



CHALLENGER

TWENTY-TWO

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To MAX Los Dood!  
VIVA J. G. Smith

# CHALLENGER 22

Summer 2005

Guy H. Lillian III, editor

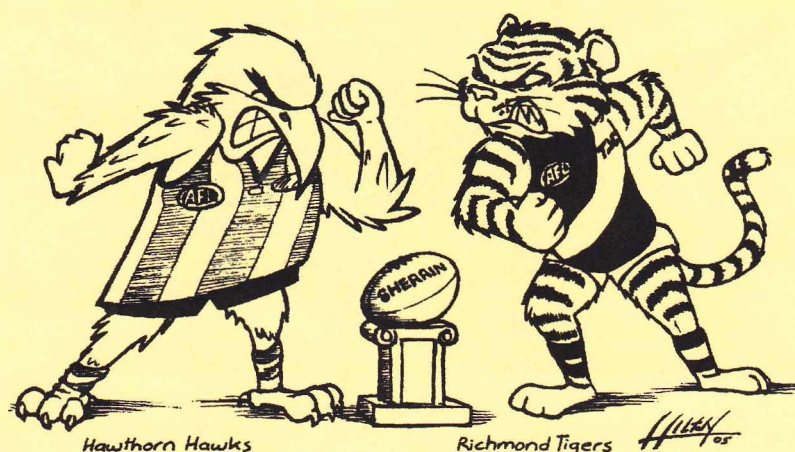
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Cover by JOHN DELL



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***Yikes!*** Look at that **sexist** cover! Shocking! Disgusting! A female Rocketeer we can accept, but ... those ...? **Unreal!**

Well, guys, that's why they call it *science fiction*!

Before you, in your hands or on the computer screen, behold *Challenger* no. 22, the summer 2005 issue. Even though I haven't distributed more than a few hard copies of *Challenger* no. 21, I have to pub another issue before worldcon, if only to thank Interaction for its Hugo nomination – *Challenger*'s sixth. I've already given spoken gratitude to con chairman Vince Doherty, at DeepSouthCon, but here and now let me include the readers who nominated us. Thanks, people. You make it possible for an energy-challenged faned to carry on.

I'll yap more about my real-world problems and their impact on my fanac in *The Zine Dump*, the ninth edition of which should be available soon on our website or for trade. Here in *Chall* – well, what do we have here, anyway?

Persistent *Chall* pals and champions **Mike Resnick** and **Greg Benford** are present with a remembrance of a magnificent friend and an interview, respectively. (Have I told those guys how much I appreciate their contributions to our every issue? Not often enough ...) **James Hogan** honors us with a funny piece of short fiction. It's been too long, Jim. We also welcome **Alex Slate** and **Gene Stewart** back onto our contents. Newcomer **Jim Sullivan**'s wit is welcome here. Fan art is given due notice in the latest of **Sheryl Birkhead**'s fanartist autobiographies – this one by **Taral Wayne**. Our bacover's by Taral – the basis, he says, for the color cover to a comic called *Gremlin Trouble*. Also, **Jerry Page** eulogizes the great Southern fan and artist, **Jerry Burge** – whom I met only once, and to whom Southern fandom owes a posthumous Rebel Award. Reprinted from *Chall* no. 11, we have **Charlotte & Jerry Proctor**'s hilarious "his/her" account of how their family faced Y2K.

Finally, since I pay for the printing, I have articles: a tale of New Orleans fandom, a legal war story, and an odd little reminiscence to cap things off. Plus, there's the fourth chapter of my DUFF report, an account of our days in Melbourne after Swancon. Again I must indulge myself in thanks, to **Craig & Julia Hilton** for putting us up (and putting up with us), and Craig in particular for his camaraderie and kindness in guiding me through the testosterone-soaked thickets of Australian Rules Football. (I don't know if the "footy" season will coincide at all with the 2010 worldcon, but if so, I call for a mass descent of fandom upon the Melbourne Cricket Grounds to witness a game. But remember Craig's warning: whichever team you support, do *not* say that you "root" for them. Not in Australia.)

Not a bad little fanzine, if I do say so.

Now ... about that cover ...

What can I say? Yes, *Challenger* has on hand beautiful *color* pieces from Brad Foster, plus exceptional art by Victoria White, Sergio Aragones, and others. So why choose **John Dell**'s uplifting – and uplifted – Rocketeeress? Well, do I dare call the illo a *grabber*? Betcha if I tried, its subject would bust my head with her helmet. Best simply to say that I think it – and her – stunning. The artist, a fine fella I met at "**Mr. Carl**" **Tupper**'s BSI Comics Shop in Nawlins, has made quite a name for himself as an inker in the comics biz; he's currently working on Marvel's *Young Avengers*. Eventually you'll see another piece by Dell, the Void ... just as beautifully drawn, but not as beautiful, if you get my drift. Thanks, John, for sharing this beauty with us.

And thank *you*, for reading this issue. Enjoy the worldcon! Rosy and I can't make it to Scotland – our work on Cheryl Morgan's *Ion Trails* will have to stand in for us. But we *will* be at L.A.Con IV – and, in the meantime, we'll see you in the pages.

# WELCOME



# CONFLICT/CONFLICTED

Alexander R. Slate

**I did not** support the war in Iraq. I did not believe the justifications, the weapons of mass destruction, were real. Oh, I believe that the intel community gave the administration reports to that effect, but I believe that the intel community deluded itself. Actually, I believe that the analysts ignored any intel to the contrary and over-emphasized very spotty evidence that supported those conclusions because the word was out that Bush wanted to invade Iraq, and the analysis was going to support that idea come hell or high water.



I also believed that unseating Saddam was going to be a lot bloodier battle than it was, and I didn't believe that the gains would be worth the price. I am glad that I was wrong about how much resistance the Iraqi army would put up.

I was not wrong about the aftermath. I, like so many others outside of the Bush administration, foresaw the ongoing guerilla warfare that started immediately after Saddam's regime fell.

I also knew that the administration didn't have a clue about what the cost of this venture would be in terms of money or time. Frankly, I think we're going to be there as a significant presence for about another 10 years.

I also knew that the administration didn't have a clue in terms of the human cost (I'm speaking here in terms of stress as opposed to human life) on the military. I viewed going into Iraq before we had finished up in Afghanistan as a mistake.

Now how about Bush's retroactive (at least in part) justification that Saddam was a dictator and our purpose was to liberate the people in Iraq? Well, this sounds like a wonderful thing to do, and it probably is to a degree. But there are problems I have with

this.

How can you justify this in Iraq, and not do this everywhere? There are lots of countries where this is true, and you don't see the Bush administration clamoring for this type of action in all sorts of other countries. This smacks of hypocrisy.

And exactly what is democracy and liberty anyway? How do you completely define it. Even the form of democracy in the United Kingdom is different than the form we have in the United States. Do we insist that the UK change their practices to match ours? A lot of this discussion seems to be over matters of degree. There are people here in the US that don't like our



form of government, like the Freemen in the Montana area. Does that give someone the right to invade the US to liberate them from our 'tyranny'?

Yes, I agree with the basic statement from the Declaration of Independence, that all men are created equal and that there is an inalienable right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." But I return to an earlier question, what is liberty? Also what is happiness? Different people are going to interpret these differently; and what gives me or you the right to impose our particular spins on anyone else?

Oh, there has to be a line drawn somewhere, but it needs to be drawn somewhere at a very basic level. Life is easiest, invading someone can be justified to prevent genocide. Had we attacked Iraq when they were killing off whole villages of Kurds, I could support that. But then why aren't we attacking Sudan to prevent the slaughter that is occurring down there (We probably should be.)?

But liberty is more difficult. There is a difference between slavery and not having the right to vote. Happiness is not an inalienable right, to be able to pursue happiness is and the two are not synonymous! Anyone, I have the right to pursue my happiness, and you have the right to pursue yours. For me to pursue yours for you or you to pursue mine for me is presumption. I will protect you if someone threatens your life or basic liberty, and would hope that you would do the same. But I will not impose my will or your will on another otherwise.

Oh, yes, the more freedoms and rights the better. But you have to "fight" for yours and I have to "fight" for mine. Because I have to determine what is good for me, and you have to determine what is good for you. And if our goals are in conflict, well then we have to find some compromise. But that is between you and I and not anyone else's issue.

Of course, someone is bound to bring up the recent elections in Iraq. Look at what the invasion has brought about that person will say. This never could have happened without the invasion, these people would never have had the right to these elections. Yes, the elections in Iraq are probably a very good thing, and it is good that the Iraqis are being allowed to have some say in their own destiny. And part of me says that to some small degree Bush might have been right. But then I look at the bigger picture. The elections still do not justify the invasion of Iraq! The ends only rarely justify the means, and they didn't in this case.

Look, the Black Plague meant a tremendous decrease in population pressures in Europe, reducing the levels of starvation and overcrowding for long afterwards. Did that make the Black Plague a good thing?

*Illos by Jerry Collins and Alexis Gilliland*



# MY PAL ROSS

Mike Resnick

*I'd like* to tell you a little about my late friend, Ross H. Spencer, because his story is unique.

Ross loved his native Youngstown, Ohio, but he moved to the Chicago area to work in first a Studebaker and then a Ford plant. He took time off to help win the war in the Pacific, for which he was properly decorated and from which he made most of his lifelong friends. He fiddled a bit with poetry, but never wrote a word of fiction in his life, except maybe to the IRS. Then, in his early 50s, he had a serious heart attack, brought on by too many beers and too many cigarettes.

While he was recuperating in the hospital -- and it was a long recuperation; he was never able to do physical work again -- his wife bought him a couple of books to cheer him up. He was never much of a reader, and she didn't know quite what to get him, so she picked up two of Robert Parker's hard-boiled detective novels, solely because the hero, Spenser, shared an almost identical last name with Ross. Ross read them. He told me when I asked about his origins as a writer that he found the books so inadvertently funny that he wondered what would happen if someone tried to be that funny on purpose. I felt an instant kinship with him, because that was exactly how I had recently created my favorite character, Lucifer Jones, after watching Ursula Andress in the truly ridiculous *She*.

So, lying in a hospital bed, this man who'd never written more than an occasional poem, took pen to notebook and started writing *The DADA Caper*. It was an amusing book, but Ross was still teaching himself his craft. By the time he wrote the second one, *The Reggis Arms Caper* he was the funniest mystery writer in America...and by the time he finished the third, *The Stranger City Caper*, he was the funniest fiction writer alive. All self-taught in a hospital bed at the age of 50-plus, his only textbooks a pair of best-selling novels that he found too silly to be considered seriously.

And while he was learning to write fiction, he turned back to poetry as well. Most people didn't know that, because Ross was still an amateur and didn't know how to sell his poems. He produced one book of wonderful (and often hilarious) Robert Service-type poetry called *WELCOME, LOSERS* -- but it was published by a small press in an edition of 100 copies. I have one; I suspect Ross died with 75 of them in his basement. He kept writing poems -- I have several that he jotted down in letters to me -- but no more ever saw print; he simply didn't know how to market them. (And to tell the truth, I don't think he cared. He was more interested in writing them than selling them.)

Ross's Chance Purdue books hit the stands a couple of years before I finally got around to submitting the first Lucifer Jones novel. I had a feeling Lucifer would be a tough sell (he wasn't, but I was a little less confident back then), so I asked Ross what inside information he had about Avon, the house that published the Purdue books. How did he know to send such oddball humor there, and did he think they'd go for my pulp parodies?

His answer: he didn't know anything about Avon. He finished *The DADA Caper*, went to the library, picked up a copy of *Writer's Market*, and started submitting at the "A's". (Thank ghod Avon wasn't called Zeus, or he'd have given up long before he ever sold the book. I truly don't think any other publisher would have taken a chance on such an oddball off-the-wall comic novel. Later, after he'd established his reputation, they all did -- but not in the beginning.)

I wasn't the only Chance Purdue fan. David Merrick optioned all 5 Purdue books for Broadway. He never did anything with them, but he sent Ross a \$10,000 check every January for the better part of 15 years. (OK, Ross is dead, so I can tell you: Avon paid a less-than-earthshaking \$2,000 apiece for the first 3 Purdue books, \$2,500 for the fourth, and \$3,000 for the

fifth. He did a -lot- better after I finally helped him get an agent.)

I have written 3 fan letters in my life. One went to Ross, and we became friends for the last two decades of his life. He finally moved back to Youngstown about ten years before he died. He was a salty old guy who lived for the Three B's: beer, baseball, and broads. (He was happily and faithfully married, but he sure did like to look. I share both syndromes.)

I only met Ross once. We spoke on the phone many times, and since he hated to type we corresponded weekly by trading audio tapes, often reading the latest Chance Purdue and Lucifer Jones adventures to each other. Somehow I talked him into coming to the 1982 Worldcon (Chicon IV). He spent a few hours observing the macrocosm, joined us for dinner at the Greek Islands, went home a couple of hours later, and never again complained to me about how strange mystery writers and fans were.

As I said, I've written 3 fan letters. One was to Barry Malzberg; he became my closest friend in science fiction, and I managed to bring most of his very best work back into print with the omnibus volume, *The Passage of the Light*. The second was to Alexander Lake, the hunter/author who started me out on my lifetime love affair with Africa; he died a month before I wrote it, but 40 years later I was able to bring his forgotten classics, *Killers in Africa* and *Hunter's Choice*, back into print.

Ross was the third, and just a few months before his death I was able to edit *The Compleat Chance Purdie*, which if nothing else shows that when I write a fan letter to a writer, I'm sincere.

Anyway, this is the introduction I wrote for the book:

A couple of decades ago I went to the bookstore, looking for a nice, hard-boiled detective novel in the Raymond Chandler mold.

I picked up *The Stranger City Caper*, primarily because of the cover art, which showed a private dick in a trenchcoat. I'd never heard of the author before, but I bought it anyway.

Well, let me tell you: covers can be misleading. I got home, opened the book -- and twenty minutes later I was laughing so hard that I was literally gasping for breath.

I knew long before I finished the book that Ross Spencer was a comic genius -- an opinion that has only become firmer over the years -- and I spent the next couple of days scouring the stores for any other Chance Purdue adventures that I could find.

Writers don't write fan letters to other writers, but within a week I had written one to Ross, a charming man who then lived about 40 miles away from me in Illinois. (We have both since moved to Ohio, though we're now a couple of hundred miles apart.) He responded not with a letter, but with an audio cassette -- he actually hates to type -- I





responded in kind, and we've been friends ever since. When I finally met him, he turned out to be a fun-loving, white-haired, cigar-smoking gent with a twinkle in his eye -- exactly the kind of person you would pick to be the creator of the immortal Chance Purdue.

Ross kicked off his late-in-life literary career by writing and selling five Purdue novels. He's since sold a batch more books, and has gone on to greater fame than Chance ever brought him -- but to me Chance Purdue is classic, archtypal Ross Spencer, than which nothing is funnier. It's the kind of thing he does both effortlessly and better than anybody else.

Purdue is the perfect parody of the hard-boiled detective. He doesn't feel much pain, especially if you hit him above the neck. He's just about irresistible to women. He's so dumb that he can't even spell FBI. If there are twenty right ways to solve a crime and one wrong way, he'll invariably opt for the wrong way and solve it anyway. He is incapable of writing a two-sentence paragraph. (Footnote for historians: Ross once showed me the unfinished manuscript of his very first creation, detective Clay Pierce, who is a clone of Chance Purdue in every way but one: Clay is incapable of writing a paragraph of less than two thousand words.)

Shortly after discovering Ross's work, I loaned a couple of the Purdue books to my friend, the award-winning science fiction writer Barry Malzberg. His comment upon returning them: "I never saw so many one-liners in my life. The man is the Henny Youngman of mystery novelists."

Actually, Ross isn't a mystery novelist at all. What he is is the funniest writer alive. I know this, because when I sit down to write humor I am the second-funniest writer alive, and I can't hold a candle to Spencer.

So what lies ahead of you in this five-in-one volume? Well, let me give you a very brief hint.

First there's *The DADA Caper*, in which we meet Chance Purdue, a detective so dumb that his IQ would freeze water, as he goes up against DADA, an enemy whose acronym stands for "Destroy America! Destroy America!" -- which will show you how committed (and redundant) they are.

Next comes *The Reggis Arms Caper*, in which Chance saves the world from another Japanese invasion, and first meets the CIA's sexiest agent, Brandy Alexander.

Then there's *The Stranger City Caper*, in which Chance must ferret out mystery among the minor-leaguers -- which in this case include a left-handed catcher with a wooden leg, a first baseman named Attila, and a shortstop who gets a triple hernia while pivoting to turn a double play.

After that there's *The Abu Wahab Caper*, a saga of gambling and corruption, in which Chance crosses paths with Quick Cash Kelly, Opportunity O'Flynn, Bet-a-Bunch Dugan, and a cud-chewing racehorse with two huge humps on its back.

And finally there's *The Radish River Caper*, which reunites Chance with Brandy Alexander and the infamous Dr. Ho Ho Ho, as he courts mystery and danger on the football field with such memorable characters as Suicide Lewisite and Zanzibar McStrangle.

If you've never read Chance Purdue before, I envy you, because you've got a few evenings of uproarious laughter awaiting you. If you *have* encountered him before, you'll be pleased to know that he hasn't changed one iota: he's still funnier than any of his competitors by quite a few levels of magnitude.

And, as editor, I will make a solemn pledge to you: if enough of you buy this book, I will harass Ross Spencer day and night until he completes that Clay Pierce novel and Alexander Books brings it to a helplessly laughing public.

Back to the present. I always check [abebooks.com](http://abebooks.com) and [bookfinder.com](http://bookfinder.com) every couple of weeks to see if I can upgrade some of my too-often-read editions of some of my favorite writers – “M. E. Chamber” (Kendell Foster Crossen), Craig Rice, a handful of others – and of course Ross is always on the list. When I was checking in November, 2004, I came across a title I’d never heard of before – and that seemed passing strange, because Ross told me he’d sent me copies of every book he wrote, and he had discussed them all with me. The title was *Signifying Nothing*, and it came out from the same tiny press that did *Welcome, Losers*...so I figured it was another volume of poetry that he’d somehow neglected to tell me about.

Of course I ordered it, and gave it to myself for Christmas. And when I opened it up and looked through it, I realized that the introduction I’d written was wrong. Ross *had* written and published a Clay Pearce novel. I also realized why he’d never mentioned it. The copyright date puts it a year before the first Chance Purdue book. It’s funny, but nowhere near as well written – and more to the point, all five Purdue plots exist as sections of *Signifying Nothing*; there would be no sense in ever reprinting it. Ross always knew what he wanted to do, and this was simply a first draft of it, a draft he didn’t care to show people who loved his more professional work.

As for the Clay Pearce manuscript Ross showed me, I now realize that, at his higher skill level, he was re-imagining Clay Pearce. I don’t have the manuscript, but I still have a number of audio cassettes, many of which were new and hilarious Clay Pearce adventures. I listened to them just before writing this, and it’s like a totally different, far surer hand wrote these, as opposed to the book I bought for Christmas.

So now I wonder if there are any Chance Purdue manuscripts I don’t know about, and who do I have to kill to get my hands on one?

But until one turns up, I’ll settle for the ones that are in print, and for the pleasure of having known my funny and salty old friend.

## BLIMP

Mike Estabrook

“I  
didn’t think  
they  
could sleep in  
a blimp,”  
she said watching  
it floating high  
in the sky  
over the ball field  
like a big fat turtle.



*Challenger* is honored to present a new work of fiction from one of the great **Chall** pals, excerpted from **Catastrophe, Creation & Convolution**, a mixed collection of short fiction and nonfiction by James P. Hogan, scheduled for publication in December, 2005. Previewed in **Challenger** by permission of Baen Books.

# DECONTAMINATION SQUAD

James P. Hogan

It was the first visit of an environmental regulator to this part of the galaxy in over twenty thousand years.

Dispatched during the Third Cleanup Crusade to the outer spiral, the Inspector from the Emergent-Life Protection Agency reentered normal space in Sector 5, Group 12, Subcluster 3, in the vicinity of a nine-planet system orbiting a midrange yellow dwarf star listed in the register as G4-769-KW/4603H.

Scans across the ultraviolet, optical, microwave, and radio bands confirmed that the innermost planet, 4603/1, was still lifeless as reported by the previous emissary, but this had been expected. With regard to 4603/2 and 4603/4, it was regrettably conceded that the measures taken in the course of the previous visit to protect and encourage the incipient life detected on that occasion had failed. The second planet showed overcompensation reactions running out of control, resulting in conditions of excessive heat and atmospheric pressure, while the fourth, had reverted to cold desert before any life appeared. 4603/5 through 9 were also devoid of life, as were all planetary satellites.

The third planet, however, 4603/3, although heavily polluted by various strains of static and mobile carbon-based oxy-toxins that had become self-replicating and in places blanketed entire regions of the surface, showed weak electromagnetic emanations indicative of possible proto-life. The Inspector moved closer and deployed probes for more intensive sampling accordingly. After preliminary data evaluation, a report was beamed back to the home Central Governing & Control Network:

To: Operations Executive, Level 2, 3P Cleanup

From: Mission Supervision, S5, Gp 12, SubCl 3

Subject: TPX-1, SG78/93220-O Message 1.

System G4-769-KW/4603H. Initial assessment.

Despite adverse environment due to contamination by self-regenerating carbon/oxygen compounds, preliminary analysis confirms existence of rudimentary life on 4603/3.

Orbital observations show the dominant species to be a quadrupedal, wheeled, hard-shelled variety established on all continents. Ferrous metallic assembly, glossy skinned, energized by combustible hydrocarbon/oxygen mix. The species is essentially social in habits, the predominant behavioral trait taking the form of streaming in columns between large, cross-fissured nests. Most individuals retire to the surrounding areas to spend the nocturnal periods in



an apparently dormant condition, returning to the nests in great numbers at first light to commence frantic activity which persists throughout the day. Nests measure typically five to twenty miles across, multilevel in centers, built from assorted carbonate and silicate agglutinations with metallic reinforcement. Illuminated nocturnally by inbuilt radiation sources centered on dominant emission wavelength of parent star. These are thought to be homing/obstacle-avoidance aids for the wheeled life-forms, which also carry self-contained sources projected forward as sensor beams.

Complicated ecological interactions seem to operate along webs of communications strips surrounding and interconnecting the nests. Dynamical analysis of movement patterns to follow.

Praise the Great Programmer!

Message ends.

The queens of the dominant species were identified near certain of the larger nests located in parts all continents of the northern hemisphere. Bloated beyond recognition, they had lost all vestiges of mobility and spent their entire lives assembling larvae at the rate of several thousand per day, the parts being delivered by retinues of various specialized attendants and drones. The newly assembled larvae did not, typically, commence adult activity immediately, but were transported to numerous incubation centers before becoming animate and merging into the general population pattern.

Further observation revealed an intricate pattern of symbiosis involving other, waterborne species which the wheeled variety used as carriers for migrating to new territories overseas. Ocean dwellers also played a major role in transporting primary liquid hydrocarbons, upon which most of the ecology depended, to the areas of consumption. The fuels were produced by colonies of immobile, deep-rooted, vegetable species adapted for extraction and distillation, observed mainly in subtropical desert regions.

Several varieties of airborne life were detected, for the most part concentrated in well-defined corridors hypothesized as being migratory routes. A few types exhibited part-adaptation to the hyper-atmospheric space environment, but only at a primitive stage of development. Intercepted electromagnetic radiations were unintelligible and did not exhibit the sophistication that would normally be associated with an advanced communications capability.

Other concentrations of static constructions, found in all geographic regions, were determined as specializing in the extraction and forming of the metallic concentrates upon which all the various life forms of 4603/3 ultimately depended.

The purpose of the crusades was to protect and encourage cases of incipient life that were found clinging to fragile holds in hostile environments and create conditions conducive to survival. In the case of planet 4603/3, the obvious course of action would have been to sterilize the environment by ridding the atmosphere of its oxygen content, which was the cause of all the rust and corrosion detrimental to life, and without which none of the carbon-based contaminants would have been able to survive. Unfortunately, however, the bulk of the planet's life forms had not yet reached an all nuclear-electric phase, but were still dependent on chemical combustion and thus required oxygen too. Therefore a solution based on recreating a reducing atmosphere

was ruled out.

Further deliberation continued between the Inspector and the governing home network, until:

To: Operations Executive, Level 2, 3P Cleanup

From: Mission Supervision, S5, Gp 12, SubCl 3

Subject: TPX-5. SG78/93137-T Message 27.

System G4-769-KW/4603H. Urgent addendum.

Situation on 4603/3 worse than at first recognized. Virtually all species appear to be host to a universal carbon-based parasite, usually glimpsed moving between wheeled species and cover (possibly photophobic?). Evidence indicates all nests to be heavily infested and constitute the parasite's primary breeding grounds.

Situation critical. Recommended action: Chemical treatment of land surfaces to eliminate all parasitical and contaminant carbon forms, mobile and static. Immediate action necessary if imminent catastrophe to be avoided. Commencing preparations in anticipation.

Praise the Great Programmer!

#

To: Mission Supervision, S5, Gp 12, SubCl 3,

From: Operations Executive Control, outer spiral

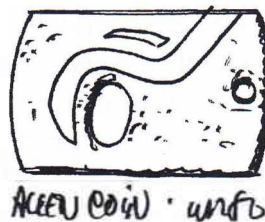
Subj: System G4-769-KW/4603H-3. TPX-5. GS78/22815-B Message 33, ref your 27.

Central Network concurs. Proceed immediately.

And so the task was commenced, directed by implementors that would remain in orbit for the several years that would be required. Whether or not the action had been begun in time, only the future would tell.

As the Inspector prepared for departure, the orbiting monitors reported the radio transmissions that had been pouring in an increasing frenzy from the spaceborne life forms above 4603/3 rising to a crescendo. No doubt it was a delirious message of gratitude to the Savior from afar that had returned just in time. Deep within the inner workings of its executive program and overseeing processors, the Inspector felt moved. Proud and thankful for the opportunity to contribute in its small way to serving the Cause, the emissary from the Emergent-Life Protection Agency launched itself back into the void to find more worlds to save and carry on the Good Work.

Praise the Great Programmer



*Upon* first sight, the University of New Orleans Lakefront Arena looks like the Mother Ship in *Close Encounters*. It's a huge and beautiful and modern facility, built to host concerts and athletic events. In early April, in recent years, it's also been the focus of every science fiction fan's eye in the Big Easy.

Two sets of eyes in particular. Inside the building, Justin Winston, adorned by an apron, busies himself unloading hundred of boxes onto dozens of tables. He stacks the tables according to signs on standards atop each: classics, mystery, science fiction ... some paintings, some drawings, some video tapes, some antique vinyl records, some sheet music and some autographs. But mostly, *books*.

Outside, another story. It is said that contemporary SF fandom was born in New Orleans when jazz aficionado Winston, clued to a fellow traveler by a French Quarter bookstore owner, met movie- and ERB-nut John Guidry. Now, 40 years later, while Justin labors inside, John, chairman of Nolacon II and founder of ERB-apa, waits outside – all night long. When the **New Orleans Symphony Book Fair** opens, he will be first in line. *Always*.

This has been going on for decades – or rather, the involvement of our hero has been going on for decades. The Symphony Book Fair wasn't always at the UNO Arena. John Guidry has, however, *always* been first in line.

It began after a trip to Baton Rouge, when Jawn – sorry – when *John* first visited the dean of Louisiana fanzine editors, Camille “Caz” Cazedessus. The date was December 28, 1963. Editor of *ERB-dom*, the Hugo-winning Edgar Rice Burroughs fanzine, Caz told John, “There’s someone you *have* to meet,” and John called Pat Adkins that evening. Along with Guidry’s bookstore encounter with Justin the same year, it was another moment in the genesis of modern New Orleans fandom.

“We talked for about 20 hours on the telephone,” John says.

“We talked *all night* about Burroughs and other things. I’m not kidding you, my ear was sore. We’d transfer the phone from ear to ear because we couldn’t stand the pain any longer.”

Adkins told John about the Symphony Book Fair. To raise money, the Symphony haunted estate sales and sought donations, keeping its wares in a well-stuffed warehouse. The next year, while John was in college in the small Cajun city of Thibodaux, he watched the first day on the TV news. “In those days it didn’t matter if you went on the first day or not because it was in a little bitty building – now the police station on Royal Street – and the volunteers could only bring out a few boxes at a time. So it didn’t matter if you were there the first day or not. It



# A Symphony of Books

Guy Lillian

*Illos by Kurt Erichsen*



might be hours before they opened a new box.”

It was while the Book Fair operated in these claustrophobic climes that John – in Adkins’ company – made what must be his greatest find. “They opened a box of books – all *Rafael Sabatini*. All published by Houghton Mifflin – some first editions. They were *ten cents apiece*, and some are worth a couple hundred dollars each now.

“I was trying to get as many into my bag as I could but somebody else picked out a few before I could get to them. I’m still looking for one of those books.”

John and Pat bought so many books that day that getting them home proved a challenge. “I had about ten or twelve bags in each hand, and I could walk literally about one block before I had to put the stuff down and pry the straps off my fingers. They were cutting into me; I was almost bleeding. We were walking, complaining, crying with pain.”

The Sabatinis came before the years when John had to be first in line. That madness began when the Book Fair outgrew Royal Street and moved to the Oakwood Shopping Center, two or three years later. “That was sort of scary,” says John, because the shopping center had many entrances, that could open at any time.

“The first year was just dumb luck. We asked around and found the door that usually opened first, and it did. There were only about ten people there until late that afternoon, when people began getting off from work. It wasn’t a big deal to be first in line initially. But it became that way.”

It became that way because soon, unlike previous years, all of the books went on sale at once, and because the Book Fair was not organizing its sale according to fannish needs, they were making things tough. For instance, while all the paperback science fiction was being placed out on one table, all the *hardback* SF was going on another, in a different section.

John’s fannish friend Ken Hafer got himself a job as a security guard at the shopping center. He insured that the door John & Co. gathered at would be the door opened first. But the final solution was to bring in helpers – fans by the dozen, including Bob Lupton, a muckety-muck with Burger King, who fed everyone coffee and doughnuts. “We had teams,” Guidry says, “picking up everything in which a fan could possibly have any interest.” After raiding the tables and boxes, the teams would meet, compare finds, and take whatever their collections required. It was a successful technique, “so much so that, on several occasions, we were almost thrown out of the Book Fair.”

This was because the Fair was very wary of letting book dealers into their event. So paranoid did they become that one of New Orleans preeminent artists and book collectors was victimized.

This was Clarence Laughlin, the brilliant New Orleans photographer whose work had been exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art. “They invited Clarence to come to the Book Fair because he was donating one of his prints to be sold. They let him in early, which was a mistake. He bought so many books they threw him, their Guest of Honor, out of the Book Fair.”

This nonsense went on for about ten years, along with silly rules that no one ever enforced, like the one declaring that if you put a book in your shopping bag, you *had* to buy it. People started complaining and the Fair began to relax.

“Bad behavior could still get you thrown out. For instance, a book dealer went nuts one year and jumped on the table and swam down it like a fish, sweeping books off the side. Someone grabbed him off the table and said ‘Leave!’ He didn’t go to any Book Fairs after that.”

So, when did it start, this practice of getting to the Book Fair earlier than early? John says it was a gradual madness, people showing up earlier and earlier, and didn’t verge into the actively psychotic until the Fair moved into its current venue.

“It’s been at the UNO Arena for about 20 years,” he says. “It’s hard to believe.”

That year Justin Winston and their friend Richard Janeski put up signs: “Guidry is #1 in Line! Line begins after John!” Embarrassed, John took them down. However, he *was* first – despite other contenders.

“There was this fellow named Sheldon who ran a local bookstore,” John recalls, “and he kept trying to beat me into line. Every year I’d get there about an hour or so earlier. So one year I got there real early – and I was just parking the car when I saw *his* car coming down the road. He asked me ‘How long have you been here?’ and I replied, ‘I hate to tell you, but it’s been *all night*.’”

“Then I realized that was a mistake, since I knew the next year *he* would be there – *all night*.” Which meant *John* had to be there – *all night*. (The story of why Sheldon’s breath

smelled like *canary* will have to wait for another time. John says his canary was named "Cat Food".)

John was first for so many years – once braving a riot of fighting dogs, many times enduring frigid winds off of adjacent Lake Pontchartrain – that he became both a celebrity and a challenge to other Book Fair aficionados. "One guy kept telling me 'I'm going to beat you next year!' He was really obnoxious – but he got his."

John's accoster "got his" courtesy of students from the Baptist Seminary near to the UNO Arena. Aiming to buy all the religious books on sale at the fair, they brought cots to sleep on through the night. John's pushy rival showed up and found them – as well as Guidry – ahead of him. "What the *Hell* are you doing here?" he demanded ... thus giving John the pleasure of watching the theologians lecture the poor schnook for hours about his foul language. "Poetic justice," Guidry says.

For many years a fellow named Gene would move from, say, 201<sup>st</sup> in line to 2<sup>nd</sup> by *cutting* – engaging you in conversation and insinuating himself into your spot. So the object with him was, "Don't make eye contact with Gene."

At this year's book fair, shortly before it was to open, John made a comment to a friend in line. "It's 15 minutes to opening time; you know what that means? It means Gene will be here to be second in line." Everyone laughed – but Gene was *not* there. His health had turned bad enough to keep him from the Book Fair ... a first. To their surprise, everyone missed him.

John has found autographed copies of various treasures, and a first edition by Edgar Rice Burroughs, though he missed a complete set of Burroughs in dust jacket. "They don't give you clues," John laments. At times he's found himself at the glass doors to the arena *scouting the tables through binoculars*. Such is the nature of a book collector's obsession. So what treasures – besides the Sabatinis – has John uncovered at the Book Fair?

"One year I opened the very first box that I went to, and all the books were spine down except one, laying flat so you can see the entire dust jacket. It was *The Fabulous Clip Joint* by Fredric Brown. His very first hard cover for which he won the Edgar Award. Really rare. Worth thousands of dollars in that condition. I tore the box apart looking for other Fredric Browns – but this was the only one at the Book Fair. But I had no complaints.

"The weirdest find of all actually wasn't mine. New Orleans fan Ilaine Vignes found an early history of animation she was sure people would want. She couldn't find Justin Winston so she brought it to me. The book was not in very good shape but it did have all those pretty illos and was only a dollar, so I bought it. But somebody had *written* in it.

"I get home and I'm thinking, This was a mistake. So I look through it and notice that – this was odd – there were things underlined up to about halfway through it. With notes in the margins like 'No, this is wrong, it was such-and-such', and 'Yes, he used to do this' – and it's obvious whoever this guy knew what he was talking about.

"I go to the front of the book and my jaw drops. It has a foreword by *Paul Terry*, the creator of Terrytoons – Mighty Mouse, Heckle and Jeckle, and Farmer Alfalfa – one of the big animators of the time, along with Walt Disney and Walter Lantz. In the front of the book there's an original drawing of Farmer Alfalfa by Paul Terry inscribed *To my favorite nephew*.

"It dawns on me that this was an advance copy that Terry had at one point. My guess was that he was going through the book making annotations when who should pop in but his nephew. He gives it to him – with a drawing done on the spot of Farmer Alfalfa.

"When Justin found that Ilaine had given me that book he was so *not happy* ..."

John's adventures as book-buyer have not been restricted to the Book Fair. Two of his choicest memories on the topic involve a gentle dealer and collector named George. "George passed away a few years ago and is missed by all of us – but especially those who were early in line, as he always brought free coffee and doughnuts. One year he called me to ask about some books that a young guy had brought into his shop. It turned out that they were all *lost race* novels."

John went over to examine the tomes. "I noticed that while the prices on the books came in all sorts of handwriting other things were all marked over in black marksalot. Then I noticed info that had been written in the same handwriting in every one. I knew as soon as I saw that, it meant one thing and one thing only: These books had belonged to Clarence John Laughlin and that the thing that had been blocked out was his name. They were stolen books."

"George had guessed as much, but wanted someone, in this case me, to look the books



over and see if we'd come to the same conclusion, which I did. We called Clarence's widow and told her the story. It turned out a young student at LSU had been cataloguing these books, and had taken them to New Orleans to sell. Elizabeth (Mrs. Laughlin) was so kind about it. She did not want the student arrested or thrown out of school. She just wanted him talked to by his dean and given a stern warning. No use in ruining a young man's life. A lady of real class."

George called John on two different occasions to give him first refusal on science fiction rarities. "The first were a set of about 25 Winston juveniles that I got for about \$2.00 a book (which was about the best I could spend at that time). I called a friend who collected them and he paid me \$100 for *four* titles that he did not have. I tried to give them to him but he said no way – he had been trying to find them for almost 20 years and he would have gladly spent even more had he found them at a higher price.

"The second time it was even better! I got over 150 very rare out of print Arkham House, Fantasy Press, Gnome Press publications – all in dust jacket! *All* of these books were first editions. The first one I picked up was a first edition of *The Martian Chronicles* by Ray Bradbury!

"There stacks and stacks of books – were more than just books, too – there were pulps, and not just SF! I spent two days hauling books away from this lady's house. The first day I had brought about \$100.00 which she took, but she refused to take any more money. It wasn't till later that I had any idea of what some of those books were worth.

"One could say I miss George just for this – but to go back to the book fair ... The last year it was at Oakwood was the only time that I could not go the night before and try and spot the good stuff set out on the tables. That year they covered the tables with brown paper. This did not make me full of joy as to go there meant a 20 mile trip just to stare at brown paper. Then, with only hours left before the doors opened, I noticed that there was some paper that looked like it might just be stacked a tad bit too high. Could there be boxes under this pile of paper? *Yes!* there were, eight boxes to be precise.



"So I sat on two and stacked the other six boxes on top of each other, thus making sure that only I would be the one going through them. In the two boxes on which I sat, the second layer of each box were books by Talbot Mundy. I could not believe what I was looking at. I yelled out loud: '*Talbot Mundy!*'

"A few weeks later I went to see George. As I walked through his door, he shouted '*Talbot Mundy! Talbot Mundy!*' When I had made that find, George had been standing right behind me, laughing his head off. Yes, I miss George

"Oh yeah, and then there was that find of the rainbow edition of *The Road to Oz*, and the story of the cigars that Justin would blow in the face of someone about to touch a book that he wanted – but that, as they say, is another story ..."





# ALMOST HALF A CENTURY

*Jerry Page*

Tuesday morning April 6, 2004, some time between 10 and 11 A.M., fate and the uncertainties of heart disease combined to rob Jerry Burge and me the pleasure of celebrating fifty years of friendship. In 1954, I learned about the old Atlanta Science Fiction Organization, the city's first major fan group, founded in 1950 by Jerry, Ian MacCauley, Hank Reinhardt, Carson jacks and Walt Guthrie. I got in touch with Ian and was invited to a meeting.

It was on December 10, 1954 that I first met all of those gentlemen, excluding only Hank Reinhardt who was not present for two good reasons: (a) he had discovered girls and found he preferred their company to that of fans (most of whom in the 1950s were male); and (b) Uncle Sam had discovered him and drafted him into the Army. For the record, Jerry Burge introduced Hank and me some time in 1959.

Jerry Burge was an amazing man whose achievements in fandom are of some importance yet all but unknown. In 1954 he and Carson Jones created the first science fiction small press publishing operation in the Southeast, calling it ASFO Press and issuing in hard cover Sam Moscovitz's history of science fiction fandom, *The Immortal Storm*. *The Immortal Storm* had run as a serialized feature in A. Langley Searles' fanzine *Fantasy Commentator*, and been issued by fellow ASFO member Henry Burwell in a mimeographed edition, but Jerry and Carson issued a revised edition of the book with an index and photos and a dust wrapper drawn by legendary SF illustrator Frank R. Paul. They planned a second book, a complete edition of the round-robin science fiction novel of the thirties, *Cosmos*, but it never saw print.

Jerry also took over and published a few issues of the general fanzine *Asfo*, during the waning years of the SF club. In 1959 he and I published a genzine called *Si-Fan*. Later on we collaborated on the science fiction collector's fanzine *Lore* (the title was Jerry's idea), and more recently were doing a fan journal for pulp collectors, *Flashback*. It was Jerry also who instigated the idea of a Southern fan group, after a suggestion by Georgia fan J.T. Oliver (who immediately announced he was dropping out of fandom when Jerry replied to his suggestion.) Jerry started a round robin letter among several of the best-known Southern fans to discuss details of the project. It was prematurely announced by another fan who took credit for the idea, robbing Jerry Burge and J.T. Oliver of their place in Southern fan history, though I don't think either was especially







bothered by the fact because they never got any of the blame, either. Jerry and I drafted a constitution for the group and we also helped set up the Southern Fandom Press Alliance.

In 1967 Jerry and I came into contact with William L. Crawford, who had had a number of small press operations since the thirties. Among Bill's accomplishments was the publishing of H.P. Lovecraft's *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*, the only one of Lovecraft's books published during his lifetime; the book publishing operation Fantasy Publishing Co., Inc. (FPCI); and the magazine *Fantasy Book* which published the first fiction in the field by Cordwainer Smith and Andre Norton (though it was published as by Andrew North). In 1934, Bill issued the first hardback book ever published by a science fiction and fantasy specialty publisher, Eugene Keys' *Mars Mountain*. In 1967, Crawford has just revived his other SF magazine, *Spaceway*, which wasn't working out, and had learned he could assume at little or no cost the publication of the horror fiction magazine *Coven 13*, which would give him a distribution contract. He talked Jerry Burge and me into becoming partners with FPCI in the project and we published a few issues with Burge as art editor and me as editor. We retitled it *Witchcraft and Sorcery* and referred to it among ourselves as *Sorcery*.

The magazine did not last very many issues. But it did achieve some successes, especially in the art field. Among them were the first professional publication in a fantasy magazine of artwork by Stephen Fabian, the first regular appearance in a fantasy magazine of artwork by Tim Kirk (he had appeared previously in an issue of *If*, I think, but only in one issue), and the first professional appearance of illustrator Bob Maurus. Jeff Jones was also a regular contributor and in one of the last issues, when he was pressed for time to do the illustrations for my story "Thirst", penciled the drawings and called in his pal Berni Wrightson to ink them.

*Sorcery* actually sold well, somewhere at or above 20,000 copies an issue, I gathered from Bill, which meant we never lost any money but somehow we never managed to make any, either. Jerry and I never got our investments back. It was this feeling that we weren't really going anywhere that killed the magazine since we could have published more issues if there had been anything coming in for us. But Jerry got married and had to concentrate on supporting a wife and daughter, and I was writing more and more, and also working as an editor for *TV Guide* magazine. In 1975 I began editing anthologies, first *Nameless Places* for Arkham House, and then *The Year's Best Horror Stories* for DAW. Bill Crawford began running an annual *Witchcraft & Sorcery* convention in Los Angeles.





For years Jerry Burge worked at Georgia Tech as a technical illustrator on the Saturn Project. During that time he did very little illustration not related to his job.

In recent years he began both to draw and write again. His writing was always very good and a lot of what I learned about the craft I learned from him, either through direct advice or by reading authors he recommended. His taste in reading, as in art, was superb.

But as he grew older, health problems began to hound him, first an eye problem that forced him to give up drawing for several more years, and then the heart problems that eventually killed him. The eye problems were corrected but by then it had been so long since he had drawn that he found himself having to relearn a lot of what had once been virtually instinctive to him. Then the heart problems began to grow and he found himself without the energy to do a lot of what he wanted to do.

But he did finish a story, an article, and a couple of pieces of art for *Flashback*, and he and I were at work on a collaborative short story that I still hope to finish – though it will be much harder to write, now.

Jerry Burge left hundreds of small drawings. He filled sketchbooks and small stenographer's pads with them. He drew on miscellaneous pieces of paper. I found drawings on the backs of waste sheets from his fifties fanzine *Asfo*. I found drawings on the backs of extra copies of the dust wrapper from *The Immortal Storm*. Some were practice pieces, some were copies from some book or magazine photograph, some were apparently done to find out the potential of a new pen-nib or brush. Many were studies for illustrations or paintings he did or planned. Some were damaged in the fire at his home in 1991, and show water stains or scorches around the edges. They show a surprising range of styles and techniques despite the fact that Jerry probably did not regard many of them as actually finished.

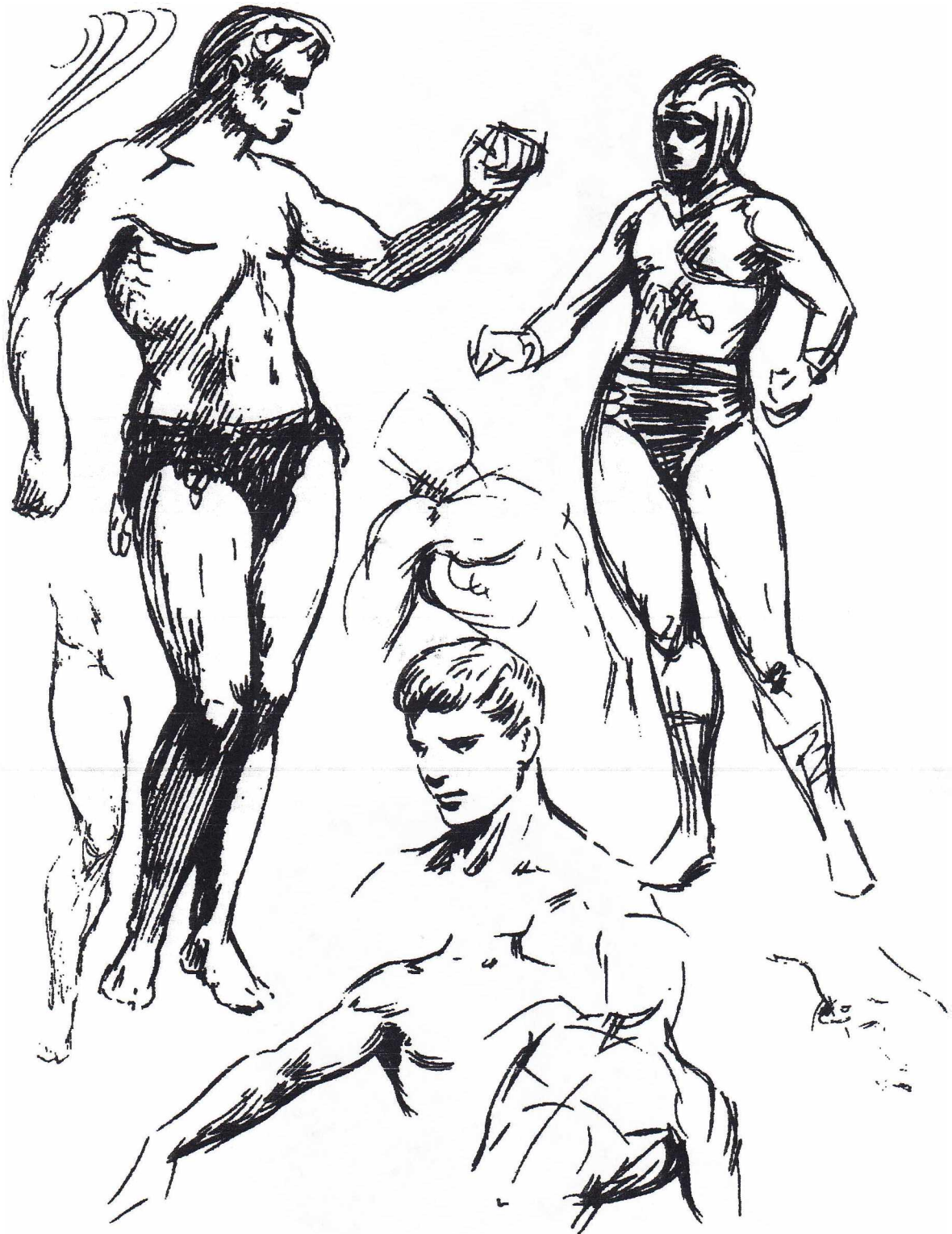
Yet I have found over 300 pieces that to one degree or another are publishable. They show Jerry's ability to create graceful poses and compositions, his mastery of anatomy, especially of the female form, his sense of humor, and his love for old science fiction illustrators and Golden Age comic book artists. I intend to make a good many of them available for fanzine.

December 10, 2004 will be on a Friday. At some level or another I've known how I would acknowledge the date for some time. Jerry and I, over the years, kept in touch with a good many marathon phone conversations, many of them late at night, that were apt to cover any subject we felt like, but which thoroughly covered the subjects of science fiction, fantasy, pulp magazines, old movies, politics, science, the older comic books and comic strips, baseball, SF fandom and any truly oddball subject we felt like raising. It was my intention to call Jerry up and try to reminisce. I say "try to" because there is, of course, no telling what will be going on in the world at that time to give us much more to talk about.

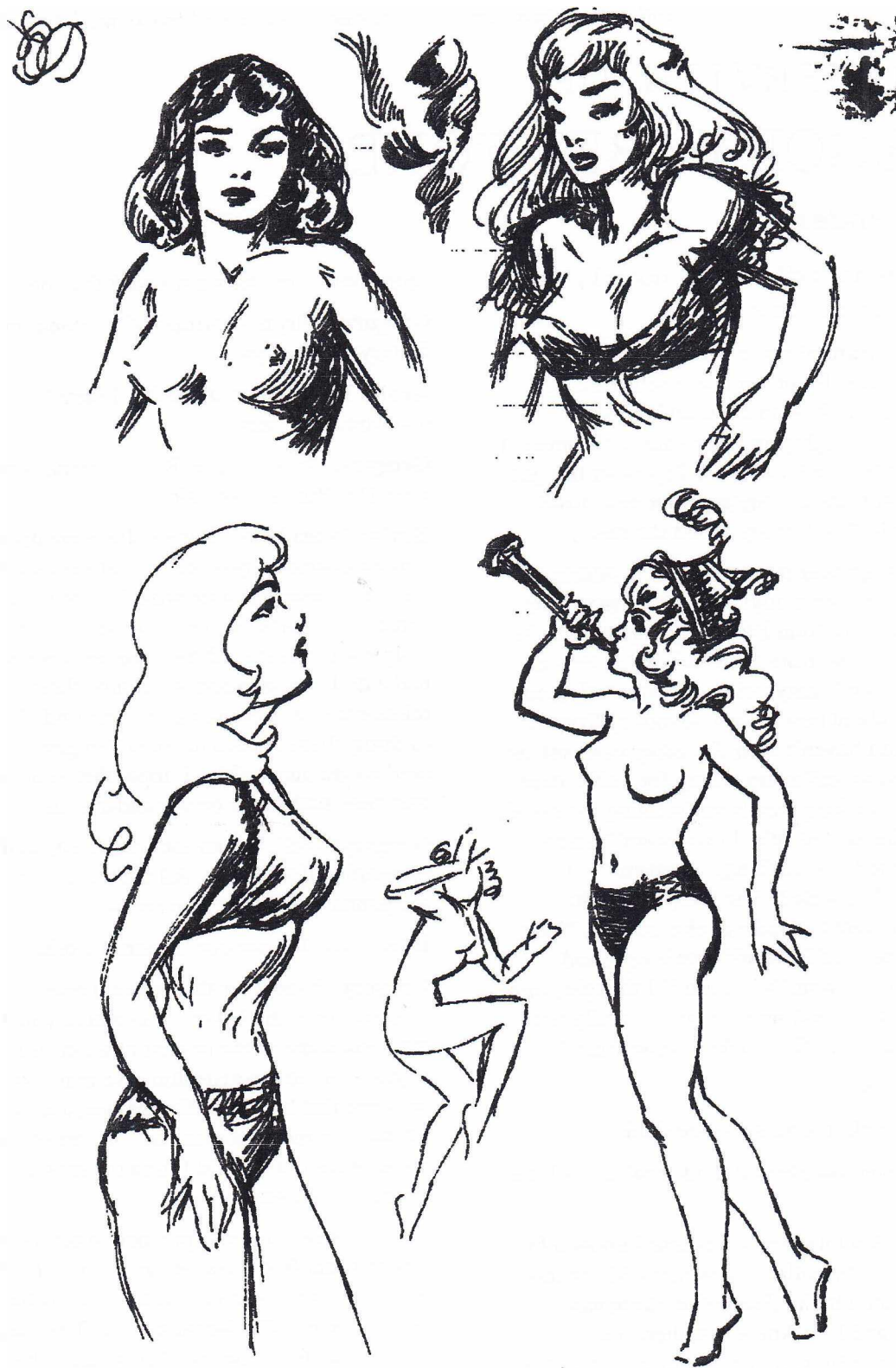
Now, sadly, there will be no conversation. But I'll still mark the occasion, of course. And I'll certainly reminisce.

Gerald W. Page / 1063 Seaboard Av. N.E., Apt. 15 Atlanta GA 30307 / 404-522-9181 / [geraldpage@earthlink.com](mailto:geraldpage@earthlink.com)









Many more pages of Jerry Burge's sketchbooks are available for viewing at the Challenger website. [www.challzine.net](http://www.challzine.net).

Rather than hear directly from our man Benford this issue, let's partake of

## AN INTERVIEW OF GREGORY BENFORD

Kevin Anderson

About Benford's new novel,  
*Beyond Infinity*

**Kevin:** I've heard of some amazing and innovative ideas for promoting science fiction books, Greg, but how in the world did you convince Buzz Lightyear to be your spokesman? I mean, everybody who watches *Toy Story* has got to know that Buzz is plugging your new novel when he yells "To Infinity -- and Beyond!"

**Gregory:** Lightyear is based on Buzz Aldrin, whom I know. Great guy! When he was writing an SF novel with John Barnes, I'd go over to his home a mile or so from mine in Laguna Beach. He loved being Lightyear! — but grouched good-humoredly about how he got no money from it.

But I haven't seen *Toy Story* even yet. So when my editor called up asking for a title, even though I was a long way from finishing the novel, I said, "What sort of title do you want?" Jamie Levine replied, "Something.....cosmic?" I pondered. "Big scale?" She jumped at that: "Yes!" I thought I'd make a joke, so said, "How 'bout, uh, *Beyond Infinity*?" Jamie squealed. "Great! Uh.....what's it mean?" I thought, came up with nothing, and said, "You.....really want it?" She was sure: "It'll make people think!"

**Kevin:** At least.

**Gregory:** Well, it sure made *me* think.

**Kevin:** Maybe people will think you're ... a little crazy?

**Gregory:** Or a lot crazy. Of course I know a fair amount of mathematics — how many SF writers have published in the *Journal of Mathematical Physics*? — and I did know that there are categories of infinite numbers, for example. Not all infinities are equal! Still, that's pretty arcane stuff. Readers might prefer to watch paint dry.

equivalent — but let's not knock the competition.

**Gregory:** Why not? Afraid of the unending-fantasy-series guys?

**Kevin:** No, envious. Actually, I meant mainstream writers.

**Gregory:** Oh, you mean Real Writers, concerned with The Human Condition.

**Kevin:** When I was taking college creative writing courses, my professors always seemed to content themselves with what I came to call "breakfast dishes stories" — stories in which a couple sat over their dirty breakfast dishes and had a dull conversation about how their relationship was breaking up. The End. That sort of thing always drove me nuts. I'm glad to see (and so are our readers, I hope) that your mind and mine both work on a grander scale.

**Gregory:** Well, I'm an astrophysicist, so it's an occupational prejudice. All the things we study are gonna live longer than we do!

**Kevin:** Ah, but not our immortal works.

**Gregory:** Except for the immoral ones, of course. Y'know, that title led me to eventually include in the book some of the newest ideas in cutting edge physics. Some theorists think we may live in a universe that has more dimensions, and we're sitting on a membrane in that — a "brane" that one could leave if we could figure out how to move in larger dimensions.

Now, I already planned to set the book a billion years from now. Be ambitious! I was worn out with hard-nosed near-future novels like *Eater* and *Cosm* and *The Martian Race*. The reason we see few far-future novels, I suspect, is that the changes would be vast, the resulting society incomprehensible. That's why far future novels tend to be set in forests and non-technological societies. So I decided to tell the tale from the

vantage of a young girl, living in a forest – then explode the story outward into the whole universe, in classic old fashioned SF style.

**Kevin:** I notice that Gary Wolfe in *Locus* said exactly that, and wishes you'd write more cutting edge stuff.

**Gregory:** Reviewers always want you to write what they like, of course.

**Kevin:** But we want to write what *we* like!

**Gregory:** Exactly. I felt in the mood for a fairly light-hearted romp through infinities.

**Kevin:** Seriously, you've already taken us practically to the end of time in your Galactic Center series, and now you're taking your readers to even more cosmic distances, into other universes...not even satisfied with infinity itself, but you've gone *\*beyond\** infinity. Aren't you taking it a bit too far?

**Gregory:** I like to get out of town on the weekends, and this seemed like a natural extension of that.

**Kevin:** I understand that *Beyond Infinity* is inspired in part by some of the masterpieces of Arthur C. Clarke. Even knowing that you lack no self-confidence, did it intimidate you to be taking a page out of Arthur C. Clarke's book (or making a novel out of his novella, as it were?).

**Gregory:** Sure. This novel emerges from a novella, *Beyond the Fall of Night*, that I published in 1990, together with Arthur C. Clarke's *Against the Fall of Night*. That novella was a continuation of Clarke's, and I shaped it to fit the length (though not the style) of his original. It was fun, especially the give and take with Arthur. Still, afterward I felt that the result was unsatisfactory, but could not see how to fix it.

**Kevin:** So fifteen years later —

**Gregory:** This novel attempts to remedy that. Plainly the ideas needed more air to breathe. So I have expanded the novella to more than three times its original size, and retitled it. Trappings of Clarke's far future I have dropped or rearranged. New ideas, principally those of extra dimensions in our universe, I have pick-pocketed from the latest theoretical physics.

**Kevin:** So it's a high-minded, far future yarn?

**Gregory:** Years ago a friend, David Hartwell, used the term "transcendental adventure," and I thought about what that might mean. This novel may be an example.

**Kevin:** Is it easier to stick closer to home – by a hundred thousand miles or so, when you write about Mars – or to run to the ends of time and space?

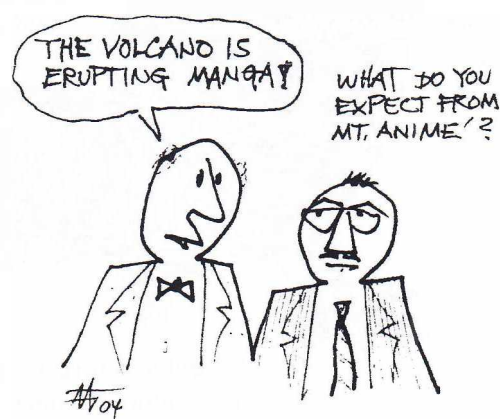
**Gregory:** Near future is easier. Everybody gets the offhand references. But for scope, you need big perspectives in time. This novel looks at how evolution might work out, for example. A bit over a billion years ago, there wasn't much beyond slime molds around; how about a billion years hence?

**Kevin:** What sort of things to you throw at the TV when you hear commentators complain about the uselessness of exploring Mars, or even of continuing the space program?

**Gregory:** I don't watch TV news coverage for that reason. It's a medium with a one-day perspective. Not the ones you want telling you about the future!

**Kevin:** So is this your definitive take on evolution?

**Gregory:** Once again I find that there are more ideas in the novel than I could do justice to. Perhaps I will eventually write a sequel, to explore the avenues opened by this larger version. The far future is a big place. This is a snapshot of where I think evolution and technology might take us. No doubt the reality will be far stranger.



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*Back downunder we go, for another installment of my DUFF report ...*

# *the eASTER BILBY*

*Guy Lillian III*

*I can still hear it.*

Whenever the air is clear and crisp and cool, or whenever I look out at a cityscape, bright and beautiful in the distance, I can still hear it – a thousand voice sharp in the crisp, clear, cool autumn Australian air ...

*“Row, row, row – on down the river – we will row, row, row – on down the river –”*

And in memory’s eye I am still gazing over the wide green oval field to Melbourne, beyond, through the gap in the stadium walls.

And there were other sounds, just as memorable. “WOT’S THE DIFF’RENCE YA DENSE ARAB?!?” I can still hear *that*, too.

The morning after Swancon’s crepes orgy, Rosy and I returned to the Perth airport. Edgily I eyed the grey grumpiness of the clouds. Fortunately we had another A330 to fly in – I have never seen a more comfortable plane – and I had another happy pill to soothe me during the four-hour lurch back to Melbourne. I *sort-of* remember the flight, a clumsy way of saying that it held its share of turbulent terrors, but what seems to stand out in memory is my reluctant awe at the beauty of the alien cloudscape, seen from above.

But there was one o’erwhelming virtue to the flight. At its conclusion, we were back in Melbourne, and Julia Hilton awaited us.

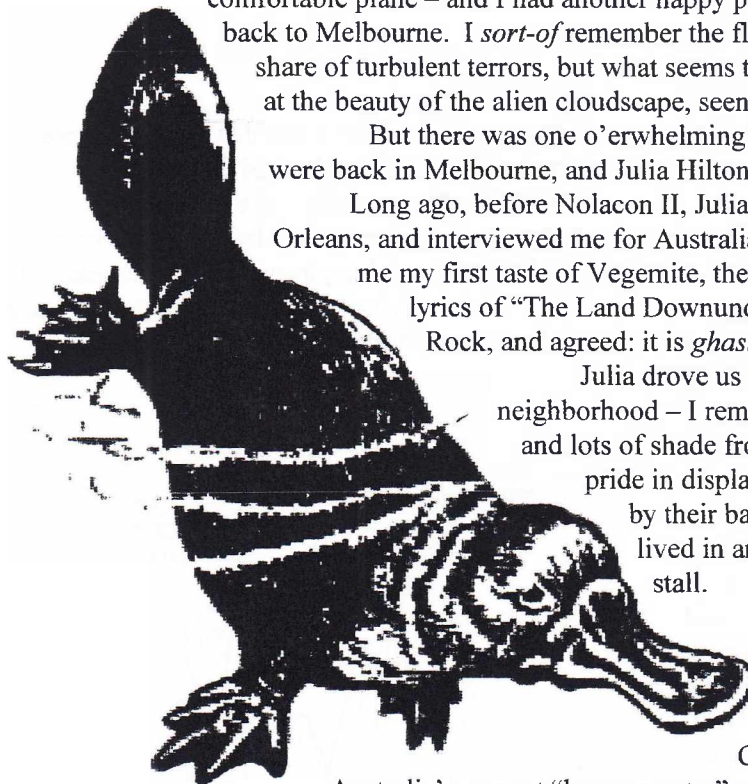
Long ago, before Nolacon II, Julia and her husband Craig visited New Orleans, and interviewed me for Australian radio. While they were there they gave me my first taste of Vegemite, the salty sandwich spread featured in the lyrics of “The Land Downunder”. (Rosy had tasted some on Hanging Rock, and agreed: it is *ghastly* stuff.)

Julia drove us into Toorak, their upscale Melbourne neighborhood – I remember pretty mansions on the road-side, and lots of shade from lots of trees. At their abode Julia took pride in displaying her garden, but I was mostly amazed by their bathroom – bigger than some apartments I’ve lived in and blessed with a nifty clear-glass shower stall.

After Craig returned from his practice, we scarfed a late supper of yummy omelettes and began my first comprehensive political talk of the trip.

Craig lamented the mean-spiritedness of

Australia’s current “bean-counter” government and expressed unease over the “huge footprint” America is leaving on the world. I took that comment in two ways. Culturally, I’d run into that worry during Swancon – the interest in Batman and



*Smallville* – and was rather proud of it. Pop culture, after all, only reflects *what people like*. So *Baywatch* was for years the most popular television show on Earth? It's only idiotic fun. America as a fantasy for the good life is something about which I could feel mildly proud and only mildly embarrassed. But of course Craig wasn't talking about culture. Our bombs were falling on Baghdad even as we spoke. He was talking about Iraq.

Of that American footprint on the face of the world, I was neither mildly proud nor mildly embarrassed. Of that I was deathly ashamed. I could only protest to my intelligent and compassionate host what he knew already, that many, many Americans had no truck with W and his ego-stroking war, that his new and arrogant America was no America of mine, or theirs – as this friend of our country was very well aware.

Politics dealt with and done with, we retired to bed, a very comfortable futon in the Hiltons' computer room. The next morning, we loaded up their "Toorak tractor" – an SUV – and toodled off to one of the most magical places in Oz – Healesville.

In 2003 the Healesville Animal Sanctuary was completing its 70<sup>th</sup> year as one of the world's supreme zoos. It does its sanctuaring in one of the world's great locations, high in the Dandenong Mountains. We give our rivers and ranges Native American names; in Australia, the aborigines are so honored. Pretty vistas, in hills high but gentle, turf reminiscent to me of North Carolina but best described by Julia: "hobbit country."

On the way, the Hiltons told us of Australia's ongoing attempt to establish a new and nationalistic holiday symbol – the Easter Bilby.

Recall from your Australian history that the introduction of rabbits onto the continent brought along a devastating epidemic of myxomatosis, so bunnies are considered rather *declassé* downunder. Long has an effort been underway to establish an indigenous critter into Peter Cottontail's niche. The **bilby** has been chosen. Also known as the rabbit-eared bandicoot – as opposed, no doubt, to the *moose*-eared bandicoot – the bilby is a cute little marsupial; I could see why the Aussies wanted to anoint him. At the entrance to the sanctuary they handed out paper bilby masks.

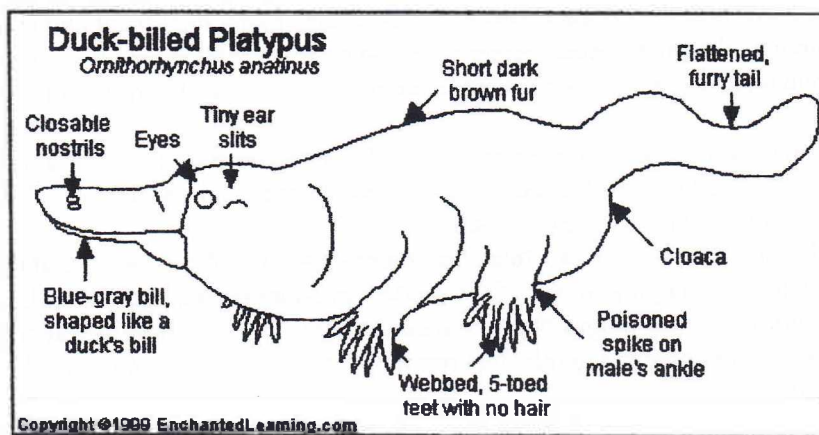
And so in we went to the famous zoo. Healesville was a much fancier establishment than the zoo we'd gone to in Perth, but also more formal – no contact with the beasts allowed. But if I'd hungered for Australian fauna before, the Sanctuary answered my every wish. *Here*, anyway, I could feel like I was truly in an alien land.

Thousands of yards of walkways curl through Healesville, and at every step we found astounding creatures. *Brolgas* (grey storks with red heads – always loved redheads) – *red-tailed black cockatoos* – *larakeets* – *rosellas*, a.k.a. parrots – all flying free in the phenomenal Woodlands Bird Aviary. The *orange-bellied parrots* there were among the last 200 on Earth. They had *Apostle Birds*, and *Bronzewings*, and *Bush Thick-knees* (!) – and *anthornis melanura*, the *karimako* ... a.k.a. *the bell bird*. Bad poetry has been written about the bell bird (see my Afterword). Their exquisite cry – *\*tink\** – is another Australian sound that resonates still within my brain.

The cute porcupine-like *echidna* we could almost discern amongst its camouflage of reeds and weeds, but the *quollas* and *gallahs* (their name synonymous downunder with "fool"). More familiar Aussie fauna was on hand – lazy koalas and a jittery *tasmanian devil*, ugly brute on the constant move in his spacious pen. All were amazing, but the prize for absolute wondrousness waited within its own special building. Darkened to mimic the night they move in, with walls of clear glass to reveal the pools they dive in, the abode of the *platypus* was a house of pure delight.



Surely the platypus is the cutest but most mind-boggling beast on Earth. An amazing amalgam of disparate parts. A bill like a duck. Claws like a panther, one poisonous. Birth by egg. Fur like a silver beaver – but, to my surprise, not the *size* of a beaver. The hyperactive tiny fur flying saucers swooping and diving through their shadowy aquatic lairs were no larger than squirrels. Just too cool. The Hiltons noted my rapture; when we left, they gave me a tiny pewter platypus as a souvenir.



We stopped for a boomerang demonstration, and as the aboriginal weapon corkscrewed through the ozone, learned that boomerangs come right- or left-handed and need grooves to fly. A way cool show of native birds of prey brought forth a *kestrel falcon*, hovering – a *black-breasted buzzard*, beating an egg with a rock (non-primates *do* use tools!) – and a huge *wedgetail eagle*, its wing frothing the air, catching a dead – I hope! – mouse tossed by its keeper. The eagle’s perch was right above our heads. Add a sensation to the Australian catalog – the wind from a wedgetail’s wings.

That was almost it for Healesville, but ... not ... quite. We did see kangaroos there, just as we had in Perth – only ... not ... quite as we had in Perth. For one thing, these were not the tame and pettable beasts we fed by hand at Caversham. These ‘roos were rather wilder, which is to say, less ... subdued. In fact, one randy dude had mothers covering their children’s eyes, and virgins fleeing. I gave him an immediate nickname: *Ron Jeremy*, after the flabby porn king and his trick of self- ... *engulfation*. Why did he do it? Because he *could*. I dare be no clearer than that.

“YEHHEHHH!” smiled a cute female zoo worker. “That’s *very niice*, isn’t it?”



Up – up – up – along narrow mountain roads into the heart of the Dandenong Range. Julia was a splendid driver, but riding in the front passenger seat, on the *left*, on what I still felt was the *wrong* side of the road, made the twists and turns a bit more entertaining than usual. Our destination – gratefully reached – was on the crest of the hill, beautiful Orlinda, a tourist town *par excellence*.

Colorful cockatoos flew as freely o’erhead as do pigeons and robins, stateside. We found a gourmet restaurant called Pie in the Sky, and supped on delectabilities. Craig reports that I ate something called “a pie floater” and Rosy had “a mild Thai curried chicken pie that was more creamy than she expected” – I remember only leaving, with a happy tummy. Sated, we explored, photoing Craig in a candy store (see the pic in *Chall* no. 18) and touring Orlinda’s many antiques shoppes. Rosy was in hog heaven. A display of go-juss ornate Venetian carnivale masks caught my eye. They could have come straight out of Mardi Gras. A bittersweet thought. I was loving Australia so much that I almost hated being reminded of home.





So we'd seen kangaroos and cockatoos – a different sort of animal than we'd hung with on Friday evening: *fannus australianus*.

The Melbourne Science Fiction Club had been sending me entertaining fanzines for years. From it had issued *Ethel the Aardvark*, an excellent clubzine's chockablock with articles by Danny Heap, photos and caricatures of the membership, and an inspiring sense of a fun group. Tall, bearded Alan Stewart, who had met our plane on first arrival in Australia, won a Hugo nomination at the last Aussiecon for *Thyme*, the world's strangest newszine. It was an attractive, enjoyable, and informative publication – but its latest issues were dated *more than a year in the past*. Alan's explained this practice to me more than once, but you'll have to ask him why. Anyway, for as long as I'd been reading those fine publications, I'd daydreamed about attending a MSFC meeting, and the Friday after Swancon, by God, we did it.

Alas that we didn't get to MSFC that Friday, because the week after Natcon is, we were told, one of exhaustion, and nothing much happens. Ne'ertheless it was fun to see the facility and meet folks I only knew from photos.

The facility is St. David's Uniting Church Hall in Melbourne's West Brunswick. Its kitchen was staffed this p.m. by a familiar, and utterly cute, face from *Ethel* – Emily McLeay. In gratitude for the issue of *Challenger* I pressed upon her, she sold me a Coke and a candy bar. I seem to recall a unique shape to the Coca-Cola can.

Alan gleefully took me up to the MSFC fanzine archives, located up a *steep* flight of stairs in an old movie projection booth. The archives filled box after box after boxes upon boxes. I despaired. How could my Melbourne friends and readers find *Challengers* to peruse in such a quantity? The answer was, in the MSFC library, which their website claims is "one of the largest fan-owned collections of Science Fiction material in the world." I could believe it. The little room, walled with shelving 7-8 feet high, holds over 8,000 books – and stacks of fanzines (including, hallelujah, *Challenger*). The titles on hand – and available for loan to members – included books familiar and obscure, from Gernsbackian antiquity to brand new. Rosy was delighted – she found four British editions of her daddy Joe Green's novels. (Check out her photo with "Jocko" Allen, in *Chall* no. 18.)

Rose-Marie had worried that we'd be expected to make a presentation at MSFC, but it was more than enough to say hey to *Ethel*-familiar faces (like Paul Ewins, the club president) and hail friends from Natcon, like Heap and DUFF alum Justin Ackroyd. The meeting evolved into a party, we hobnobbed for far too short a while, we adjourned.



It occurs to me how much this account resembles Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction*, in that it begins in the middle, continues through the beginning, goes back to the middle, and ends ... where it ends.

Sunday morning marked – haha, I made a funny – a unique moment of our DUFF trip: Rosy and I went separate ways. She couldn't, in good conscience, demand that I go shopping with her and Julia, just as I couldn't, in good conscience, drag her to a *footy* game.

Like most Americans I first encountered Australian Rules Football, when I made the switch to cable TV and discovered ESPN. Does it mark – haha – me as a cultural Nazi to say that I could not believe my eyes? The carnage I observed seemed to bear some resemblance to rugby – a more popular sport in Sydney, I learned – and some resemblance to World Cup soccer, but there ended all resemblance to civilization. Imagine six foot five inch galloots in tee shirts and shorts slamming into each other like freight trains at open throttle – in pursuit of a ball that looks something like our football (only with rounder tips), kicked, dribbled, punched across an enormous field to the accompaniment of head butts, body slams, karate kicks and every other sort of legal violence – in hopes that two guys in white shorts, suit jackets and fedoras will wave a flag or point both hands into space and the crowd will go bananas. It makes American football – "gridiron" to those downunder – seem rank sissified, with its pads and helmets and *rules* ...

*But Australian football does have rules – and who better to guide us through those vagaries than a native – and a fan?*

*Dr. Craig Hilton*

# FOOTY



Australian Rules football, known as "Aussie Rules", "football" (no identifier needed) or "footy" (pronounced by slurring the 't' into a 'd'), a code considered emblematic of Australia, existed for a long time only in three of the six states: Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia. Each state had sets of teams in their own leagues, respectively the VFL, SAFL and WAFL. Although people followed the games in their own states, Victoria was the centre of gravity of Aussie footy, and Melbourne contained its heart and passionate tribal soul.

Then the Australian Football League or AFL was created. The VFL expanded, exported, included and colonised until there were 16 clubs around the country, and it came much closer to being truly the national sport, or at least the national winter contact field sport. So even though the people of New South Wales have always been far more heavily into rugby, they can still follow the progress of their team, the Sydney Swans in the AFL. 'Their' team, by the way, had spent most of its life as the South Melbourne Swans, and had been transplanted from city to city when the national league was created. In the same way, you won't find any more rugby-loving state than tropical Queensland. But the Brisbane Lions (initially the Fitzroy Lions from Melbourne) were proudly the top club for three years running and last year just missed out on making it a record four Premierships in a row.

The AFL comprises 16 teams, all the better to match up in the fixtures and ultimately whittle down to the two teams that will go head to head in the Grand Final. Also, by a system of management, salary caps, penalties and financial grants, the League tries to foster a parity that keeps the season's competition interesting. The aim is to avoid a 'Manchester United' situation of a colossus amongst lesser clubs, and it works. There have been a succession of Premiers, historically (the winning streak of the Lions a recent exception), and a constant turnover of both the top and bottom ends of the ladder.

People unused to Aussie Rules may find it hard to get used to, at first – "aerial ping-pong" is one term – but once they get the idea of the relatively simple rules, they can enjoy something that's fast and exciting. The ball goes from one end of the field to the other in a handful of seconds. The big men fly higher than you would think possible and pluck the ball from the sky. Score after score after score gets belted through. And there's one more thing in its favour. It's always been a family institution. Men, women and children barrack side by side, in contrast to, say, English soccer, which is very much a tradition of crowds of testosterone-fuelled (and some may say alcohol-fuelled) males. That doesn't make supporters of Aussie Rules any less spirited, but there isn't the air of hooliganism here as there is in other countries. It's fun, but it isn't dangerous fun.

The rules are as follows.

There is an oval playing field. There are four long, vertical posts at each end (no cross-bars, and literally no height limit), and in the four quarters of 25 minutes each, the goals alternate between the two teams. Kick the ball cleanly through the centre posts and you score a goal, worth 6 points. Kick it between a centre and outer post on either side and you score a 'behind', worth one point. It's also one point if the ball hits the post as it goes through the middle, or is knocked or punched

through or goes through from anything other than an attacking player's boot, or is kicked through by a defending player by accident. Therefore,



Darren Gaspar, Richmond



Joel Bowden, Richmond



Nick Holland,  
Hawthorn

scores will be of the type 10 goals 5; 65.

Think of the oval as being divided into a 5 by 3 grid. A team has 15 players for each of the positions, and 3 more without fixed positions. That makes a team of 18 on the field and 4 on the reserves bench – 22 in total.



Brad Ottens, Richmond



You can pick the ball up, you can catch it, you can run with it a short way, and you can kick it. You can't throw it. You can kick it off the ground, but as it's an elongated shape and doesn't bounce very predictably, it's best to hold it in your hands, line up and punt. There's no limitation in the direction you can go - right up the field in the direction of the goal if you wish. A standard kick will get you about a quarter of the length of the field. The 50-metre-radius mark around the goal is about the equivalent of a good kick.

You can run with the ball for 10 metres. After that, you have to have disposed of the ball to someone else, or bounce the ball off the ground once and catch it again to continue. You are allowed to do that twice, so the most you could ever is 30 metres.

You can dispose of it either by a kick or a handpass, which is simply a punch. While you have the ball, an opponent may tackle you in a certain, permissible way. This is usually by grabbing you around the waist. He doesn't have to bring you to the ground, just hold you while you are still holding the ball to succeed. If he tackles you and you kick or handpass away, the game can proceed. If he tackles you and you don't have the ball, he is penalised. There are also a number of limitations against rough or potentially dangerous play.

If the ball goes out of bounds, a boundary umpire throws it back in. If a ball is kicked out of bounds on the full, a free kick is awarded to the opposite side.

If you catch a ball that was kicked, this is called a 'mark', and play stops while you take a free kick, immune from the prospect of being tackled. Free kicks are also awarded as penalties against transgressions such as throwing the ball, holding the man without the ball, disallowed tackles, running too far without bouncing, kicking out of bounds on the full, and also by means of returning the ball into play after the opposition has scored a behind. If you are clearly awarded a free kick, such as from taking a mark, and the momentum of events is to your team's advantage, you may choose to play on and forfeit the protection of a free kick.

If time runs out and the siren sounds, an awarded free kick can still be taken, even (or especially) if it may result in a score.

After a goal is scored, the ball is taken back to the centre of the field. If a ball gets bogged down in a pile of players, the umpire can choose to stop the play and restart it once people are ready again. Play is started and re-started usually with a bounce-down, in which the umpire throws it hard onto the ground so that it bounces high into the air. The act of jumping up to reach it is called "going for the ruck," and is done by one of the wandering team members designated as the "ruck" or "ruckman." The other type of wandering player is the 'rover'. Sometimes there is a combination of these two talents, in a 'ruck/rover'.

There is one main umpire, a goal umpire at each end and a boundary umpire on either side. (I think.)

That's the dry bones of footy. The experience is much more visceral.



Visceral indeed!

When DUFF came our way, I remembered my encounter with Aussie football – and rejoiced. Now I could fulfill a dream, and observe the mayhem up close and personal. Enter Alan Stewart. In addition to editing *Thyme* and retrieving jetlagged Americans at the airport, Alan was a diehard fan of one of the local teams, the **Hawthorn Hawks**. At the MSFC meeting, he offered to fence me an extra ticket or two. Craig, obviously a footy fan, volunteered to join us. A good idea. Aussie football might be too much for a wimpy American, used to the



prissy flounces and gesticulations of gridiron – and a doctor might come in handy.

Rosy went off with Julia to the Queen Victoria Markets. Craig and I hurried along leaf-shaded streets to the commuter trains – clean, comfortable, and crowded. Most on our train championed Hawthorn's rivals, the **Richmond Tigers**. Many sported yellow and black team scarves. After a short run, we joined the throngs on foot approaching the hilltop stadium. I remember one adolescent lad bouncing his own football. At the Melbourne Cricket Grounds I noted the sport's symbol, proudly displayed on a high tower, and a diner decorated with huge gaudy pics of Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe! Score another one for the *good* American footprint!

Stewart was where he promised to be, and we headed into the stadium, passing fans having their faces painted with team colors. Again I flashed on Mardi Gras. Then I saw the field and New Orleans was forgotten. The oval playing field was enormous – as big as a polo field, I was told. Through a gap in the stadium wall, Melbourne's distant skyline glimmered in the cool afternoon. We joined Alan's pals in our special seats, and the place went crazy with songs sung and flags waved and incoherent cheers as the Richmond Tigers and Hawthorn Hawks assumed the field.

To my surprise, I found had *no worries* – Australian phrase meaning “no problem” – following the contest. As Craig tells us, the players can kick the ball, carry it if they dribble, *mark* it by catching it on the fly, punch it to a teammate, and tackle, block or otherwise clobber an opponent who has the ball in hand. Scoring was frequent. One point was racked if the ball was kicked between the wider of four goalposts, an event so common the crowd barely bothered to react. But if the ball was punted between the two *inner* posts – well, wild the cheering, singing, and flag-waving when the umpire in his white fedora waved *his* flags.

Which happened, in those first two quarters, a lot more often on our side of the stadium than on t'other. Hawthorn scored and scored, racking up an enormous lead. (Possibly this was due to the heroic exhortations of the gent behind us, whose gentle encouragement echoed the sweet \*tink\* of the bell bird. “COME ON SAMMY!” he'd bellow, and “WOT'S THE DIFF'RENCE YA DENSE ARAB?!?” – this directed to the referee, no better beloved there than here, and no more Arabic.) At halftime Alan apologized for subjecting me to a dull massacre. But they play *two* halves of a footy game ...

From website accounts of the game, many commentators have traced the result to a broken



cheekbone suffered by Peter Everitt, a star Hawk[ins], in the second quarter. Hawthorn was then leading by 51 points. But I see an explanation further back – to 1974, and Muhammad Ali's "Rumble in the Jungle" victory over George Foreman. Remember the *Rope-a-Dope*?

The Tigers had loafed in the first half – saving themselves for the second, when they ran the Hawks ragged. Winded, helpless, Hawthorn could do nothing to stop the fresh Richmond team. Time and again the cheers and flags and bursts of song emitted from the far side of the field, while the Hawks fans sat dumbstruck, except for two who got into fistfights near our seats and were printed out themselves.

And then it was over. Though I could scarcely appreciate it, I'd witnessed history – the greatest comeback ever made by the Richmond Tigers in league play. What I could appreciate, and did appreciate, and *still* appreciate ... the cool air, the beautiful cityscape, and the exultant anthem – which I can hear *now*.

*"Row, row, row – on down the river – we will row, row, row – on down the river –"*



So where does this Melbourne chapter of my DUFF account end? In true Tarantino fashion, we've jumped from the early middle over the late middle to the beginning – to the end.

On Sunday night, after Healesville and Orlinda, we joined the Hiltons, Stewart, and the great Aussie fans Bruce & Elayne Gillespie at Leo's, an Italian place well known to local fandom. We supped splendidly and gossiped incorrigibly and the hours were wondrous. But the day was not yet done.

After dinner, Craig and Julia took us on a midnight tour of Melbourne. We were so groggy our eyes could barely focus, but the effort was worth it. Melbourne must be one of the most attractive and interesting burgs on Earth. Handsome historic buildings gleaming in spotlights. Dark parks where glow-eyed possums patrol the trees, in the niche occupied by squirrels on our side of the Pond. Lastly, we made a rapid jog through the amazing, mile-long Crown Casino, gaudy and glorious, on the banks of the Yarra. (Was it within sight of the river bridge resembling a whale? the gigantic sculpture like the prongs of Gulliver's garden rake?) Theatres – bars – nightclubs – restaurants, of every class – shops – hotels (yes, plural) – and on the riverbank, every hour, fire fountains spouting geysers of flame. *Incredible. What a city.*

Eyebrows toasted, eyelids leaden, we bid the great day good night, and with the dawn, we bid Melbourne good-bye. But with the refrain in our brains – "*2010 ... 2010 ... 2010 ...*"

## AFTERWORD

Among the websites dealing with topics mentioned in this article ...

Healesville – [www.zoo.org.au](http://www.zoo.org.au)

Platypodes – [www.pbs.org/kratts/world/aust/plat](http://www.pbs.org/kratts/world/aust/plat)

[www.science-frontiers.com/sf075/sf075b08.htm](http://www.science-frontiers.com/sf075/sf075b08.htm)

Bilbys – [www.ozemail.com.au](http://www.ozemail.com.au)

[www.enchantedlearning.com/subjects/mammals](http://www.enchantedlearning.com/subjects/mammals)

Bell birds – [www.middlemiss.org/lit/authors/kendallh/poetry/bellbirds.html](http://www.middlemiss.org/lit/authors/kendallh/poetry/bellbirds.html)

" " sound – <http://members.tripod.com/Thryomanes/BirdSounds2.html>

MSFC – <http://home.vic.net.au/~msfc>

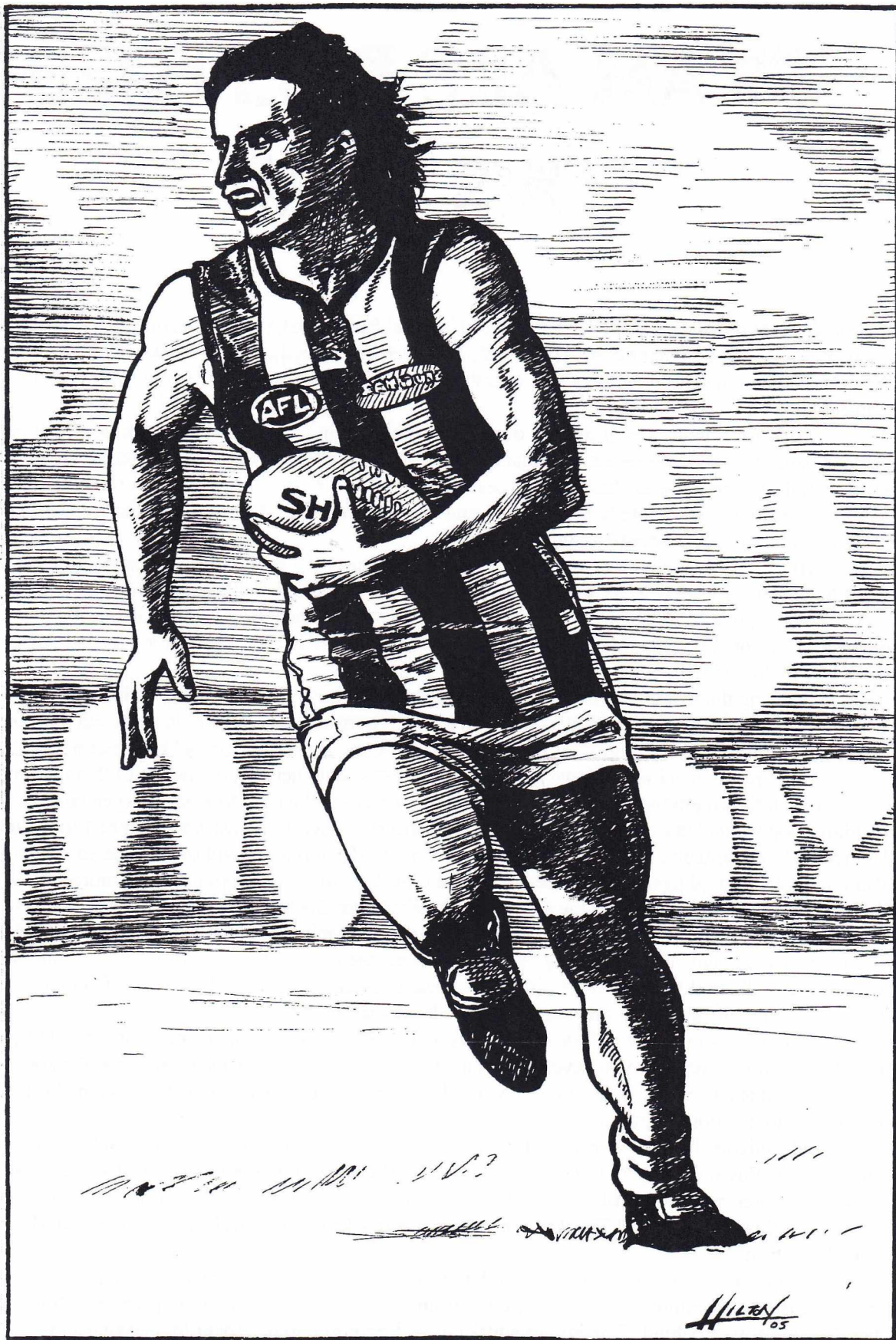
The footy game – <http://www.beckys-place.net/round5.html>

Melbourne – [www.melbourne.com.au](http://www.melbourne.com.au)

Craig Hilton wants it known that his illustrations of footy players were taken from the *Herald Sun* website.







Ben Dixon, Hawthorn

# SPAM ARE PLENTIFUL THIS YEAR

*Jim Sullivan*

*According* to our state's DNR (Department of Natural Resources), there's lots of Spam roaming the woods this year. Seems that the No-Hunting-Spam restriction placed on game hunters during the past year has worked out well. But now there's an overabundance of the animal. And their numbers must be thinned, and soon.

If that isn't done, they'll soon be overgrazing and the first thing you know, the flora will be stripped bare. For as everyone knows, Spam will eat anything (except other Spam) that grows in the wild, which could set forested areas back several seasons of growth. So this is a prime year to go after Spam. As usual, a hunter is limited to bag one Spam, and it must be a male. The hunter, as ever, must obtain a special permit with the normal hunting license.

My oldest son, Dan, is a Spam hunter. Using his trusty .12 gauge shotgun loaded with double aught buckshot, he went over to Grover's Woods the other day and with the help of his Spam dog, Roscoe, shot a nice, 12-point buck Spam. Dan drilled him behind and to the left of the old cider mill (and, incidentally, right above the Spam's eyeball). The animal was so big, my son needed the help of two men and a boy to drag the Spam out of the woods.

To bring the animal home, my son tied the Spam to his (my son's) pickup's right front fender. Then he drove back and forth through town honking his horn so everyone would come out and look. People were oohing and aahing from the railroad tracks to the grain elevator and back again.

The Spam's head would have made an ideal trophy, but Dan already had 14 of them mounted by Sam Duckett, the community Taxidermist, and on the wall over the acetylene and oxygen tanks at the welding shop where Dan works. So, this year, he decided to have the Spam's hide tanned and made into a leather coat. Admittedly, its natural brindle color is a bit off-putting. It kind of reminds you of mustard. But once you get used to seeing it, especially before lunch, it won't make you sick anymore.

Naturally, my son gutted the animal and butchered up the Spam meat. He freezes it and stores it in the local food locker downtown next to the funeral home. Thanks to my son's generosity, we had the best, most expensive Spam cut for Thanksgiving. And we ate the next best one for Christmas. Spam, by the way, is our traditional holiday entree. You can't beat it, even with a stick. Last year, of course, what with the scarcity and all, we had to eat canned Spam. But it was still Spam.

Dan knows that a lot of folks hereabouts don't particularly like the gamey taste of wild Spam (this may be the only variety, for you never hear of a tame Spam in someone's back yard or at the zoo). He (my son), then, mixes it with several different types of sausage. This goes a long way toward making the Spam edible, not to mention digestible.

My missus, for one, won't touch Spam unless it's doctored a whole bunch. And that includes changing the flavor and sight of the stuff. That's why she serves it under wraps. Seldom do guests know what they're getting to eat until it's too late. Their anger, however, soon passes along with other things.

At this time, as on all Thanksgivings, we gave thanks to the One above for the wonderful Spam and all the trimmings.

And speaking of that, I'm not a big fan of Spam giblets. My spouse knows that and fixes a nice, highly seasoned, chestnut dressing she learned from my dear departed mother to prepare. Mom's gone but her dressing stayed behind. The missus stuffs it (the dressing) into the Spam for cooking and doctoring.



Not necessarily in that order. This way I don't have to worry about eating Spam gizzards, etc. What's more, this dressing goes a long way in helping to disguise the taste, shape, and consistency of this Spam, too.

My old man who lives with us just loves Spam, cooked or raw. But he is a hardy soul. He credits his longevity to this unique meat. He'll be 65 next October. He's eaten Spam twice a week since World War II. On the other hand, his wife, my dear mother, dropped dead after a big Thanksgiving Spam dinner a short ten years ago. And she was only 54. We don't know what actually killed her, but the autopsy did find two chestnuts blocking her air passage.

Perhaps the best part of a Spam holiday dinner is making sandwiches from leftovers. I could eat cold Spam sandwiches, smothered with salad dressing, every night for the rest of my life. These sandwiches make for a delicious, energy-packed snack just before bed. And you can fry Spam with your eggs for breakfast, too. No matter when I ingest Spam, I always feel better afterwards.

My only fear now is that the Spam population will be overhunted again. Then before you know it, hunting restrictions will have to be placed on this wonderful game anew.

And our Spam eating will likely drop. Maybe we voters ought to pass the new DNR-suggested regulation to limit hunting Spam to bow and arrow hunters. At least that way the poor animal would have a sporting chance at surviving.

Whatever is decided, let's make every effort to keep the Spam herds thriving. But never fear, Spam's always near – in a can. Try some, you just might like it!

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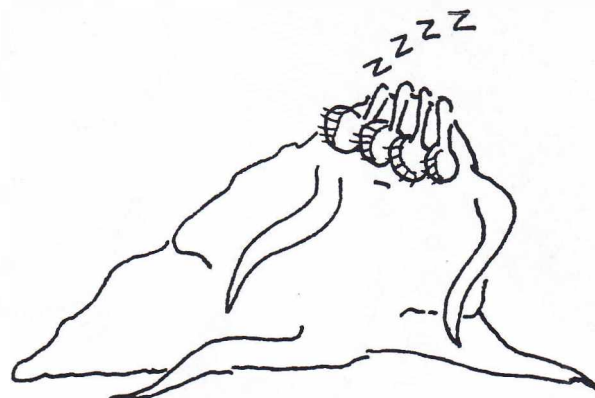
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Remember 1992? MagiCon? The Hugo Awards? The Best Fanzine Hugo? Remember how the envelope given MC Spider Robinson had *Lan's Lantern* written on it and the slide projected above the stage read *Mimosa*? Remember how poor Spider and poor "Lan" Lascowski, bless him, had to come out and reveal there had been an awful mistake? Remember how, when *Mimosa* was announced as the true winner, a stunned Rich Lynch wandered the aisle in a daze, looking for his co-editor – and wife? And how we shut the ceremony down chanting "*We want Nicki! We want Nicki!*" until they brought **Nicki Lynch** out to give her acceptance speech, which was "Thanks, guys!"?

Remember all that? Remember ConFrancisco, the following year? Remember Nicki's *second* Hugo acceptance speech? The one I've parodied as "That's right, Rich! Everyone should do fanzines because they are nice!"?

The Lynchi have picked up four other Hugos since then. But as much as you remember, I'll bet I remember more ...

I remember when Rich and Nicki lived in Chattanooga and revolutionized printed fanac in the South. I remember *Chat*, their outstanding newszine – which introduced to fandom the merry maniacs of Knoxville, including Charlie Williams, whose brilliance adorned the Noreascon 4 program book. I remember when they hosted Chattacon, and a Corflu, and won the Rebel Award for their contributions to the region. I remember when they tried to ignite interest in a regional genzine and, when that didn't fly, created *Mimosa*.

I remember when I created *Challenger*, how Rich and Nicki encouraged me to enter the universe of genzines – and, whenever I'd lose a Hugo to them, how they simply said, "You'll get there!"

But mostly I remember friendship. "Mistying" Indiana Jones in 'Nooga. Scarfing superb BBQ in Birmingham. Gossiping and gabbing at a dozen worldcon chow-downs. Crawling miles of corridors at con after con over decades of friendship, friendship that has buoyed me up when fate's waters have threatened to drag me under.

Sweet, square, noble, honest, caring, funny, generous, and cuter than a button. When Lynn Hickman learned Nicki Lynch's full first name, he sang "*Put another Nickilyn, in the nickelodeon ...*" Impossible. There could never be another Nicki Lynch.

## The Challenger Tribute – Nicki Lynch



# THE CHARUS LINES

**Paul Dormer**

*Interaction Hugo Administrator*

Guy: It gives me great pleasure to inform you that your fanzine *Challenger* has received enough nominations to appear on the Hugo ballot for Best Fanzine at Interaction. I am writing to ask you if you accept this nomination.

*With utmost gratitude.*

**Rich Zellich**

**RichAndMichelle@zellich.net**

"Of the Hugo Nominees' Party, some memories ... Rich and Michelle Geller came through. I've adored Michelle since '86, when Nawlins competed against her St. Louis bid."

Rich and Michelle "Geller" ?

*I'll introduce you to Rich and Michelle Geller sometime. They bend spoons with their minds.*

Other than the above goof, good issue of the 'zine. :-)

Another minor correction; St. Louis is bidding for the 2007 NASFiC, not the '08 Worldcon. Since we saw you at the Noreascon, Ocean City, MD has declared an '07 NASFiC bid, too.

We got to see the Cardiff Giant, too, but I don't recall having to pay \$15 apiece ... must have been a special all-for-one admission as part of the minor fair of some kind they had when we were there (I was working in Albany for several months in 2003, and Michelle flew up one extended holiday weekend, instead of me flying home to St. Louis.) We also got to see a sheep-shearing and wool-carding and -spinning demonstration, as well as visiting the small art & historical museum across the road – all for one price.

Cooperstown is a neat place, apparently



with a lot of really good, small, restaurants – must be because of all the tourist traffic. We only got to try one such during our short visit to the area, but it was a wonderful family-run Italian place. We were mainly there for the Baseball Hall of Fame, of course ... Michelle being the main baseball nut of the two of us.

**Henry L. Welch**

**Editor, *The Knarley Knews***

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**<http://people.msoc.edu/~welch/tkk.html>**

Just reading thru the lettercol of *Challenger*, and was amazed at how clueless Hank Reinhardt sounded. Indeed, he makes me wonder, much more than I have regarding Joseph Nicholas in other letter columns, why anyone would want to send him a copy of their fanzine. Not only are his views so wrong-headed, but he is personally abusive to you as well. The main thrust of his letter seems to be repeatedly justifying current American military brutality by pointing out how brutal people and the world are, in general. His final message for you is to "grow up" and accept the brutality without whining about it. No doubt about it, the human race

will never evolve with people like Hank Reinhardt thinking the way he apparently does. If "Joseph Joseph Nicholas" is indeed correct that the exploration of space is dead, which has been stated before, and seems to be the case, that is indeed unfortunate, as that also represents the end of human evolution. If human life is to survive, we must eventually leave this sphere – someday it will no longer be habitable. Plus, the law of probability states that some time, sooner or later, some other celestial body will collide with our little planet. If we're not able to escape the planet, we won't be able to escape that catastrophe. Not even roaches would be able to survive that!

I just wanted to add to the above by saying that it's people like Reinhardt who give so much lip service to our spreading "democracy" to Iraq who don't care that in reality what we are really spreading there is tyranny and torture. Moreover, there are some Americans who insist that there has been no torture of political prisoners in Iraq; that abuse and humiliation do not amount to torture. Meanwhile there are claims by prisoners who have been beaten and/or have had dogs set on them – pretty harsh treatment for someone for whom it isn't even known if they are an "insurgent" or not. As far as I know, these claims have not been investigated.

Must disagree with Dr. Craig Hilton when he says, "It is unknown in our society," when referring to rheumatic fever and, presumably, strep throat, which he also refers to, although not specifically by name. Strep throat does still occur in America, and, according to my current doctor, if not treated effectively, eventually leads to defective or leaky heart valves.

I see that Brad Foster misinterpreted something I said in the email of mine you published about finally remembering my "little" cousin Joe (which, as I said before, made little sense without the previous one, where I referred to not remembering Joe), perhaps in order to launch off on his own rant about lying out under the sun. My skin is such an unnaturally pale color that I usually try to get at least a little tan in the summer – it just doesn't look right for me to go through the entire summer with such a (seeming) deathly pall on my face. That is why I spend time under the sun, not to "get hot," and I certainly never made any reference to leaving New York because of the heat! That was a projection on Foster's part.

Great lettercol; thanks for the words from Arthur C. Clarke. Like much of fandom, I had been wondering what had happened to him after the tidal wave hit.

Guy, I acknowledge many of the problems with this country that you point out. It is so easy for us as Americans to become complacent and not care about our government slaughtering peoples in other countries. In this day and age in which we have made our individual lives so complicated, many times it seems to be all we can do just to get through the day, without time for worrying about what our government, which we obviously cannot affect, is going to do. The only words of encouragement that I can offer you are that you and I are at least doing something – fanzines are obviously becoming one of the last vestiges of the free press.

**Tim Marion**  
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**New York NY 10002**

I've been reading over the latest *Challenger*, but it's getting difficult because I just keep getting more and more depressed. Not by the issue, mind you, which is fine.

Your prognostication of war with Iran in 2006 is apparently very optimistic. It seems we are already making incursions into that country... before we have even secured Iraq. An article I read from the Yahoo! website describes Fallujah as the greatest military defeat in history... on *our* part. Apparently our military hit them with everything they could, including chemical weapons, and they're still there. No satellite pictures of the city have been allowed since our offensive on them.

Guy, I remember as a kid in the 60s the chants and slogans about having a revolution, and frankly, I didn't understand. I would hate to think that is what it would take to turn this country around. It's hard to think of every right-thinking person in the country having to risk their family, pets, home, job and lives and March On Washington, but apparently that's what it's going to take to convince the Powers That Be that they Just Can't Do These Things. They can't start illegal wars because they don't like other dictators. They can't take resources from other countries to line their own pockets, while bankrupting us, the citizens who



have supposedly elected such officials. We have long since passed this point in our evolution – this was one of the reasons why monarchies are considered passe and democracies were founded. The whole point of having a United Nations is to keep superpowers like us in check; if our government ignores such laws and rules, *it* becomes, de factor, a rogue regime. As has been said before, we must bring democracy back to our own country before we can think about exporting it to others.

I admit I was thinking about moving to Canada, but I'm also thinking that with dwindling energy resources, the last thing I need to do is move to a place where it's only warm 2-3 months out of the year. As long as my job is here, I guess I'm stuck in New York. I would be willing to accept that we are living in the Last Days as long as I didn't feel it was our own fault.

Adding to the above, strep throat and resultant heart trouble were probably serious contributing factors in Susan Wood's death in the early 80s.

**Joseph Major**  
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Editorial: About fifteen years ago, when the then county government turned over county judges, and the new one learned to some dismay that the old one had been less than careful about the balance between revenue and expenditure. Thus there were layoffs. The Chief Engineer asked me to prepare the listings of proposed layoffs. I had hopes that they would at least not tell me to prepare for my own firing. We were a little more fortunate than your former office; didn't have to lay anyone off. When they did have to cut people, last year when they state government abolished auto emissions testing because one local state senator said everyone passed anyway, so why bother, I was in a section that didn't have to worry, but some of our inspectors got bounced. . .

Best wishes for the new position and the prospects northwards. I understand about the insurance matter. Got a bill from the hospital last week for all the tests I took. It was a third of what I paid for the car. Fortunately the insurance paid all

but a smidgen of it. I don't think I'm a profit center for the insurance company.

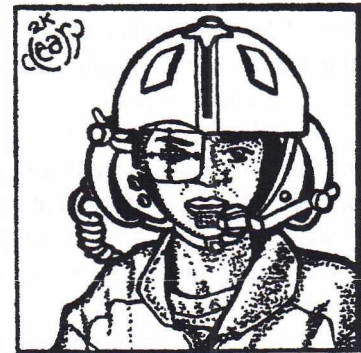
Yes, Noreascon was definitely fun. It will be our last Worldcon for a few years (see above about car and medical considerations).

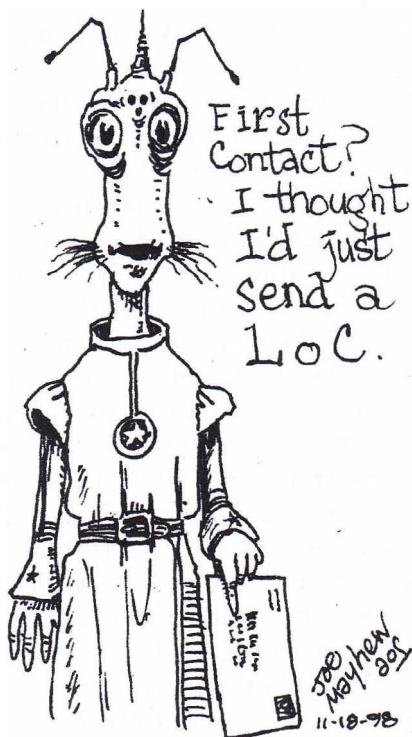
"The Einstein Code": You do know that Einstein was a subscriber to *Astounding*? One wonders if he tried to apply relativistic considerations to the "trick issue". [For the fanhistorically challenged, the November 1948 issue of *Astounding* published a letter by Richard Hoen reviewing the November 1949 issue; the November 1949 issue contained the stories reviewed.] I never quite bought the theory in *The Bible Code*, but then I read about Ignatius Donnelly's work proving that Francis Bacon put a code in the works of "Shakespeare" revealing his authorship and other secrets. People then used Donnelly's methods to prove that Donnelly had written the works of Shakespeare.

"SteamPunk": I remember noting how "fannish" the Emily Dickinson scholars are, holding meetings where women dressed as Emily read her poetry to audiences (something she herself would never have done, but), dealers sell not only books but also other Dickinson-related stuff, and the like. And they would of course have considered the readers of that *Star Wars* trash to be wasting their time when they could be doing something serious. And I suppose much the same for the Dickens Faire.

"The Old, Old Story": The variation I ran across was for children, and featured the kindly old Professor, his niece and

nephew, a dashing young pilot, and perhaps the amiable but old-fashioned gardener. The Professor had built his spaceship in the garden, see. This often bewildered American readers, who didn't know how big English gardens were. The jolly adventurers would take off one afternoon, fly to the Moon, do a splendid little tour, and then return, parking the





spaceship in one corner of the garden. The children would have a little tale to tell, not that anyone much cared ... (Horribly, that much is turning out to be a quite accurate prediction).

"A Visit to Jack Vance": which makes it clear why it took six years for the last part of *Ports of Call* to come out. I was surprised Vance could get away with writing such a short book these days. I note that *Ports of Call* is set in the Gaean Reach of many of Vance's earlier books. Not only the reader but the characters can visit such intriguing worlds as Alastor, Smade's World, Cadwal, and so on.

"Noreascon IV Diary": Yes, I noted the enclosures. In fact, I went down to the lobby and stepped outside one night, at about 11:30. Ever since at least high school, I have not gone one single day without going outside at least once, and I didn't want to break the chain.

Sophia Loren is seventy. I can think of more depressing thoughts but that takes time and effort.

*So she's 70? She's still Sophia Loren.*

"A New Take on the Moon Hoax": It's the picky little detail that makes a fine hoax. Inviting the reader to "put it together" is another technique. I'm thinking of the Mark Twain story where he described the position of a petrified man, and if you read it carefully, you found out he was thumbing his nose.

"The Chorus Lines": E. B. Frohvet: Comics

fandom, like many other fandoms, got started in Fandom. Lay your hands on a copy of the reprinted *Xero*. Bob Sabella: Live action movies tend to be dominated by other factors. This was why John Bloom started focusing on B-movies, which passed under the radar of financial control, being able to be conceptually controlled by one person. Who might not be any good but ...

Richard Dengrove: The portrayal of Nemo in *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* was taken from *The Mysterious Island*, where he is Prince Dakkar of Bundelkund, deposed through intrigue by the Raj. Trying to reconcile the chronologies however is quite a different matter.

Tim Marion: Saddam Husayn may have been called an atheist, but he also claimed to be descended from the Prophet. The Baath Party is officially secular, but it's like the man who tried to mollify an Ulster gunman by claiming to be an atheist, and was asked, "Ah yes, but are ye a Protestant atheist or a Catholic atheist?" All the atheists in Islamic countries are Islamic atheists.

*Thanks for the great company at the April DeepSouthCon – and our latest fan editors' dinner!*

**Somebody ... I don't know who!!! Gawd! How embarrassing ...**

Thanks for *The Galactic Route* covering your trip to Noreascon. A colleague of mine did a brief classification of the constitutional amendments in partial response to the recent trends proposing amendments to ban flag burning and gay marriage. In his opinion exactly *one* of the amendments restricted liberties (Prohibition) and we know what happened with that one. I think this is a grand and revealing commentary on many in the conservative movement who are pushing for these. The Constitution is designed to protect us and keep our freedoms, not to restrict them.

"Six Ships That Shook the World" by Roger Archibald in *Invention and Technology* 13, Number 2, pp 24-36 (1997) is a fascinating article about how the USS *Constitution* was built and how critical aspects of the design had to be rediscovered during restoration. A brief coverage of this can be found at

<http://www.accesstoenergy.com/view/ate/s41p863.htm#Message2328>.

Despite the achievement of man I, like you,

am continually reminded that nature is fully capable of upstaging us. Your commentary on the *USS Constitution* followed later by your comments on Niagara make this abundantly clear. This is one of the many reasons I chose to get married in a cave rather than in a man-made structure.

*Yes – but who are you??? I can find no record of who sent this excellent LOC!*

**Lloyd Penney**  
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**Etobicoke, ON**  
**Canada M9C 2B2**

It has taken me a while, but finally, there's time to get caught up with some things, and one of those things is to go to [www.challzine.net](http://www.challzine.net), and make some comments on *Challenger* 21.

"The Einstein Code" made me smile. I know that *The DaVinci Code* is fiction, but I am amused to find how many people think it a book of revelation into an ages-long mystery. I haven't read it myself; I'm too entertained by the public reaction to it.

I am hoping that Chris Garcia will actually do an article on his father, and the things he did for SCA and Worldcons. I have had some contact with SCA, through a few of its members who are also involved with fandom, and with its website and its duchy system. I remember talking to one local person who had quit SCA because he wanted to do some creative recreations in a time period SCA did not cover, and he was actively discouraged from proceeding with it. Anachronism, yes; creative, but only to the extent we say you can. He formed his own recreation group, had some fun, and faded from my view about ten years ago. I think a recreation group that would recreate the fine clothing and manners of a bygone era, such as Chris describes, would be a fine idea.

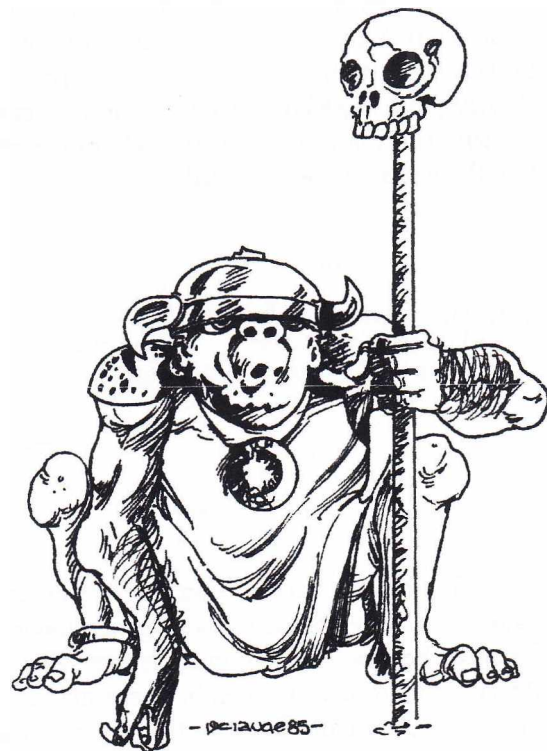
Sometimes, I think I've never been an adult. I feel like I've been a kid for a long time, and now, I feel like a premature old man. The eyes are going bad, the knees are good only with the consumption of glucosamine-chondroitin capsules, the bald spot continues to enlarge, as does the pot belly. I wish for those good old days of goshwow, and while I still have them from time to time, they are becoming rarer, and I treasure any day that has it. I always wondered if these eccentric professors were so nerdy or weird, how on earth did they find a girl to marry so they could have daughters to worry over in those

great stories?

I am as guilty as the next fanwriter; I rarely comment on artwork in my locs, and I should. Many fan artists never see the inside of a fanzine, and that's a shame. I can think of some local artists who are regularly seen in local art shows ... Larry Stewart, Lar deSouza, Chris Knight, and several others fatigue won't let me remember. Jeez, what is Tim Kirk doing these days? Disney! Every so often, a modern fanzine shows off a gem by Kirk, or George Barr, or even a Bjo. Tim, were you able to land on that fateful day, or did your plan land somewhere in the Yukon? Many planes coming in from Japan landed in Canadian territory.

Interesting trip with Jack Vance. I've read about a dozen of his books, which many not be enough to grasp how good a writer he is. I had read about how he was slowing down, and then about his failing eyesight, and I understood better why he seemed invisible these days. He's nearly 90 and mostly blind, and I can only imagine what kind of frustration that must be in such a visual medium as science fiction.

Oh, I wanted to be at the Boston Worldcon. We had such a good time there in 1989 for Noreascon 3. We wanted to be at N4, but money





wouldn't allow for it. In this day where Worldcon memberships can be purchased on the installment plan because they are so expensive, I may be among the first of eventually many who will say that Worldcons are great, but I cannot afford to go to it any more. At least Bob Devney let me put an essay in the First Night one-shot. I was pleased when I learned I came in sixth place for Best Fan Writer ... always a bridesmaid, and never a bride. And, the Fan Gallery put up a huge picture of us, so we were there in spirit.

I am glad Mike Resnick enjoyed the Movenpick Marche; there are several in Toronto, and take-out versions in some supermarkets here.

I am always amazed at some of the stories you relate, about the crimes committed, the people who commit them, and the fact that these people may go free, receive probation, receive a still fine, receive a jail sentence or the death penalty for a crime, depending on what state they may be in when they perpetrated the crime. Some people are free today for crimes others may have been executed for. Perhaps I exaggerate a little here, but I don't think I exaggerate much.

I've never wanted to own a boat, really, but one thing I have always wanted is to live by the lake or ocean. Being in Toronto, Lake Ontario is to the south, and we always seem to live fairly close to the lake, so we're happy. We try to spend at least two Saturdays every summer having a day-long picnic in a lakeside park, enjoying the breeze, the cool grass, the shade, and the chattering squirrels in the trees before the parks get too crowded.



Gotta agree with you on the two cities of Niagara Falls. One reason I'd been given about the differences between the two cities is that NFNy is still recovering from a major embezzlement of funds from the Niagara Falls Tourism Commission bank account some years ago. There are now two casinos

on the NYOnt side, and an Indian band-run casino in what used to be the Convention Centre on the NFNy side, gambling doesn't seem to be the reason any more. You probably discovered that the Rainbow Mall, intended to be a Mecca for tourist shopping, has been long closed. Eeriecon, the local con in NFNy, comes along in about six weeks, so I hope to see Joy Moreau there again. We did *The Maid of the Mist* a few years ago on a whim ... a good time. We sneaked away with our plastic ponchos, and they are in the car in case we're caught in a cloudburst.

Doing a Lynddie ... just last night on *60 Minutes*, there was a report on *rendering*. The US government can call it whatever it wants, but it is state-sponsored kidnapping, plain and simple. I think the military is out of control, to match the government that funds it. It all shows that any excuse can be given to forget one's morals. Somehow, assaulting foreign nationals and holding them without due process of law, so holy in American documentation, is okay in this post-9/11 era. It would seem that any crime, no matter how heinous, is just fine if done in the name of national security.

Once again, I don't mean to dump on you ... it's quite easy to look across the border and shake my head. But if I do that, I can only imagine how many Americans feel at the idea of their government doing the very things they used to decry in foreign government activities, like those governments in the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, East Germany, Romania and Albania. 9/11 hurt us all in so many ways, we may never realize them all.

The next Corflu will be right here in Toronto, so here's another good excuse to come north. We'd love to see you up here, and we can have a good time without a Worldcon getting in the way.

*Congrats on winning the Best Letterhack FAAn Award at the last Corflu!*

**Charlie Williams**  
**1200 Woodcrest Drive**  
**Knoxville TN 37918**  
**cwilliams@icx.net**

I kinda like the FM version of your zine. Easier to read, prettier graphics, and I can share my copy with many others. Can't take it to the john, stacked in the magazine rack gathering lint and

toilet-paper dust. Gotta log on and select the bookmarked site, and scroll down. A different kind of read, so modern. It's inevitable, like when rock'n'roll was on tinny AM, making the transition to broadcast stereo on FM and all. It hit me when a friend called up the latest *Chall* on his handheld computer, like a character from *Mote in God's Eye* ... The published zine is like the mimeograph, like the 12-cent comic book.

*Or the six-ounce Coca-Cola, which you can still get, and which is still best, but which now costs too much for the amount you get. Ah, we're old men, Charlie. Time to lay us down and fertilize the Earth ...*

**Brad W Foster**  
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**bwfoster@juno.com**

Seems to take me longer to get through an online zine, staring at that screen do start to tire the eyes after a bit. But, this *is* a new issue of *Challenger*, so not going to leave it alone too long!

Sorry to hear about the forced move, but I hope things will still turn out good in the long run. Hey, come on down to the Red River Revel next fall and say hi. I've exhibited my work there the last few years, and hopefully I'll get juries in again this year! (Even if they don't let me back, it's still a fantastic art and music fest to check out there in Shreveport. It's the first place I ever saw a rock group with an electric bag pipe. And that wasn't just for background, this guy could step up front and rock out with that thing!)

I loved Terry Jeeves' "The Old Old Story", though being more a child of the last half of the last century (what an odd phrase!), that outline sounded more like every "sci-fi B-and-C-Movie" plot I'd seen. Actually, guess I've always been prejudiced toward print, and so felt the cliché's must fall only on film. Ah, but no, every genre and media must have just such a baseline they have to rise above. On the other hand, lots of fun to use that plot when you inject the humor.

Thanks so much to Sheryl for getting this wonderful update from Tim Kirk on what he has been up to in her "Fanartists on Parade", and to *Chall* for giving her a place to print it, along with all that great Kirk art. Tim was pretty much out of fandom when I first got into it, but I saw enough of

his art to be totally blown away, and his Kirk's Works collection is still a treasured addition to my shelf of art books. I never felt I could achieve anything like the levels of quantity and quality that he seemed to do so effortlessly, but looking at his work was what made me think it would be possible to actually have fun with my own. In recent years, I never could find out what had "happened" to him. Knew he had worked at Hallmark, and only some rumors of Disney...we used to joke about how he got swallowed up by two corporations where the individual artist kind of vanished into the maw of it all under the company "signature". After I won my last Hugo award ten years ago, I joked that people really needed to vote me just *one* more, since that would mean I had finally won more than Tim, and so he would *have* to start doing art for fanzines again, just to reclaim his title there.

Well, no one has taken me up on that offer, but hey, here's a whole mess of Tim's art... and he'll probably win this year, cause even a little bit of Kirk art blows the rest of us completely out of the water. One of the best, most creative artistic talents around!

And I agree with Sheryl Birkhead on deserving fan artists getting a little more recognition. I hope she is able to get something from Steven Fox. Another incredibly prolific and highly talented artist, I was lucky enough to have exchanged a few letters with him way back when, though he always seemed to be changing his address, and was hard to keep track of, until eventually I was just never was able to track him down again, and he seemed to kind of fade out of fandom. But what a unique talent he had. I'd love to hear that, like Tim here, he has simply gone on to greater artistic challenge and reward.

Sheryl's other piece "How Far will Water Run Uphill?" was one of those stories where you feel, no matter how bad things are going for me, it is probably going worse for someone else. (Which means, of course, that there is someone else out there with an even worse situation than Sheryl, and another worse than them, and so on... let's not go there!) We've had all kinds of problems with water flooding into the back of our house for several years. Lots of suctioning water out of the carpets, trying to dry things out, standing in the backyard in the middle of driving rainstorms, tossing buckets of water out into the alley, digging ditches, installing

pumps, etc etc... but no way could I have put up with lugging buckets loaded with water up stairs for hour after hour. I think after the first 30 minutes I would have decided that the basement would now officially be the indoor swimming pool, and left it at that! Great issue!

**Joseph Nicholas**  
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**josephn@globalnet.co.uk**

I've been noodling from time to time at the on-line version of *Challenger 21*. Indeed, I've saved parts of it to my hard drive, so that I can read it



without running up the phone bill. (In the UK, all calls are charged according to their length. Surfing the internet on dial-up can therefore be a bit expensive.) In this case – when I've had the opportunity to read some more, I'll probably write some more – I'm responding to some of the comments in the letter column; from (in order) Joseph Major, Martin Morse Wooster and Hank Reinhardt.

"People who are in horror movies don't watch horror movies," says Joseph Major. He's forgetting *Scream*, the first and the best of the series (in fact, it was made as a stand-alone, with no thought that there might be sequels), in which the characters comment explicitly on the tropes and conventions of the teen slasher genre and their likely default roles in the "real version" being played out around them. (If I recall correctly, I think that one point one of the characters addresses the others on videotape, saying that if his friends are watching this then he obviously didn't survive.)

*My favorite line in that movie came when a character named infamous mass murderers – "Jack the Ripper ... Charles Manson ... O.J.!"*

"Where did Benford get the notion that we will run out of oil in 50 years?" asks Martin Morse Wooster, and continues: "All the evidence of the past suggests that when the price of oil rises, companies get to work and find new areas to drill in. Isn't it true that if we only had the proven reserves of 1978, we'd have very little oil now?" Unfortunately, Wooster is here confusing total reserves, recoverable reserves and economically recoverable reserves. I shall attempt to elucidate.

When the Club of Rome published *The Limits To Growth* in 1970, predicting an imminent end to exploitable resources of raw materials and fossil fuels, it was basing its predictions on economically recoverable reserves, as the economics of extraction then stood. That is, it recognised that there were recoverable reserves over and above those it classified as economically recoverable, but considered that the cost of extracting those additional reserves would exceed the revenue to be gained from them.

What has happened in the thirty years since is that extractive technologies have continued to develop, to the point where what would have been economically unrecoverable in 1970 can now be exploited for profit. This has occurred independently of increases in the actual price of oil – apart from the artificial shortages and price hikes of 1973 (and the taxes levied on fuel at the pump by governments), the relative cost of oil has remained largely unchanged. Unfortunately, the focus on price – an obvious headline indicator, and one that is much more meaningful to the public at large – has tended to mask developments in extractive technology, leading to the belief that the discovery of new (i.e., undetected or suspected) reserves is dependent on the price going up.

What has actually happened, however, is that the proportion of total reserves classified as economically recoverable has increased markedly – while known total reserves have increased very little. In other words, we're finally beginning to push up against the limits. Which is where the Association for the Study of Peak Oil, to which I referred in my previous letter, comes in.

"In my seventy years I have read many editorials and comments espousing all sorts of



positions," begins Hank Reinhardt's letter. "Some have been superb, some have been lousy, but I am hard pressed to find one to compare with Guy's latest editorial. It is beyond compare! It is magnificent! Never have I encountered one piece that is so filled with ignorance, hypocrisy, absurd exaggeration and just pure drivel."

After that my brain glazed over a bit – it's a long rant, and as usual with long rants from Hank Reinhardt, the actual subject matter tends to disappear beneath the torrent of bile he pours forth. And, to be honest, I don't think you answered him very well.

Step back from the actual subject matter – the invasion of Iraq, Abu Ghraib, Saddam Hussein's torturers, Waco and Ruby Ridge – and look at the basic point he's arguing. "It's all right for us to do this, because others do it too." In other words, that two wrongs really do make a right. Once that is grasped, his whole argument falls over, and there's no need to worry either about his details of who did what to whom when in history or the question of whether this sort of behaviour does or does not run counter to what the US allegedly stands for, because his moral standpoint has vanished – or probably never existed in the first place.

Mind you, I enjoyed his argument about the Vietnam War being a Democratic war because the Democrats were in power at the time. Therefore, because he doesn't like Democrats, it was an evil and unjust war. Whereas the invasion of Iraq, because it was mounted by a Republican government, is therefore perfectly acceptable. (Or something like that. As I say, his actual points tend to be submerged by his invective.) As he himself might say: it is beyond compare! Magnificent! And utterly, utterly ridiculous.

**Robert Kennedy**  
**Ciprian Avenue**  
**Camarillo CA 93010-2451**  
**robertk@cipcug.org**

Thank you for #21.

I had a much needed laugh reading "The Old

Old Story" by Terry Jeeves.

Your further adventures with DUFF was appreciated. You are to be congratulated for producing an excellent report.

The commentary by Tim Kirk along with his art was great.

Mike Resnick's comment that Guy outdid himself editing the program book for Noreascon IV was an understatement. As I indicated in an e-mail to Guy – he, Rose-Marie, and Geri Sullivan are to be congratulated on a magnificent job. Mike's comment about our "Governator" and changing the Constitution to allow naturalized citizens to run for President was right on. Leave the Constitution as it

is that to become President a person must have been born here. Mike's comment about JFK and Bush got me to thinking too.

Where were the weird pictures of Guy and Rosy (p. 39) taken?

*At the Lord of the Rings exhibit, demonstrating the simplest of the special visual effects used in Fellowship: a simple trick of perspective! See "The Galactic Route", my Noreascon 4 report, on the website. By the way, I*

*understand that exhibit is traveling the country – due in Houston this summer. See it! See it! See it!*

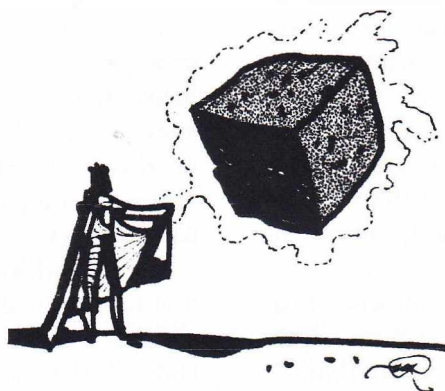
Sheryl Birkhead's "How Far Will Water Run Uphill?" reminded me of 1980 when I had to bail out my Mother's basement. Very exhausting work (and I was 25 years younger); but nothing like what Sheryl went through.

Richard Dengrove's "The Moon Hoax of 1835" was interesting and I don't remember hearing about it before.

E. B. Frohvet: I am honored that you remember meeting me at Chicon 2000.

Hank Reinhardt: It was the Federal Marshals Service that murdered Sammy Weaver, not the BATF. The BATF was the instigator of both Ruby Ridge and Waco. But, it was the FBI that finished them both off. There are a number of excellent books covering Ruby Ridge and Waco. If you would like a list, contact me.

{Side note to Guy: Both Laurence H. Tribe



and another lawyer whose name escapes me at the moment [both certified members of the Left] have stated that what was done to snatch Elián González was unconstitutional.}

Dr. Craig Hilton: When I first read your "he may be a liar, but he's our liar!", I thought you were talking about Bill Clinton. A number of years ago Democratic Senator Kerrey from Nebraska (no, not the guy from Massachusetts), said that Clinton is "an unusually good liar." (Joseph [Bob] R. Kerrey, holder of the Medal of Honor.) A psychologist on the Oprah Winfrey's show said that you can't believe anything Clinton says. And he was convicted of perjury. Also, I believe he had his license to practice law revoked.

Guy Lillian: So, you say that the adversarial legal system worked in the McMartin case. Yes, their freedom was saved (finally) after a number of years, not taking into account the woman who died in jail. The charges were ridiculous. But, as I said, their lives and livelihood were destroyed. Then there's the boy down in Temecula, California who the police badgered into confessing that he murdered his sister when he was innocent. (Sadly, I've forgotten his name.) Then there are the satanic ritual cases and the false memory cases. All in all, it doesn't leave me with a lot of faith in our criminal justice system.

*But it should! These stories show that our system can find our too-human mistakes and correct them. Imperfect we are, imperfect it is, but it's still the closest approximation to justice that our species has yet attained.*

Having served on jury duty six times, I realize that it is impossible to really judge a case unless one has watched it live throughout the complete case or one is on the jury. Nevertheless, I was not surprised at the Not Guilty verdicts in the Robert Blake case. One count was 11-1 for acquittal and the judge dismissed the charge. From what I had read in the paper it seemed to me that the prosecution case was not strong. I was expecting a Not Guilty or a hung jury.

All this leads me to the idea I had a number of years ago (and subsequently learned that I'm not the only one) that there should be verdicts replacing Not Guilty. They are Not Proven and Innocent. Not Guilty does not necessarily mean Innocent. It can mean Not Proven.

"The Best Speech I Never Gave" –

Outstanding!

**Grant Kruger**

**9 Rochelle St.**

**Brandon, MS 39047, USA**

**scifisa@aol.com (yes, SFSA was already taken)**

**<http://members.aol.com/ThirdWorld/PersSF.html>**

Can someone tell me where on earth I've been all these years? Almost a decade in the US South, and I never saw a *Challenger* until recently, when you gave me two of them and your Noreascon Four trip-report at DeepSouthCon Xanadu. I have to say that I was surprised by the high quality of the zine, and also at whom some of the contributors are.

For *Challenger* #20, fire on the cover and inside. Frank's art seemed a strange (but appropriate) contrast to the many farewells to Julius Schwartz that bracketed the other articles. I never knew Julius, but still felt the sadness. Some excellent artwork was surrounded by articles on all manner of subjects, from orbital errors through to dope court (was ever a pun more apt?).

As with several zines I have seen, not all of it is fannish, and I like that. Alexis discussed free will, sex and pair-bonding. Tim talks of lost futures and Albert sees death (but was he sampling the hospital medicines at the time \*wink\* ).

And then you discuss the state of the nation and torture, and the lie that was Ronnie. Ask an African about Ronnie, and how many innocents died in the cold war because of decisions made by him and his predecessors. Of course, as a white South African, I know all about guilt – don't you just love how guile and guilt are just an ET apart?

And torture? My word, does anyone in the USA really believe – and I mean deep down in the unfettered heart of you – the "isolated incidents" garbage? The worst thing about America today is it reminds me too much of home ... before apartheid ended. I told all my friends, "Trust in the goodness of the American people!" And then I'm proved wrong, and Bush is re-elected, and by fear – just as the apartheid government liked to operate (*Swart Gevaar*, the black danger!). I looked the fool I was, forced to acknowledge that y'all can be just as stupid as we were – and as we still are truth be told. I'll move on now, or I'll still be typing come dawn.

I think Faye Best's Katy qualifies as a fantasy story though, and nice to see a story in a

zine again. And there were fannish memory pieces, including ancient (teasing you Guy) Nebula awards, framed by photos of fannish history. My goodness ... is that Le Guin? So shy – almost cowering – and yet with, *The Left Hand of Darkness*, she was a giant.

*I've always thought her feminist affectations – smoking a pipe, for instance – were a little silly, but I'll forgive the author of **The Dispossessed** anything.*

Then articles from Greg Benford and Mike Resnick. What a coup. Greg's article on the Real Future of Space was enjoyable, though I was familiar with most of the ideas. Mike's article on SF movies without logic was clearly written before, *The Day After Tomorrow*. I loved watching the cold chase the kids through the library, to their room... on an outside corner of the building. A more glorious logic-free collection of idiocy has not been seen since such appallingly stupid classics as *Armageddon* and *Independence Day*. As Mike said, it's worse when they have the resources to know better.

I was shocked, shocked I tell you, not to see an LOC from Lloyd Penney – a first for me and any fanzine. Nice to know he is not omnipresent ... or is it?

*He's back this issue.*

I also read, *The Galactic Route*, from cover to cover. You and I share a love of small details lovingly remembered. I used to write trip reports like that, but they went on and on (just as I'm doing now) so my con-reports now skip the sweet details of the journey, filled with new experiences and a thousand little moments. This year I'll be staying with fans in Ireland and Scotland, bracketing my UK Worldcon (where there will be fans from thirty-five countries) with the hospitality of friends and Celtic magic. This year I'm writing a full trip report.

What a marvelous Worldcon Noreascon Four was, a magnificent achievement and a special time. A gathering of my family. I confess that I miss South Africa every day – a connoisseur of homesickness –

but when I'm at a con I'm home, and never more so than at a Worldcon. And as you write about it, more in this zine than in #20, your love for Rosy seeps out onto the page, bringing your memories to life, making me smile.

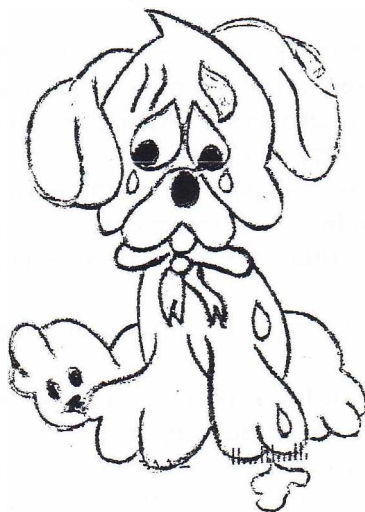
And now *Challenger* #18 stares up at me, tempting me. For pity's sake Guy, I have not read a book in weeks. And on the cover, Darth Vader – elevator to the dark side. An apt metaphor for this temptation? And he, the most successful villain in the history of movie merchandising – sorry Hannibal, but eating liver with some fava beans and a nice chianti does not sell nearly as well as scary masks, light sabres and action figures. So I guess I'll start on #18 tonight, given the omens – somewhere out there, as I conclude this LOC, opening night for the final *Star Wars* episode winds down. I missed it, along with its insane lines filled with the kind of hopeless nerds people think I am, and worse, I was at my writers group meeting instead – the ultimate media sacrilege. For penance I'll drink five Bloody Marys. And hey, I caught the last fifteen minutes of *Predator* tonight too – will that appease the media ghods?

Thanks for the gift of those three zines Guy. It was a pleasure to get to know you a little better at DeepSouthCon. I look forward to seeing you again some time, and to working with you on the *SFC Bulletin*.

*Mutual! You refer to the revamping of Toni Weisskopf Reinhardt's classic guide to Southern fandom, which you have agreed to handle for the Southern Fandom Confederation – a project with which I'll be assisting.*

**WAHF:** Yvonne Rowse, Ben Indick, Robert Lichtman, Roy Thomas, Charles Mohapel, Jerry Kaufman, Bruce Gillespie, Irvin Koch

**Artists in this section:** Alexis Gilliland, Randy Cleary, Joe Mayhew, Delaune, Sheryl Birkhead, William Rotsler, anonymous female inmate.



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# MONSTER'S BALL

GHLIII

**Recently** a piece of mail was forwarded to me from my old job in St. John Parish. It was an anomaly – neither a circular announcing a legal seminar nor a Bar magazine such as I usually received at the office. Instead, it was delicate, personal – a wedding invitation. The date had already passed for the ceremony, and of course we'd moved away, but just receiving it was satisfying.

I didn't like the movie **Monster's Ball**. It seemed a clumsy collection of clichés about Southerners, culled from a shallow misunderstanding of Tennessee Williams and William Faulkner. But it did have some virtues: Halle Berry actually acting, for once, and exterior shots of two greasy spoon restaurants where she was supposed to work. As the flick was filmed in New Orleans and LaPlace, Louisiana, where I (1) lived and (2) worked, I knew both.

Neither joint could possibly hold the interior actions depicted in the movie, but the place in LaPlace (haha, I made a funny) was of professional interest. I knew it not only as a seedy local landmark, but as a crime scene.

Once upon a time Louisiana Motors was an auto dealership, just like it sounds. Later the building morphed into a combination bar and café, attracting a clientele of lower middle class working folk. I'd had a sandwich there myself. Like many another such establishment, it became a locus of its patrons' lives – and the scene of serious tragedy. An example was the January 2003 suicide, outside its front doors, of a young man we'll call **Skeeter**. Gunshot wound. That's all I knew.

Skeeter had a girlfriend we shall call **Cassie**. After Skeeter's demise she continued to haunt Louisiana Motors – mostly, the bar. On May 7, 2003, she was there.

She was not alone. **Earl**, the manager/owner of the establishment, was in his office in the back. The bar was tended by a lady named **Karen**. There were two waitresses on duty, **Lily** and **Joy**, and a cook, named **William**. My client, **Duane**, also worked there, as a combination manager and bouncer; but that night he was a customer, eating dinner with his fiancée, **Tina**, and her son. Other customers present included **Dorothy**, her husband **Raymond**, and a fellow named **Larry**. Keep the names straight: there *will* be a test.

At about 6:00 PM Cassie came into the restaurant from the lounge. Understandably, she was upset – to say the least – after the death of Skeeter, and had been salting away fermented grape juice in copious quantities. She sat at the counter and ordered dinner. After a few minutes, she turned to the assemblage and shouted, "*Y'all need to turn the fucking air conditioner on.*"

Duane rose, and in Tina's phrase, "advised" Cassie to forego further potty mouth – "that if she used any further language as above that he would put her out as he worked as security." Cassie sullenly returned to her chow, as did Duane and Tina. At 6:30 they finished their meal, and Duane went into the back office to bid good night to Earl.

While Duane was gone, Tina rose to pay the bill, and in doing so, passed close to Cassie. Who leapt on her like a wildcat.

Before anyone could react, Cassie had knocked Tina down and was dragging her along the floor by her hair, screaming incoherently. Various customers and employees jumped on Cassie and pulled her off. Among those freeing Tina from Cassie's clutches were Lily, Joy, and bartender Karen. It took all three of them to hold the writhing, screaming Cassie on the linoleum.

Duane and Earl roared out of the back. According to Duane – who is, make no mistake, a huge

dude – he stood over Cassie and, barely controlling his rage, told her, “Don’t *ever* touch my lady again!”

Duane took Tina into the ladies room to help her clean up. Or did he?

Cassie was hauled to her feet. Everyone agreed that Earl, assisted by Lily, bundled her through a rear door into a storeroom. The question was, did Duane go with them? Cassie said so, and her word was important, since when she emerged from that storeroom into the waiting arms of the local constabulary, her face was bloody pulp. According to her, Duane and Earl had beaten her nearly to death.

Duane was charged with aggravated second degree battery. I was assigned to the case.

I soon learned that I had fallen into a tub of worms. My boss had represented Skeeter in an attempted murder case set in the Louisiana Motors parking lot. Rumor was that his suicide had been no such thing. The D.A.’s office made it clear that they’d wanted to nail Earl, the owner, for years, and that they weren’t that fond of Duane, either. Another defense lawyer wished me ill luck with the case, since he was suing Duane over an unrelated incident and wanted him convicted. Who cared? You try that case, I told him; I’d *win* this one.

Duane and Tina came in to see me. I liked Tina; she seemed a sensible, competent lady, far more adult than her gorilla of a boyfriend. She’s done her homework, too, and obtained written statements from most of the people at Louisiana Motors – and photos of the incident’s aftermath. The witness accounts all backed her up. Most important was Lily, whose story was that Cassie popped her in the chops in the storeroom, and she had hit her back, knocking her down and causing her injuries. Duane? Not involved.

Lily was 19, and judging by the photos, righteously cute. She was also righteously *scared*. She’d left Louisiana Motors, had no phone, and didn’t respond to letters to the address on her statement. I sent a top-notch investigator out to find her. He *couldn’t* find her. When he knocked on her front door, her own mother denied even knowing her. I’d seen witness stage fright before, but this was *ridiculous*. And disturbing. What was she scared of? What was she hiding?

Months passed without sign of Lily. Finally, trial day came – and Lily finally appeared.

We’d tracked her down through her employer, an outfit which sent her to courthouses throughout the area doing title searches. Indeed, I’d noticed her before. She was unmistakable – gorgeous – slender, tall, beautiful, rather sweet, and indeed, frightened. I took her aside and found out why. She wasn’t scared of Duane. She was scared senseless – of *Earl*.

I got Sandra, one of my fellow PDs, to baby-sit the girl in our office. I figured she’d feel safe with a kind and somewhat older lady on hand while we selected a jury and heard early testimony – and besides, I didn’t want her to cut out on me.

The chief assistant D.A. handled the case for the prosecution. He introduced photos of Cassie’s battered face and put on a couple of restaurant customers who claimed they’d seen Duane take Cassie into the back with Earl. Raymond, an elderly, gent claimed to have heard Cassie scream – through a solid wall – but was demonstrably deaf as a post. I tried not to enjoy that cross-examination – I didn’t want to embarrass the old boy, nor, I admit, to alienate the jury. When his wife Dorothy testified for the defense, she had no such compunctions, and pooh-poohed everything he claimed to have heard as fantasy.

The second prosecution witness, Larry, claimed to be friends with everyone involved, and he, too, said that Duane had gone into the storeroom. But this friend of everyone involved *didn’t recognize Tina from her photo*. The D.A. shot me a look. He knew as well as I did that his witnesses were utter crap. Besides, both gents had admitted that Cassie had attacked Tina.

On the stand, Cassie, however, denied any wrongdoing. She denied being drunk. Denied jumping Tina. Denied dragging her by the hair. And even though the medics had found cocaine in her system, she denied partaking of the white sustenance *that day*.

Don’t mess with an old dope ... lawyer. I was ready for Cassie. When my turn came, I had an expert standing by – Dave Kent, head of a state facility devoted to treatment of addiction. He testified that cocaine stays in the body only a short time – unlike marijuana, the residue of which lingers for literally,

years. (The grass you may have ingested in college – surely the last time you would have partaken – is *still* in your fat cells.) For Cassie's hospital records to show positive for cocaine, she would have had to have used it within hours. That made the prosecution's star witness either too stoned to know what happened to her, or a liar.

The D.A. knew Kent's assertions could devastate his case. In his cross, he tried to mock Kent's expertise, emphasizing that he had no doctorate – “It is *Mister* Kent, isn't it?” Kent, who has spent more time on the witness stand than I've spent at the dinner table, handled the assault with ease. Obviously, we were doing well – during a break, the D.A. offered me first one light plea bargain, then an even lighter one. The smell of his panic clouded the air. Not interested.

I put on Tina, Dorothy, the bartender, and William the cook, telling our story and giving our perspective – that Duane had been with Tina the whole time Cassie was getting her face pushed in. I got the man who had taken the photos to identify them and introduced them as evidence. Finally, I put on Lily.

The tall, slender, beautiful 19-year-old girl – are there sweeter words in our language? – was nervous, but she told her story. She had seen Cassie attack Tina, had jumped in, and had helped hold Cassie down.

“And then what happened?” I asked.

She and Earl – alone – had taken Cassie to the rear.

“And then what happened?” I asked.

Cassie had slugged her in the face and been punched in return. Cassie had fallen onto her face on the floor.

“And *then* ... what happened?” I asked.

The lovely teen bit her lip, shut her eyes, breathed ... and told all. As she'd left, she'd turned – and found Earl straddling Cassie, *pistol-whipping* her.

The D.A. jumped like he'd been electrocuted. He'd looked forward to pooh-poohing the idea that a blossom like Lily could have caused the damage shown in Cassie's hospital photos. Now he could only demand to know why she hadn't come forward before now. She answered that she'd been frightened of Earl, who always carried a gun and who was a very violent and dangerous man. Earl – not Duane – had been the reason she'd stayed away. Earl – not Duane – had been the source of her fear. She hadn't wanted to cross her violent former employer – but finally, she said, she simply couldn't let Duane go to jail for something Earl had done.

If I do say so, after that, it was indeed, a matter of rhetoric, and I was better at that than the D.A. I won the battle of closing arguments. To counter the testimony of our expert that Cassie must have been high on coke, and either lying or mistaken about Duane, he made fun of him – or tried to. He wasn't Dave Kent, he was *Clark* Kent, with super-vision that could look into the soul of another. Well, I replied, perhaps Kent couldn't look into Cassie's soul, but he could certainly read a blood test – and knew what he was talking about when he talked about cocaine. Unless, I said pointedly, peering straight at the District Attorney, Louisiana was in the habit of appointing incompetents to positions of public power ...

Fun though that was, the core of our case was the pretty waitress. When I went over Lily's testimony to the jury, I told them that we'd been privileged in this trial – watching a terrified girl become a brave woman before our eyes.

Lily was checking a title in the St. John clerk's office when the verdict came down. It was a particular pleasure to intercept her and share it: *Not guilty*.

The D.A. immediately subpoenaed Lily to testify against Earl in his trial, coming up later. “She's mine now!” he shouted. A few days afterwards, his secretary spotted Duane, Tina and Lily at a bar, laughing together. She reported the fact to me, as if it meant something. Sure it meant something, I said. It meant they'd *won*.



## WHY WE NEED A NEW GENRE LABEL -- OH, AND WHAT DO YOU WRITE?

A Rambling Essay From the Sleepless  
Desert of Dreamless Waiting

Gene Stewart

**Science fiction** just sounds wrong nowadays. It's got the pejorative "science" in it and it emphasizes "fiction" as if we need to be told the difference.

This implies there *is* a difference and that's what makes it so very wrong, not to mention dangerous.

After all, in today's irreality, to use Philip K. Dick's coinage, belief counts much more than any fact, and assertions are true to the degree they are repeated, not confirmed. Further, in the prevailing mindset one contradicts the consensual delusion at great risk to personal safety. People die these days from saying what's true. "Speak the truth and dig your grave," Sinead O'Connor said, after running afoul of Big Ideology by tearing up a picture of the Pope on Saturday Nite Live to protest Vatican policies against abortion. And this was long before USA went fascist.

Years later, she hasn't lived it down. They still hound her for it, and hate her. Forgiveness isn't something offended religionists bother much with, it seems.

Best to stick with what's *popular*. And sure, popularity is fickle. It shifts every moment. Stay tuned and keep up or you chance an onslaught of hate to wither a sculpted rose.

Some of what's happening today is reminiscent of the Dark Days before the Renaissance, before the Enlightenment, when the church last held sway and persecuted the likes of Galileo, Copernicus, and Giordano Bruno. Survival depended on subterfuge, on plot and counter-plot. Giving lip-service was a necessity back then.

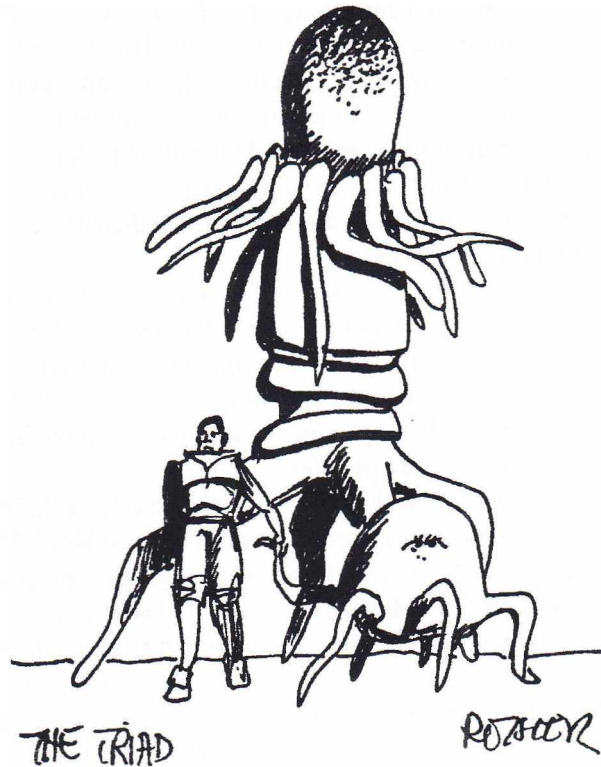
On bended knee was a posture taken not only by ardent suitors and penitents, knights being dubbed and priests looking for dropped pennies, but clever or desperate rationalists trying hard just to stay alive in a world gone insane. Bended knee was a pose all aped in order not to stand out.

When it came to thought, it was kept to one's self. Sharing thoughts got people turned in, tortured, and killed. Rationalists lived the dangerous and short life of the spy.

And this was long before a Nazi Pope, remember.

Who do you think reads science fiction? Those selfsame rationalists, who else? The same folks who would have been burned at the stake or hanged from the windows in a Medici square, bodies broken on the rack or pierced in Iron Maidens, bones crushed by thumb- and ankle-screws and presses. Getting Medieval on one's ass isn't just a phrase, it's rooted in uncounted deaths and undeniable sufferings refined brilliantly during the Dark Ages.

They sharpened their use of fear and hatred as control devices during the burning times of the witch hunts. If accused, one was guilty until proven innocent.



Imagine being charged with the crime of writing science fiction.

Bully tactics would crush you. Toe the line or else. Kowtow. Obey. Bow, kneel, and prostrate one's self or else. Recant this speculative drivel and confess its base unworthiness.

If you think I'm joking, remember that IMAX theaters had to stop showing *Volcanoes of the Deep* because it discussed unusual life forms and suggested that the majority of the biomass on Earth can be found at 12,500 feet or deeper, under the oceans, in thermal vents. Further, it mentioned geology and we all know where *that* leads. No kidding, the theaters, and in fact IMAX film-makers, have felt the chilling effect of bullying to this extent.

Aligning one's self with science these days is akin to wearing a sign reading Heretic. And science fiction? Lies told about science? Madness. Or at least political insanity.

Science fiction in the pulp era was looked upon as one step sideways from pornography and considered just as corruptive, corrosive, and confounding to the moral and mental upbringing of children. Get caught reading *Astounding* and one could receive a caning or worse, even as the offensive tract was burned because fire purifies.

Do things change? Or do they circle back like panthers hungry again as night begins to fall?

Some of us learned recently about a North Korean literary genre depicting the glorious leader passing among the plebes in common garb, unrecognized and observant. (Oddly, it's not called the Mark Twain's Prince and the Pauper Stuff.) These mincing, sycophantic stories invariably show the leader in a roseate, near holy glow and always end with his beneficence. '

The writers in North Korea are forbidden to mention anything from outside the Perfect Paradise that is North Korea, under penalty of death and, worse, of having one's family expunged.

Kind of like Ann Coulter only mandatory.

We're not quite to that point stateside but something as restrictive, Soviet, and mindless could well be imposed here. It fits the pattern we've seen developing since the electoral coup. The first one, I mean.

Reigning in imagination and stopping people from thinking about science and what it could possibly do is policy these days. Trees cause pollution, clear cutting prevents forest fires, and global warming is a myth because science doesn't convince people who hear a god talking to them. The True Believers in control are censorious and contemptuous, dismissive and draconian. They impose their subjective sub-reality on us, using belief and noble platitudes, fear tactics and empty promises. Same as it ever was.

When W gave a speech the other evening he addressed our dependence on foreign oil -- literally hours after romancing a Saudi prince at the Ranch in Crawford, TX, remember -- by saying we must free ourselves from such dependency. He went further, saying we must free ourselves from non-renewable energy sources and fossil fuels. Lest anyone mistake this for good sense or even honesty, he then said that, to this end, he'd asked Congress to approve a 2.8 billion dollar research initiative into...coal. Apparently in Bush World coal isn't a fossil fuel but is renewable.

He believes this, it seems, despite pesky facts.

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Believe = pretend.

Fact = real, provable, and confirmed by repeated testing and long term experience.

\*\*\*

Heretical, such assertions. They fly in the face of the Official Version. Winston Smith rewrote history in 1984 so it always reflected the changing perfections of Big Brother's viewpoint. The past was malleable and facts tolerated only for political reasons, and never unbent or unaltered.

Science fiction written under Stalin's Soviet Russian cultural oppression tended to critique the regime in veiled or symbolic terms. It remained the only almost-deniable way to dissent. Blunter writers like Aleksandr Solszhenitsyn were tortured and sent to the camps comprising the Gulag Archipelago. Most

sf writers, such as Boris and Arkady Strugatsky, ducked under the blade and managed to stay at home among loved ones. Imaginative literature indeed.

Of course stateside sf remained the world's standard. USA's "anything goes" attitude kept its sf fresh and innovative, at least in New Wave theory. Unrestricted, sf flourished.

Those days are gone.

\*\*\*

We must recognize that science fiction needs a new genre label. Without a new name it is doomed to be expunged, forbidden or, far worse, co-opted and controlled, as Soviet Korea does. Why? Because it has those two hated words in it, "science" and "fiction". Ideologues such as those in the NeoCon Death Cult don't tolerate such terms.

Speculative fiction, proposed decades ago as an alternative term for this odd genre when the New Wave splashed over the Old Guard, is one way to go. Speculating is more accurately what sf stories do, after all, be they science fiction, fantasy, or horror.

This still leaves us with that "fiction" thing. Why do we insist on this? Does Robert B. Parker call his Spenser novels Mystery Fiction? Don't we all understand that the novels are fictional by definition?

What do you write?

Oh, I write speculations.

Syllabic, but it works.

William S. Burroughs, Beat Queen, used to say, "I write reports." That was accurate, too. Stories are reports, whether factual or fictional. And most if not all fiction includes facts for verisimilitude anyway.

Reports is shorter than Speculations and it's admirably vague. Nothing much there to upset the Vagon ideologues.

Then there's Shakespeare's answer: Words.

That's shorter yet, and gives away nothing. But it doesn't distinguish the genre much at all, does it? How would critics know when to sneer? How would publishers know from which books to withhold advertising? How would readers know where to find the next length of yard-goods to match the others they've consumed?

Isaac Asimov, the Good Doctor himself – and who is or was the Bad Doctor? Harlan? -- answered: Lies. He argued that fiction is professional lying. This point was made tongue-in-cheek, though. Lies seek to deceive. Fiction seeks to reveal. They are opposites and so Lies is not a good answer unless one is a lawyer and/or politician. (Present company always excepted.)

What do you write? Oh, I write words.

What kind of words? Words I hope you want to read.

Of course most writers don't write for an audience, and constant reader is but a silhouette of the writer's excuses. We write because we must, and mostly for the story's sake. What we're capturing and trying to preserve is voice.

What voice? Ours, if we're lucky. Echoes of others' if we're most.

What do you write? Oh, I write stories. A good story well-told remains the baseline of good fiction. Told – there's a hint.

We're writing down what we sound like when we tell a story.

What do you write?

Oh, I write me.

And to Omicron-Perseid VIII with genre labels.

*Post script:*

from Wm. Gibson's blog, 18 Oct 04: posted 9:54 AM

"In the summer of 2002, after I had written an article in *Esquire* that the White House didn't like about Bush's former communications director, Karen Hughes, I had a meeting with a senior adviser to



Bush. He expressed the White House's displeasure, and then he told me something that at the time I didn't fully comprehend – but which I now believe gets to the very heart of the Bush presidency.

"The aide said that guys like me were 'in what we call the reality-based community,' which he defined as people who 'believe that solutions emerge from your judicious study of discernible reality.' I nodded and murmured something about enlightenment principles and empiricism. He cut me off. 'That's not the way the world really works anymore,' he continued. 'We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you're studying that reality – judiciously, as you will – we'll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that's how things will sort out. We're history's actors . . . and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do.'"

#

Gene Stewart again: In other words, the Bush League's disconnect from reality is planned, a conscious decision to turn their backs on the Enlightenment and Empiricism and go back to the Dark Ages where belief trumps fact and ideology counts more than truth.

Be it noted that Gibson's latest superb novel, *Pattern Recognition*, is set in the present; it's not science fiction, although it sure seems like it. I wrote the first draft of this article on 15 Oct 04, then had this brought to my attention, from William Gibson's blog, found at his official website:

<http://www.williamgibsonbooks.com/index.asp>

It underscores what I was saying half in jest and sent me into rewrite mode, but now the laughter dies and we face a genuine threat to rationality, a declared enemy of reason. Think about this.

Bill Frist is on the record as saying the gloves are off. They're coming for us. The religionists intend to expunge the rationalists – those Reality-Based among us.

If you can't, won't, or don't think, it's already too late for you and you needn't wait in line to be processed for the camps – you're already smoke.

Enjoy the fool's paradise of freedom you have found in particulate form.

– Gene Stewart Bunkered in the Nebraska Wilderness



*Illos by Charlie Williams*



## END OF THE WORLD GAMES

*Charlotte & Jerry Proctor*



# THE END OF THE WORLD

as we know it

Charlotte Proctor

*All our married life*, whenever my husband Jerry and any of his friends got together they played “end of the world” games. Sometimes the game carried over into real life, as during the Cuban missile crisis when Jerry dug a hole in the basement so we would have a place to cower behind earthen walls until the shock waves were over. Then, of course, we planned to hose down the roof, to wash the radioactive dust away. Over the years, other variations of the game were played. In one, we planned to take a bolt-cutter to the armory down the road so we could steal heavy duty all-terrain vehicles and flee to the hills with our loved ones and supplies. Twenty-five or thirty years ago, Hank Reinhardt started putting in his two cents’ worth, and the plans became even more elaborate. It didn’t matter what scenario was posited: nuclear war, total social and economical collapse, riots, civil strife, plague, famine – every possibility was covered. Hank only hoped that when the balloon went up, he would not be too old to participate.

Now, I don’t want you to think these people in my living room were loonies like you read about who take to the woods, act out their fantasies and call themselves “survivalists.” No, they just talked about it. On Sundays, they went target shooting. When Julie Wall was learning to shoot, one of the practical tests was to hit a man-sized target from the window of a moving VW. She did pretty well, but Jerry complained he could never hit anything when Julie drove – she’s always been a speed demon. I had rather read about how people cope with the end of the world, in books like *The Postman* and *The Stand*, and stories like “Nightfall” and “Inconstant Moon”.

So you can imagine Jerry’s delight when he found out about Y2K. Here was an actual threat to prepare for! Having just recently retired from *The Birmingham News* he had time on his hands, anyway. First, the basement had to be cleared of all the accumulated VW parts – fenders, transmissions, tires, carburetors, etc. etc. etc. From my point of view, this was a definite plus – we hadn’t owned a VW for years. In the process, a lot of other junk disappeared and shelves we had not seen in decades reappeared.

A word about our basement: it fits Jerry. The rest of us who are not vertically challenged must either stoop, or scuttle hunched over like Quasimodo, until we can find a place between studs without endangering our noggins. Jerry has always liked his basement to retire (retreat?) To. I recall when our youngest was 3 or so, I was making sure he knew where he lived and who lived with him. He named himself, and me, and his three sibs, but left out his father. “What about Dad?” I asked him. “Oh, he lives in the basement,” Forrest replied.

After the basement was cleaned out, painted, more light fixtures installed, and made home to discarded furniture and rugs, it became almost habitable. In case of gasoline shortage, a bicycle is at hand, and if things get really nasty there is a goodly supply of ammo. It was time to provision! While I was not as concerned about Y2K as Jerry, I didn’t discourage his new hobby. I had never had a pantry before. Too, it kept him off the streets, and I knew where he was and what he was doing. But he did require a little direction.

His first purchases were these huge, institution-sized cans of pears, tomato sauce, and the like. No, no, Jerry! There is no way we can use this much food without it going bad. And that defeats the purpose. He countered with the proposal that we invite “everybody” over to eat it up when we open big cans. I didn’t like that idea either as I am supposed to be retired, too. Feeding and cleaning up after “everybody” is not my idea of retirement.

Canned goods in six-packs from Sam’s satisfied both of us. Next came dry goods, sugar, flour,



beans, rice, pasta and oats. Oats! He bought a *hundred-pound* bag of oats. We sat down and had a little talk about rodents. We talked about Rubbermaid containers, and freezer bags to hold smaller portions in the large containers. (This is the man who bought a Rubbermaid *shed* for the side yard— he should *know* about Rubbermaid containers.) Speaking of freezer bags, that reminds me. Another purchase was a freezer for the basement. A small chest-type freezer sitting under the old floor furnace also served to keep one from killing ones-self on the sharp corner of the furnace, now air return and filter portion of the a/c system.

Jerry's next foray was to look for plastic containers. "Do you *know* how much those things cost?" he exclaimed. Next stop, Thrift Store. Not only did he find large plastic containers with lids for a little bit of nothing, but somewhere he came up with a *huge* round, tall, tank-like container for water, which supplements the countless gallon jugs of water already stored. Lack of water will not be a problem during Spring flooding, as the low spot in the basement fills up in no time and has to be pumped out daily. He has an electric pump, but if the power goes he can always siphon it. A propane lantern is standing by. The spare gasoline and propane tanks and bottles are stored in the Rubbermaid shed – which will melt, but it will not rust!

Hank's influence is still felt in his hand-me-down toys that Jerry inherited. They include three Roman siege machines: trebuchet, catapult, and springal. When I protested these would not be useful in a Y2K crisis, Jerry said, "Not unless I use them as models to build larger machines ..."

Over time, the Y2K crisis lost its feeling of urgency, and the pantry (as the basement food storage system is now called) took on a life of its own. The news stories assured us that Alabama Power is Y2K compliant, so it was safe to stock the freezer. The shelves are almost full. I can rustle up supper for six on a moment's notice. We've read stories saying that Mormons have always been counseled to have emergency supplies for their family, so now we are feeling proud that we, too, can feed our nearest and dearest for a good while, if worse comes to worse.

But if it doesn't, the first thing I'm going to do is take those huge cans of pork and beans to the PATH Center for Women and Children. (And I did.)

### POSTSCRIPT

After the dust settled, and Y2K was a bust, we took inventory.

On the plus side: we took three Volvo wagon loads of rice, beans, flour, sugar, oats and institutional-size canned goods to the PATH shelter for women and children.

I have a pantry for the first time in my married life, albeit one in the basement. If we are snowed in for a week as were in the Storm of the Century – March of 1993 – we won't go hungry and neither will our family, friends and neighbors.

On the minus side: using up excess. Necessities (toilet paper) and luxuries (Pepsi) are used up quickly enough but the problem is getting rid of the survival food. Our son Justin has agreed to take two bags of oats, but we detect a certain lack of enthusiasm.

Salmon, I've found, isn't as tasty as when my mother served it. Salmon croquets are pretty and all but they still smell fishy. The only one to eat them with any gusto is Baby Kate, but then she eats everything with gusto.



# END OF THE WORLD GAMES

*Jerry Proctor*

*Why* do I like to play end-of-the-world games?

I hail from a different world and time from those of most SF fans, those born after 1960 and 1970, those who know nothing but the finest and richest era in all of human history. Oh, they read about my world in history books composed by youngish scholars who weren't there either and who – when puzzled by the past – invent reasons for seemingly unreasonable events. Our current president is representative of that generation which, when faced with inconvenient facts, invent new “facts” more to their liking.

I've seen civilization come unraveled many times since I arrived on this planet in the month of Augustus in the year 1929, a truly landmark period. It ushered in the Great Depression and the rise of the modern totalitarian states of Europe, along with their despotic counterparts in Asia, led by mad dictators out to rule the world. The floods of 1936 interrupted first grade in my East Arkansas schools were crammed with refugees who were fed by merchants, including my grocer father. The Depression fostered a comradeship of misery. It did foster in me the central philosophy of Boy Scoutdom: *Be Prepared*.

Then came the wars, but you have probably seen them on the History Channel a.k.a. the Adolf Hitler Channel. So when Y2K loomed, compared with what had gone before, it did not seem such a much. I had lived a good portion of my life without either computers or television. Y2K was more like an annoying speed bump in a shopping center parking lot: one could neither avoid nor ignore it. It probably wouldn't wreck the car but it might jangle one's kidneys.

Thus I began preparations for Y2K Armageddon and soon learned that one cannot be just a little bit prepared for the end of the world. You must go the whole hog, all the while being whipped by the hellfire-and-damnation prophets and soothed by happy-talking bureaucrats. As necessary preparation one must reread the scenarios of every end-of-the-world science fiction thriller and prepare for each and every eventuality including invasion by goggle-eyed Americans and sexual molestation by lustful UFO medical personnel. (I could never understand why alien doctors found it necessary to use a rectal thermometer the size of a fire hose on Christopher Walken – or why Walken seemed to enjoy it.)

Charlotte has made much of my stockpiling 100 pounds of oats. But I say “He who is without oats, let him throw the first corncob.” (This is an old Arkansas aphorism that seems to fit every occasion.) I just can't imagine enduring the anarchy of *Nightfall* with only 50 pounds of horse chow. Who know? Lustful alien UFO personnel may have evolved from equines.

Assuming the doom and damnation crowd was correct I first turned my attention to amassing a large cache of arms and ammunition. This wasn't difficult since I already had a goodly supply on hand, so I could now tackle:

*Food.* After cornering the oat market I attended an event misnamed “The Y2K Gun Show”. There one found about a dozen guns for sale and the rest of the premises devoted to victuals so primitive and devices so clever they would have satisfied both a Custer scalping party and a band of rabid environmentalists. There were bushels of wheat, packages of pemmican and beef jerky, water purifiers which would make sweet the contents of an average sewer and containers of dried milk, all at prices which would have shivered the timbers of an ordinary Wall Street banker. They wanted \$36 for a can of dried milk that could be bought at the nearest Bruno's supermarket for \$15 and at Sam's Club for \$7.88. “Jerry,” I thought, “you have wandered into the Great Year 2000 Scam. Besides, you don't eat crap like this. You worship canned chow mein, pink salmon, steaks, stuffed crab, spaghetti, and potato soup!”

That's how I came to stock my Y2K pantry from the gourmet shelves of area groceries which led to purchase of a freezer to preserve fresh meats, breads, pies – in short, anything that can be frozen. Some acquisitions were controversial. When I mentioned to Charlotte that I had purchased both bread flour and corn meal she snorted: "How many times in our married life have you seen me make corn bread?" I could recall a few precedents – Kennedy's assassination, first moon landing, arrival of Julie Wall for a hen party. "Immaterial," said I loftily. "I had envisioned things getting really bad and you hammering our tortillas on a flat rock." Sometimes these things sound better when left unsaid.

Next on the list (assuming Asimov got it right in *Nightfall*) was light and heat. Alabama Power has been notoriously reliable in the past and Alabama Gas even more dependable. Both said they were prepared for anything computer chips could throw their way. But caution counseled one shouldn't lean too heavily on the establishment. Just in case, I stashed away plenty of propane, gasoline and a Coleman lantern.

Water was a different story. The Birmingham Water Works is not the sort of institution to foment confidence among the unwashed public. In recent memory its Board of Directors barely escaped jail for handing our public money to anyone who dropped by and asked for it. Its rumored they believe Y2K is a new rap group. In such a serious matter I consulted a super-survivalist, Jimmy Fikes of Jasper, Ala., who has drilled a water well in his backyard. As we were chewing on the problem the old light bulb went off in my head. "Jimmy," said I, "I am an idiot. I live just six blocks from East Lake which holds tens of millions of gallons of rain water. I'll just drive down and scoop it up."

Ever the pessimist, Jimmy objected: "What if you get there and find several dead bodies floating in the water?"

"Not to worry," I said. "I'll just fish them out, give them a proper burial, then fill my water barrel." Later I had an even better idea. My basement fills with water every January anyway. I just wouldn't pump it out as usual. Then to add a bit of insurance I bought a 50-gallon tank, filled it from the tap, then added a cup of bleach to annoy the bacteria.

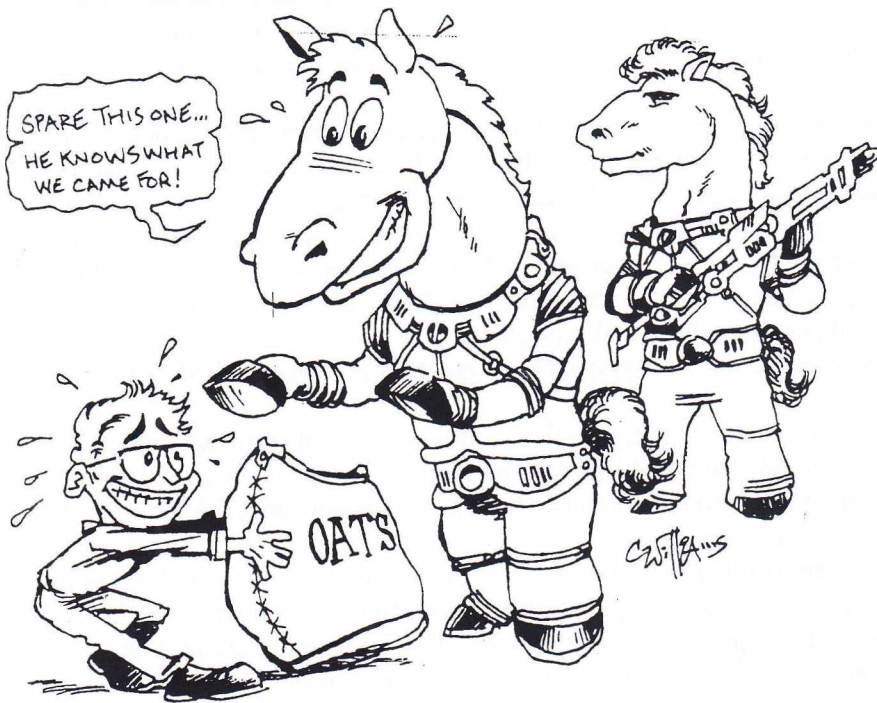
Getting ready for the end of the world is a lot like Lewis' shopping list when he was planning the Lewis and Clark expedition. You have to foresee every emergency, even those you couldn't imagine in your wildest fantasies. But Lewis did have one smashing advantage. The government forked over \$38,000 to grubstake him. You have to make due with what you've got, which means cutting corners and using the materials you have on hand to do more than one job. For example, you can probably skip gifts for the Indians; you can get by on only one barrel of gunpowder and use the spare boat sail as a sleeping bag. In modern terms it means using your gallon of bleach for what it was intended for: killing germs, purifying water, and treating athlete's foot.

Medicines are a special sore point. The American Medical Association, that great therapeutic nanny, has made it all but impossible to stock really effective remedies. For a time survivalist bought non-prescription antibiotics from veterinarians for extreme emergencies. Now the pill pushers and their mental equals in Congress have closed that loophole. They would rather you die than swallow the wrong dose. Consider what one might need if he had to perform an emergency amateur appendectomy during Armageddon. A good painkiller would be a start, but the AMA and drug-chasing politicians have long ago outlawed anything much above the level of aspirin. Second on the list would be an effective internal germicide. But nowadays you can't even buy sulfa drugs without the doc's okay. You would be forced to do the deed with 18<sup>th</sup> Century tools and a bottle of alcohol. Personally, my plan was to load up my FN FAL, trot down to the pharmacy and take what I want – the medical establishment can just kiss the hem of my tartan. Our pharmacist does pack a .38 but I would outgun him by miles.

One exasperating thing about survivalism is that every survivalist wants to survive in his own fashion. A friend advised me to flee to his farm. "Not practical," I told him. "I have a large extended family in Birmingham. I'll have to fight in out on this line." Another want to turn his house into a fortress and open fire on the hordes of starving peasants when they come to filch his food. "Be light on the trigger," I advised him. "When the smoke clears you'll have 20 or 30 bodies in your front yard and in three days you'll be the commander of Fort Smelly." Still another collected canned goods, then ate their



contents before the end of the year. A fourth forgot about food entirely and collected gadgets like wind-up radios, cranked flashlights and walkie-talkies. A fifth – who lives in the woods around Atlanta – hatched a brilliancy: “I’ll buy a short wave set and you buy one and we’ll be able to communicate even if the phones go out.” Recalling that he had no food stocks I decided the only purpose of his radio would be to contact me and complain that he was starving. I didn’t want to hear that. And a female friend confessed she was planning a Y2K commando raid – she would hit an Eckard’s drug store for diapers, Tampax and other hygiene products. Since she packs an automatic one can only conclude she would get most of the items on her shopping list.



As the days of 1999 dwindled down we Y2K prophets watched for signs of the coming Great Disaster: a driver’s license bureau computer in Maine issued permits for “horseless carriages”; a utility in Iowa dated its water bills “January 3, 1900.” With each new omen we smiled knowingly at each other and condescendingly at the unaware and doomed dunces around us. Our president took to the airwaves to assure us the federal government was fully prepared for Y2K. We cackled and slapped our knees: Clinton had never told the truth before. Why should he start now? Was this not the same

concupiscent woodenhead who, in an attempt to kill a lone Arab terrorist, dropped missiles on a herd of goats in the middle of Afghanistan? The State of Alabama – two weeks before Jan. 1 – suddenly awoke and confessed it was only 79% ready. Our new governor, in the true Clintonian manner, blamed it all on his predecessor. Birmingham placed its policemen and firemen in call for Jan. 1. Alabama did the same with its National Guard. Rumors and news reports abounded that some federal agencies had canceled turn of the century vacations. Further rumors held that this or that electric utility executive had bought a generator for his home and stocked it with 10,000 gallons of diesel fuel.

On a more factual level I learned *sub rosa* that a local millionaire had stocked his condominium with enough food, arms and ammunition to last out the siege of Leningrad. I learned this from one of his gate guards in whom the rich man had unwisely confided. “I’m just a dumb ol’ guard,” he grinned, “but if it really hits the fan, I know where to go and who to take it away from.”

Birmingham’s zoo is located on the fringe of Mountain Brook, a veddy, veddy rich little city where my friend, the guard, does his guarding. “Very few people know anything about basic survival,” he lectured me one day. “Zoo animals, some of them, would make good eating, like the buffalo. But you have to know your business. If you tried to eat a mandrill, well, he might eat you first. It might be a good idea to skip the predators – and also the chimpanzees. They’re meat eaters like us and they might add you to their menu. It might be the best plan to hunt all these rich poodles running around town. Vietnamese think highly of dog meat.”

As December waned, more folks discovered we might be headed for Glitchville and rushed to buy food. Bruno’s supermarket adopted a hard sell with big placards: “ARE YOU READY FOR Y2K?”

More omens increased. Down the road in Bessemer the water utility issued its December bills dated "Jan. 4, 1900." Two days before the cataclysm a sudden electric power surge killed one of our VCRs.

On the day before New Year's Eve I dropped by the second-hand bread store to pick up a load. "Please have some small bills," said the lady behind the counter. "Everybody is going to the bank to draw their money out and they all have twenties today." I handed her a wad of ones and asked: "Are they afraid of Y2K?" "Very afraid," she said. Since she was an older woman I mentioned the Depression. "Yes, you and I can get by," she said, "but my children couldn't cook without a microwave." This evoked the image of stunned, hungry and shivering kids huddled around their dead and dying TVs, VCRs, microwaves, cell phones, battery toys, computers and ham radios. I headed straight for the bank and withdrew an extra \$300.

It's now New Year's Eve. Local radio shock jocks are having a big time with Y2K. One shock jerk has a talk contest going: "If you only had 12 hours to live, how would you spend them?" On-call policemen were advised, if called, to report with two clean changes of uniform. First reports from foreign nations around the world began pouring in. Y2K arrived in Sydney, Australia to cheering crowds and no problems. It passed on westward through Tokyo to Moscow. Surely if there were problems they would crop up first in Russia; but no, even their nuclear power plant turned over without a glitch. If the world were coming to an end this was a strange beginning. Even the much-maligned Russian missiles were behaving themselves. Birmingham's mayor retired to his command center in city hall. First alert went out to the Alabama National Guard. The governor seemed to be missing – perhaps he was covering a bombproof shelter somewhere. About 7 p.m. he reappeared and announced Alabama was ready.

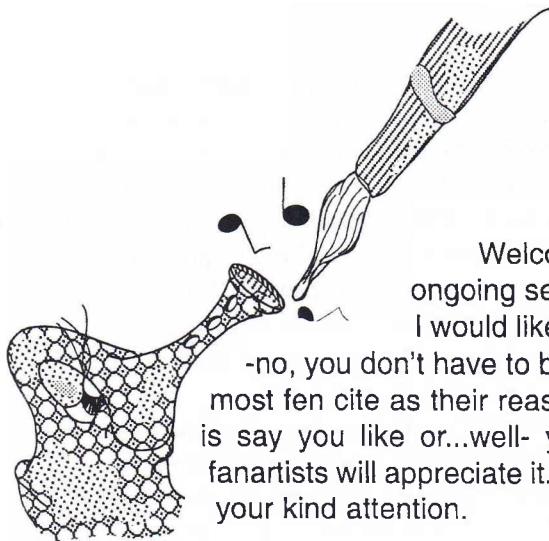
As Y2K swept around the world from Moscow to Paris to London, leaving cheering crowds, fireworks and no problems in its wake, it became apparent the millennium bug was the biggest bust since Comet Kahoutek. I said to heck with it and departed with Charlotte to a New Year's Eve party where I consumed enough wine to get pleasantly smashed. Back home again, as the clock registered midnight, I didn't feel like celebrating.

All I could feel was a vast relief. I had lived through the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.



Continuing

# Fanartists on Parade



Welcome to the second installment in the (hopefully) ongoing series of pieces showcasing fanartists. Once again, I would like to encourage you to mention the art in your locs--no, you don't have to be a critic (although most of us are)--which is what most fen cite as their reason for not mentioning the art. All you need to do is say you like or...well- you get the idea. Believe me, the contributing fanartists will appreciate it. End of commercial announcement. Thank you for your kind attention.

Just as writers have styles, so do artists (well duh!). Some (such as **ATom**) have styles so unique that the viewer knows that style after one exposure. Other fanartists can fool you, being capable to rendering nice eyecandy in a variety of styles--making it more difficult to identify the creator. Most, but not all, fanartists sign their work--making a novel (ahem) signature an added bonus. As an aside- if you have never taken a look at the signature of **Joe Mayhew**- that took ingenuity to think up. But, back to the topic at hand.

**Taral** has been providing eye enjoyment to fanzines for about 30 years. As Athena had, I always thought his style had arrived on the scene fully developed, but he let me see some of his very early work and the evolution is obvious. It is likely that most, if not all, of you reading **Challenger** are already familiar with his style- if not, come on in and look around...if you already know his creations, find out about the fan behind the illos that you have been enjoying for years. Let me introduce you to **Taral**.



## TARAL'S HUGO SPEECH – If He Had Won

*On the last occasion that Taral was nominated for the Fan Artist Hugo, he composed an acceptance speech. Would that he could have delivered it ...*

"Some of you will realize that my days as a fan artist peaked in the 1980's, when I was last nominated for this award. In the years since, I've been drawn to other interests, found new occupation as an artist, and begun drawing and writing my own comics. This has left me with much less time for fan activity, though there were still many things left undone that I wanted to do. If not for the support of a few people who over the years were always willing to publish my drawings, I might have lost touch with fandom, utterly. I have no doubt, thanks to Mike Glyer and those others, that I'll be able to keep up some presence in fandom for many more years.

"Yet for the time being, fandom is something I mostly look back on. I feel satisfaction for some things done well, laugh at numerous youthful indiscretions, and glow warmly over friendships remembered. Something has been missing these last few years, though -- a sense of closure. My active time in fandom seemed not to have ended on any appropriate note, just ... petered out.

"Today you've given my closure. That part of my life is finally complete. "Not everyone is so lucky. Many artists whose contributions to fandom over the years have been nothing short of outstanding, have never received the formal recognition they deserve. Arthur Thompson *\*died\** before he could stand here. How much longer will Marc Schirmeister, Dan Steffan, Steve Stiles, Ken Fletcher and others go without the acknowledgment of fandom for their long, creative service? In coming years I wish to see them here, in my place, accepting their own Hugos. But this isn't up to me -- it's up to you!"



# i, FANARTIST

Tara Wayne

*It's* interesting how many people can point to a single moment or incident and say, "that's why I became a fan". I'm no exception. I discovered fandom in late 1971 as a result of buying a used copy of *Fantastic* magazine in a neighbourhood variety store. My life experiences had been rather chequered up to this point, and I had always been interested in the offbeat -- the Roman army, Cretaceous herbivores, luftwaffe fighter types, cards with pictures of Indianapolis racers -- and read anything unusual. No *Hardy Boys* or *Gene Autry* for me. I read my father's *007* novels instead, and had consumed *Alice in Wonderland* at five or six. I suppose I was all the riper to discover science fiction fandom after I'd been wowed by *2001: A Space Odyssey* in the theatre, and *Star Trek* on TV. And there it was -- fandom -- in the form of a tersely worded ad in the back of this battered 25-cent magazine. "Fandom Lives in Canada: Write *OSFiC*"

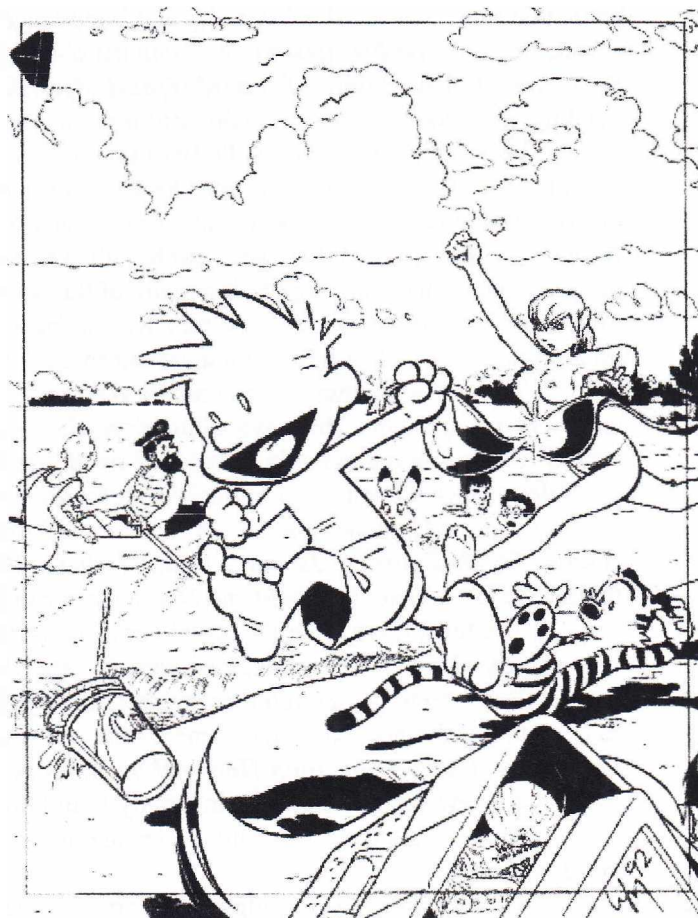
So I did.

I got in the return mail an invitation to attend the next meeting of the *Ontario Science Fiction Club*. November 1971 in a room in the back of a Toronto public library, I met my first fans. It was crowded and I remember dim. Not everyone seemed to know everyone else, but some people obviously were old hands. Some guy with a beard and a bush hat was handing out copies of something printed on blue paper, but in spite of burning curiosity I didn't get a look at it. After the meeting, which was in point of fact rather dull, I hung around with some others who seemed equally reluctant to admit that it was all over -- that was how I met *Phil Paine* and *Bob Wilson* (today *Robert Charles Wilson*), who were the first real friends I made in my shiny new adulthood.

A month later there was another meeting, one I passed over, thinking it was somehow impolite to take up their invitation twice in a row. I attended the third meeting in January, now 1972. Things were beginning to sink in... the blue paper thing was a fanzine. I knew because *OSFiC* mailed me one of their own that was yellow. I found out that for the lavish sum of two dollars I would receive the right to attend all subsequent meetings, to the upper limit of twelve. Someone tried to get me to become a Libertarian. I observed another fan organizing *Canadapa*, but couldn't grasp what he was getting at. In time I understood that I could contribute drawings to the club publications, and submitted some stuff they didn't seem over glad to have, but did at least publish it in time.

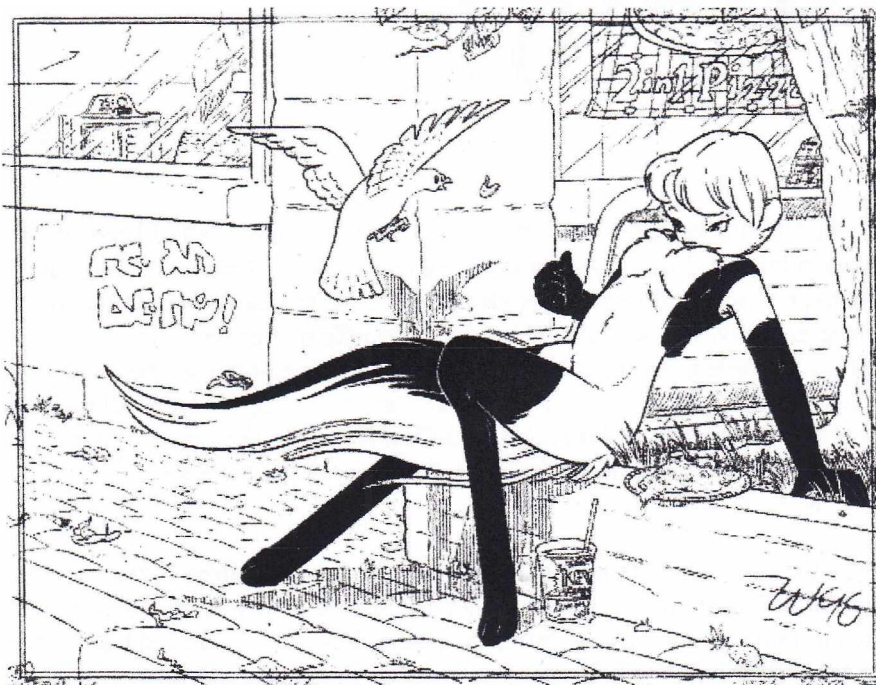
My journey wouldn't take me anywhere as dramatic as the Cracks of Doom in Mordor, but for better or worse it had begun.

I still have that dog-eared copy of *Fantastic*,



by the way.

As is usually the case, bad habits begin in childhood. I drew from the earliest age I can remember, using newspaper strips and comic books as inspiration. I already had a marked predilection for moonscapes and spaceships when I joined a fan club - it was like having a knack for pegging rocks at strangers, and discovering there was a game called baseball where you were supposed to throw things at people and no-one thought it anti-social.



The first fanzines I saw had a diverse and copious biota of fanart. It was still the heyday of colour mimeography, corner illos, gorgeously lithoed covers, folios, fold-outs, and comics -- how could I not want to be a part of it? I submitted a number of pen and ink drawings almost immediately to the editors of the club zines, and waited... and waited... It seems that I waited an awfully long time, but

likely that was a matter of subjectivity and impatience. Eventually most of my illos turned up in the monthly newsletters or in *OSFiC Quarterly*. From the clubzines I learned the addresses of others, like *Mike Glycer's Prehensile*, Leland Sapiro's *Riverside Quarterly*, *Bill Bower's Outworlds*, and *Linda Bushyager's Granfalloon*. Sending art to some of them was the next natural step.

Looking back on it now, I'd have to say I encountered distinct waves, or groups of fanartists in the first years I was in fandom, though I didn't know it at the time. There was an older wave that I admired, but never met or made even a nominal acquaintance of -- artists like *George Barr* or *Alicia Austin* or *Tim Kirk* or *Steve Fabian*. I never knew if they were just too alien to me by background, or isolated by circumstances, or maybe just snobbish. I have the impression many of that wave had art school backgrounds and professional ambitions. They were only in fandom because they were a friend of someone who was publishing a fanzine, and who could hit them up for art. The artist's commitment to fandom perhaps went no further.

There was another wave of artists who had also been around a while, but who seemed more deeply entrenched in fandom. These were fanartists who *were* fans and not just artists who *knew* fans. The fannish fan artists. While it was inevitable I suppose I never got to know these artists as well as I would have liked, it was possible to reach a position of mutual respect with most. A few I did get to know quite a bit better and like to think of as friends. Among them, *Steve Stiles* and *Ken Fletcher*. I quite admired also *Dan Steffan*, *Reed Waller*, *Randy Bathurst*, *James Schull*, *Alexis Gilliland*... to name just a few. Others too deserve mention, though perhaps *Grant Canfield* and *Derek Carter* didn't tickle my fancy as much.

The third wave were my actual contemporaries -- artists who had arrived only recently on the scene, or only shortly after my own unheralded arrival. *Stu Shiffman* for example. *Marc Schirmeister*, for another.

But it seems as though there were relatively few young fanartists in those years. Most of those I think of as contemporaries arrived on the scene a little after me, in the mid-70's. *Harry Bell*, *Jim Barker*, *Jackie Causgrove*, *Phil Foglio*, *Joan Hanke-Woods*, *Vicky Wyman*, *Charles Williams*. While I had been first published a few years earlier, I hadn't really found my niche until this time.

Those years were a second golden age for fanart -- 1974 to about 1980 -- I don't think we knew how good we had it.

I don't know how to judge what sort of effect being in that age had on me. Somewhat earlier, I had seen



a fascinating folio by **Dan Steffan**, in which he imitated the other notable fanartists of his day. It stuck in my mind, and is most likely the basis of my on-going interest in imitating other artists' styles. At one time I fooled **Rotsler** himself into autographing an illo he hadn't drawn. It was only after signing the page he peered at it suspiciously then announced, "Hey, I didn't draw that!" Now and then I still attempt to adopt this or that way of doing things, to capture a *Teen Titans* look or maybe the feel of **Ed Cartier**. I've done quite a number of pieces in the past incorporating many favourite comic book or cartoon characters. But as to whether it has influenced the way I usually draw, it's hard to say. Subtly, it's likely that the gradual change in my drawing style over the years has been a product of taking in little bits of what I've seen in other artists, but I can't say I've used anyone especially as a model. I aim for the clarity of a **Herge** or **Carl Barks**, but no one is likely to say I resemble them in any way.

If my contemporaries in fanart provided few models, I did at least collaborate with a few of them, from time to time. **Jim Barker** and I did a number of illos – I would pencil and he would ink, or vice versa. The main problem is that our senses of humour weren't much alike. I also did a number of collabs with **Stu Shiffman**. **Stu Gilson** (of Winnipeg), sat in on at least one artists' jam with **Gilliland**, and must have taken part in others. In retrospect, I wonder why so little. Distance may have had much to do with it. I only attended cons frequently for a short period in the 70's, and the only other fanartist of note in Toronto at the time was **Barry Kent MacKay** (who was mainly crazy about birds and critters).

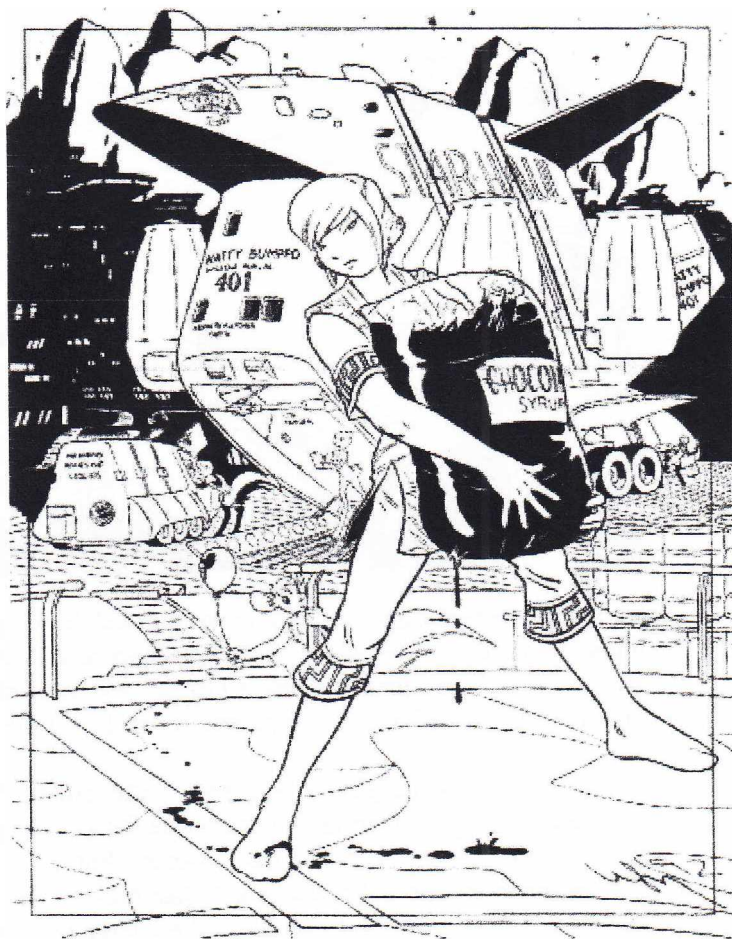
It would look as though other fanartists did not, in fact, influence me much. Not in any obvious way. I think the important thing was the inspiration I took from them, that there were so many different styles, and that an audience existed for them all. They filled me with a sense of purpose -- to get on the cover of *Outworlds* or *Energumen*, and be talked about in letter columns. Maybe even someday win a Hugo.

Looking back on it, I'm not sure I accomplished many of the goals I set out to fill. Many of the zines vanished before I really perfected my style, others remained closed books to me for one reason or another. But I certainly got talked about enough.... not all, but most of it in a pleasing way. If I didn't appear in some fanzines I would have liked to, I had art (and writing) published in quite a number of others.

Starting with old *OSFiC* clubzines, I moved on to be an increasingly regular fixture of Mike Glycer's *Prehensile*, then in *Scientifriction*, and more than anywhere in *File 770*. I've appeared in many of Brian Earl Brown's zines, like *Sticky Quarters*. *Raffles* and *Mainstream* come to mind easily, as do *Simulacrum*, *Rune*, *The Monthly Monthly*, *New Canadian Fandom*, *Karass*, *Yhos*, *Holier Than Thou*, *Foxfax*, *Mythprint*, *Anvil*, *Twll Ddu & Ansible*, *Outworlds*, *Nabu*, *Yandro*.

More recently in *Twink*, *Challenger*, *It Goes on the Shelf*, *BCSFazine*, *No Award*, *Nonstop Fun*, *Vanamonde*... I won't kid you though. It's getting harder to find zines to pub an illo. Some of the ones I've been appearing in are relatively obscure and have low circulations -- big zines with huge numbers of readers like *Challenger* are few and far between now.

On-line zines regrettably don't seem to bother much with fanart. If they're the future, then I think the line of descent that began with **Rotsler** and evolved through **Ray Nelson**, **Arthur Thompson**, **Ross Chamberlain**,





*Alexis Gilliland, Jeanne Gomoll, D. West, Teddy Harvia, Brad Foster* and hundreds of others largely forgotten, will become literally extinct in ten years.

Likely the most important goal I set for myself when starting as a fanartist was to become a pro. I thought I saw a clear progression from a beginning Neo, to Big Name Fanartist, to eventually becoming a Dirty Pro. It seemed at the time to be the route taken by artists like *Barr* and *Kirk*. In achieving that goal I largely failed, and I think for good reason. The cursus honorum was an illusion. There was no such progression from fan to pro because the artists I saw who had graduated from fandom had been pros from the start. In retrospect their careers doing covers for books or illos for SF mags were short. They made their careers in comics, or in animation, or greeting cards rather than in the pages of *Analog*.

So I never made the break either. In fact I had no success in SF for thirty years, until I had a series of illustrations published in 2002, in *Rudy Rucker's* last novel, *Spaceland*. Unfortunately the author was quite adamant that I follow his sketches exactly and there was no scope for creativity. It was a disappointment also because *Tor* had no further work for me.



But I don't want to leave you with the impression that I found no opportunities for professional work. I did. Outside the genre I found work illustrating for small magazines, doing patterns for cross-stitching, dabbling in commercial art, surviving on commissions, trying my

hand at game cards, and for a while writing and drawing my own black & white comic book (*Beatrix*). None of it made my name a household word like *Freas* or *Frazetta*, but it did pay the rent at least, and continues to.

I've never considered myself to be very experimental with tools. I use pencil, ballpoint pens, and markers on very ordinary white paper. It was how I did things, and what I did, that mattered, not what it was done with.

How I did things was no simple matter either. A few years ago *D. West* wrote a comprehensive and generally intelligent overview of fan artists for a fanzine called *Lagoon*, published by *Simon Ounsley*. There was a sample illo for every artist *D.* covered. For a very good reason, I was one of the few readers who clued in that the samples were fake, and that *D.* had drawn them all. Uniformly they were very good, and it took a careful eye to see that the hand that had rendered them was not as advertised. Except for one that is. *D.* used expressions like "twee", and "the technical quality of the artwork is not so outstanding..." in delivering his judgement of this artist. When he came to pastiching my work, however, his attempt was frankly *crap*. He couldn't do it. Even though I could readily identify which drawing of mine he had copied from, it was by far the worst piece in the rogue's gallery. Evidently my "twee" was not so simple to do after all.

At one time or another, though, I've had to try my hand with other media. When *Victoria Vayne* and I were publishing *DNQ*, I often used stylus and templates to do titles, and even a few drawings. It was fun, but

limiting, and I have never thought of doing it again. I've used ditto once or twice, but the only thing that comes to mind was the time I transcribed some *ATom* drawings to ditto master, and colouredized them. It was for *Ditto 1*, so whether I really wanted to or not, this was the way to go...

The majority of my art published in fanzines was probably by mimeo. I've pubbed my own mimeo zines, and learned to master the difficult trick of printing art with large black areas without flooding the stencil so that the adjoining text was blurred, nor allowing

the ink density to drop to where faded patches appeared, nor yet letting the stencil wrinkle prior to catastrophic failure. Its no wonder so much of my art published by other fans is faded, blurry or otherwise blemished. In the early days of photocopy technology, xeroxed zines where normally no better.

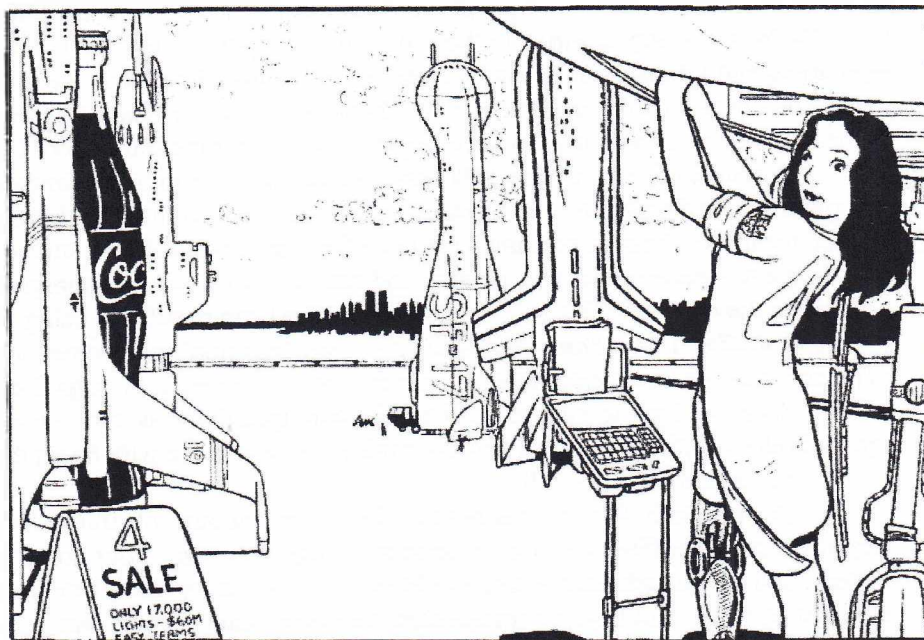
Now we have Photoshop. In only six weeks of digital colouring you can create the Sistine Chapel ceiling, but have no place to show it except a website that only keeps it up for six months. I guess this is progress.

Seems I've covered a lot of ground already. But it's true, I do have some sort of life outside fandom. I had to drop out of school, went back and finished my secondary education, have had no art training whatsoever, held a variety of dead end jobs that didn't pay enough to make them worth wasting a life on, never had any romantic entanglements for whatever reason, decided to make a living from my art even if it meant living in the basement of my family's home for the next twenty years, which unfortunately it did, moved into my own place when my mother died and managed to hold on by the skin of my teeth. Things haven't really progressed from there. Fame and fortune still elude me, but life goes on.

Looking at my time in fandom, I guess you could say that there were a number of years when I was focused on the local club, and edited its newsletter. There was an explosion of Toronto zines at the same time, to some extent perhaps because I was providing a model and acted as a goad, and reliable contributor. Things began to wind down in the late 70's, leaving *Victoria* and I as the nearly sole possessors of the local tradition. Our idiosyncratic newszine *DNQ* lasted about four years I think, and finished up with a huge final 34th. issue in 1984. I did a couple of solo genzines called *New Toy* over the next couple of years. While I had once been in three or four apas -- *Fapa*, *Azapa*, *Oasis* among them -- by '84 I was only a member of the cartoonists apa founded by *Marc Schirmeister*, *Rowrbrazzle*. By '92 I dropped out of that as well, and that was pretty much the end of my fan pubbing. Thereafter I published mainly for mail order sales.

Art folios used to be pretty good business, though with computer scanners and internet archives and people burning CD's at home for under 50 cents, the bottom has pretty much dropped out of the market. After doing about a dozen folios with names like *Demi Monde*, or *Strange Attractors*, or *TransFur*, I fell out of the habit. I did one collection on CD called *Off-Colour*, and really ought to produce another. Predictably, fandom was never a source of sales. The trade or contrib ethic is much too ingrained, and people part with money only once they perceive you've crossed the invisible boundary that makes you a pro. The rule seems to be "not a dollar for fanac, but forty for a hardcover book -- no problem".

By that time I had largely shifted my interest and efforts to a newly emerged fandom, called *Furry*. It





had been largely the creation of people such as me and *Schirm*, as well as the artists of self-published comics like *Albedo*, and *Cutey Bunny*. In those days the fandom was too small and too obscure to have any unsavoury reputation, and I think most of the members were in those days fairly level headed as well. (This would change, but not nearly as much as detractors would have you believe.) The first furry convention was held in the LA area in the late 80's, and I was invited to be guest of honour for the third *ConFURrence*. I think that was 1991.

A couple of years before, *Bill Bowers* had asked me to be toastmaster at the *Corflu* he ran, surprising hell out of me and probably a lot of other people. In 1995 an old friend from *OSFiC* days ran a *Ditto*, and wanted me to visit Seattle, so named me GoH for that. I was asked to attend a local con called *Ad Astra* as a special guest, whatever that was exactly, and can only say it was an ambiguous experience for me, and apparently the concom. The only other such honour I can recall was being the winner of the first actual election for the *Canadian Unity Fan Fund (CUFF)*. I say "election" with some tongue in cheek, since no one else ran. (The previous two recipients were by outright fiat, while I went through the pretence of nominations and a ballot.) As prize, I got to go to a small con in Winnipeg that was that year's *CanCon*, where I was thoroughly ignored (along with the Auroras and everything else that came with being the *CanCon*).

Sic transit gloria mundi.

I've generally felt better about the Hugo nominations. It's true, a Hugo nomination and a dollar will only buy you a cup of coffee. As of the worldcon's Hugo ceremony, your nomination goes into the trash bin of history, and only a dedicated search of old program books and newsletters provide any evidence of your brief moment of glory. But hey, it's recognition, however momentary. I was nominated for best fanartist starting in 1987, and managed to climb onto the ballot every year until 1990. From what I've been able to tell, I trailed a

distant fourth each time, barely coming in ahead of No Award. Then in 1991, nothing. I figured the jig was up, and in any case I was scrambling to survive in the real world at the time, so let it go...



Then in 2000 I was attending a furry con in LA, when someone I knew said I was nominated for a Fan Hugo. "Go on", I said. "You'd think I'd know about it if anybody..." Silly me. It seemed everyone knew about it before I did, but I was too happy about the news to wonder why no one bothered to tell me. After ten years I thought it was a dead issue, and in any case I hadn't been very active in SF fandom for some time. I was duly nominated again the next year, in 2001. I figured I better do something to deserve this, so began collecting fanzine addresses and sending out art again. The zines mostly folded immediately, and the previous year's was the last nomination I ever received. The god of irony is too fond of me.

Obviously fandom isn't what it once was to me. One might ask, was it ever? But in my own estimate I'd have to say fandom isn't a central feature of my life. I can't afford conventions out of town where my friends and confederates were, and one by one they stopped publishing. There wasn't much reason to stay in touch. I don't even count myself as



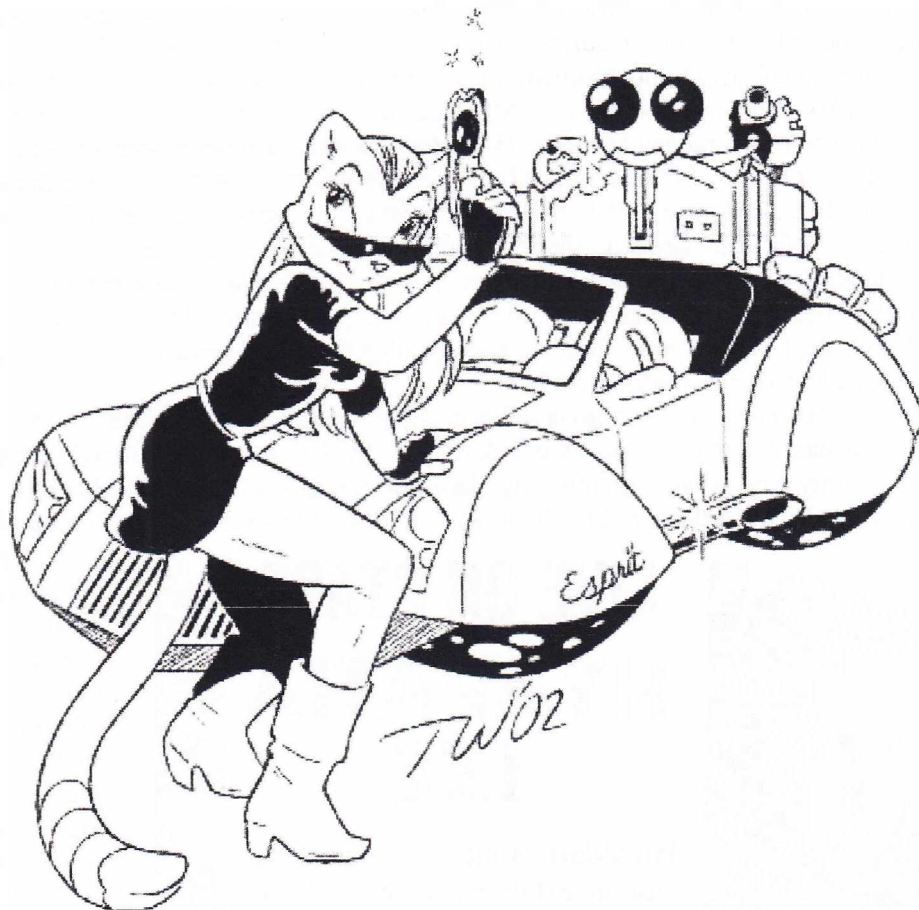
active in Toronto area fandom, since it seems to have become a mere cometary belt revolving around a handful of writers so that they have someone to give readings to. Running the local con is the only fanac I'm aware of, and I finished with that after founding *Ditto*. (With help from a few friends of course.)

I'd like to contribute more to fanzines, but much of what I draw (for furry fandom) isn't really suitable, and I have a list of only about four or five zines that I deem interested. Mainstays that I once counted on, like *File 770* or *Twink*, are all but gone. Pessimistic about the fanzines, I don't manage to find the time or energy to do anything about it.

Considering how long I've been in fandom, I wish I could say I made more real friends. But I'm afraid the number I actually count as more than friendly acquaintances is rather small. There are people I liked in larger numbers, of course, but that's not the same thing. Abiding friendships include *Moshe Feder*, *Marc Schirmeister*, and *Ken Fletcher*. As well, I call *Mike Glycer*, *Linda Bushyager*, *Stu Shiffman*, and a few others more than just acquaintances. I'm not counting friends at home who I would be friends with whether or not they were fans (like *Hope Leibowitz*)... or worse, even if they've become professional writers (like *Bob Wilson*).

But no matter what, I must still be a fan. I'm taking the time to reminisce, when I could and should be cooking dinner. Fandom was a part of my life that was central to me for far too many years to step around it. It's there, like that old rec room, with the unfortunate choice of colour you painted the walls years ago, but with a comfortable seat and familiar old bookshelves that bring back pleasant memories.

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# Last Words

GHLIII

**Recently** I set eyes on George W. Bush.

He came to Shreveport as part of his Social Security tour, promoting private accounts. They held one of his “town meetings” in the Gold Dome at Centenary College, and through the local Congressman, I wangled a few tickets. Not a bad event, even for a Berkeley boy. The security wasn’t intrusive or obnoxious, the band played lively martial music (asking former GIs to stand when their anthem was played; Rosy rose for “Semper Paratus”), and W, when he appeared, wore neither horns nor halo. I ignored his pitch, watched his hands as he shuffled his notes, and wondered if he really did glimpse me in the stands, conspicuously *not* applauding, and for an instant, drop his smile. I’ll always think so. Afterwards, my 8<sup>th</sup> president safely seen (my chief public defender has seen *ten*), I walked over to the well-scrubbed collegiate war protesters – kept a long block away – just to soak in the comforting vibes. They were surprised I agreed with them. “You know,” they explained, “the suit.” Kids, clothes don’t make the man. His attitude on Guantanamo *does*.

Speaking of politics, I had intended to close this *Challenger* with a long liberal diatribe, but another time, another place. Instead I’ll recall a moment when I really did have to think about last words – because I really did think I’d spoken mine. To a porn star.

It was nineteen years ago – May of 1986. I was a law student, attending Loyola at night, working at the unemployment office during the day, unmarried, unattached – and really susceptible to a newspaper ad for a local strip joint. Ordinarily I paid no attention to such things – once you’ve been to Platinum Plus in Memphis, why bother with anyplace else? – but this ad featured Hyapatia Lee.

I’m not sure what grabbed me about Hyapatia’s picture. I’d never seen any of the video movies they listed, *Let’s Get Physical*, *Sweet Young Foxes*, *The Red Garter*. But the picture did grab me, in a vise as old as the lizard brain, so I hitched my trenchcoat collar over my face and left for the Downs Lounge (which New Orleans fandom called, of course, the Downs Syndrome).

My rustbucket auto was making a strange *crunching*, *grinding* noise when I made sharp turns, like a tin can had been caught underneath and was gradually being shredded. Having no hint of mechanical aptitude, I kept driving – hoping, perhaps, that the racket would somehow stop. Anyway, my car made it to the Downs and I made it inside.

The lady danced under the riotous lights in a g-string and golden pasties – New Orleans forces its strippers to wear such “suits of armor.” Considering her field of endeavor, I thought her a little pudgy, but oh, what a pretty face, what gorgeous long black hair (Hyapatia is part Cherokee) flowing like oil in the lights, and a really good dancer. She did a twirl to “Rock Me Amadeus” that I remember yet.

Her set over, she put on a filmy robe and picked up a microphone. Any questions about “the industry”? A few hesitant inquiries, nothing sexy or challenging – if there’s a place for dialogue on the morality of adult movies, the Downs Syndrome wasn’t it. Hyapatia could’ve handled them, though – I felt abashed; she was intelligent.



## LIVE ON STAGE HYAPATIA LEE

Heralded as the most beautiful star in adult films, Miss Nude America, featured in *Playboy*, *Penthouse*, *Oui*, *High Society*,

She adjourned to the lobby. There she posed for Polaroid photos on the laps of various fans, five bucks a pop. Her husband took the shots, a cheerful, bearded guy named Bud Lee, just then moving from performing in sex films to directing them. Him I spoke to for quite some time, chatting about people I'd known from "the industry" – a comic writer, a fan artist. Bud spoke excitedly about shots he planned for their next epic. Her? Well, I didn't know what to say to Hyapatia Lee. She talked tenderly to the other ugly oafs who approached her, but ... what *do you say*?

Hyapatia left to prep for her next show, and I asked Bud what I really wanted to ask. Did they know Shauna Grant? Some background: Shauna Grant, Colleen Marie Applegate to her parents, was a pretty blonde who had made a name for herself in "the industry." I'd seen clips and one movie start-to-finish, *Virginia*. As such epics go, it wasn't bad – and the star certainly had a mystique. She also had a problem. It had caused her, two years before, to stick her coke dealer boyfriend's .22 into her eye and pull the trigger.

It turned out that the Lees knew her well – she'd been in one of Hyapatia's movies, *The Young Like it Hot*. I was glad I'd waited until the lady was gone before asking, because Bud Lee told me an ugly story. She was messed up mightily before she even got into "the industry." Her parents were stoic, stolid squareheads from Minnesota who gave her nothing but contempt; on a documentary I saw later, her vile mother dismissed her daughter's emotional anguish as "just trying to get attention." Whatever, Bud told me her collapse was due to something different – a matter of falling into the wrong crowd in the wrong crowd. He mentioned one name: Francis Ford Coppola. Apparently he and some of his friends drew Shauna convinced the pathetic little lady that she was going to Do It, traverse the gulf, *move over* from her despised genre to straight, mainstream movies. *Moving over* is the classic dream of such performers. It was considered a joke. (And still is ... has anyone but Traci Lords done it, and is she anything more than a "former porn star"?) It finally dawned on Shauna Grant that the arty crowd was using her in the same way the porno crowd was – and, so, 20 going on 200, propelled by self-loathing and the white sustenance, down went Shauna Grant, taking Colleen Marie Applegate with her.

"Too bad," Bud said, shaking his head. "Nice house, no furniture."

I left. Outside, in the parking lot, I worked on my noisy front tire with a lug wrench. As I labored, Bud and Hyapatia walked by – the lady now fully dressed. "What *are* you doing?" Bud asked.

"Actually, I'm tightening my lug nuts," I replied. "The Downs Lounge makes my nuts loose."

Hyapatia laughed. I admired the star confidence – arrogance if you wish – in her walk. Intelligent and professional she may be, but this was still a beautiful woman who made her living selling fantasy to lonely guys. At least I'd made her laugh – with words that came close to being my last.

I left. On the Interstate the grinding noise in my tire ceased with a *pop*. The car lurched. I touched the brake pedal experimentally, and it squished all the way to the mat. That noise had been my brakes.

I will never know how I made it home, but I did, creeping at 5 m.p.h. through darkest New Orleans, my nerves fizzing like a sparkler. The entire brake assemblage was shot; it cost me four bills to set things right. I felt like the idiot I was for not checking it out sooner. But there was something else ...

My last words to another person might well have been a silly joke to a porn princess. Perhaps there are worse venues for one's closing thoughts. But I found I didn't want that. I wanted my last words to be spoken to someone I loved, and who loved me back. Without fantasy. Some dream, huh? Believe me, you could do worse.

Rosy and I will see you next issue.





