scan through email files sighing nostalgically? Isn't a letter, with its touch of hand to pen to paper, more personal in more ways than anything electronic could be?

And so it is with zines. Print zines bring something personal to communication that is missing from the electronic hybrids. It offers a touch of humanity in an increasingly dehumanized world.

We lose this human touch at our peril.

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## **“BUT I REALLY BELIEVED HIM!”**

*CONTINUED*

had committed other minor damage. I identified an offender after search from marks found on various items and informed the local police. The man was taken to the police station for interview, and denied the charges, stating he had never been inside the chapel. He sobbed his innocence, and asked for the attendance of the Parish Priest. When the priest entered the police station the man sank to his knees in front of him and in an impassioned manner swore his innocence. The priest believed him, and told the police they had arrested the wrong man.

The first intimation I had that the local police thought a fingerprint error had been made was when the Detective Chief Superintendent came into the fingerprint office and asked for the marks to be double-checked. The senior detective told us that he was entirely confident with the identification—he had actually signed the correspondence—but he had been asked to ensure that the fingerprint aspect of the

identification was in order, which of course it was.

At the Committal Proceedings, where I proved the marks, I continuously received dark looks from the priest and the investigating police officer, both of whom firmly believed in the man's innocence. When I was leaving the courthouse, the police officer sidled furtively up to me and whispered hoarsely “you've got the wrong man.”

On the day the trial was fixed, my front door was knocked at 5.30 am in the morning, and a police officer instructed me not to attend the court.

In the afternoon, the officer in charge of the case telephoned me, and said that the man had pleaded guilty to the charge, and asked for eleven additional cases of sacrilege to be taken into consideration.

“I'm sorry, but I really believed him”, admitted the embarrassed officer.

*Challenger is always open to tales from the jury. Here are some good ones.*

## MY TIMES IN THE BOX

*Robert Kennedy*

Having been called to jury duty a number of times in Los Angeles County and Ventura County, my experience might be of interest to others. As **Milt Stevens** wrote in **Challenger #12**, it used to be that the time one had to serve in Los Angeles County was for a month, longer if you were on a jury at the end of the month. In Ventura County you are only there for one day unless you get on a jury. Los Angeles County is now the same. Both are "one day or one trial."

### *Los Angeles County*

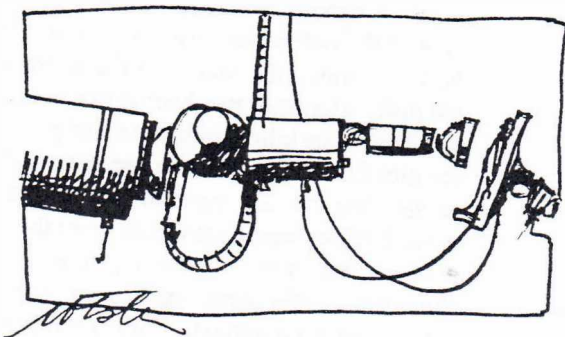
My very first call to jury duty was in the 1960's in Superior Court. I was accepted on the first jury for which I was called. It involved a young man and his girl friend (or wife, I don't remember) who were charged with trying to break into a drug store. While the man was trying to break into the drug store, the girl wandered around some stores nearby to see if she could hear any noise from the break-in. At some point the man was spotted and people started chasing him. The girl got in their car and drove beside him trying to get him in the car. The chasers were so close that she had to make several attempts before he was finally able to get in the car. The police later found the car at a motel and the two of them in one of the rooms. The evidence against them was overwhelming (eyewitnesses, articles in their car, etc.). I was chosen as foreman. The first vote we took saw 10 Guilty and 2 Not Guilty. The Not Guilty votes were both women. One of them appeared to be in her 70's and the other probably in her 40's. It was about noon, so we went to lunch. As we were waiting for lunch the older woman tried to discuss the case with me. I told her that we could not discuss it outside the jury room and that was that. When we got back from lunch she changed her vote to Guilty. Oh boy, it was then obvious that she just wanted a lunch at taxpayer expense. Engaging the other woman in discussion, the best reason she could come up with for her vote was that the defendants were new to California. After a while we were able to get her off that and she

finally voted Guilty. So, back to the court room and I delivered the verdict.

The next jury panel for which I was called also resulted in my being picked for the jury. This time it involved three young men who were charged with killing a fourth. The evidence again was overwhelming and the only question should have been the degree of guilt. One of the defendants was the actual killer and he had stabbed the victim in the heart with an ice pick. The other two had beaten on him with tire irons. The killer claimed he had grabbed the ice pick from the soon to be deceased and struck in self-defense and that the victim then ran a considerable distance at which point they fell on him and beat him with the tire irons. Actually, the three defendants had seen the victim walking down the street. They drove around the block, stopped, took tire irons out of their car, and went after him. Any claim of self-defense was ludicrous. It did appear that it may have been a drug-related case and that the victim had been an informer. After much discussion we took a vote on the killer. To the best of my memory the vote was 3 First-Degree Murder, 7 Second-Degree Murder, and 2 Not Guilty. The Not Guilty votes were from a 20-something male and female pair with sawdust for brains. Thanks to them we were locked up for five days. One day as we were leaving for lunch I noticed the female looking through a doorway. I walked over to see at what she was looking. It turned out that the doorway was in a straight line to a holding cell that contained the three defendants. She turned to me and asked: "Don't you feel sorry for them?" After getting my jaw up off the floor, I responded: "No! And if you feel sorry for them why are you staring at them like caged animals?" She didn't answer. When it became evident that there was no testimony as to whether or not the victim could have run the distance claimed with the ice pick having punctured his heart, the First-Degree Murder votes changed to Second-Degree Murder. The two bubbleheads were still voting Not Guilty so we changed to discussing the other two defendants. Finally, everyone agreed on a verdict of Assault for them. Then the



bubbleheads agreed to a verdict of Manslaughter for the killer. We were getting very tired and now took another vote on the killer that was 1 Second-Degree Murder and 11 Manslaughter. The woman voting Second-Degree would not change. In open court we informed the judge that we had two verdicts and could not reach agreement on the third.



The judge then declared a mistrial for the actual killer and the verdicts were read for the other two. Through a very quick comment, one of the defense attorneys brought out the "hung jury" vote. The judge got upset and said we could not do that but it was too late since he had already declared a mistrial. At the time I thought we had screwed-up. Later I was glad that the woman voting Second-Degree Murder had refused to change, thereby forcing another trial. However, I have no idea what, if any, verdict was rendered in a subsequent trial.

My next call to jury duty was in the 1970's in Municipal Court. The first panel for which I was called involved a DUI. The Defense attorney excused me. The next panel was also for a DUI and I was accepted. The defendant had been arrested about 2:30 a.m. The defense brought an "expert" down from Sacramento. He was quite long-winded and really didn't help the defense very much. A humorous part of the defense was when the defense attorney obtained testimony that a person who had used mouth spray just prior to taking a Breathalyzer test would give a false reading. When we came back from lunch the defendant was using a mouth spray. When we got to the jury room we all cracked-up laughing.

In listening to people talk I thought we might have a hung jury. I was chosen as foreman. During the trial the defendant claimed that he had just been out looking for something to eat and a bar was the only place he could find food. Sadly for him, one of the jurors was familiar with the area and said there were several fast food places open even at that time of night. It was the end of the day so I asked if people wanted to go home and discuss the case the next day. They said OK so we called the bailiff and told him that we wanted to go home. He went off to inform the judge. While he was gone someone said why don't we take a vote just to see where we stand. I told the people to write Guilty or Not Guilty and the paper and if they were undecided and wished to discuss the case to turn in a blank paper. So, I'm opening the papers—Guilty, Guilty, Guilty—12 Guilty. I told the people that if we went in now the defense attorney would poll us to be very sure we were all in agreement and if that bothered them we had better wait. No problem and the defense attorney did poll us. After we were out in the hall we found out that the defendant had been drinking since the morning. It was surprising that he was not very drunk instead of a DUI. Under today's draconian law he would have been considered drunk.

The next case was a young man accused of assault against another in a bar. Actually, there were two attackers (who were trying to kick the victim's brains in), but the other one had skipped and was not present. We learned later that he had entered the building during the trial and was eating lunch in the lunchroom. Someone informed the bailiff and the other attacker was now residing in a cell. (A not very bright person.) After some discussion we took a vote. 11 Guilty and 1 Not Voting. On our questioning, the woman Not Voting turned out to be afraid that the defendant and his friends would come to her home and do terrible things to her. We were able to convince her that her fear was groundless and she voted Guilty. Oh yes, the attackers did not know that there were three off-duty police officers in the bar.

Next was a man accused of contracting without a license. During the questioning of the jury, the defense attorney elicited from me that my wife and I had been sued in Small Claims

Court by a painter who did not have a state contractors license and whom we had fired. He did not ask about the result, just asked if that would affect how I judged this case. I said no and was accepted. (We won the Small Claims Court case because we had done our homework and discovered that if a job was for more than \$100, an unlicensed person did not have a case.) The homeowner testifying for the prosecution in my opinion did not help their case. He was a psychologist who was obnoxious and had refused a reasonable request by the man who had done the work. The man had put in a patio cover and apparently it leaked. Anyway, we went to the jury room, looked over the evidence, and took a vote. 11 Not Guilty, 1 Guilty. After awhile the man who was voting Guilty (and who had been on the DUI case with me) went to the bathroom. When he came back he said, "it's not worth it" and changed his vote to Not Guilty. You can imagine the reaction of the worker on hearing the verdict. It was "thank you, thank, thank you," to all of us jurors. I believe (but am not positive) that if he had been found Guilty, he may have been barred from ever receiving a state contractors license. Although it was never discussed, I think our verdict just may have been an example of "jury nullification." At least that was rather much my thinking.

And here's one I almost forgot about. A man in his early 20's and his high school girlfriend were being tried for stealing an expensive model airplane from a hobby shop. A man had grabbed a model plane that was hanging from the ceiling, ran out the door, and jumped into his pickup truck that also contained a young female. They then took off and were chased by some people who had been in the store. The thief drove down a dead-end street and had to reverse himself so that the people chasing them were able to see the windshield. I don't remember the circumstances of how the two on trial were arrested. Anyway, these two were on trial and I was on the jury. There was testimony from people who had been in the store and who claimed to have gotten a good look at the male who grabbed the plane. The people chasing them claimed to get a good look at the two people in the truck. Both the man and the girl testified claiming it wasn't them. The girl claimed to have been in school at the time.

The school principal testified for the defense that he had checked a record and it indicated the girl was in school at the time of the theft. After lunch, the principal got back on the stand and had to reverse himself. Apparently he had not checked the right record and when he did so at the lunch break it was very clear that the girl had not been in school. What a blow for the defense. The male also testified that he had tinted windows and someone on the outside would not be able to recognize anyone inside. A hazy point on my part is some other testimony given by the man. I don't remember what it was (this was some 26 years ago) but other testimony for the prosecution clearly refuted it. The defense attorney in his closing argument even apologized and said he didn't understand why his client had lied. During our deliberations we asked if we could see the pickup truck. We were allowed to do so and it appeared that a person could see who was in it. We asked if someone could sit in the truck so that we could be sure. The request was denied. Obviously we found the two idiots guilty.

#### *Ventura County*

In the 1980's while still working I received several jury summonses. Each time I was excused for medical reasons. After retiring in 1993 I felt better so went for jury duty the next two times

The first time I showed up it was to sit in the jury room all day, never being called. So, it was read a good SF book, eat lunch, continue reading the book, then go home at the end of the day.

The next time I did get called for a jury. The case involved a man who was charged with





beating his wife. We were informed that he was shackled (although we could not see the shackles) and asked if that would affect our thinking. Everyone said no. There was very extensive questioning by the judge, the prosecution, and the defense. Among other things, we were asked about our education, marital status, and opinions on various subjects. We were also asked about any trials we had been on previously. So, obviously I had to mention the trials in Los Angeles County and whether or not the juries had been able to reach verdicts (without indicating what verdict we had reached). The judge, as well as the prosecution and the defense excused a number of people. After a considerable time there was a break. When we returned the defense attorney dismissed me. That was that and I went to lunch and sat with one of the potential jurors who had been dismissed earlier by the judge. She was a scientist who was from some Asian country and not familiar with our legal system. I told her that it was obviously the reason for the judge dismissing her and she agreed indicating that she really didn't understand what was going on. Although the prosecution and defense never tell you why they dismiss you, I think it is reasonable to conclude that my dismissal was based on my previous jury experience. I had too much experience for the defense to want me on the jury.

That's it for now and I hope to be called for jury duty again.



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*A million thanks to everyone.*

# THE TCHOUPITOULAS

## CHOO-CHOO ...

You know what I first loved about New Orleans? *The nights.*

Late at night, I mean, *late* at night, hours I couldn't even reach these days, I would leave meetings of the New Orleans Science Fiction Association and drive home through the silent city. What I would feel would have no name. Part of it was the heaviness of the humid air. Part of it was the age of the funky and often dilapidated housing flanking the streets, often streets with names like *Melpomene*, from the Greeks, or *Tchoupitoulas*, from God knows where. A goodly percentage of it was the acceptance and humor I'd found in the fans, the people. And there was the shush of the wind and of Time through the branches of the willows and the oaks.

I called this sensation – for lack of a better word – *texture*, but that's a cold term for a warm feeling. A feeling that said I had become part of a heritage, part of a reality ... a flawed heritage and a primitive reality, maybe, but nevertheless, it had welcomed me, and it was here, with me, sensual and subcutaneous ...

"Subcutaneous" ... Yes, New Orleans did quickly get under my skin. I had lived in California for eight years, throughout junior high and high school, and I had begun and would finish college there. But I found New Orleans infinitely more friendly, infinitely more funny, infinitely more inviting and accepting than my birth state had ever been.

Was this true of fandom as it was for "mundane" life? Less so, because in California I had the weekly meetings of the fabled Little Men to look forward to, and the company of the Andersons and Alva & Sid Rogers and Chelsea Quinn Yarbro – then a fan, just like me – to treasure. In NOLA there was NOSFA, a giddy group of like-minded lunatics – different only in that they were my own age. Friendly, crazy, approachable, and active in a way the Little Men were not, NOSFAns were into *fanzines*. Led by Don Markstein and Rick Norwood, they were hardcore apans – most notably in SFPA, the glorious Southern Fandom Press Alliance, and K-a, the great comics apa. They had a monthly clubzine, *Nosfan*, and even a genzine – a good one, too: *Nolazine*. As someone who has enjoyed scribbling words on paper since the age of 6, this sort of fandom was obviously for me.

After two – or is it three? – DeepSouthCons, a worldcon bid and a worldcon, innumerable Saturday nights doing nothing at Faruk von Turk's and almost as many Saturdays churning out another episode of *The Oriental Fox Trot Museum*, after a thousand shared movies and meals and a zillion fanzines, I can safely say, how right I was.

There's so much I'd like to tell you about New Orleans and its fandom, so many stories and so many people. The Tent of the Turk. Our DeepSouthCons. The Symphony Book Fair. Clarence Laughlin, of the light ... and Roger Lovin, of the darkness. All, of course, couldn't fit into this issue. Well, there will be more issues of **Challenger**, and in the fannish life of this city I've found another constant to which I will be returning.

Here and now, some bits and pieces of New Orleans' fannish history, from the legendary era of Room 770 to date ... with some sports thrown in. (And some horror. I personally vouch for the Bessie story in Dennis Dolbear's "Tales of the Stumble Inn". Dolbear called me the day after it happened, and his was the voice of a dude *righteously spooked*.)

<– This illo, by the way, should be familiar. It's by Peggy Ranson, and was used to decorate the Nolacon II freebie bags.





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## Bulletin # 2

*The cover – by who knows? – to the second Nolacon progress report.*



*Famed in fannish legend is the party in Room 770 of the St. Charles Hotel, at the first Nolacon, or Nocon as Roger Sims calls it. He wrote up his version of the party shortly thereafter, and recently revisited and amended his account..*

## SATURDAY NIGHT PARTY IN ROOM 770

ROGER SIMS

*Illos from the original by LEE HOFFMAN  
traced by CHARLIE WILLIAMS*

(Note: the regular typeface is as best as I can read it a faithful repro of what I wrote in a SAPSzine, **Hay is for Horses**, right after I returned home from Nolacon. (Not Nolacon I, because I reject back unnumbered anything but World Wars!) The san serif writing is my comments and thoughts now, as I type from the original. Also I should say that I have not done much in the way of correcting the grammar. However I have corrected most of the misspellings. [And my spellchecker has hopefully caught the rest – Editor.]

The first thing that I need to say is that Nolacon was my second worldcon. So I knew about the ways of fans at worldcons. But I did not know about the party in Frank Dietz's room. I believe that either Rich Ellsberry or Max Keasler were in the room. Frank's room was a single. It may be necessary for em to explain to the younger fans



reading this, just exactly what a single room entailed. In today's world all hotel rooms have either a king-sized bed or two double beds. But in 1951 and for some time a single room had one single bed. A double room had either one double bed or two single beds!

About eleven P.M. on Saturday two things happened in Frank's room: (1) the room became very crowded with fun-loving fans; (2) the House Dick called for the umpteenth time. At this point either Max or Rich suggested that the party move to room 770. Room 770 was separated from the rest of the rooms on the floor by a fire door. Also the room was next to the stair well. This caused the noise to go up or down instead of to the other rooms on the floor. Therefore no one complained which meant that what the house dick did not know could not hurt us.

The hotel detective did not show up at the party even once. I cannot say how many drinks were consumed or even how many showed up but I can say that the next morning when I left the room I found a stack of four trays each holding 24 empty glasses.

I do not believe that I had the nerve to write the following.

Now in my estimation room 770 will attain immortality in fandom, and as you read on you will understand why I make this claim.

The room contained four beds occupied at least part of the time by Richard Ellsberry, Ed Kuss, Max Keebler and myself.

Thursday night all four of us slept in our own beds. Friday I think all of us did so except Ed Kuss who occupied a couch in the lobby because Dale Hart, a Texas fan, not having a room, claimed Ed's bed for his own. He also claimed it Saturday night. How it came about that Ed reclaimed his bed for Sunday night was never discussed. I slept in my bed for three of the four nights that we were booked into the room: Saturday night, Bob Johnson and Frank Dietz shared my bed while I stayed up cutting out very large letters from Xmas wrappings to place on the wall. **DETROIT WANTS YOU.**



Detroit fandom, in the guise of Ed Kuss, Agnus Harook and myself, had planned to throw a bid party Sunday night. Howard deVore thought that a party would convince the fans in attendance that Detroit was serious about wanting to hold a worldcon and would vote for us. As you all know, while many did feel this way, more did not, and 1952 became Chicon II.

But from about 4 in the morning until about 6, I cut out letters. About the time I finished Frank and Bob woke up and left the room. I decided I had hit the wall and really did not want to attack Sunday's activities without some sleep. As I crawled into bed, Dale also left and about the same time Ed came in. So for at least part of Sunday night all four of us slept in our own beds.

For an update on the original occupants of the room: Ed is dead; Richard and Max have not been heard from for over 40 years; and as for myself I leave it to the reader to make appropriate remarks.

At other times by Bob Johnson and Frank Dietz (my bed), Dale Hart, a fan from Mexico City (Ed's bed), Ed Kuss (Max's bed) and myself and Richard (Richard's bed). I don't know the reason but the House Dick did not bother us here so we had fun. Or at least the sober ones did.

About one we ran out of mix, so someone called up room service and asked them to send up some. When it arrived I paid the hotel boy \$1.60 for four bottles that in my estimation weren't worth sixty cents. Right there and then I said to myself I will not buy anything else from the hotel unless I can't help it. Dietz knew of an all-night drugstore where we could buy some mix, so we started out for it. Frank had left his shoes in his room and did not feel like going down the street without shoes on, but fortunately a number of fans had taken off their shoes so he put on one of their pairs and with his shirttail hanging out and a drink in his hands he accompanied me through the hotel lobby down the main drag and to the drugstore to buy the mix. Although a lot of people thought we were crazy no one said anything to us.



Along about three thirty I decided – because most of the fen had left and because Ed Kuss was asleep (and because there was nothing left to drink except a half bottle of vermouth and nobody there liked vermouth) that the party was over and everybody would leave in a short while – that I would go down to room 335 and watch or participate in a poker game going on there. There were two games in progress, a small one and a large one. Both filled to the gills. So I thought I would watch the big one. The players were Mel Korshack, Fred Brown, Moe Greenberg, and Lee Jacobs. They played a no-limit table stakes game and after watching money pass back and forth across the table for an hour, I thought that I had given the rest of the fen at the party time enough to go home and I went back to my room.

I now believe that Bob Tucker was also one of the players. The big game was a no-limit table stakes game and the small game was a nickel/dime game. It had seven players, so there was not an empty seat. Would I have taken one had there been one? I think so...

Two things happened while I was there. One, someone emptied an ashtray into a wastepaper basket that was directly under a window with a curtain. The ashtray had a cigarette butt that was not quite out. The wastepaper basket had some paper. After a few minutes the burning butt made the paper burn. But fortunately smoke from the basket was discovered before the fire reached the curtain. It was quickly put out by a well-placed glass of water.

The other thing happened during the last hand I watched. Mel Korschack was dealt a pair of aces in a game of five card draw. He kept the aces and a kicker. He drew *another* pair of aces! He was most fortunate to have several other plays in the pot who thought that they had the winning hand. The betting was fast and furious. Needless to say Mel was very happy at the end of the hand! While I do not remember how much was in the pot I do recall that I was impressed at the number of twenties



visible in the middle of the table.

As I walked back to my room I thought to myself how good it would be to go to sleep. Oh what a dreamer I was. I opened the door and the smell almost asphyxiated me, and the smoke almost blinded me. After the first sting of smoke cleared from my eyes a most terrible sight met them. Over in a corner was Ed Walters laying in a drunken stupor, with a mattress and box spring on top of him. I walked over and pulled the box spring and mattress off of him and pulled him to his feet. He rewarded me for my efforts by trying to choke me to death. I felt he didn't want me to help so instead of trying I tried to help myself from being killed.

In his defense he (a) was out of his gourd with strong drink and (b) did not squeeze too hard.

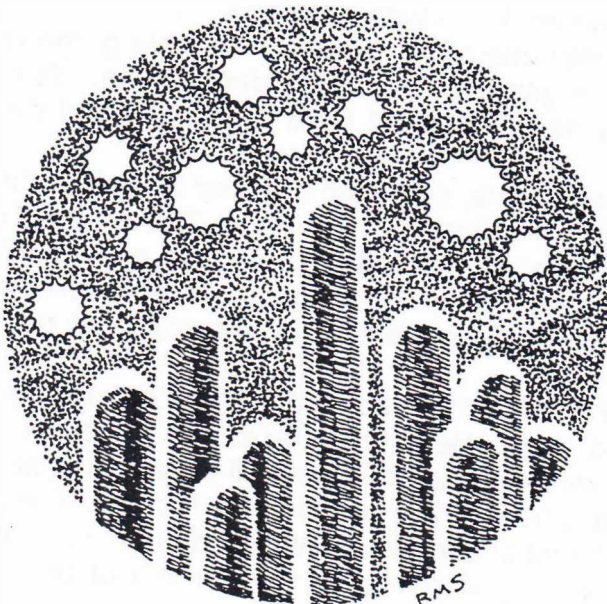
While I was gone there had been a parade in the room. The beds had been pushed together and placed directly in the path of the parade. The fan present [*led, it is said, by Terry Carr*] had marched around the room [*stomping over the mattresses*] singing and yelling at the top of their lungs until Walters had fallen on the floor and the bed was pushed on top of him.

About this time I decided to go to the bathroom. As I opened the door I nearly fainted dead away. In order for you to fully understand the sight that I saw I will have to go back to Frank Dietz' room. While we were there I personally saw one fan drink a glass of half water and half vermouth, followed by a glass full of *creme de mint*, followed by a scotch and soda. When he was drinking the *creme de mint* I told him he would be sick before the night was over. He shook his head. Well, to make long story short he did. In the bathroom of 770.

For some reason or another he didn't use the throne, maybe because it was too low. Instead he used the washbowl, and naturally stopped it up. This would not have been too bad had it not been for the fact that the faucets leaked. When I left 770 at 3:30 the bowl was half full and didn't look like it was going to overflow. My God how wrong can a guy be? At 4:30, when I came back, water was rolling off the bathroom floor onto the rug in the bedroom. I grabbed a glass and started bailing into the tub. [*Sickening account of unplugging the sink excluded*] Next I grabbed all the towels in the room (enough for four people) and mopped up the water on the floor, wringing the towels out three times in the process.

Thus I coped with a major crisis!

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I don't know how you felt about Nocon – the name I originally used – but speaking for myself “Nocon” expresses exactly what I think of it. The only part that I thought was any good was the “smoke-filled rooms” and these were bigger and better than I have ever experienced. Gee, don't fans have fun!!

(This from a neo who at the time had been to one MidWesCon and one worldcon. What an expert!)



*Editor's note: Readers interested in the party in room 770 are encouraged to check out the accounts thereof in Let the Good Times Roll, the Nolacon II souvenir book, edited by ... modesty prohibits.*

*One of the accomplishments of Nolacon II was bringing the geniality and genius of Mike Resnick back to the attention of fandom. The man who, with his wonderful wife Carol, had dominated worldcon masquerade competitions began to dominate Hugo ballots ... and for my money, it all began with the*

# NOLACON II TOASTMASTER GIG

*Mike Resnick*

*Art by Charlie Williams*

To whit, a transcription, from videotape, of my speech as Toastmaster before Nolacon II, the 1988 World Science Fiction Convention held in New Orleans.

Good evening, and welcome to the Awards Ceremony of the 46<sup>th</sup> World Science Fiction Convention!

Well, actually, that's not exactly true. If you'll check the third revision of the second printing of your program book ...

There, that wasn't so bad. You know, I met Bob Shaw one night this week. He toastmastered this in Atlanta [at Confederation in 1986], and he assured me that no matter how used I was to public speaking, when I actually got around to Toastmastering the Hugo ceremonies I was going to be *nervous*.

I explained to him that very few things make me nervous, except for muddy racetracks and overly aggressive redheads named Thelma. But here we are, and I think maybe he was right. For the past few weeks I've been having this recurring dream, and in this dream I'm sitting right over there, and John Guidry introduces me, and I get up, resplendent in my tuxedo, walk to the microphone, open my mouth – and I haven't got anything to say.

So yesterday I scribbled some notes, and last night I dreamed that John Guidry introduces me, and I walk to the microphone, and I know *exactly* what I'm going to say – but I'm not wearing any pants.

I'm afraid to look down.

Anyway, when the Nolacon committee invited me to be Toastmaster, I asked what the job entailed, and they explained that my primary function was to introduce the pro and fan guests of honor. I've been flown here at great expense to do just that – so you can imagine my dismay when I found out that they *already knew each other*.

So instead, as long as I'm here, I might as well hand out these little rocket ships.





At least I get to do it in New Orleans, which is a fascinating town just now recovering from a veritable plague of Republicans.

When you consider that mankind took his first tentative footsteps across East Africa four million years ago, and two hundred thousand generations later we are confronted by a Presidential contest between George Bush against Michael Dukakis, you can only draw one logical conclusion: Darwin was wrong.

So much for politics. On the plus side, New Orleans is also the home of Risen Star, the remarkable racehorse who won this year's Preakness and Belmont Stakes by huge margins. I freely admit that I'm a devout horse-racing fan, and I think you'd be surprised at how many science fiction writers are. Pat Cadigan, who's up for a Hugo tonight, is well known as a great horse follower. Her only problem is that the horses she follows are even greater horse followers.

Speaking of bettors, the former governor of Louisiana, the very colorful Eddie Edwards, was quite a gambler himself. It was at this very podium thin this very hotel, while awaiting trial for borrowing money from the Louisiana State Treasury to go gamble in Las Vegas, that he called a press conference and offered 8-to-5 odds that he'd beat the rap.

Not bright, but colorful.

Anyway, the story of Risen Star, who is currently recovering from a bowed tendon – for you fans in the audience, that's the equine equivalent of Twonk's's Disease – is really quite uplifting. Ten percent of his earnings are given to the Little Sisters of the Poor. It was an inspiring thing to do, and I went out looking for them in the French Quarter last night. I couldn't find them. I *did* find several *Big* Sisters of the Poor. They're on almost every street corner, along with their business agents.

Speaking of the Quarter, I hope most of you have had a chance to get there. In places, it's almost wilder than the Orlando party.

My favorite store is no longer there, but it was until about two years ago. It was known as the Endangered Species Shop. From the name, you'd think they specialized in selling science fiction novels to which there were no sequels, but in point of fact it sold ivory and animal skins and the like, and why it wasn't picketed by 20,000 students is beyond me. But it did go the way of all endangered species.

Bourbon Street is the Quarter's huckster room, and it's probably as hard to walk from one end to the other without being accosted by some fast-talking salesman as it is to walk through our huckster room without Dick Spelman trying to sell you a complete set of **Dumarest of Terra** for only \$1,600.

\$2,300, if you include New Orleans tax.

These days Bourbon Street seems to be divided into three equal parts, not unlike Gaul, but Bourbon Street's parts seem to be tee-shirt shops, brass shops, and strip joints featuring performers of indeterminate gender.

For you celebrity watchers in the audience, I should point out that the Hugo nominees are all sitting in these cordoned-off areas up front. The committee has asked that you neither pet nor feed them until the awards are finished.

Actually, some of them will probably spend all night here., since a number of the hotels won't be honoring Worldcon reservations until next Wednesday – which, coincidentally, is the very same day the next-to-final Progress Report is going out.

Fifth class.

That means the mailman tosses it on the road and hopes you trip over it.

Now, before we go any further, it's my unhappy duty to point out to you that the practitioners of science fiction, who write about longevity and immortality with such optimism, are themselves not exempt from the limitations that the Star Maker has placed upon all other mortals. Science fiction has been harder hit than usual this year, and among the departed are four former worldcon guests of honor: C.L. Moore, Alfred Bester, Clifford D. Simak, and perhaps the tallest giant of them all, Robert A. Heinlein. The complete list of our departed friends is on the necrology page of your Program Book, and we ask for a moment of silence for them at this time.

Before we give out the Hugos, I've got a few bits of business to do. Just before I came out here Algis Budrys slipped me five dollars and asked me to plug one of his books, so I want you all to know that Algis

is responsible for the sale of half a million copies of **Rogue Moon**.

I know I sold mine.

For those of you who are following the pennant races, we have some late scores for you: 3 to 1, 6 to 5, and tied at 2 to 2 in the top of the 11<sup>th</sup> inning.

On a more serious note, the Sheraton Corporation has asked me to announce that Dave Kyle is now banned from the use of the swimming pool. He leaves a ring.

At this point, I suppose I should draw your attention to the fact that for the first time in many years there is no screen on the Hugo stage. We offer no apologies for this; it was done purposely. We feel that the Hugo Award ceremony is one of the last bastions of the written word and of serious illustrative art, and if you must have pictures with your awards, we suggest a re-run of **Lost in Space**.

*[I introduce Nolacon President Justin Winston, Chairman John Guidry, and Guest of Honor Don Wollheim.]*

The Hugo Ceremony wasn't always the prestigious ceremony that it has become. The award wasn't created until 1953, when the very first one went not to a novel or a short story, but to Forry Ackerman as the Number One Fan Personality.

They made such an impression on fandom and Worldcon committees that they were dropped in 1954 (and Bob Silverberg has been trying, during his various Worldcon Toastmastering gigs, to give out the 1954 awards ever since).

They were back in 1955, and to show you how seriously they were taken, the legendary Lou Tabakow won a Hugo for the Best Unpublished Story of the Year. And Sam Moscovitz, arguably one off the two or three most identifiable fans in the universe, won a Hugo as Science Fiction's Mystery Guest.

However, they were back again in 1956, and since anything that happens two years in a row becomes a fannish tradition, we began taking them seriously and there's never been any suggestion since then that they should be discontinued.

No, categories have changed over the years. On occasion there were only two categories for fiction, and there was a time when if all the fans in the world were laid end to end – as I'm convinced happened outside the Cincinnati suite last night – they could still only win one Hugo among them.

Categories continue to evolve, even this year. I was personally hoping to open the envelope for the Least Anti-Social Behavior by a Best-Selling Author Not Under the Influence of Alcohol, if only to announce that there were no nominees. But instead this year's new category is entitled "Other Forms," which in these days of explicit inter-species sex truly boggles the mind.

Now, the Hugos are just one small part of Worldcon, and as I hand them out I'm going to be recalling to you incidents from other Worldcons, because most of us don't win Hugos.

*[I introduce Analog editor Stanley Schmidt, who presents the John W. Campbell Award to Judith Moffett.]*

More work goes into a Worldcon than meets the eye. Some of that work involves the creation of the Hugo Award itself. In 1973 the rocket ships didn't arrive on time, and the committee was forced to give out wooden bases to the winners.

I should point out that professional artist Ned Dameron, who did the cover to the Program Book, has designed the bases for this year's Hugos, which are the first ever to be shown in actual flight.

*[I present the Best Fan Writer Award to Mike Glycer]*

The 1971 Worldcon was held at Boston's Sheraton Hotel, and it had an open-air swimming pool which could be seen from all room above or, where it resided. One night I walked into your Fan Guest of honor Roger Sims' suite on the 23<sup>rd</sup> floor, and everyone was playing cards or reading or talking. There were



no empty couches or chairs, no place for me to sit down, and I was exhausted from lugging a bunch of books with me all day.

So I walked to the window, looked down, had a wonderful idea, walked to the center of the room, and announced that there were 500 naked people in the pool. You never saw a room empty out so fast, as they all made a mad rush to the elevators and stairs.

Well, I sat down in the empty room, and started reading some of the things I'd bought in the hucksters' room. But the room stayed empty. And finally, a couple of hours later, Roger, red of face and short of breath, entered and said, "We thought you were kidding!"

I said, "You mean I wasn't?"

And that is the origin of skinny-dipping at Worldcon.

There's a postscript to that story. The next evening it was about 45 degrees and raining, and some 2,000 hopeful voyeurs gathered by the pool, waiting for the previous night's skinny-dippers, all of whom had the intelligence to stay inside where it was warm and dry.

*[I present the Best Fan Artist Hugo to Brad Foster.]*

1972 was the year that Worldcons outlawed peanut butter. They really did. It seems that there was a fan who came to the masquerade in a costume of his own creation, as an underground cartoon character called The Turd. And his entire costume was about ten quarts of peanut butter spread across his pudgy little body.

But he hadn't realized that at Worldcon masquerades there are numerous bright lights, and before the evening was over the peanut butter had turned rancid. He ruined every costume that he brushed against and did considerable damage to the walls and curtains.

*[Best Fanzine is presented to Pat Mueller's Texas SF Inquirer]*

The 1968 Worldcon was held in Berkeley, California at the Claremont Hotel, later to be known in fannish legend as the Transylvania Hilton.

Worldcons were just beginning to get big at that point, and the Claremont had hardly any rooms, so most of us stayed at sleazy downtown Berkeley hotels. (There are no *unsleazy* downtown Berkeley hotels.)

Now, Worldcon was held at the same time as the Democratic Convention in the city of Chicago, and the local Hell's Angels decided to protest Chicago police brutality by killing a Berkeley cop. Suddenly all the hotels were cordoned off, and reaching the Claremont became a feat equivalent to climbing the Berlin Wall and getting to the other side.

I remember one night I went out to get something cold to drink, And I had three Berkeley policemen accompany me. I bribed each of them with a chocolate malt so we could get out quickly the next morning. It took two and a half hours to get to the Claremont anyway, which was when I realized, perhaps for the first time, that to outsiders such as policemen in the real world, we look even stranger than Hell's Angels.

*[Best Semi-Prozine award is presented to Charlie Brown's Locus]*

Prior to 1968, Worldcons weren't large enough to fill a single hotel, let alone the three and four we regularly fill these days, and we frequently found ourselves sharing a hotel with another convention.

*[A fan adds a comment from the audience.]* Yes, I'm coming to that one, but first I want to tell you about 1966, because it was at Tricon in Cleveland that we shared the convention with a convention of Scotsmen who donned their kilts, pulled out their bagpipes, and marched up and down the corridors all night long serenading us with bagpipe music.

I think it was the first, and I believe the only, case in history where the members of a Worldcon complained to a hotel that the mundanes were making too much noise.

*[Best Professional Artist goes to Michael Whelan]*

In 1967 we shared New York's Statler Hilton Hotel with a convention of Scientologists. To this day I still don't know why converted more of which to what.

But 1967 was also the year that an impassioned group of fans called *Trekkies* made their initial appearance at a Worldcon. At first we thought we might have a little fun running them off the premises, but then cooler and wiser heads prevailed, and explained that the show was on its last legs and we'd obviously never hear from it or them again.

So much for science fiction's ability to predict the future.

*[Best Editor is presented to Gardner Dozois]*

Every Worldcon is allowed to present one Special Award. In 1963 it was given to Isaac Asimov, right in the middle of his shtick about how he deserved awards more than anyone but had never won one. It was the only time I've ever seen Isaac speechless.

*[Nolacon chieftains John Guidry and Justin Winston present a special award to the SF Oral History Association]*

I want to say just a little more about the SF Oral History Association, because too many people don't know about it. They have more than 20,000 hours of recorded tapes and interviews, many with people who are no longer around. They have major speeches and addresses which will never be given again. They are underfinanced and underappreciated., and I hope all of you will take it upon yourselves to start supporting them. I'm sure they have a room or a booth here where you can find out what they are doing and how you can help. They're all we have; without them, we have no history.

Except for me. I'm going to give you a little more.

Now we come to the category of Best Dramatic presentation, and along about this time you must be wondering why we even bother listing the ever-present No Award, since it never seems to win.

Well, it did win in 1958 for Best New Author, but more to the point, it has triumphed in this particular category, Dramatic presentation, more often than Gene Roddenberry, Stephen Spielberg, or Stanley Kubrick, which makes it a formidable contender.

*[But not this year, as The Princess Bride wins the Best Dramatic Presentation Hugo.]*

The 1977 Worldcon was held in the Fontainebleau Hotel in Miami Beach. There were signs posted everywhere you could see that the residents should *leave no crumbs on the floor*. At first we thought this was merely because the maids were lazy – which indeed they were – but one night while going from one tower of the Fontainebleau to the other, we stumbled across a small army of *palmetto roaches*.

I had never seen a palmetto roach before. I hope to God I never see a palmetto roach again. They'd make dandy trophies if you could figure out a way to kill them without endangering your own life.

We immediately turned around, went back to our room, and scrubbed down the floor.

*[New Orleans' innovation, the category dubbed "Other Forms", wins a Hugo for Alan Moore's and Dave Gibbons' graphic novel, Watchmen]*

Worldcon voting wasn't always carried out quite the way it is nowadays. Prior to 1970 we voted only one year in advance, and there were no such things as mail order ballots. Those of you who survived the parties to the extent that you could crawl out of bed at nine in the morning and attend the business meetings heard somebody said something about the restaurants in each city and then you voted.

One year a Midwestern fan, Earl Kemp, decided to enter a gag bid – for Tijuana. It didn't take a



whole lot of votes to win in those days – 40 to 50 were usually quite sufficient – and when the perpetrator saw how well-received his proposal was, he did a very quick head count, and at the last moment he and his wife both voted for one of his main competitors. It's probably a good thing that he did: Tijuana, complete with its rent-by-the-hour hotel, missed being in the final runoff by a single vote.

*[Best Non-Fiction is presented to Michael Whelan's Works of Wonder]*

The 1976 Worldcon in Kansas City was billed as “the ultimate Worldcon,” and the proprietors, in the months leading up to it, became positively paranoid that people were going to try to get out of paying. So they announced that along with the normal convention badges that everyone wears, they were going to come up with a unique identification system that could not be replicated in a single weekend – and in the days and weeks leading up to the convention, that became the primary topic of fannish conversation.

Not to keep you in suspense, what it turned out to be was a hospital bracelet with your name imprinted on it ... and now that a dozen years have passed and Ken Keller, the Worldcon chairman, is no longer so sensitive about such things, I think I might as well reveal that a number of fans went to a local hospital, found a septuagenarian lady who was due to be released that Friday, convinced her *not* to take her bracelet off, and managed to get her into every function including the masquerade and Hugo ceremony.

*[Best Short Story is presented to Lawrence Watt-Evans for “Why I Left Harry's All-Night Hamburgers”]*

Phoenix can be a pretty hot town; it certainly was during the 1978 Worldcon, with the temperature rising to 120 by day and rarely dropping to under 100 at night.

One evening I went out for dinner with the legendary Lou Tabakow. Lou had heard about a fabulous rooftop restaurant not far from the hotel, and nothing would do but that we should go to that one and avoid the crowds. What he didn't know was that this was not a penthouse, but literally a rooftop restaurant, with no screening and no shade – and of course no air conditioning, since it was outside.

We sat down, ordered drinks, and removed our ties before they arrived. Our jackets were gone by the time we got our salads. I had my shoes and socks off long before the main course arrived. Then dignified, white-haired, legendary Lou, who in his time was both a professional writer and a worldcon chairman, looked around before dessert came, saw that we had all male waiters and that no one else was crazy enough to be dining on the roof, and finished this 4-star meal in his underwear, which is my one lasting memory of Iguanacon.

*[Best Novelette goes to “Buffalo Gals” by Ursula K. LeGuin]*

I remember everyone at the 1983 Baltimore Worldcon telling us they were going to make a profit. I remember everyone at the 1984 Los Angeles Worldcon assuring us there was no way



they could *possibly* make a profit.

I don't know about you, but I feel much more secure knowing where our future fantasists are coming from.

*[Best Novella? "Eye for Eye" by Orson Scott Card]*

I don't have any stories from Brighton last year. Everyone who went with me is still looking for the Corn Exchange.

So we'd better get on with our major award, the Hugo for Best Novel of the Year.

*[And it goes to David Brin's The Uplift War]*

There are going to be some very unhappy people tonight, if there aren't already. I think the audience should acknowledge that even making a Hugo ballot, no matter how much they aspire, is something that most people will never do, and give all the nominees one final ovation

*[A long standing ovation follows.]*

I have been asked to announce that the New Orleans Lagniappe Dance will be held in the Marriott Mardi Gras Ballroom at 11 o'clock, so you don't have to run, you have plenty of time to get there.

I've also been asked to announce that all Hugo winners are due on stage for photographs as soon as the Hugo ceremony is over.

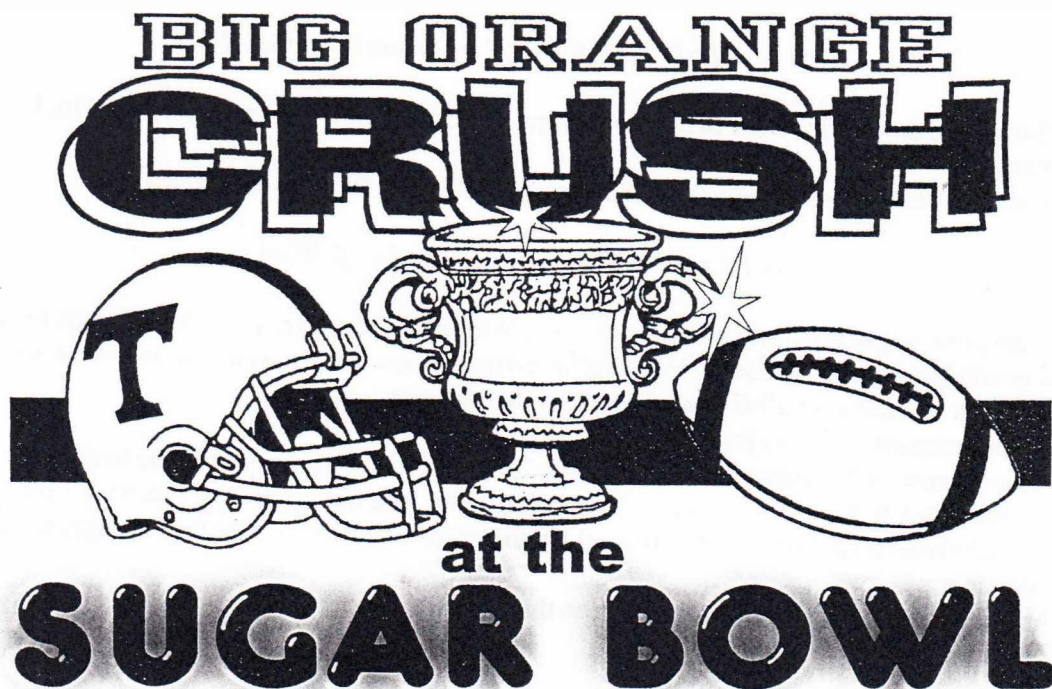
And finally, I've been asked to announce that the Hugo winners are due on stage *now*.

Thank you and good night!





*Lots happens in New Orleans ... and around New Year's, what happens is football ...*



*Charles Williams Jr. & Charles Williams III*

On January 1, 1986 the Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans was the site of one of college football's most unexpected upsets. It was also the scene of a remarkable display of fan support that surprised the host city, the television audience, and especially the arrogant, favored Miami Hurricanes.

The Tennessee Volunteers were 8-1-2 and #8 in the national rankings. They had already turned in a notable performance in an early September victory against Bo Jackson's then-#1 Auburn Tigers, and then went on to win the Southeastern Conference title for the first time in sixteen years. The SEC title had been won without the services of Quarterback Tony Robinson, who'd been injured against Alabama in October. Instead, Daryl Dickey (son of Doug Dickey, the head coach of the '69 championship team) was the man who had led UT to New Orleans. The Vols were coached by Johnny Majors, UT star in the '50's and lately the man who'd taken the University of Pittsburgh to a National Championship.

The Miami Hurricanes were 10-1 and had beaten many of that year's finest teams, including Oklahoma, who this very same night was playing #1 Penn State in the Orange Bowl. The second-ranked Hurricanes, led by QB Vinny Testaverde, freshman wide receiver Michael Irvin, and defensive stars like Bennie Blades were not impressed by the Vols. The 'Canes dismissed Dickey, running back Jeff Powell, wide receiver Tim McGee, linebacker Kelly Ziegler, and safety Chris White as "lucky" and "overrated".

Nor were UT's stars enough to impress the oddsmakers, who listed the Vols as eight point underdogs.

It would be Johnny Majors' Volunteers against Jimmy Johnson's Hurricanes, and the 'Canes were already being billed as the 1985 National Champions. After all, they had bigger stars, better credentials, and since it was believed that Oklahoma would beat Penn State, Miami would advance to #1 as soon as they brushed aside the Tennessee team. All this made Johnson's

boys extremely cocky. Star running back Alonzo Highsmith remarked that "The only Vols we know are A, E, I, O, and U."

But the Vol fans who streamed into New Orleans could not be ignored. The Hyatt was soon packed with orange-and-white clad Tennesseans, dressed in orange tuxedos and overalls, rattling the building with endless, off-key renditions of the school fight song, *Rocky Top*. They filled parking lots with motor homes and the air with barbecue smoke and whiskey fumes. They spread out all over New Orleans, spending a collective \$4.5 million. Many if not most Vol fans expected to lose the game, but this was New Orleans, *so let's party!*

One elderly UT fan found himself on an Hyatt elevator with a group of Miami fans and noticed one of the Hurricane boosters sporting a button that read "Piss on TN". As the old gentleman exited the elevator he turned and jabbed a finger into the offending button and grinned evilly: "I'm afraid we're gonna have to *whup your ass!*" Only hours before kickoff UT fans were wearing their own buttons—"Vinny Who?" and "Go Vols! Kick 'em in the Testaverde!"

Finally, it was New Year's Day, and as evening came on the Superdome filled to capacity. The first hint of the coming debacle was the color scheme: orange and white. The green and darker orange of Miami were completely lost in the sea of Vol fans. High above the gridiron in a VIP box, Tennessee Senator Al Gore and Congressman John Duncan grinned like fools at the tableau. "We outnumber 'em ten-to-one!" exulted Senator Gore, slurping an orange Crush.

The game began as expected, with the Vols falling for the oldest trick in the book, the fake kick. This set up an easy touchdown as Michael Irvin caught an eighteen-yard pass from Testaverde, and the 'Canes were ahead 7-0 early in the first quarter. The 77,432 in attendance appeared not to be surprised by how well Miami was moving through the Vol defense. No one could guess that this moment was the high-water-mark for the Hurricane offense.

On the first play of the second quarter, Daryl Dickey hit Jeff Smith for six yards and the tying score. *Rocky Top* thundered from the *Pride of the Southland Band* and thousands of delighted Tennesseans. The next several Miami possessions were clumsy and ineffectual, as plays were interrupted by the Vol defense, broken up at the line or batted away downfield. Finally, as Testaverde dropped back to pass, three Vol linemen broke through the Miami defense and own fumble in Miami's end zone for the lead, 14-7. Suddenly desperate, Miami attempted a field goal at the end of the half, and the kick fell short. As the sunned 'Canes left the field for halftime, Vol fans pelted them with packets of granulated sugar.

The third quarter should have demonstrated the character and resiliency of the Miami team. Instead, the Vols continued to pile on, thwarting every clever play Jimmy Johnson's staff could cobble together. Testaverde was accustomed to hurling the pigskin to his choice of several talented receivers, but on this night he was constantly being swarmed by orange-and-white defenders, either smothering his intended targets or simply pounding his ass into the ground. The closeup of his weary face broadcast on national television told the tale; millions of children watching the game learned new words as they lip-read Vinny's frustration and dismay.

While Testaverde sucked Gatorade and combed his hair on the sideline, UT's Sam Henderson found a hole in the Miami line and punched through a one-yard score. Down 21-7, now, Testaverde returned on Miami's next possession and threw the ball to the wrong team. Moments later Jeff Powell took off at Warp Speed, leaving track star Bennie Blades stumbling in his wake.

As the third quarter ended the score was now 28-7. The thousands of fans who had driven or flown from the hills of Tennessee to New Orleans were completely deranged with joy. *Rocky Top* had become a constant, droning background noise, and the screaming din had so confused the Miami team that they could not hear plays being called on the line.

The fourth quarter saw the Vol starters taking a well-deserved rest on the bench, allowing younger players an opportunity to taste the victory that now seemed inevitable. Some starters stayed on the field, such as Chris White, whose late interception would set up the final 6-yard touchdown play by Charles Wilson. Throughout the final quarter, the Hurricanes were never able



to mount any kind of offense, and as the final seconds ticked off and the fireworks exploded into the night sky, some Miami players openly wept in anger and frustration. Daryl Dickey's Vols had overcome the odds and won, 35-7.

Dickey, the mid-season replacement, was chosen the game's Most Valuable Player. Testaverde, who had been expected to lead his team to the National Title, was intercepted four times and sacked by the likes of Dale Jones, Darrin Miller, and Richard Brown, among others seven times, for a total loss of 84 yards.

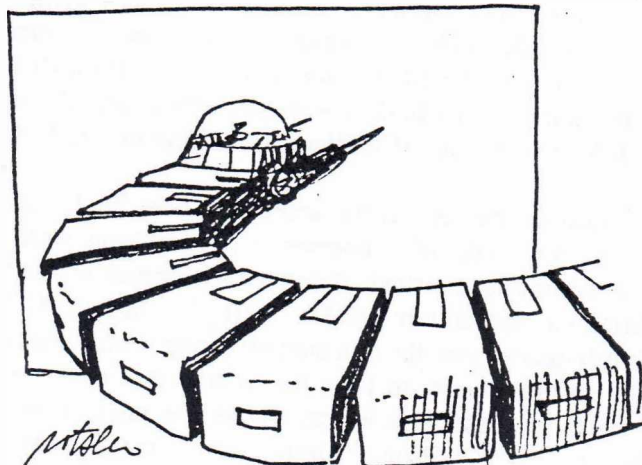
As a result of UT's stunning upset, the Vols rose to #4, the 'Canes sank to #9, and Oklahoma became the 1985 National Champions. Expectations for UT in 1986 were high following the shocker in New Orleans. Some were even talking National Championship, but it was not to be. UT suffered through a 5-6 season in 1988, following decent showings in '86 and '87. They would cycle through a series of great quarterbacks, from Andy Kelly to Heath Shuler to the legendary Peyton Manning. None of these talented men could lead Tennessee to the top of the mountain; it took the leadership of Tee Martin to take the Vols to a 13-0 record and the National Championship in 1998.

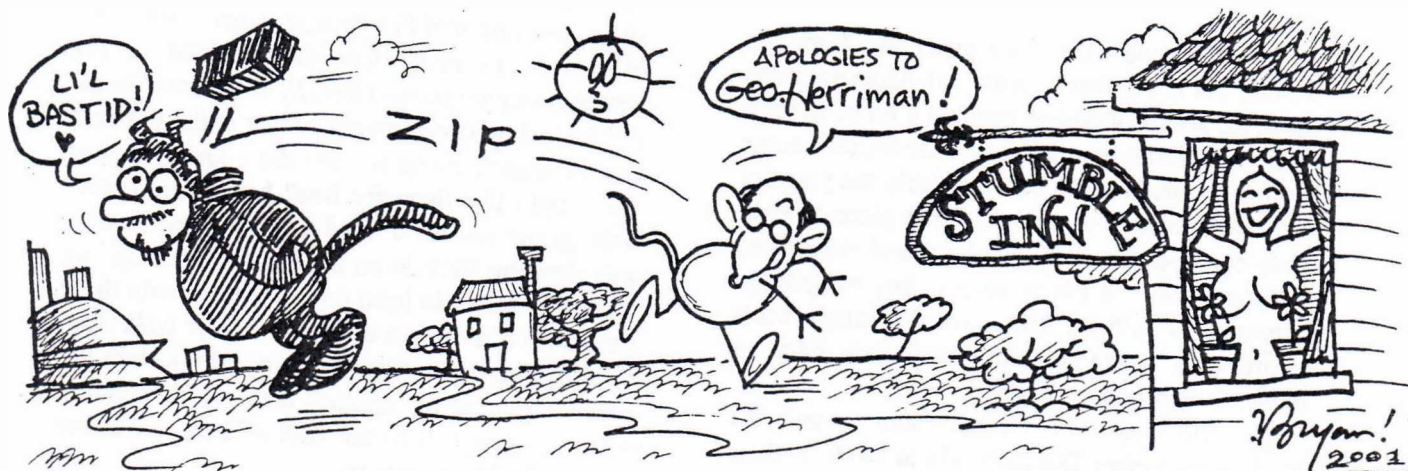
Miami, meanwhile, would rebound dramatically. They won the National Championship in '87, '89, and '9, and came close two other years. But Testaverde, who won the Heisman Trophy in '86, would never taste the sweetness of a championship. Instead, Vinny would go on to a so-so NFL career, playing for at least four different teams. Teammate Michael Irvin would play for the multi-champion Dallas Cowboys, and many other Hurricanes would play for the NFL, as well.

The Vols would send many players over the years to the NFL, some with prolific careers, but hardly anyone from the '85 squad went on to play pro ball. One notable exception was wide receiver Tim McGee, who was with the Cincinnati Bengals for nearly a decade. Daryl Dickey would have a short-lived stint with the San Diego Chargers before turning his attention to coaching.

For all those who were in the Superdome that New Year's night, the 1986 Sugar Bowl was a game of historic proportions. The Miami team learned humility, while the Tennessee team proved that, on any given day, any team can beat any other team, if they are determined, resolute, and lucky.

The fans from Tennessee were drunk with pride. In years to come, enthusiastic fans often told Coach Majors that, other than the birth of their first child, or their wedding day, or their first Christmas memories, that the Sugar Bowl of 1986 was the most exciting experience of their lives.





Yes, "The Stumble Inn" was a comic strip by George Herriman, creator of "Krazy Kat". It was also the name given the home of Dennis Dolbear in those dear days when ... well, we'll let Dennis tell the story. Stories, actually:

## TALES FROM THE STUMBLE INN

*Dennis Dolbear*

I have hosted many people in my house in New Orleans. Several times I've opened my pad on Betz Avenue for "Gras Cons" over Mardi Gras weekends, and later, the Jazz Festival brought many great people to my door. And there were other times, other guests.

There was Professor Martina Klicperova ... but this is not the place to speak of religious experiences. She was sent to me, and to New Orleans fandom, by a student of hers, the late, great, purple-haired wonder Zetta Dillie. Most of the time people pass through your life like ships in the night, but every now and then they leave you something really enduring ... and our friendship with her is such a gem. We shall speak of her at another time.

Then there were the Chicago girls - owners and staff of Leo's Lunchroom, which is located at 1807 W. Division Street in Chicago. My friend Chuck Wirstom, a student at the Art Institute, called me one year from up there shortly before the Jazz Festival. "Dennis," said he, "I need a favor." "Ask and you shall receive,"

I replied.

"Some friends of mine, four unattached young women who run a restaurant in Chicago, are driving down in a van for Jazz Fest. I'm going to ask you to let them use your shower. They can sleep in the van." I replied, "If you think four unattached young women are going to sleep in a van at my house ..."

Came the day when the van pulled up to my house. They piled out one by one. Donna wore a black leather miniskirt, black leather jacket, black leather boots. As an amateur chef, and not knowing just who I was talking to. I undertook to educate them in some of the finer ways of French cuisine. They were very sweet and didn't say anything as I proclaimed my cooking expertise.

On subsequent trips to Chicago, I've gone to Leo's Lunchroom. At 1807 W. Division, either you take a cab from the Loop or you walk through Cabrini Green, the worst housing development in the world (cf. *Candyman*) to get there. It is worth the journey. It is worth several such journeys. Leo's Lunchroom is beyond doubt the funkier establishment known. It's bestrewn with old



socialist newspapers and other indicia of the student / artist / boho area that sustains its clientele.

You know how such areas are. Sure, it's a slum, but it's *cheap*. Artists, intellectuals, poets move in, artists of course needing a lot of space – then the galleries come in for the artists, then come the funky eateries, and then suddenly the yuppies discover that this is really a great place to live. They can re-do some of the places and make them look beautiful. So the developers buy everything, renovate everything, and now the artists can't afford their space anymore, and they have to move. It happens everywhere.

Anyway, Leo's Lunchroom ... and the *food*. I remember Donna busily at work in their tiny kitchen, surrounded by steam and the heavenly smell of frying eggs, preparing an omelette for me that was well worth killing the population of a good-sized Venezuelan village. And these were the people whom I'd presumed to lecture about cooking! Boy, did I show my ass! But it was the best omelette I ever had.

But back to their visit – it was exceptionally enjoyable, the ladies were wondrously charming. On the last day, Vern Clark, fellow Fabulous Furry Fan Bro, and I decided to forego the last day of the Jazzfest in favor of showing the Leo's Ladies around the town. We went from bookstore to used record shop, with occasional stops at funky bars of our acquaintance and, of course, lunch at the Hummingbird Grill, located at what was then the heart of New Orleans' Skid Row district, and a New Orleans legend in itself – 24 hours a day, a greasy spoon with great diner food, and an ambience that would have to be experience to be believed – at any night, particularly during the carnival ball season, you might find transients, winos, and whores rubbing elbows with formally-dressed rich folk coming from some exclusive Mardi Gras ball – and no one minding at all, which must say something about this city.

Anyway, after we finished at the Bird we moved to the Quarter, which wasn't as crowded as normal – so many people were at the Fest for the last day. We were lounging at Record Ron's shop – the ladies were making a few last purchases before getting ready to depart – when Jerry Brock, noted local music figure and co-founder of

WWOZ, the famous local blues & jazz radio station (*where for years, Justin Winston, a.k.a. Faruk von Turk, did a thoroughly demented radio show – the Oriental Fox Trot Museum – aided and abetted by Dolbear, John Guidry, and Ye Ed, amongst many others--GHLIII*) mentioned to me that he had two *performer's passes* to the Festival, that he wasn't going to use--did I know anyone who might like them for free? I sure did, I said, holding out my hand. And a few minutes later I was slapping Vernski on the back and telling him that good deeds do have their reward – with these passes we didn't have to wait in line or walk from a far-distant parking space – we'd drive right up, practically onto the grounds themselves. Bidding a tearful farewell to the staff of Leo's, we tore over to the Fair Grounds.<sup>1</sup>

And we got there for the last three or four sets, seeing Fats Domino, Dr., John, the Fabulous Thunderbirds, and snatches of other acts – they have about nine or ten going simultaneously – and particularly some of a fine bluesman whose name I've unfortunately forgotten, who did an excellent mixture of classics and original compositions. At this point he was doing Mississippi John Hurt's "Hoodoo Woman":

- *She got the Mojo Hand*  
*She got the john de ConQueroo*  
*Woo-Wee—*  
*When she gets that mojo working,*  
*Then my black stuff just won't stay still.*

### Class Discussion Questions

1. What do you think Mississippi John Hurt means when he refers to his "black stuff"?
2. Why won't it stay still?

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<sup>1</sup>Chuck Wirstrom told me later the girls didn't know whether to take up a collection to get me and Vern to move to Chicago or simply move to NO themselves. As Sandy, the leader put it, "there really is such a think as Southern hospitality." (*Ted White, N.B.--GHLIII*)

I don't know if the Hospitality Exchange still exists in these days of the Internet, but in the early '90s, it provided me with some wondrous experiences. I was traveling a bit in those days, so for a small fee, I joined a club and got a guidebook listing people in other cities who were willing to host other club members. It was an interconnected group of people willing to lend you their couches. Of course, you had to host visitors in return, so being in New Orleans, I probably hosted more visitors than anybody else.

But none like *Stardancer*, and her dance collective from San Francisco – who were also a crew of *nudists*. That's a whole 'nother story there! 44 years old and a body any teenager would envy. JoAnn Montalbano, a long-time New Orleans fan and friend, came over while they were ensconced in my record room. She fixed me with that look in her eyes. "Well, Dennis," she said, "I see that you're being affected by *other considerations*" – as *Stardancer* walked *stark naked* through the room – "but let me tell you, they're going back to California, and you're going to be stuck in Louisiana with *me* for the rest of your life!"

## THE SATURN BAR

Through the Hospitality Exchange I had a group come in from Holland, traveling in America shooting advertisements for boots. Photographers ... and *models*! When I met them out in front of my house, one incredibly beautiful girl got out of the car, and I complimented her, saying, "You're everything I'd expect a model to be!" She scoffed, "But I'm not ze model, I'm ze hairdresser!" And out came this other girl, who made the first one look like *H. Ross Perot*. These are the kind of people that, not only am I not allowed to date, I'm not allowed to *look at*. But they were nice, nice people.

The model's boyfriend was the camera guy, named Theo. He could have been a model himself. "Okay," said he, "we want to hear zome New Orleans muzic." I am a music buff – guests often slept in my "roomful of records" – so I was more than happy to oblige. Our first stop was the famous Maple Leaf Bar, where Kermit Ruffin and the Barbecue Swingers were playing. The music was nice but nothing particular was *happening*. If

I could have brought them to a James Booker or Exuma concert, they would have known what a hot night in New Orleans was like!

So afterwards, we cruised about the city, and they asked, "Let uss go to a really *fonky* bar." Okay by me! Off we went ... to the **Saturn Bar**.

The Saturn Bar is on St. Claude Avenue, in New Orleans' famous Ninth Ward – which natives pronounce "Nint' Waw'd". It used to be a classic working man's neighborhood, but it's going to seed now. The bar has a ringed Saturn in neon in its window. Inside – it looks like somebody's garage. What that's stuff piled in the corner? Treasure? No – *junk*. The decor looks like they ran around the neighborhood for years picking stuff off trash piles. "Look, there's a chair that still has most of its stuffing; so what if it's only got three legs?" Indeed – so what if the chair I'm sitting on has stacked phone books for the fourth leg? I can still sit on it ... after a fashion!

A miniature Statue of Liberty stands at the end of the bar. Photos of customers and events from the 1960's crowd the walls ... along with murals by Dany Frolich's uncle. Dany always considered this guy the source of his talent, talent which made him the dominant Mardi Gras artist in the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The paintings are *weird*: eyeballs riding motorcycles and shit like that. Dany's uncle never took LSD – I don't think he needed to. The tabs responsible for those painting were *bar tabs*. Whenever he ran up a big enough bar tab, he'd do a painting to pay it off.

Always something interesting. That's the Saturn Bar.

But that night it wasn't so much what was there, as what went on. When the Dutch people and I entered, there was a crowd gathered in the center of the room ... all looking *in*. Suddenly, two *bare female legs* in *cowboy boots* poked *straight up* from the crowd, unfolded and opened in a *V* ... and everybody oohed and ahhed. Then the owner of the legs rose and showed herself.

Blonde, very pale, slender as a willow ... had *Galadriel* been a white trash stripper, this is what she would have looked like. She was *buck naked* – we'd walked into the middle of a *bachelor party*!

The bachelor in question was next to the bar ... in *chains*. His hands were chained behind him, his legs were chained to the ground, and in





front of him pranced this stripper. She sprayed her body with whipped cream, and leaned in so he could lick it off ... without actually touching her. Whereupon he howled like a dog. " *H O O O O O O O O O O O O ! HOOHHOOHHOOOOOOOOOOO ...* "

I hope this guy's marriage was 1/10 as much fun as his bachelor party! I haven't even mentioned the guest who showed up in the *Nauga* costume. That's the beast from which you get *naugahyde*, you know. Theo turned to me. "Oh Dennis! Thees ees a *great bahr!* I am zo glad you brought us *to zis bar!*"

A postscript: I told this story to Annie and Justin Winston at a local restaurant. There was a group sitting next to us, and after I concluded, they got up and *relocated* to another table on the other side of the room, possibly on the theory that I might tell another story.

Annie's reaction: "I have never been so

humiliated in my entire life."

## THE THUNDER DID IT

Bessie Harvey was a sweet, tiny, frail old black lady who came down for Jazz Fest in 1983. That was an auspicious year for New Orleans. Our friend Rusty Burke moved to town from Knoxville, coming with Skip Andrews – a computer whiz – and another pal, Vern Clark. Bessie arrived with her agent, a lady named Judy.

Bessie was a folk artist, who hoped to sell her art to galleries and out at the Jazz Fest. She had about ten pieces with her. I took one look at her stuff and thought, if she sells any of this to

anybody I will be amazed. Well, lucky I didn't make a bet. She sold everything, and for a very good price.

Bessie's art style was what you could call *African-American folk art primitive*. Imagine a piece of driftwood with a lot of branches. Bessie would affix found objects to those branches – a little pickaninny or Raggedy Ann doll – a piece of calico – arranged in a certain way ... *like, but not like* a face. Alone, the flotsam she assembled would not be spooky, but in context the entire effect was either silly ... or *disturbing*. Almost all western art in some way derives from the Greeks, who exalted the beauty of the human body. Their gods represented human perfection. African artists come from a completely different tradition. African gods are usually monstrous, in a nightmarish way that is suggestive of Lovecraft. *Disturbing.*

Perhaps “disturbing” *is* the best word. Nancy Collins, who was to become the creator of

Sonja Blue and the writer of some of the goriest horror stories ever, saw Bessie's sculptures, and said, "I'm really freaked out by those things."

Lotta *juju* in this stuff. Lotta *bad juju*.

Jazz Fest was on Friday and on Saturday, and it was on Saturday night that *it* came. Supposedly Bessie and Judy had spent part of the day in the French Quarter, where a weird Creole guy riding a bicycle came up to Bessie as they were walking down the street. Judy didn't hear it exactly, but his words affected Bessie profoundly. Somehow he *knew* that she was an artist. He told her something to the effect that she had tapped into *the other world*. She said something odd to Judy: that she knew this person was not a human being, but something supernatural in human guise. When I heard that at the time, of course, I blew it off. "That's the most ridiculous shit I've ever heard," I said. Idiot!

The rest of us had a wonderful day at the Fest, and made it back to the house just before a classic Olympian New Orleans thunderstorm, a storm so bad that we were isolated in the house. It ripped leaves and twigs from the trees. There was street flooding. We certainly didn't want to drive.

It was about 10:30 or 11 at night. Skip and Rusty were in my back room, which they and Vern had turned into a combination toxic waste dump and book fair. All had been spending as much as they could on books and had stacks and boxes of them everywhere. In the front Vern and I were doing our electronic music number. We had candles burning in the gloom, and Klaus Schultz electronic music booming and echoing through the house. Vern and Rusty were shaking *shok-shoks*, long vanilla or cocoa-bean pods, that would make a spooky *shishing* sound when you shook them. Considering the spirits that were around at this time, that was not a good idea. But we were *white*; we knew there was no such thing as ghosts and spirits, right? *Idiots!*

Bessie was sitting outside, on the kitchen stoop, underneath the awnings, eating an orange. I asked her how she was and she said, "Oh, fine," and I left her be. Half an hour later, I went outside again, and all I found were the orange pips. It was raining like a motherfucker, and the lights were off in the record room where she'd been sleeping. I figured she'd gone to bed. Later, I went to bed.

When I woke up, Judy was talking

frantically on the phone. To the police. She was giving them Bessie's description. Bessie was not in the record room, or in front of the house, or anywhere. She had *disappeared*.

Vern and I got into the car and cruised the neighborhood. We thought she had wandered off in the thunderstorm and gotten confused. Maybe hid under an overhang of a house. We drove all over ... and there was no sign of her. We were all intensely concerned.

She never turned up. Later that day – it was her birthday – her kids called, and I tried to cover up for the fact that I'd lost their mother. Judy stayed an extra day helping us look, then took a plane back to Tennessee.

When Judy got to Alcoa, she found that Bessie had been discovered ... at home. On Sunday morning – less than 12 hours after I had seen her in New Orleans – her neighbors had found her on her front porch, rocking back and forth, apparently catatonic. That could be explained – she hadn't taken her insulin. But it was what she kept saying ...

"The thunder did it," she said. "*The thunder did it.*"

When she could talk coherently, Bessie claimed that, in the middle of that storm, while Vern and I listened to music and the rest of the house slept, she was *taken up* from my yard by a *cow-like beast with horns, and wings*. She was taken up into the sky, where her sculptures were fighting against demons, and transported through the sky back to her porch on Alcoa, Tennessee. *The thunder did it.*

Needless to say, over at the Inn, we were pretty spooked—so spooked that Nancy actually moved out temporarily, saying she couldn't take the vibrations and just the possibility that whatever had happened that night might happen again.

But Burke and I, heirs of the Classic Greco-Roman tradition of rationality and science, made of sterner – or maybe just slower – stuff, decided we'd investigate and find out exactly what had happened, and get to the bottom of this "mystery." And we came up with the results described above.

"All right – I've given you a carbon of our list here – every possibility of transportation – planes, trans automobiles – and that last item. You checked the airport?"



"Right," Rusty replied. "No way. No money, no one by her name or description, and no flight that would have made it, as well as no way to get to N.O.'s airport."

"Bus lines – negative. Trains – hell, she'd still be on the train, two weeks later. If she's walked to the Interstate – some miles in a storm – and caught the first big rig headed north – and if he was going to her home town –"

"Yeah, like a truck driver is going to pick up a insulin-shocked elderly black lady? I'd classify that as impossible."

"Correct. Now if she'd caught a cab and hired A.J. Foyt as a driver – but I've got proof Foyt was elsewhere that weekend, preparing for the Indy 500.

“That leaves only one possibility,” I said to Rusty, trying to avoid looking at the remaining item on the list.

"Yeah, " Rusty said slowly, forcing himself to look at that list line too. "Remember what Conan Doyle said about possibilities? When you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains..."

"...no matter *how* improbable...."

"*Must* be the truth." And we looked at that last line:

THE THUNDER DID IT.

I didn't want to say anything, didn't even want to think about the implications of this nightmarish episode. Finally Rusty broke the impasse, got up and came back a moment later with two glasses and a bottle of Jameson's Irish Whiskey. He poured me a glass, and said, "Now drink that down real quick." I knocked it back, and Rusty poured again. "This time sip it slowly." I did so. He picked up both our glasses and said, "We will never again discuss or even *think* about this matter."

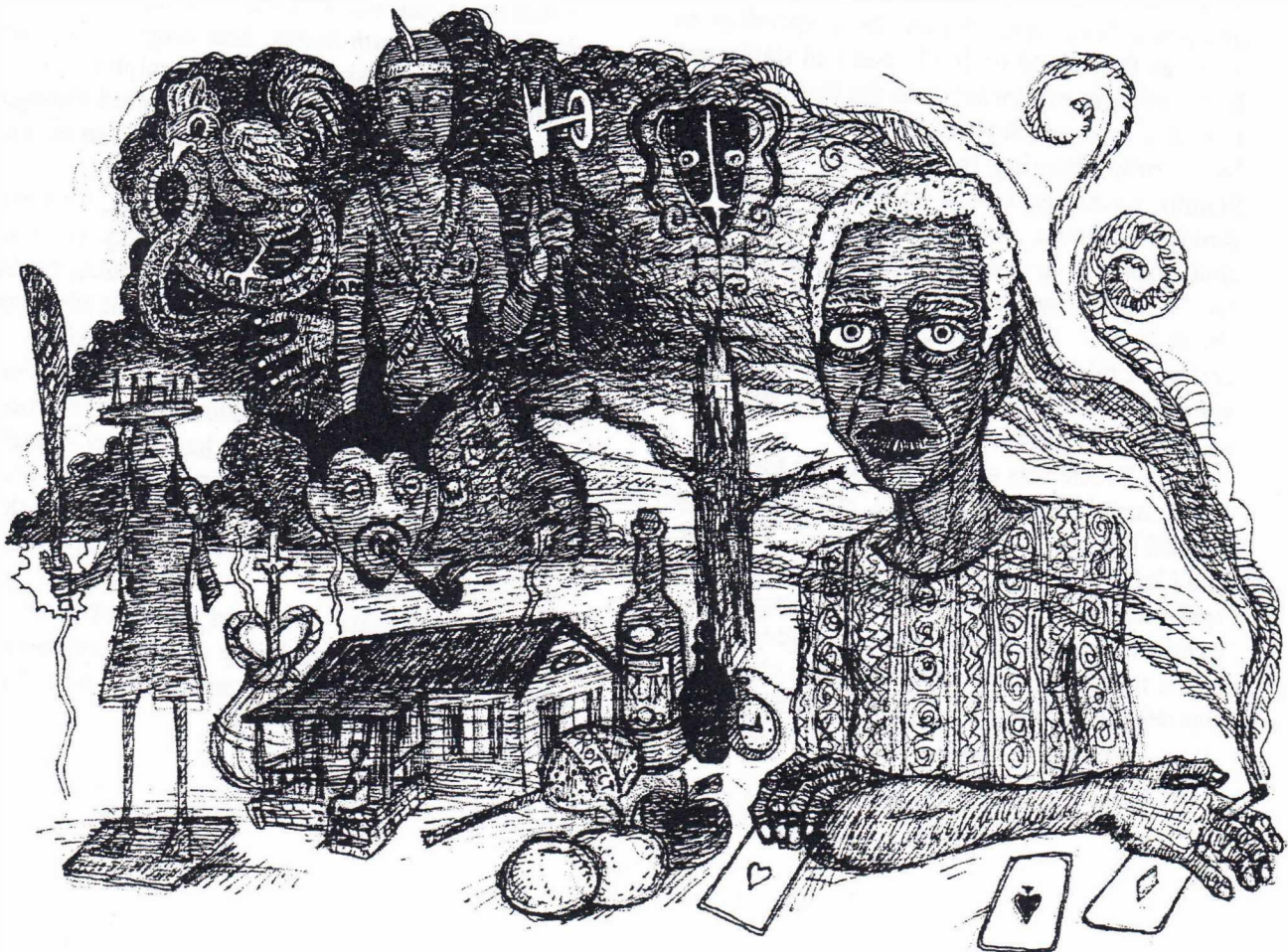
I spent years obeying his advice. I was happier for it. Then who should come onto **60 Minutes** one fateful evening ... but a story about a New York art dealer who was systematically ripping off African-American artists. Bessie was one of them. Seeing her reminded me of the whole story. It was like the Pit had opened up before me and I pitched headlong into it ... a nightmare version of Proust going into that goddam bakery shop.

How did she do it? How did she travel from my front lawn to Tennessee overnight? How? *How?*

I think we know. And until we hear a better explanation, it's the answer I must believe.

*The thunder did it.*

## Pass the Jameson's.





## THE *PETER'S PENCIL* PRINCIPLE

It's June 13, 2001, and life is changing, and about to change even more. This third part of **Challenger** #14 is the shortest, but it is by far the most significant.

Over the last few weeks I've been engaged – heh, that too – in moving, and like all moves it's a wake-up-hyperventilating nightmare. I'd lived in my three-room apartment on Fontainebleau Drive for 17 years. While small, my place was a labyrinth of cabinets and cubbyholes, and as I began to clean it out in early May I found junk packed into every cubic centimeter. No, you can bag junk without compunction and pile it by the curb. The stuff I found was *interesting*, it was *precious*, it deserved inspection and contemplation and evaluation and categorization: trash or treasure? I found very little trash. My brother knows. When he moved me from Greensboro, he found in my stuff a Little Golden Book without the cover and covered with pencilled scrawl. It was from his childhood. **Peter's Pencil**.

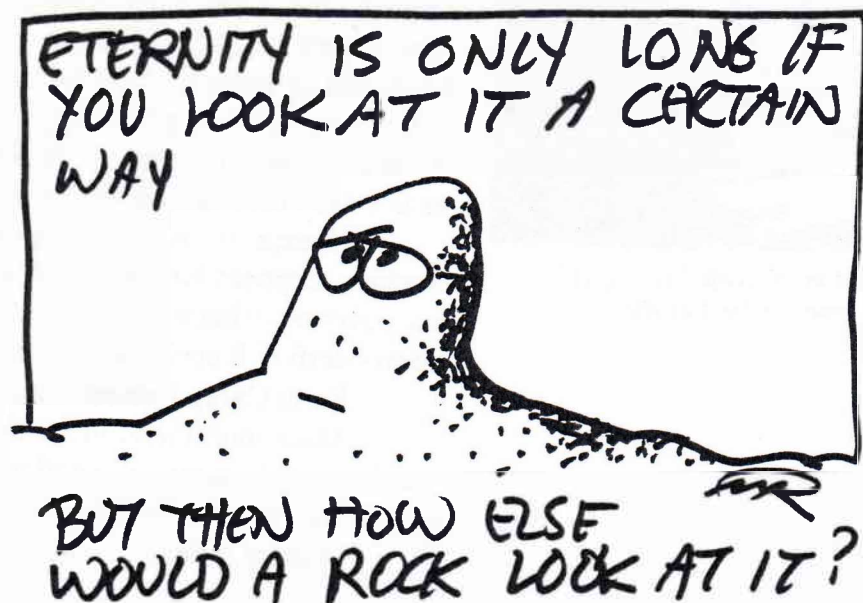
"Aw, isn't that sweet," he said. Then his face twisted into a rictus mixing anguish and disgust. "I'm busting my ass moving **Peter's Pencil** to New Orleans." And he hurled the book into the junk pile. The insensitive beast! Fortunately he was not around to dump the treasures I uncovered in this move.

I found books – tons of books, tons of tons of books – and apa mailings – *why* did I choose to save all my disties when I joined the Southern Fandom Press Alliance in 1971? (Is there anyplace to send that stuff where I can count on it being preserved?) Photos from the past – as precious as the books. The original masters for the Nolacon II souvenir book – where is Dell Harris these days? – and ah! Ned Dameron's original cover. Old letters I found – souvenirs of past relationships and discarded hopes. Old check registers from Greensboro and my first marriage, saved when I moved as hymns to my own bitterness. All (but one) went into the trash. Preserved most everything else.

I rented a storage locker and a U-Haul and moved much, straining my right arm in the process, not to mention the patience of the kind souls who helped me. 30 years of the GHLIII Press in a trunk. 36 years of my journal, in another. Mib and Tony and Susie in a box marked "Precious". What did not go there came here.

"Here" is a huge apartment on a beautiful, tree-shaded street short blocks from New Orleans' City Park. Compared to what I've known, it's a gigantic place – three big rooms, two bedrooms, two baths, a kitchen. Three rooms sport ceiling fans, and we have beautiful stained wooden doors and molding. Spoiled by 17 years without a rent increase, I suffered severe sticker shock when the cost of this place was revealed, but Rosy and I talked it over, and she has no worries, and so here I am. (So is my special neighbor Cindy, until her own new apartment opens up, but that's another story.)

I will miss 4217E Fontainebleau Drive, the pretty parquet ceiling in the living room, the wood paneling, even the crummy wallpaper in the bathroom which I never bothered to replace. I'll miss Archie, the pooch next door, and the pretty chimes from the church around the corner. But there's a reason for this move, a reason founded in faith and hope, and so *you* say goodbye. I'll say hello.







*Rose-Marie & me at Confederation, 1986*  
*Photograph by Jay Kay Klein*

Hello!

By the time you receive this issue Rose-Marie Green and I will either be married, or short days from it. It's to happen June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2001, at the Porcher House in Cocoa, Florida, scant hours after the launch of a Delta rocket from nearby Cape Canaveral. (Like Joe Major says, what's a good wedding without fireworks?)

I never expected this, you know. I had resigned myself to a life alone. I thought that love was a noble, failed experiment, and that dreams were just dreams. I thought I'd live out my span doing about what I was doing now, and that I would age alone. Not so bad, I told myself, most of the lifelong bachelors I've known have been solid guys whose lives seemed fulfilling. Besides which, I was 50 – even if I didn't feel it, I looked it, and by the half-century mark, the things we've tried and the mistakes we've made have formed a caul of possibility and impossibility around us. I thought life was a *decided* thing. That's true, isn't it? Life is *decided*. This is the way it is; the immutable, finished, concrete way it *is*. Isn't it?

It isn't. However short, life is too big to be written off. Especially because there are other lives involved, lives that resurface suddenly ... and change everything. That's what happened to me. Life has revealed itself anew.

At the end of this month, June, 2001, the beautiful lady I met at MidAmeriCon – a quarter of a century, half of my life ago – will take my hand, and for however long we have together, we will be together, and surprising, challenging, rewarding Life will surprise, challenge and reward us in ways I cannot even imagine.

Unexpected possibilities thrive in life's shadow, surprises lurk beyond fear and hope. You can never tell what will happen next, and it could be wonderful. It could save your life.

**From Camp Concentration:**

*Much that is terrible we do not know.*

*Much that is beautiful we shall yet discover. Let's sail till we come to the edge.*

Science fiction.



*Charlie Williams*



