

Challenger 27



Mitch



CHALLENGER

no. 27

GUY H.

LILLIAN III

8700 MILLICENT

WAY #1501 *

SHREVEPORT LA

71115

GHLIII@YAHOO.COM

318/797-1822

PHOTO BY ROSE-MARIE

LILLIAN

COVER BY KEN MITCHERONEY

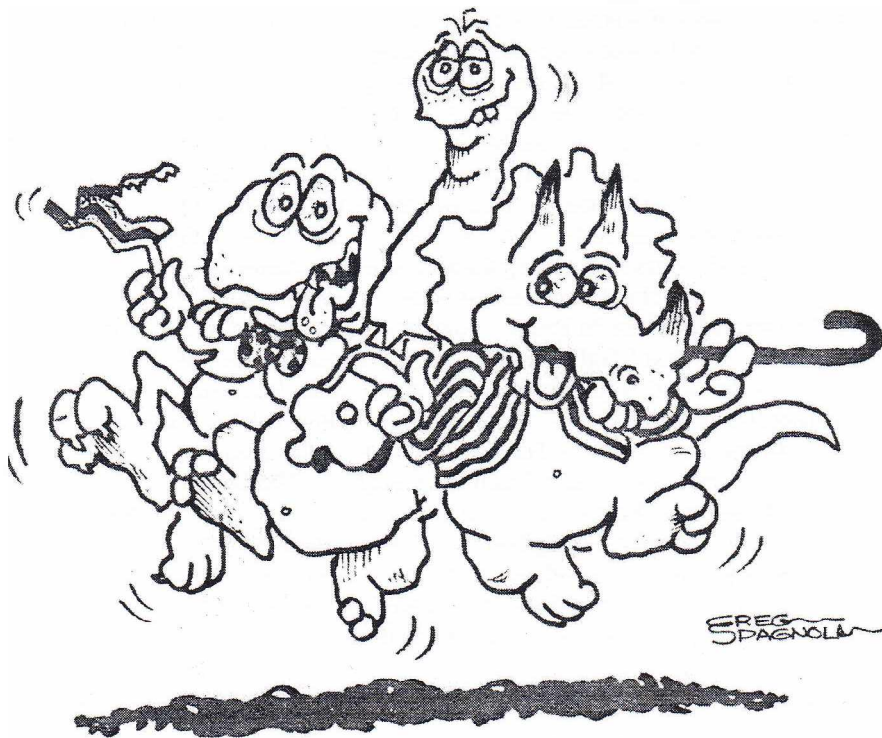
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Some of the talents you will enjoy in this *Challenger* may be contacted thusly:

James Bacon, 55 Cronwell Road, Croydon, London CR0 2J2 U.K. piglet@indigo.ie
Warren Buff, 2825 B Conifer Dr., Raleigh NC 27606 warrenmbuff@gmail.com
Randy B. Cleary, 138 Bibb Dr., Madison AL 35758 rbcleary@bellsouth.net
Dennis Dolbear, 217 Betz Ave., Jefferson LA 70131 dkdinexile@yahoo.com
Mike Estabrook, 4 Valley Road, Acton MA 01720 mestabrook@comcast.net
Brad Foster, P.O. Box 165246, Irving TX 25016 bwfoster@juno.com
Chris Garcia, 1401 N. Shoreline Blvd., Mountain View CA 94043 garcia@computerhistory.org
Binker Hughes, 11700 Wetherby Ave., Louisville KY 40243 embgh@mindspring.com
Sue Jones, Flat 5, 32-33 Castle St., Shrewsbury SY1 2BQ, U.K., sue.tortoise@btinternet.com
Charles Mohapel, 135 Boul. Deguire, Apt. 603, St. Laurent QC H4N 1N8 Canada
charles.mohapel@gmail.com
Julia Morgan-Scott, 108 Woodlawn Dr., Chattanooga TN 37411 juliamorganscott@comcast.net
Gary Robe, P.O. Box 3221, Kingsport TN 37664, grobe@chartertn.net
Taral Wayne, taralwayne@3web.net
Charles Williams, 1200 Woodcrest Dr., Knoxville TN 37918 cwilliams@knology.net
Gregory Benford, Joseph Green, Mike Resnick, c/o *Challenger*



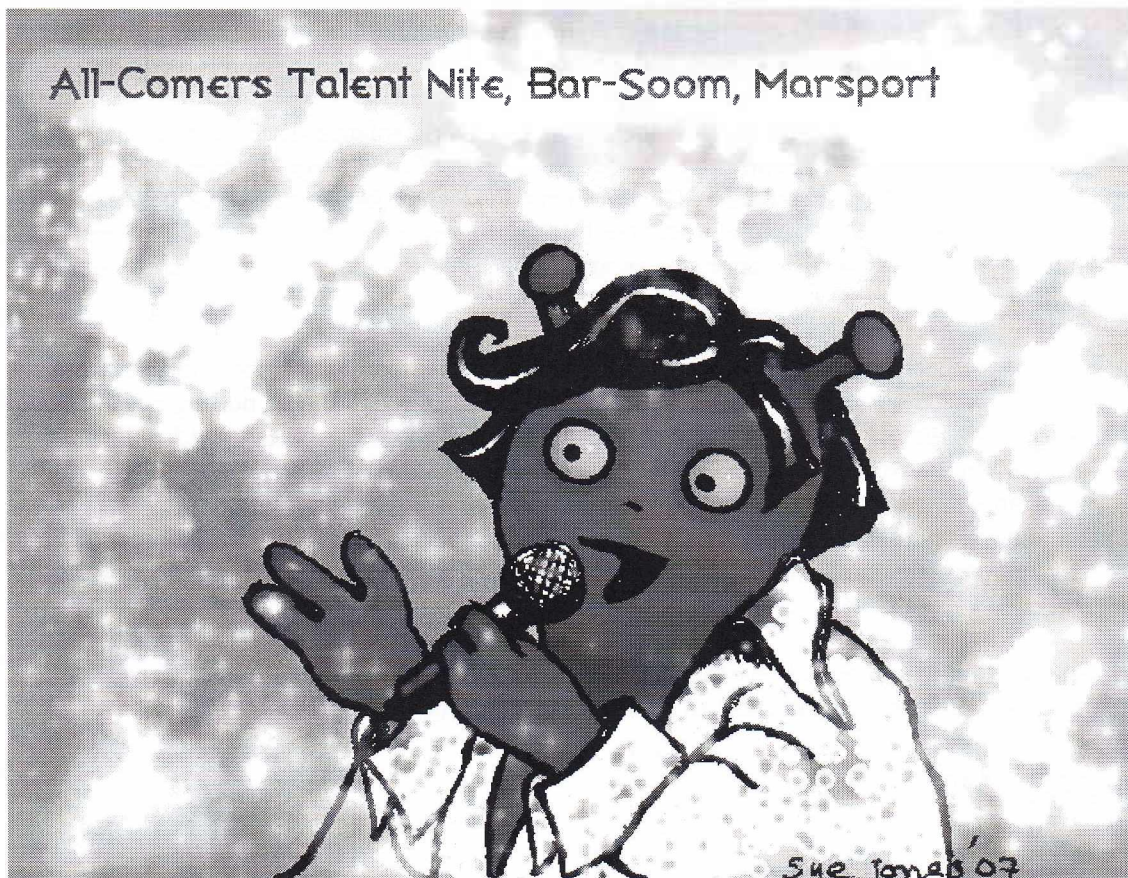
Sometimes I look back nostalgically upon the glorious ambitions with which I founded *Challenger*. Back in the fall of 1993 I was very specific about what I wanted to present.

“Material of interest to the *adult male fan*.” For a fandom steeped in feminism and political correctness, as SF was at the time, it seemed a worthy and somewhat daring goal. At long last, 14 years later, I believe I’ve reached the essence of that theme.

Gaze upon our contents! *Bathe* in testosterone as “Zenkitty” discusses date etiquette, Binker Hughes takes us to *Antiques Roadshow*, and Julia Morgan-Scott deals with that snarlingly masculine concern, arm fat! *Snort* *Stomp* *That’ll* put your prostate into orbit!

Well, all of these pieces are grand fun, and there’s more to *Challenger* #27. If you look carefully, you’ll even find a *theme*. I’ve often perused some of the fine fanzines that have come my way and admired their use of thematic material. Rich & Nicki Lynch were particularly adept at this in *Mimosa*. I have been lousy at this; the only times *Chall* has suggested and maintained a common subject throughout an issue have been issues 10, 15, 16 and 23 – and those were grim stuff, Columbine, 9/11, the death of Ray Lafferty, and Katrina. Other issues have blundered onto topics popular with several contributors, but mostly I’ve been both lucky and grateful to have had excellent people filling my publications with whatever the hell they wanted to give me. But now, inspired by Ken Mitcheroney’s marvelous cover – originally sent my way in 1981 – and by

THEME DREAM



my insistence on honoring composer and performer Ruth Judkowitz as this issue's tributee, I chose to form this issue around **music**.

This was a strange decision for me, since I can't carry a tune in Samsonite and my only personal experience with music was a discouraging experiment with drum lessons when I was a whelp. In fact, my musical knowledge can be summed up in a phrase: "Ask Dennis Dolbear. If he doesn't know, ask Rick Coleman." You all know DD; Rick's the author of *Blue Monday*, an award-winning biography of Fats Domino, and between them, he and Dolbear know everything about early rock'n'roll. Dennis and Rick promise music talk a'plenty in future *Challs*. Dennis' "Cookin' with Fats" this time is a reprint from *Chall*'s aforementioned first issue.

In addition, Warren Buff, a new and enthusiastic voice in North Carolina fandom, talks rock'n'roll, James Bacon explores the rock roots of Robert Rankin, Mike Resnick contributes a great listing of SF/fantasy stage musicals, sublimely illustrated by Kurt Erichsen, and Gary Robe – who was also part of *Chall* #1; remember his black vinyl pants? – shares a unique adventure from the road – a *happy* one, this time. (Which is to say, no kidnappings!)

So where's an article about filk? About SF movie music from Bernard Herrmann to John Williams to Danny Elfman? About how to play a theremin? Good questions! *Write* such articles and I'll print them!

Joseph Green, author, NASA retiree and *ahem* my father-in-law, writes about the predictive ability of his friend Arthur C. Clarke, and Greg Benford remembers *his* friend Sid Coleman. Not music-oriented but most valuable and diverting. My own contributions also aren't musical, I fear. Continuing an irregular series on the great fannish moments of my life is "Wake Up and Smell the Coffin!", an account of Confederation and the New Orleans worldcon bid that succeeded there. Later, Greg and I eulogize Hank Reinhardt, friend to all of us, and a great, great soul. *I come to praise Reinhardt, not to bury him ...*

Speaking of praise ... At Nippon 2007, the Yokohama world science fiction convention, the Hugo for Best Fanzine was copped by *The Science Fiction Five-Yearly*, founded by Lee Hoffman in the 1950s. Its 12th issue, edited by Geri Sullivan and Randy Byers, carried on her tradition with zest and style, and was undoubtedly the best single zine published in 2006. Not only a nice coup for Geri and Randy, the honor was an appropriate and overdue gesture towards LeeH. I salute them all.

Challenger placed second in the competition. This is higher than ever before, and I'm both tickled and jazzed – which means I'm pleased and very inspired. So I'm pulling out the stops for Denver. *Challenger* #28 will appear in the spring of 2008 and #29 is scheduled for the summer. Themes are in the works – inspired by the covers by Sheryl Birkhead and Alan White, I'm thinking about *pets/critters* for #28 and *games/sports* for #29. If a guy with a tin ear can edit a zine about music, then why can't that same guy – whose idea of physical exertion is stretching for the TV remote – do one about SF and athletics? *Contributions begged for. Contact me with ideas!*

Special gratitude to *la belle* Rose-Marie for her laser-eyed copy-editing, to Patti Green for maintaining our website, and a call to all to please, continue to support DUFF.

GHLIII



Passing from this planet on the 20th of August, 2007 – Jesse, our yorkie terrier, a member of Rose-Marie’s family for fifteen years, and of mine for six. She weighed two whole pounds at the time she left us, no more than 3 ½ at her heaviest, and she never exceeded the size of a couple of shoes. But oh, the hole she will leave in our lives ...

Jesse was with us at our wedding – remember Rosy’s “living bouquet”? She’d come with *la belle* to New Orleans, and gone with us to Buffalo – didn’t like all that snow. She went to Noreascon with us, and to Graceland – where she charmed the guard ladies -- and out west to the salt flats of Death Valley. Her yip-yips nearly got us thrown out of a DeepSouthCon hotel. Only when we went downunder for DUFF did she stay behind, and that only because Australia doesn’t admit foreign animals. When we returned from that trip, fetching Jesse was the first item on Rosy’s agenda, even before going home. And why not? Jesse was the critter to whom she fed Cheerios by hand and to whom she sang silly songs, who ran down the halls at convention hotels to find her, her devoted treasure, her woobie dawg.



GUEST EDITORIAL :

dating

ZENKITTY

I'm uncomfortable letting guys buy me dinner. This doesn't apply, of course, to guys with whom I have an established relationship, and who pays and when has already been worked out. It's only about guys I've just met. I have no problem in general letting people buy me dinner if they want to, but when it's a first date, it sets up expectations. If I'm not going to have sex with him, or even see him again, or if I just haven't decided yet, I'm bothered by letting him pay. If I've already decided that I will have sex with him, even if it's going to be on the next date (first-date sex is almost always a bad idea) then I don't feel so bad. I know, I know, that makes it sound like a transaction, dinner for sex, but it isn't. If I'm planning to have sex with a guy, then I will, whether he buys me something or not. Likewise, if I won't, I won't, no matter what he buys me. But guys, if you spring for a nice dinner, maybe a movie or a show, that's not cheap --

(At least it better not be, or you're really not getting any. Research shows that women are more likely to be impressed by [read: have sex with] men who offer them gifts that are expensive, but are ephemeral or luxury items rather than useful or practical. Like fancy-restaurant dinners and gemstone jewelry. Because this shows both that the man has plenty of resources, and that he's generous, which makes him an attractive mate. This may be hard-wired into our brains, I don't know, but it's true. Even women like myself, totally not impressed by money, if a guy appears to be cheap on a first date, he loses "points". He doesn't have to be rich, but he does have to be generous with what he has, or he looks like a bad choice of mate. For what should be obvious reasons. Women can take care of themselves, but a mate who won't share his resources generously is a bad choice. Whatever a woman may want from a mate or from her life, her brain is transmitting the advice of ten thousand generations of maternal ancestors: "Find a man who can provide for you and your children! Find a strong man who will treat you well, and rich would be good too!" So on a first date we instinctively look for generosity and health and good manners, and if he talks all evening about his health problems, or acts like an ass to the waiters, or is stingy? We're gone. Or we should be gone, anyway. Back to what I was saying.)

-- and be honest, after you lay out that cash, and you've been a right gentleman to boot, and you drop her off at her door, and you don't even get a little kiss, or another date, or even a "call me!", no sign that there will be a next time, don't you feel like she used you to get a free dinner? That's what I imagine guys feel like, and I don't want to leave a guy feeling like I used the vague unspoken promise of sex to get a free meal.

On the other hand, I don't want to insult a guy by suggesting we go Dutch on the first date. Or come across as one of those off-putting prickly women to whom a guy can never say the right thing. I also don't want to wait until the check comes to say that I'll pay my share; that sounds like I was judging him all through the evening and just then decided I wasn't gonna put out, and he'll never know where he went wrong.

Maybe it's my issue. Maybe the real problem is my unwillingness to disappoint anyone, even a near-stranger. Maybe the expectation that I feel exists is really only in my own head. I don't think so, though. I may be taking it way too seriously, but I think it's really there.

Any thoughts? Any wonder I'm single and don't go out much?

*Of course, you've heard this great news for a **Chall** pal already, but let's just pretend*

YOU HEARD IT HERE FIRST

Taral Wayne

Just a few hours ago, while it was still Sunday, I got the news.

The first part arises from the Labour Day Weekend being the traditional date of the World Science Fiction Convention, (usually known as The Worldcon.) This year it was held in Tokyo. One of the routine matters at the Worldcon every year is the selection of the Worldcon site two years in future.

This year the choice was between Kansas City in the U.S. and Montreal in Canada. Montreal seemed the dark horse. Most often, American voters will choose an American city for the convenience of not having to travel abroad. But not always, as evidenced by several U.K. and Australian Worldcons. There's been three in Canada before, and even one in Germany.

This year, as I said, it was between Kansas City, home of steak and jazz clubs, and on the other hand Montreal. Montreal was by far the more adventurous choice, since it's an international city -- its population speaks both French and English. As well there are many long established ethnic neighborhoods where a host of languages are spoken. It has old world architecture, a unique literary and musical scene, restaurants of every variety, a lively theatre community and a vibrant nightlife. But it's across an international border, and once again, Americans usually (though not always) prefer a domestic site.

To my surprise, Montreal was chosen over convenience and cheap airfares. Maybe all those Japanese voters tipped the balance?

What does this mean to me? Well ... I haven't been able to go to many Worldcons of late, what with the cost. Neil Gaiman as the announced Guest of Honour is certainly an interesting draw. (He was the writer for *The Sandman* comics, as well as the author of the novels *Good Omens*, *American Gods*, and *The Anansi Boys*) But that's not the real reason I'm boring you all with this.

The real reason I'm boring you with all this is that Worldcons also have *Fan* Guest of Honours... and the 2009 Worldcon chose ME as its FanGoH!

I'm not used to good news, so it was pretty hard at first knowing what to do in the face of the best news I've had in ages. So I reached for the phone to tell the first 500 people I could think of. Dammit though... I knew I could find a lead slug in a chest of gold coins! Almost everyone I knew was either *at* the Worldcon (and probably knew my news before I did) or had chosen the Labour Day Weekend for a bit of a holiday, and were out of town.

I don't want to sound flippant, this still has me excited and happy. I was never able to score a Hugo. Though I came close enough to view one from afar a few times, I never had enough votes in the final ballot to rise from the bottom of a slate of four or five. But this is easily in the same league. Maybe somewhat better. Lots of people win Hugos every year, but there are only three or four GoH at each Worldcon, and only one is the *Fan*GoH. In Canada, I share the distinction with only two others (one was FGoH at the first Aussie Worldcon in 1975, the other in Winnipeg). So plainly I'm in a more exclusive club.

Of course, it's also a lot more arbitrary. Kansas City could have easily won and someone else would be GoH. For *every* Worldcon there has ever been, 66 so far, there has been at least one set of Guests of Honour who were disappointed, and sometimes more than one. Likely as not, they all deserved the recognition. Unfortunately, only a few could be so lucky.

And so for once I was lucky. Woo-hoo! I wish I could hold a party, but everyone is out of town...

Maybe I'll order a pizza tomorrow – go crazy and order double cheese *and* double pepperoni!

Special congrats to Chris, who recently won the 2008 TAFF race.

TO BUILD A FAN

Christopher Garcia and Evelyn Aurora Nelson

I've got a slightly strange life. While I broke up with Genevieve in 2006, I've never stopped watching her now 8 year old daughter Evelyn. You see, when I lived with Evelyn, she and I bonded in a way that only kids and bigger kids-at-heart can. I taught her about movies, about computers and how to count card (by 7 she was into a four deck shoe!), and she taught me that dolls get arranged by size, that invisible tea is always drank with lots of sugar and that children should only watch Food Network if there's an adult around to explain why people eat things like snails. When we broke up, I pretty much insisted that I got to see Evelyn, and that meant picking her up from school and taking her to Cheerleading and making her dinner and watching her during the Saturdays when she's not at her Dad's and her Mom has to work. It just makes me happy to be around her, so I've got that going for me.

And I love science fiction. Most folks know that, I'm assuming, and I'm always trying to introduce new people to new things. Evelyn has never read science fiction, so it just seemed right. I figured setting up the steps over a number of years would be the best idea.

Phase one started right around the time her Mom and I started dating. It was 2003 and the Boston Red Sox hadn't won a World Series since before Harding was in the White House. Evelyn's Mom had just unpacked her old video tapes and I found the original version of the Holy Trilogy: *Star Wars*. I actually asked her Mom if I could show them to her. Gen enthusiastically said yes since they were films she had loved so dearly as a kid. We sat down and watched all of them. She then insisted that we watch them again. This was not a problem as it had been ages since I'd seen them. Her favourite part was Leia in the Gold Bikini on Jabba's barge.

That made me smile. It was my favourite part too. She enjoyed it and I believe she saw it about 20 times over that first month and I'm betting she still watches it at least once a month.

So far, so good. A fan is coming soon!

Next, I had to get her into the sound of science fiction. She likes to listen to taped stories as she's getting to sleep. Now, I could have tried to get some of the classic SF that's on tape, but there's very little that I figured would keep her attention. There was a radio show compilation that had some old science fiction, though they also had various pieces of music and commercials and such mixed in. I figured she'd love the story about the team that was circling Mars looking for a lost ship. After about a month, I started asking her about the story on the tape and she had no idea what I was talking about. I did hear her humming *Begin the Beguine*, which turns out was the song that opened the tape. Go figure.

Fan Creation: reply hazy, ask again later.

As she got a little older, I started regularly reading to her and having her read along. The kids SF books out there are good, though seldom did Evelyn seem to like them. *The Magic School Bus* was her favorite, but that's Fantasy! No way I'd be having my (completely non-biologically related) little girl reading fantasy! I tried to introduce a series of robot books to her, but they didn't take. She did see the Matrix over at her Dad's house, but she came away from it just talking about the costumes and how she wanted to make them when she grew up. Perhaps I've told her too much about how movies are made. The day she comes home and says that she wants points on the gross of Christmas movies will make me very concerned...and proud. I brought home the Harry Potter books and tried to read one to her, but she'd have

none of it. I tried Lemony Snickett (written by the devilish Danny Handler, a guy I knew from readings we'd do back in the 1990s) and even with the Steampunk elements she wasn't biting. We dressed her up as a Clockwork witch one year and she loved it, but she wasn't biting. I considered reading her some Tim Powers, but I came to my senses.

Mission is waffling.

Evelyn turned 7 and I decided it was time to get serious. Must read SF to her! Must convert her. We started with her birthday present. A series of SF books. Heinlein, Asimov, Piper, a few others. She dug *Little Fuzzy*...or so she said. I'm still not sure she really read it. She was playing with one of my Dozois *Year's Best* compilations and she tore out a few pages to make paper cranes, a talent she learned in school. Looking over what she tore out, I think she put them to better use than leaving them in there.

Signs of failure increasing.

I bring out the big guns. I start by finding a few choice short stories. She likes Phil Farmer and Theo Sturgeon stuff, though choices must be made very deliberately. I figured the film front was a strong way to do it. Now, she had become interested in AMC's movies, especially the ones like *Fletch* and *The Godfather*. I know, kids of that age shouldn't be watching *The Godfather*, but she loves it. She once came up to me and said that if I didn't let her stay up late, she'd call Luca Bazzi. I was pleased again. I figured smarter SF was in order so I bought a few films she might like. *Men in Black* was one of the first. She tried, she really did. She didn't like it. She liked a few of the special effects, but mostly she seemed bored. I bought *GalaxyQuest*, which worked at times. She loved the aliens and she kept quoting Alan Rickman. He's also her favorite in the Harry Potter movies. She was equally impressed with his performance in *Bob Roberts*, but she only watched a little of it. Like I said she's a strange little girl.

Signs of improvement.

The big test came right around the time she turned 8. I knew it was time to bring her closer, so I gave her a bunch of my old paperbacks. Her mother didn't like it, but she

loved them. At first, she simply redrew the covers for herself. She did pretty well, and since she wasn't actually drawing on the books themselves, this was a plus. She did a good job copying Freas' Laser Book covers, of which she now owns about 15. I started reading time, the usually empty space between arriving home and eating dinner. I bought more books, mostly easy chapter books, to try and entice her into SF. She again would have nothing of it. At one point she looked at me and said "I didn't need to hear the end. You can keep reading though." This was troubling. I started in on other books: *The Great Time Machine Hoax* didn't even last two pages. *Mists of Avalon* did slightly better. *Perdido Street Station* was next. What the hell was I thinking.

The final straw came when the new Bond movie hit DVD. As is true of every time a new Bond film comes out, every Turner cable network starts showing Bond films around the clock. I was in the kitchen and I heard Evelyn jumping up and down. I finished up the meal and went in to look at her.

"What are you watching?" I asked.

"There's this guy and he'd got a hat with can cut stuff and they painted this lady gold and there was a golf game!" she shouted.

I looked to the screen and there was *Goldfinger*, staring back at me.

"He's almost as good as Austin Powers!" Evelyn exclaimed.

I shuddered.

So, it's still not deeply ingrained yet, but I can say that she enjoys Spy Movies. She's now watched 10 of the Bond films, mostly Connery, a couple of Moores and two Daltons, and she's even trying to read *Casino Royale*. No, I'm not kidding. She struggles and doesn't get everything, but she reads it when she can. I gave her a copy of *Chitty-Chitty Bang-Bang* and told her it was by the same guy who wrote Bond. She enjoyed it a lot and then I showed her the movie. She loved it.

"It's almost as good as *Xanadu*!" she said, referencing her Mother's favourite film.

I've only got so much time to undo what her mother does.

*Greg's full appreciation for his friend Sid Coleman – "physicist, raconteur, world traveler" – will run in the next **Trapdoor**.*

THE CYNIC'S CONUNDRUM

Gregory Benford

Illo by Rotsler

I recall, through the years I knew Sid Coleman, a thread beneath his ideas and humor. He and I both sensed in our country, and much of the world, a gathering pessimism and cynical attitude toward the institutions of government that should deal with problems. It's easy to do in the perpetual campaign mode of our politics.

So Sid and I discussed The Cynic's Conundrum — that while a cynic might prefer that others believe an idealistic theory of his cynical mood ("cynics like us have high standards," he once said), his own beliefs should lead him to believe a cynical theory of his own cynical mood. That is, cynics should think that complainers tend to be losers, rather than altruists who gave away free, useful advice about a cruel world.

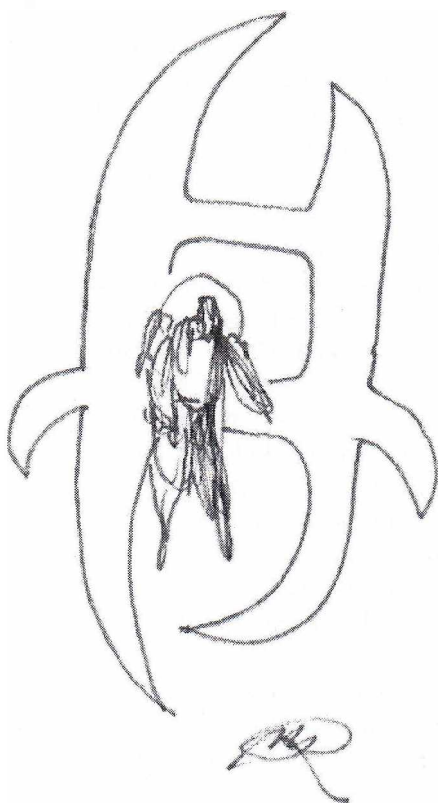
Furthermore, that meta-cynical theory we conjured up — that cynics tend to be loser whiners-- seems to better explain the patterns: that cynics are often abrupt, and that people don't like to be around cynics — unless they're witty, like Sid.

If idealism correlates with more attractive features, then people and institutions should naturally try to appear more idealistic. So politicians always say positive things, even though we know they're lying. This explained much of what Sid saw in the world, and a lot of literature, too.

There's a lot of cynicism in fandom, too. There's the old insurgent tradition of Burbee and Laney, skeptical of the grand ambitions of Walt Daugherty and others. This led to Boyd Raeburn's delightful Derogations in *ABAS*, one of the fine 1950s fanzines. Of course, Boyd's satires of fallible fans were not cynical so much as humorous. Indeed, as Oscar Wilde knew well, cynical humor is impossible to reply to, the ultimate weapon in society. It's a thread that runs through all fandom, itself a gang of creative folk who think outside the box, and indeed, distrust the very definition of the box itself.

Of course, both the idealistic and the cynical theory of cynical moods seem to accept that cynical beliefs contain a lot of truth. This fact, and the readily apparent fact that more informed people tend to be more cynical, tends to favor cynical beliefs in general, and thus the cynical theory of cynicism in particular. Thus while hypocrisy and low motives probably may well be much more widespread than most people acknowledge, people who want to be liked may well be well-advised to pretend that they believe otherwise.

Knowing this made me more cynical still, but not Sid. To him science fiction was most valuable because it was both sophisticated in its ideas and yet not cynical about them, or about the future. He retained his funny, oblique view of our world, against all odds. So he wasn't really cynical at all. Perhaps that's a state we should all aspire to — informed realism.



Arthur C. Clarke has been an occasional visitor to the home of Joseph Green. Who better to discuss Sir Arthur's fiction?

Several years ago I did a study on the accuracy of science-fiction predictions by four acknowledged masters of the field, two older (Verne and Wells) and two modern (Heinlein and Clarke). That study appears elsewhere. During these analyses an interesting aspect of Clarke's body of work emerged. (I had noted individual pieces of it before, but not assembled them to form a conclusion.) Clarke, a prominent and influential space exploration exponent, author of numerous factual articles and books on science and space in addition to his many novels, has another side. His work sometimes shows a strong inclination toward the mystical, seemingly a search for transcendence.

In science fiction, the order of popularity in the US in the last century was always Heinlein, Asimov and Clarke, according to numerous polls. But there isn't much doubt Clarke was the most popular in Europe (including Russia), and likely everywhere else SF was sold outside the USA. Clarke, now over ninety, has outlived the other two, though he is reportedly in poor health.

Clarke is also one of the few SF writers (not counting real scientists who later write SF, like Fred Hoyle) to have made a real and direct contribution to science. In an article titled "Extra-Terrestrial Relays", in the October 1945 "Wireless World", he laid out the basics for how three communications satellites could be placed in orbit, spaced equally around the equator, and provide (minus the polar areas) a world-wide instant communications system. The height he worked out, of 42,000 kilometers above the Earth's center of gravity, turned out to be slightly off, but not enough to matter. Ben Bova and others have urged NASA and various scientific bodies to call these "Clarke" orbits, so far without success.

JANUS

The Two Faces of Arthur C. Clarke

Joseph Green

Illo by Randy Cleary

Even a surface perusal of Clarke's work, from his short stories and novels to the many scientific essays (usually later combined into books), shows the two contradictory sides. The more prominent one is that of scientist/engineer, technologically savvy, well grounded in physics and the other sciences needed for spaceflight (though not that strong in biology). The second is highly mystical, an examination, usually in fictional form, of some of the mysteries of human existence; apparently a yearning for transcendence, a promise of escape from this mundane life. These two aspects of human nature have appeared in his work almost from the beginning, most often each standing on its own within an individual story or article.

One fact you learn quickly when studying the accuracy of prediction in science-fiction is that the body of speculative knowledge is highly cumulative. Later writers build on those who preceded them – and usually, in the process, try to outdo them in imaginative speculation. This has caused many of the ideas and concepts in the modern literature to move so far into the future it's not possible now to judge how accurate they may prove. By contrast, a great many of the

ideas of Verne and Wells have either come true, or been proven unlikely ever to become fact. And while I didn't do a scoreboard, it's seems clear Verne and Wells had many misses, just a few hits.

Any chronological study of Clarke's work quickly makes one fact apparent. There's an inverse relation between the age of the author and the imaginative range of his novels. Some of his earliest books go so far into future technology that the science becomes, in his own famous, phrase "indistinguishable from magic". Most of his later novels venture only a short distance beyond known science and/or technology. He shares this quality with many other writers. A. Merritt wrote the two most imaginative of his science-fantasies (*The Moon Pool* and *The Metal Monster* early in his career).

As a writer of science fiction, Clarke is a superb imagineer, spinning intellectually fascinating tales of the future. His technical background, in those areas where I can follow him (and I spent 37 years in the American space program, both military and civilian), is always carefully worked out and quite accurate. His mistakes can usually be traced to writing within the bounds of what was known at the time. He is an outstanding example of the science fiction-writer where the emphasis goes on the first word, of the type who first made the genre fascinating to science-oriented kids from nine to ninety.

According to the forward in a later edition, Clarke's first novel was *The Sands of Mars*, though *Prelude To Space* was actually published earlier. The first edition appeared in 1952, years before the general public thought of spaceflight as a serious possibility. This book is a fine example of the work of a careful and technically competent science-fiction writer working with information that is incomplete or incorrect. It contains many errors of fact, but incorporates the best knowledge available at the time of writing. His several discourses that utilize basic scientific principles are usually right, if limited. It's in the many details necessary to flesh out the story of the exploration and colonizing of Mars where he sometimes falters.

Against The Fall Of Night made Clarke's reputation. It appeared first as a short novel, serialized in *Startling Stories*. A few years later Clarke revised and expanded it into the definitive version, re-titled *The City And The Stars*. In either form, it's an excellent example of thoughtful science fiction, one where the predictions appearing in the story are too far-future to be verifiable today. But among them is one that seems astonishingly prescient, in the light of our current knowledge of solid state physics. It's an epigram that appears posted on an equipment room wall in the city: "No machine may contain any moving parts."

Childhood's End was Clarke's most famous book until the movie *2001: A Space Odyssey* appeared., and made the movie novelization a bestseller. This book deals with the growth and change of the human species into something not recognizable today. It also contains two sociological statements of high interest. One deals with scientific progress: "It works both ways – you've told me that yourself. Our free exchange of information means swifter progress, even if we do give away a few secrets. The Russian research departments probably don't know what their own people are doing half the time. We'll show them that Democracy can get to the moon first." This clear understanding of the importance of free exchange in scientific progress still has not been grasped by many Western politicians today.

The second sociological statement was to the effect that the long-standing racial prejudice in South Africa had to end – except that in Clarke's future, it was blacks oppressing whites, the opposite of the situation at the time of writing. The first necessary change for that prediction to come true has happened. The majority (by a lot!) blacks are now in political control. The second

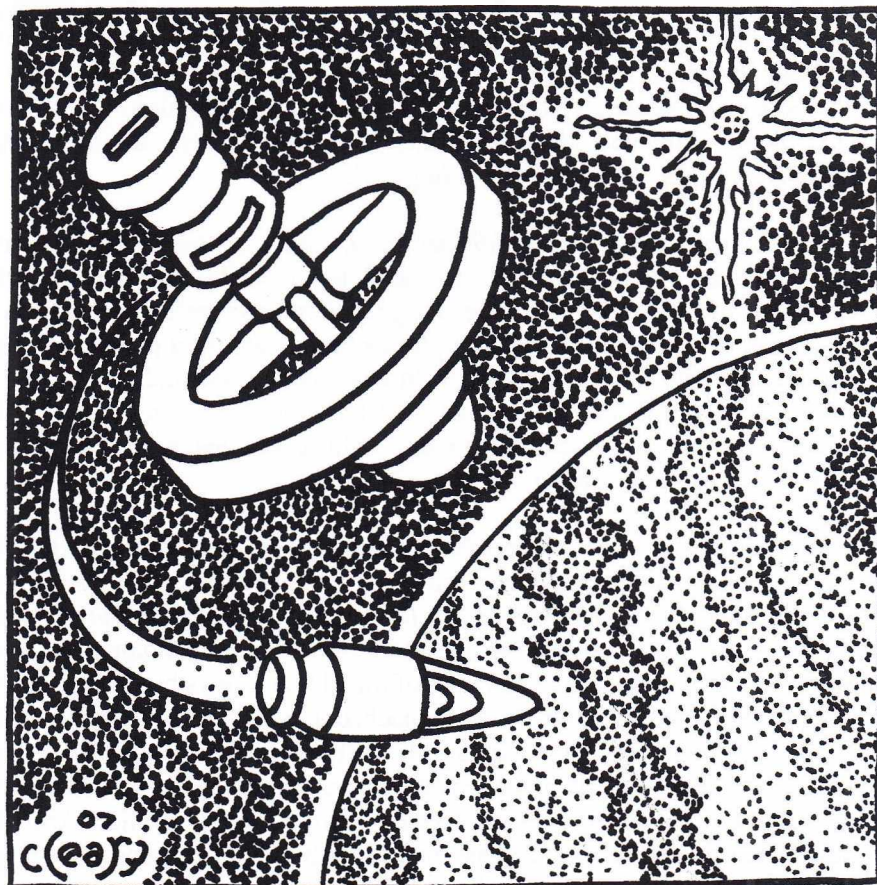
part, obvious oppression of whites, hasn't. But South Africa is a nation with big problems, and undergoing some turmoil from ongoing change. At this point we don't know if its diverse population can be successfully mingled, or if whites will indeed become a persecuted minority.

2001: A Space Odyssey contains several predictions of interest, some of which are either already here or on the immediate horizon. One big one, Clarke's "rolling wheel" configuration for a space station, isn't going to happen. I talked with one of the NASA engineers in on the original design studies. He said the wheel was the first idea they examined, and tried to work out (which illustrates the influence of the movie and book). It couldn't be done. The entire wheel would have had to be assembled and all parts carefully balanced before it could be "spun up." And that was just too difficult.

Others were more accurate. In *2001* Dr. Floyd catches up on the news by plugging a "Newspad" into a spaceship's circuits to connect him with data bases on Earth. We can do the equivalent now. The famous HAL 9000 computer Clarke projected is already on the way. It would be interesting to know how many of the top researchers working in Artificial Intelligence (AI) today were inspired by the book or movie.

In *2001*, when the expedition reaches Jupiter, the story moves on into dimensions of science and technology too advanced to say today that such a system of galactic travel is actually possible. And the novel opened with another speculation that can't be proven, that intelligent alien beings visited Earth and tampered with proto-humans to increase their intelligence, leading to the development of *Homo sapiens*. Throughout the central part of the novel, set in 2001, there are many predictions of future capabilities we can see already here, or in the process of arriving. One big one Clarke missed, though, was how rapidly computers would spread throughout the world, and how quickly the Internet would emerge and play such an important role in most of Earth's societies.

Imperial Earth, set in the year 2276, has people living below the surface on the moon Titan. Most of the predictions incorporated lie too far ahead to determine now how accurate they may be. But one of special interest appears throughout



the book. It's a type of computer, small enough to carry in a pocket and large enough in capacity to handle all of a person's business and communications needs, including vast storage. As in 2001, Clarke was way off on the time-frame. We will have such an item two centuries and more ahead of the time predicted in this novel.

In *The Fountains Of Paradise*, Clarke's first novel after supposedly retiring, he postulated a space elevator, an idea where the physics are known but the materials to make it possible do not yet exist. Others have also written on this idea, and it is under serious consideration by possible builders. Whether the money and determination to actually build it will be there, once the technical problems are solved, remains to be seen.

Profiles Of The Future contains a listing of some of the most important scientific discoveries and inventions since 1800, followed by an extrapolation of progress into the future as Clarke envisioned it. He predicted a moon landing by 1970, only a year off. He predicted automated translating machines by 1970, and they arrived in early forms (much better ones are available now) about that time. He called for a much more efficient means of electric storage, and that didn't happen. He predicted landing on another planet, probably Mars, by 1980. Instead we retreated from even our closest neighbor, the moon, and don't plan to go back before 2020 – and even that effort looks under funded. Before the year 2100 Clarke expected human replication, immortality, matter transmission, interstellar flight, and a host of other advances – all of which remain to be seen, most of which look doubtful.

The other face of Clarke, the mystic, the seeker of transcendence, has a grounding in science, but displays a yearning to move beyond its known bounds. In an early story, "The Nine Billion Names Of God" (later heading up a short story collection), Clarke has a sect of Buddhist monks using a computer to print out all the possible names of God. This was apparently the sole purpose for which their God created humanity, and when the job is done, the universe ends. The computer scientists they hired of course think this is ridiculous – but when the last name prints out, the story ends in a jarring, startling statement that owes nothing at all to science: "overhead, without any fuss, the stars were going out".

In the early novel *Childhood's End*, Clarke envisions creatures at a much higher stage of development (who are unfortunate enough to physically resemble the Satan of Christianity) appearing via space travel to take charge of Earth and save us from ourselves. They succeed, and at the end all of humanity metamorphoses into an entity of pure energy, without a physical body, and leaves Earth forever to merge with a universal overmind. (An oddity with this novel is that in the 1953 Ballantine original pb edition, Clarke states on a frontispiece: "The opinions expressed in this book are not those of the author." This continues through many reprints. One wonders why he felt this necessary.)

This was an early expression of a theme appearing frequently in Clarke's work, that some higher power will appear to save humanity from itself; a concept not that different from belief in an omniscient God. It appears again in *2001*, when higher beings interfere with evolution on Earth to create us from ape-like ancestors (natural selection apparently not being up to the task). Said beings leave access to a system of travel that allows humanity (or at least one man) to visit distant stars, but until after Man has reached a technological stage that enables us to travel to Jupiter. (But strangely, the logical follow-through whereby that man returns to Earth reborn as "The Star Child", clearly an improved form of humanity, was Stanley Kubrick's idea. Clarke told me in person, on one of his visits to the Greenhouse, that he didn't know himself exactly how the movie ended until he saw it. That didn't stop him from incorporating this moving, profoundly thoughtful ending into the novelization, though.)

I've selected only a few examples to illustrate the mystical side of Clarke. There are probably hundreds more available through a perusal of his large body of work. (And it's interesting to reflect on the fact the mind many think the most intelligent humanity has ever produced, in the head of Isaac Newton, also had a mystical side, one that seems to have dominated his later years. See Neal Stephenson's long but excellent trilogy *The Baroque Cycle* for a fictional examination.) I've presented only a few of the major, best known ones here.

The two polarities in Clarke's work (and the scientific/technical clearly dominates, though the mystic can rear up unexpectedly at any time) have kept his novels fresh and interesting for decades now. His place in the history of SF, and in popular science writing, particularly on the space program, is secure.



A Law of Controversy

Gregory Benford

Recently a friend pointed me to Wikipedia, font of all provisional knowledge, to see an entry on my Law of Controversy. I was bemused to find it came from a sentence in my novel *Timescape*, written nearly 30 years ago, which I had utterly forgotten. Since then John Brockman, Agent to Scientists (though not to me) asked to use it in a set of such called "WHAT IS YOUR FORMULA? YOUR EQUATION? YOUR ALGORITHM?". They are online at:

http://www.edge.org/3rd_culture/serpentine07/Benford.html

Actually, it's a good idea: scientists do have shortcut formulas and ways of ordering life that probably others don't. Here's my entry:

$$P = \frac{K}{I}$$

Which means: Passion is inversely proportional to the amount of real information available.

Here is not just Shannon's definition of information (counting digital bits in a message) but rather, what has been checked and is known to be true. The constant K varies with the field of endeavor. Five hundred years ago, planetary orbits were controversial: sun-centered or not? Now we know them precisely – I goes to infinity so P approaches 0. Still, the theory of evolution is not controversial among biologists, because I is large, though not infinite (this means K for biologists is very small). Among laymen of a religious bent, though, few actually attack evolution for its lack of theory or data. Something else is in play. This suggests the Law should an extra term,

$$P = \frac{K}{I} + E$$

Here E stands for emotion, which contributes to controversy independently of what's known. This connects with what I call Bertrand Russell's Law of Friction

$$R = C S^2$$

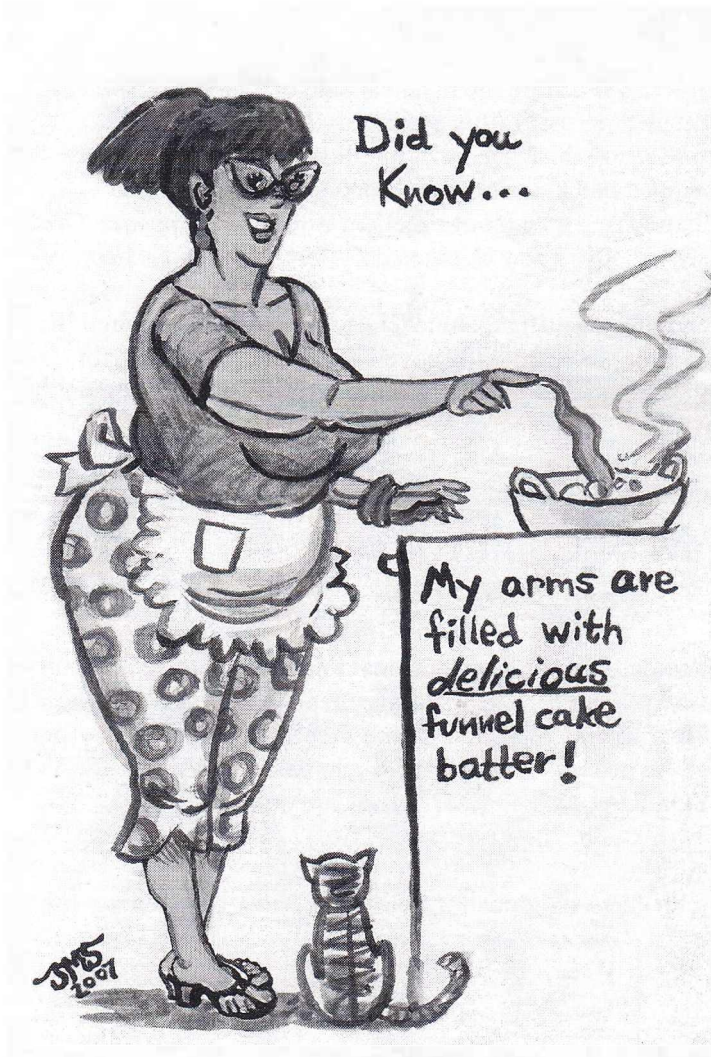
The resistance to a new idea increases as the square of its significance. Here C is a constant and S stands for significance. In public debate, keep both these Laws in mind!

*No one could laugh at
arms that end in such
talented hands ...*

Thanks for Laughing At My Arms

Julia Morgan-Scott

Illos by the author



I'm 56 years old, I'm a grandma, and it's OK if you laugh at my ridiculously fat arms. Well, it's OK if you laugh at my cartoons about my ridiculously fat arms. I

was a bit concerned that no one but me, my mom, who kindly passed on her astonishingly fat arms to me, and my sister would think they were funny, and with that in mind I'd been playing with the captions, thinking of changing "me" to the anonymous "Mrs. Dunkelmeyer." That way, people who knew me could laugh at the lady with fat arms without feeling bad. So I was extremely gratified when Guy e-mailed me the other night and said he had been guiltily snickering at my little cartoons. I said, hey, thanks for laughing at my arms! Really! I'm glad a man thinks my arms are funny too. Just don't do it in person or I'll whack you with my arm fat.

The whole idea for the cartoons hatched in my brain one Saturday afternoon. Ken and I were strolling around an outdoor flea market, and we passed a booth selling funnel cakes. My skinny husband wanted a funnel cake, which he loves. I demurred, pointing to my arms and saying, I really don't need to eat any more funnel cakes. I mean, my arms are *made* out of funnel cake batter. Then I started making jokes about how much fun it would be if my arms really *were* full of funnel cake batter, and how I could just point my finger at the pot of grease. Then, the next thing I knew, I was drawing pictures of me and my fat arms and snickering guiltily at myself.

I admit, sometimes after a hard day drawing, my favorite indulgence is to loll on the sofa and watch *Extreme Makeover*. I fantasize about spending all my retirement money on Fat Arm plastic surgery (it's called brachioplasty). Hey, I could go the whole hog, and for \$100,000, maybe more, I could risk my life and retirement funds in order to regain roughly 30% of the

adorable, if slightly squishy, cuteness of my youth, albeit in somewhat stretched and distorted form. Then, on the huge, hideous scars the brachioplasty would leave, I could get cool tattoos, which my husband would hate. Or I could just draw cartoons about my fat arms and laugh about it. Hmmm, tough call. Maybe I could compromise and work out with hand weights while I watch *Extreme Makeover*.

I read that thigh fat protects against heart disease, and belly fat aggravates it. I dunno what arm fat does. Protects against the cold, maybe – female channel swimmers seem to have plenty of it. And my mom's 82 and in possession of all her original marbles, so maybe fat arms aren't such a bad inheritance overall. I'm reminded of one of the Roman historians who described the pagan German women, who fought alongside their husbands with bare arms the size of tree trunks. I envision some stalwart Northern ancestress of mine, whacking a few Romans with her arm fat before lunch, then striding back to her thatch hut to knead bread and cleave elk until hubby arrived home from the battlefield, hungry for some early version of funnel cakes, no doubt.

I do have sufficient vanity left that I possess a closetful of semi-attractive dusters and lightweight floater tops, mainly so small children won't play games with my arms, rudely grabbing squishy handfuls of my pink freckled flesh and swatting it back and forth, like Silly Putty. So if you see me at a convention, don't pinch the arm fat. It's sensitive and bruises easily. But go ahead, laugh at "Mrs. Dunkelmeier" all you want!



Think we see costumes and celebrities at worldcon? Pish and tush ...

San Diego Comic-Con 2007



Review by *Charles Mohapel*

A field report from a survivor of the 2007 San Diego Comic-Con (July 25 – 29)

I went into my first Comic-Con with my eyes open, having received advance briefings from friends who are regular attendees, as well as doing extensive homework. Reports indicated that the 2006 San Diego Comic-Con had hosted around 123,000 people, and rumours of higher attendance in 2007 were common. The rumours were true as over 125,000 fans, professionals, and press filled the San Diego Convention Center to bursting. At least the lesson from last year was learned and they rented additional powerful generators to service the increased demand for air conditioning.

Created in 1970 as the Golden State Comic Book Convention and later renamed the San Diego Comic Book Convention, the original focus was upon comic books and related topics. Over the ensuing years San Diego Comic-Con has grown and added science fiction, fantasy, horror, anime, manga, animation, toys, collectible card games, video games, television, and movies to the schedule, becoming the largest convention of its kind in the world.

Given that the San Diego Convention Center is huge, re-injuring my left foot just before leaving



for the West Coast was not the beginning I would have preferred.

Wednesday night was Preview Night and can best be described as the offspring of a mosh pit and a piranha feeding frenzy. Hordes of fans swarmed the booths of

the major exhibitors such as Warner Brothers, Marvel, DC, Lucasfilm, Disney, Mattel, Hasbro, etc., hoping to grab one or more prized freebies.

I heard that the gigantic red/yellow/black cloth bags featuring “*Smallville*” on one side and “*Superman Doomsday*” on the reverse caused near fistfights around the Warner Brothers booth. As I turned to leave and allow other people to move in for their bags, I smiled, said excuse me, and used my arms like the Jaws of Life to extricate myself. One twenty-something fan standing halfway in my path decided that instead of moving aside for the greying, out-of-shape, middle aged man (me), he would move entirely into my path and block me or force me to go around. Given that I’m just under 6 feet tall and weigh about 275 pounds, I didn’t change expression as I lowered my shoulder into his chest and then as he was off balance, I simply brushed him aside with my right arm as if he was on casters. I coolly looked in his eyes and while I could see he was frustrated, he also realized that he was way out of his weight class by the way I effortlessly moved him. When I related this story to friends and strangers alike, the most polite comment I got was “What a moron! Didn’t he realize that if he lets you out, he moves forward?”

On Friday I attended the MGM press conference with cast from *Stargate SG-1* and *Stargate Atlantis*, plus Executive Producer Robert C. Cooper, Producer Martin Wood, and Producer Joseph Mallozzi. They discussed “*Stargate: The Ark of Truth*” and “*Stargate: Continuum*”, including how a US Navy submarine brought the production to Arctic waters. Not only did they have to avoid getting frostbite, but with polar bears as an ever present danger, they were told that when someone yelled “Bear”, they were to drop whatever they were doing and run. Christopher (Teal’c) Judge cracked up the crowd with the story of how he avoided joining them on the pack ice by saying that polar bears hunt seals and he was closest in color to a seal.

After this I attended the “*Stargate: The Ark of Truth*” panel where they wowed the audience with new footage, followed by the “*Stargate Atlantis*” panel which kept the same crowd enthralled.

I finished my “*Stargate*” Slam by attending the SciFi Channel’s *Stargate Atlantis* Q & A with Amanda (Samantha Carter) Tapping (joining the cast as a full bird Colonel), newcomer Jewel (Dr. Jennifer Keller) Staite, Joe (Lt. Col. John Sheppard) Flanigan, David (Dr. Rodney McKay) Hewlett, and Season 4 Producer Joseph Mallozzi. I had a chance to chat informally with Joe Flanigan and he has a dry irreverent sense of humour very much like the character he plays. On the other hand, David Hewlett was a much more likeable person than the character he



plays. He was promoting *A Dog's Breakfast*, which is a Canadian black comedy independent film produced in 2006. The first film to be written and directed by David Hewlett, it was shot in 2 weeks in January 2006 during the hiatus of *Stargate Atlantis*. Of interest to *Stargate SG-1* and *Stargate Atlantis* fans is that the film also stars David’s sister Kate Hewlett who played Rodney McKay’s sister Jeannie in the *Stargate Atlantis* episodes “*McKay and Mrs. Miller*” and “*Miller’s Crossing*”, as well as Paul McGillion, Rachel Luttrell, and Christopher Judge.

Near the end of the *Stargate Atlantis* press conference, I was approached by a very polite lady from Radical Publishing, inviting me to visit their booth in the Dealers Room.

When I arrived at Radical Publishing, she introduced me to company co-founder Barry Levine and WWE superstar Stone Cold Steve Austin, both of whom I photographed. After this, I was included in the group that took Steve Austin around to meet and pose with Robert "Freddy Krueger" Englund and George "Day of the Dead" Romero. Once more into the mosh pit – more to follow.

I was sitting in the Eureka panel when I realized that the disposable cell phone I had bought was no longer clipped to my belt and I rushed back to the Radical Publishing booth. I asked about my cell phone, figuring that the mosh pit crowd had caused the clip to come undone, but alas, my new phone was MIA. Hopeful to the last, I gave them my cell number and they promised to call it until someone answered.

While waiting to talk to the people at Radical Publishing, I noticed Steve Austin sitting quietly by himself in the shadows behind one of their giant signs. Not at all like his wrestling persona, he is very laid back and easy to talk to. I asked him what he was working on since *Condemned* and he said he was looking for a good script. When I followed up with "Would you consider doing a period piece like Dwayne The Rock Johnson?", he asked me what I meant. I replied that I was referring to movies like *The Scorpion King* and he said that if the script was good, he'd do it.

After this brief chat I went to the Lost & Found desk but my cell phone wasn't among the 3 they had.

Friday evening ended pleasantly with the "Babylon 5: The Lost Tales - Voices in the Dark" panel,



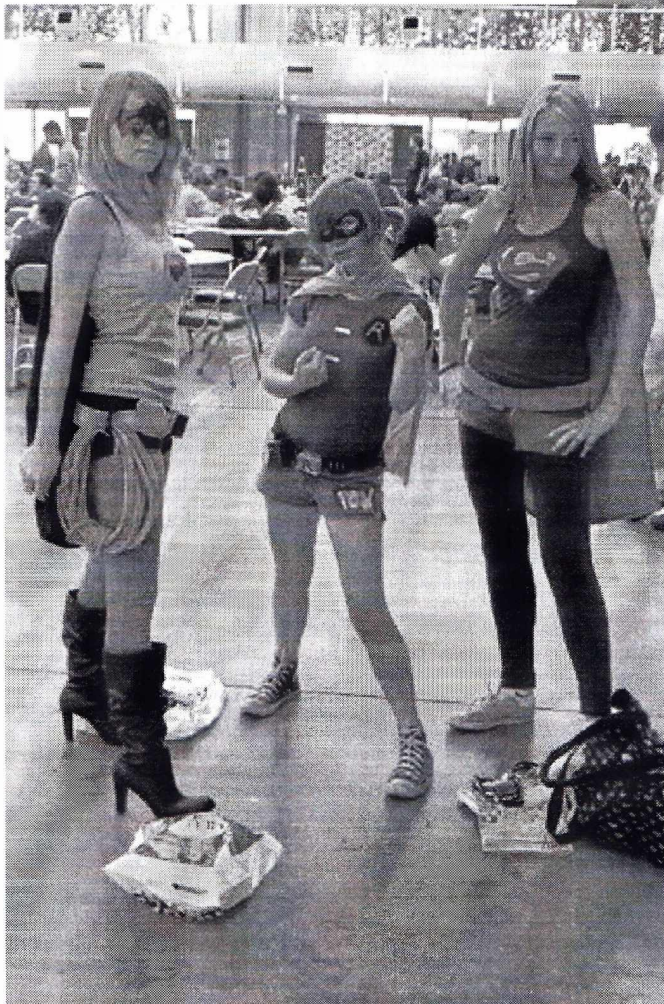
featuring a slimmed down J. Michael Straczynski (Writer/Director/Executive Producer), Bruce (President John Sheridan) Boxleitner, Tracy (Captain Elizabeth Lochley) Scoggins, Peter (Galen, the Technomage) Woodward, Douglas Netter (Executive Producer), and Samm Barnes (Producer). Airing a few clips from this DVD production was enough to bring the gathered throng to a great fervour.

The first thing I did Saturday morning was return to the Lost & Found desk, but my phone was still missing. Upon arriving at Radical Publishing, I received the news that a kid had found it and when they called the phone, he had answered and said he would bring it to Lost & Found. I finally hit pay dirt when I returned a third time and discovered that the kid had been true to his word.

Given that the prepaid Tracphone was a reconditioned Motorola C361, it is most definitely old technology, it's not really worth keeping to a kid who probably has a Motorola Razr or LG Chocolate phone, but it was a way of keeping in touch with my roommates. Thank God for honest kids.

Overall, Saturday proved to be a rude slap in the face to all the fans like myself who were unable to get into Ballroom 20 due to the fact that people who showed up for the exclusive screening of the pilot for the new version of *The Bionic Woman*, stayed for The TV Guide Hot List, and had settled in for the “Heroes” panel. I’m far from the only person who thinks that the larger rooms like Hall H, Ballroom 20, and Room 6ABCDEF should be cleared completely between panels. I would make an exception in rare cases like having “Stargate: The Ark of Truth” and *Stargate Atlantis* panels back-to-back.

Despite having a first Comic-Con experience that rivalled a roller coaster ride and encountering big problems that may or may



not be solved easily, Comic-Con 2007 was a very pleasurable convention, filled with great personal memories and bags packed with loads of posters and assorted freebies. Barring something beyond my control, I plan on returning in 2008.

With 123,000 attendees in 2006 and more than 125,000 in 2007, concerns have been voiced publicly that the event has simply become too massive for the San Diego Convention Center, Comic-Con's home through at least 2012. I want to know whether they will expand to one or two nearby hotels, or more likely, cap memberships at a more manageable figure between 100,000 and 120,000.

*I wonder how much a complete set of **Challengers** would go for?*

"So This Is *The Roadshow*"

Binker Glock Hughes

Illo by RANDY CLEARY

The great news in Louisville a year or so ago was "*The Antiques Roadshow* is coming!" Not quite "Santa Claus is coming to town" and not quite "Godzilla Alert", but somewhere in between.

Then, nothing. For months.

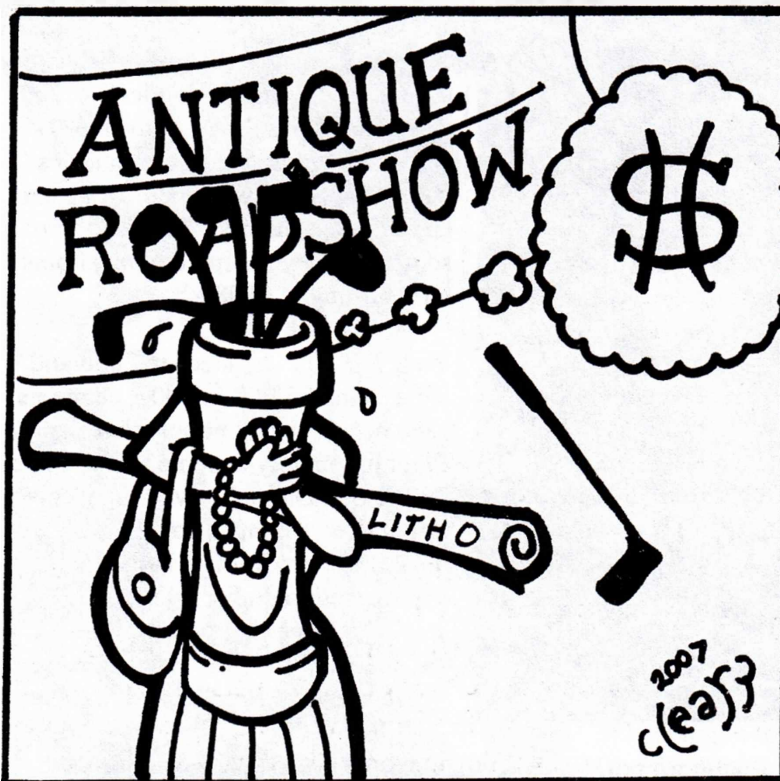
Next we heard was during the PBS fall "Pledge Week". Lo and behold, a disruptive "pledge break" in the *Roadshow* timeframe announced that – for Only an arm-and-a-leg pledged – you could get a "thank you gift" of two *Roadshow* tickets (leg-only for a single ticket). Each ticket allowed two appraisals. I looked at the outrageous collection of stuff here and, still being solvent, pledged an arm-and-a-leg.

A month or so later, they announced they were looking for A Few Large Items for the *Roadshow*. Send in your photos! If chosen, they would provide transport for the object and two tickets. I looked at the outrageous collection of stuff and knew I ought to do something, but my good cameras were stolen from the Georgia place. That meant disposables. It took several (and many delays for more pressing matters) before I finally sent photos of about 20 items as three-to-a-page color copies from my computer's wonderful printer.

That was late January or so – late enough that I figured they'd already picked their items. In fact, I'm sure of it, since I saw the stuff at the show and some of it was easily

outgunned by stuff here. I also sent a postcard to their drawing for tickets, since PBS had sent nothing but a pleasant thank you for my arm-and-a-leg (and could I send still more?)

Eventually, in mid-June, the tickets arrived. Whew! Then I had to figure out what to take. I meant to take a couple of my grandparents' oriental rugs (maybe from his parents/grandparents), and some other householdish things. Then I thought about what would/wouldn't fit locked in my vehicle. That led to a list of two dozen items that I kept trying to



winnow.

Then, about a week before the *Roadshow*, I opened a box and found it full of prints – maybe etchings, maybe lithos, maybe photolitho, maybe something else, but of a vintage and range of subjects that told me they were from my grandparents/greatgrandparents' day. Better take that.

Then there were my dad's golf clubs, which he got new in spring 1941. Rarely used, they include Hillerich & Bradsby persimmon woods and a complete set of Robt. T. Jones signature irons (steel-shafted imprinted woodgrain), in a canvas and leather carry bag. I had written Sotheby's about them since a local golfclub expert had seemed impressed with them and had never before seen a full set of the Jones irons (though he showed me one in a book he had). Sotheby's had asked for detailed photos, but in my photo situation, it made sense to take them to the Roadshow and see what an appraiser said.

That left one item to extract from my long list. Finally I decided on some pearls I inherited 25 years ago from my grandmother to see if they were real or fake. She was of wealthy enough family that they might be real, but had replaced some of her good jewelry with fake at one point. I put some in a bag that would fit in my purse and thought I had everything settled. Sure, I kept dithering, but this was it -- rugs, golf clubs, lithos, pearls. So there.

Then came the fatal morning. I carried the stuff downstairs and immediately had second thoughts. At this point it becomes useful to know how the ticket deal works.

The difference between PBS tickets and those from the drawing is that those issued in the drawing (about 3,400) were divided into ten hourly appointments, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The ones from PBS had no timeslot specified, so one could enter any time. I had meant to take two, leaving the other two locked in the truck; return, swap, and take the other two. As it got later and later before I could leave, though, I started thinking about taking all four and seeing if I could give them both tickets at once. I'd made a half-hearted attempt to find somebody local to come along, but was more relieved than disappointed when I failed. So I had to be able to carry All of it, All the way from wherever I could park, All through the line, and All the time I was in there. Hmmm.

I tried – just Tried – to sling the golf bag and purse over my shoulder, pick up the carpets with the box of lithos on top, and walk without calamity. Not a chance. Since there was measurable curiosity about the clubs and my only question with the carpets is whether I can go back to walking on them or have to hang them on a wall and protect them, the carpets stayed home. Instead, I took an odd brass ball thing, with hanging hook, separable top half, and pierced, adorned with non-glass/non-plastic fake jewels for light to shine through. Maybe they could tell me something about it. It would be easier to carry at least.

Surprisingly – since I-64 was still closed for repairs in the critical area – I was able to find my way downtown okay, only got Slightly messed-up by the absurd one-way system, and found the place. Next, to find parking. I found a parking meter a couple of blocks away, but it said Two Hour Parking Only. I got back into the Dunadan (the truck's name, in case you haven't met it – it's dark gray/green and a Ranger, so the name was obvious), and went closer to the Convention Center. I saw signs for Public Parking, but the first entrance said Monthly Only. The two beside that one said Do Not Enter, so I turned into the Next one. It went nowhere in particular. A loading zone maybe? Thank God there was someone in sight, so I hollered over to him and told him my dilemma. It turned out that, by following this underneath-it-all route, I could come out on a street near an entrance. I did – and found I could even Enter the entrance if I

managed a tight left U-turn. Then it was just take a ticket and merge with the upbound string of vehicles.

Even more surprisingly, I found a parking place only half-a-layer above a "skywalk" that crosses from the parking deck to the Convention Center. *That's* when I started meeting *Roadshow* fans. Waiting for the line of cars ahead of me to move, I was cheerfully greeted by a woman unloading their car. Was I going to the *Roadshow*? She was Thrilled it was here! They had driven several hours from central Ohio. While she told me what they'd brought, the person parked across from them pulled out, and left me a parking space! Whee! I pulled in and we went down to the skywalk together.

It was fairly elaborate to get from that entrance to the *Roadshow* area – down an escalator, find a hallway to the other end and back up another escalator – but there were signs, and enough people carrying odds and ends, that it wasn't hard. They did let me show both tickets and take everything in at once.

Entering the main waiting area, I was given a program and directed to the end of the 1 o'clock line since my ticket didn't have a set appointment. That sounded great until I noticed the line wound back and forth across the full width of the large hall like a giant fanfold serpent. I traversed at least 5-6 of these across-and-back loops before getting to the door to the appraisal area.

The line Did keep moving, but there was more than enough time to become acquainted with everybody in the vicinity. Chairs at intervals, anchoring the *Antiques Roadshow* banners that separated the sections of the line, let me put down the box and brass ball at one point. Some people snagged banners as souvenirs – some just sat and rested their feet. Very kindly, the husband of the couple ahead of me – about old enough to be my kids – carried the bag of clubs much of the way when he saw how clumsily I was managing it.

As distraction for those waiting, they had large projection screens with close-captioned episodes of past *Antiques Roadshows* and occasional *Roadshow* trivia, mostly of major appraisals; but the neighborly what-did-you-bring and how-far-did-you-come and have-you-been-to-one-before mostly filled the time.

Then -- at last! at last! -- the door to the appraisal area hove into view. In the last half of the last line section, volunteers came and tore stubs off tickets -- and we were at the door. To right and left, they had rows of tables where we went to have our stuff categorized. For me, that meant Prints & Posters, Metalwork, Jewelry, and (for the golf clubs) Arms & Militaria, of all things. They gave me theatre-ticket size tickets with those names on them and turned me over to another volunteer to lead me to the right line.

Inside the main room, beyond the general-assignment area, they had the Actual appraisal area curtained off, with openings near the corners. Lining outer edge of that appraisal area were 6' to 8' refectory tables, each with 2 or 3 appraisers sitting side by side. Behind them hung signs identifying subject areas such as you may have noticed on broadcasts.

The volunteer put me in the longest of my four lines – Prints & Posters. It wound clear to the other end of the appraisal area and back again, behind the place where Mark Wahlberg (the host they've returned to this season) was trying to keep from breaking up while filming a promo for the new series of shows. As my part of the line neared his location, those of us less than eager to have our mugs on TV turned away.

The real oddity about it all was recognizing people – not people in line, but appraisers. To someone who has watched the show at all regularly, these people are as familiar as co-workers

routinely passed in the hall. The “usual suspects” were all there – all looking a trifle more “real” than they look on TV and both “larger” and “smaller” than life. Some of the tall ones are 4+” taller than they appear on TV and some of those who seem “ordinary” height are 2-4 inches shorter than I expected. Most strange. In repose, some look much older than they appear when animated giving an appraisal on TV; while others look almost callow, so enthralled have they been with their subjects that perhaps they’ve put off the rest of life. That, to me, was the most interesting aspect of being there in person.

As for the appraisals, the lithos are photolithos of great art, not with any major value, but I suspect I can sell those I don’t keep to a frame/art gallery inexpensively, then let them frame them up and resell them at a decent price. I’ll be scouting for suitable buyers as convenient. The pearls are mostly fake, but a couple of strands are worth going to the trouble of x-raying, which turns out to be the only way to really tell. The golf clubs may have been misappraised – clubs didn’t seem to be the guy’s forte and he didn’t recognize the oddity of the Hillerich & Bradsby clubs or the complete set of signature irons – but he said about \$100 for the bag and about \$50 each for the H&B woods, with about \$25 each for the others. I’ve passed those remarks on to Sotheby’s, assuming that puts them out of range for any of their (high-priced) auctions, but will try to sell the bag, maybe on e-Bay, since there’s a group that does that not far from here. Carrying it in line convinced me I would Never want to use it on a course! At such low prices for the others, though, I’ll probably hang onto them to duff around with if I ever get time to mess with golf again.

And the absurd brass ball? It stumped the appraiser as much as it stumps me! He said the piercings and general appearance reminded him of some Czechoslovakian metalwork he’d seen, but we don’t know if it’s an incense burner (best guess) or what.

After leaving the appraisal area, there was the Feedback Booth – which I avoided like the plague. There was also a table with a spinner to get a souvenir (e.g., T-shirt -- I still haven’t dug into the small box of whatever I got to see what it is), and there were a couple of tables with the business cards/etc. of appraisers (I collected a few).

Then it was trying to retrace my steps to the skywalk – a challenge, since it turns out there’s more than one. Thanks to one of the Convention Center’s people, however, I got there, then back to my truck and home.

So there you have it, sportsfans. A Day At *The Roadshow*. Surprisingly, I had only been parked 3-4 hours when I emerged. If I had taken more easily carryable things, it would have been possible to spend more time just hanging around watching or – as some people did – collect appraiser autographs. No cameras or other recording devices were allowed, but I expect we’ll see all we want when it’s finally shown.

The new season will begin in January, with episodes taped in Baltimore June 16, Orlando June 30, San Antonio July 14, Louisville July 28, Spokane August 4, and Las Vegas August 18. They won’t decide the sequence in which they’ll air the different cities until all are taped.

The real heroes of this affair are the volunteers. They were everywhere, knowledgeable, helpful, and patient with those who – like some behind me in line – only wanted to be on TV or had other demands that were beyond the volunteers’ control. They did everything – helped the film crews, kept lines moving, and kept appraisers from being needlessly hassled without giving offense. Hats off to them!



*All right, it's not fantasy, unless
Mardi Gras is fantasy, but in any
Louisiana-based fanzine themed
on music, Fats Domino and New
Orleans must get their due ...*

COOKIN' WITH FATS

Dennis Dolbear

"... Ain't this some shit?"

The speaker was a middle-aged, well-dressed black man, one of several. As he spoke he looked towards one of his companions, another black man of about his age: short, stout and dressed in a powder-blue leisure suit and yachtsman's cap, leaning against the side of a late-model Rolls.

"Ain't this something, though?" he repeated. "Wonder if the Beach Boys had to go through this," he snorted.

The short man didn't say anything. The look on his face – disgust and resignation – did the talking for him.

Maybe some detail is in order here. *Where* we were was the access road outside of the world's second largest room, the Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans, which loomed over us like Everest. *When* was the Saturday before Mardi Gras, and the night of the Krewe of Endymion parade, which very shortly was going to proceed inside of the Dome – already we could hear the muffled drums of the leading bands. *How* we had gotten there was explained by what we were leaning on – a brand new Mercedes and a fairly new Rolls Corniche, the latter with an engraved plate that read FATS on the side. *What* we were there for was explained by the massive display tower, ten stories tall, about 100 feet from us:

**TONIGHT ... ENDYMION EXTRAVAGANZA ... FATS DOMINO ...
BEACH BOYS ... STEVEN SEGAL ...**

Which also goes something towards explaining *Who*: the short stout black man, with the disgusted look on his face, described earlier was none other than the aforementioned Fats Domino, member of the rock'n'roll Hall of Fame, seller of 85 million sum-odd records, predecessor of Elvis and Buddy Holly, certified music legend.

Which leaves only *Why*, and that's a story and a half. Why I was there at all was due to my friend Rick Coleman, music journalist, "r&b scholar" (according to *Rolling Stone* – honest). Rick's tight with the Fat Man, see, and Fats had invited Rick – and sorta invited a guest – to come along and see the show. It was likely to be an impressive one, and I prevailed on Rick to let me come along.

Which led us to the Fat Man's house over on Caffin Avenue in the heart of New Orleans' exclusive Lower Ninth Ward. That's a joke, son ... the Lower Ninth Ward is a vast area, some parts slum, some parts merely working class, but none exclusive or even upper-middle class. Fats is rich – no surprise, since his sales during his heyday were in a class with the Beatles or Elvis – but he lives in the Lower Ninth because that's where he grew up and that's where he's most comfortable; his old friends and his old haunts are there.

And there he lives, in a double shotgun house that would be indistinguishable from hundreds of other double shotguns along the avenue if it weren't for the gold and black trim with foot-high letters that spell out *FD* along the front of the house. (A shotgun, for those of you who aren't familiar with New Orleans' architectural peculiarities, is a house perfectly suited to the long, narrow lots characteristic of the city. It's a house built in a straight line, with one room after another, front to back – if you fired a shotgun through the front door the pellets would go out the back. A double shotgun is exactly what you'd expect – two shotguns in the same frame.) Fats' family lives directly around the corner (the two lots are joined) in a much larger and more elaborate house, probably the most impressive modern house in the Lower Ninth. But Fats, himself, for personal reasons, lives alone in the modest shotgun double on Caffin, with his elaborate kitchen, musical instruments, and sofa made from the rear end of a '57 El Dorado. It's comfortable middle class, not the over-elaborate luxury we've come to associate with rock stars, which may explain why Fats, unlike most of that breed, is approachable, accessible and friendly.

So Rick and I sat and cooled our heels on the El Dorado sofa and watched Fats' entourage – mostly old friends from the 'hood – get his equipment and clothes ready for the evening's performance. And finally we piled into the vehicles – the Rolls and Merc, both of which Fats parks outside on the street (the local car thieves know better). And that led our winding way to the Superdome.

And that's where we stopped, and where we began this story. Because outside the Dome, our less-than irresistible force came in contact with a (mentally) immovable object – the mind of a New Orleans Police Department officer. Or, more precisely, several of them. Several who'd been set to guard this approach to the Superdome – which was, in the event, the only omen we could use – and who just weren't going to let us through the barricades because they didn't have orders.

We pleaded. We remonstrated. We sorta-threatened, although that's not a good thing to do with men who carry guns and who are well known to be unreluctant to use them.

And mostly we waited, in a sort of resigned standoff. The policemen behind the barricades weren't moving, and neither were we – we were staying parked out in the middle of the access road that surrounds the Dome like a belt. Not that we had anywhere to go – every parking place for miles around was taken.

And so we stood – Fats and his entourage looking more and more put out, the cops looking more and more stubborn, and me getting alternately bored and nervous – because I could hear, and clearly now, the sounds of the parade as it approached the Superdome from Canal Street and finally, indeed, could see its leading

elements enter the Superdome, blocks down the street from where we stood.

Which started me thinking as to whether or not we were going to miss the party inside ... and what that party was going to be like.

You see, Endymion is one of many Mardi Gras parading organizations – called "krewes" in a deliberate misspelling – whose activities are at the heart of every Carnival. Endymion isn't the most socially distinguished krewe going – in fact, unlike groups such as Comus and Proteus, which are limited to old families and old money, Endymion is open to just about anyone who can pay the (considerable) expenses, and is mostly composed of what might be called well-off tradesmen – plumbing contractors, carpenters, and the like: blue-collar guys with white-collar incomes.

All of this makes for a somewhat more *déclassé* social experience, but there are compensations. The parade is one of the most elaborate in all Carnival: gigantic floats with moving figures, brilliantly lighted and decorated. (And designed by former fan artist Dany Frolich).

And while most krewes end up with a formal society ball, with all the trappings, including society orchestra, presentations, tableaux and excruciating boredom – Endymion is somewhat looser. Oh, they've got the all the ersatz-royalty accoutrements of the older krewes – queen and court, white tie and formal gowns, but the ball – called the Endymion Extravaganza – tends to be more unbuttoned and much looser, featuring a concert by several bands – four in this case, the Beach Boys ... and Fats, who at the moment was still waiting to see if those paragons of mulish stupidity, the members of the NOPD, were going to let him in to do his thing inside the Dome.

And finally, glory be, it happened. We don't quite know what – just that somewhere, ahead where all the action was, some honcho of the police department must have gotten his head out of his butt long enough to realize what was going on and cleared our little party to proceed – which we did for several blocks, finally halting at the rear entrance to the Dome itself, where I had my first case of sensory overload of the night.

It's a common thing during Mardi Gras, a season of glorious sensual excess in every way, shape and form – sounds, sights, smells. At the vast portal that leads into the Dome interior, the leading elements of Endymion were already proceeding: small floats, automobiles with smiling, waving beauty queens with Pepsodent smiles and silicon tits, accompanied by portly guys in tuxes, men on horseback, and, I swear to God, a phalanx of Shriners in their mini-bikes and lawnmower-engine go-karts. All of this, combined with the roar of machinery and the blare of the marching bands, the rhythmic tramp of feet and the acrid smell of diesel from the buses parked nearby, was overwhelming. I just stood there and soaked it in.

For a few minutes, until Rick and I were approached by a beautiful young woman, dressed in a formal brocade gown and holding a walkie-talkie. "Are you guys with Fats?" she asked. I guess she approached us since, perhaps being white, we seemed a little less intimidating to her. We responded affirmatively.

"Are you in his band?" she inquired. I shook my head. "He's a writer," I replied, "and I'm ... I'm his photographer." Which made sense, since I had Rick's photo bag around my shoulder.

"Ooohh ..." Her eyes widened. "Are you the two from *Rolling Stone*?"

Now, if there's one thing I've learned in practicing law, it's to roll with the punches and never correct a misapprehension if it's in your favor...if you can do so without lying. And so I used maneuver #7 – the noncommittal shrug accompanied by the you-guessed-it smile. I had no idea if there were going to be guys

from *Rolling Stone* present, or what they'd look like if there were, but what harm could there be in making hay while the sun shone? Which brought the expected reaction, a combination of cooperation, friendliness, and obsequiousness. Certain institutions do that. Finally, though, she was interested in making a good impression: she realized that there had been a screwup, Fats was more than a bit annoyed, and that this could get into print, and if it did, she'd better make sure she didn't get the blame. So she schmoozed, and I didn't try to stop her – I was idly wondering if I could get a date out of it. I didn't, but it was pleasant enough, and finally we were waved back into our cars – the next and final (short) leg of our journey was beginning.

We slipped behind a high-school marching band and in front of a duke's float and dashed sideways into one of the service tunnels that honeycomb the Dome floor. We proceeded along the tunnels and finally halted in front of an alcove – which, it turns out, lead to the VIP suites for the performers. Inside, it was quieter – but you could still hear the muffled thunder of the parade somewhere outside.

The suites were beautiful separate rooms for each performer and a large common area. Each artist had his or her name tacked to the door – Fats at one end, and over here, Al Jardine & Mike Love ... Jesus, that brought back memories.

I used to adore the Beach Boys...still do, as a matter of fact, even though they haven't produced any worthwhile new material in a coon's age. But to me, they'll always be part of my youth.

None of the Beach Boys were here yet; they were riding in the parade. But the door was open, and through it I could see the large portable wardrobes that held their stage and street clothes.

Now, I'm a great admirer, and collector, of Hawaiian shirts, which along with blue jeans, are the great American contributions to couture. I wondered aloud to Rick just what kind of Hawaiian shirts the Beach Boys would have. Exquisite, no doubt.

"One way to find out", I said, and hoping that none of the Beach Boys security goons walked in, I pushed the door open and walked over to Mike Love's wardrobe, reached in and pulled out a particularly magnificent specimen – all tropical flowers and birds of paradise. Yeah, I should've guessed. Rick obligingly photographed me.

We exited that dressing room, feeling like school kids who've gotten away with something, when my eye caught the door on the opposite end of the room: *Beach Boys Cheerleaders*.

The door was slightly ajar. I knocked – no response, and I didn't expect one – the cheerleaders were on the float with the band. Did I dare enter? I pushed the door open with the toe of my boot and entered the sanctum sanctorum.

Ah, the lure of the forbidden – my pulse was pounding, my heart sounded like thunder in my ears ... I stepped into the middle of the room and absorbed the vibrations ... the thoughts of the lovely Beach Boy cheerleaders changing clothes in this very room ... the wardrobe cases were open ... the costumes hanging, jammed into the racks on hangers. A bit of red sequin caught my eye – I reached forward and drew forth a magnificently sequined halter top: and posed for Rick holding it while leering lasciviously, a brutish satyr defiling the temple of the Muses of Rock'n'Roll Dance ...

and exited that room as well, again for fear that the wrath of Zeus – in the form of any lurking Beach Boys Band security goons, all of whom resemble Reggie White except much larger, stronger and more aggressive – might precipitately descend upon me.

Since Fats and the rest of his group were still lounging about, I decided to check out the progress of the parade.

One of the remarkable things about the Endymion Extravaganza is that the parade actually comes inside the Dome, and threads its way through the formally-attired masses on the floor. I walked onto the floor and again had one of those sensory-overload experiences: the music, the lights like stars in the vast darkness, and most of all, the giant floats – we were through with the small preliminary floats that carry the krewe officers, these were the real things – moving like dinosaurs or battleships through the sea of humanity. Naturally, the spectators were so eager to compete for beads, cups, and other worthless plastic trinkets thrown by the float riders that they casually risked death by pressing right up to the floats as they moved through the crowds. As far as I know, nobody got run over; for which we must, I guess thank Fate, since the crowd's good sense was utterly absent. Also unfortunately absent was the practice – common amongst *wymyn* at Mardi Gras – of displaying the female mammary appendages in exchange for an extra-generous throw of beads. Must have been the formal gowns.

The floats themselves are beautiful, many double-deckers, all gorgeous with lights and full of moving figures ... the members of the krewe layout a bundle for this stuff. Several of the floats were segmented – that is, two or three normal floats linked together, which made for an interesting time maneuvering through the Dome. After the better part of an hour spent watching the parade, I returned to the dressing rooms, to arrive just in time for a semi-historic moment in rock n' roll history: Fats Domino meets the Beach Boys. The Beach Boys have been around since Day 2 and Fats before Day 1 – ere Elvis was, Fats walked the Earth. The BB's knew Fats well and worshipped him – Al Jardine had actually asked, shyly, if they could meet him! Unfortunately, Fats has a somewhat more circumscribed world view and is a bit hazy on anyone who came after him (almost everybody). He asked Rick "The Beach Boys – are they a white group?" *Yeah, Fats, you could put it that way. I think the only whiter group is The Four Freshmen!*

But anyhow: the picture below is a commemoration of this historic meeting between the resplendently-attired Fat Man-the epitome of N.O. R&B, and the greatest exponents of Califor-nai-ay Beach Music. Lost in this blaze of musical talent was Steven Seagal, action-picture star and supposed former CIA hit man (although *Spy* viewed the last claim with some skepticism) – wandering around the suite trying to look macho. Some people were paying him attention – not too many, though. I was having an amusing time discussing Mr. Seagal with some of the Beach Boys band members when I unfortunately missed Fats' exit to the main stage for his performance. I therefore had to find my way backstage myself, promptly lost my way and found myself clambering over catwalks, compressed stadium seating modules and Ghu only knows what else in an attempt to get there. But I managed to avoid death and saw an opening in the backstage curtain. I went through and found myself with a number of others – including Rick – watching backstage while Fats and the band went at it.

And it was wonderful. Offstage, he's mostly a rotund, frequently-not-jolly old black guy. On stage, he's the same rollicking, freewheeling r&b pianist that was one of the great stars of the early rock'n' roll era.

*OOOo baby OOOOo-whee,
Baby don't you let your dog bite me...*

Sure, it's all the same stuff he was doing way back when. Who cares? It's incredible, exhilarating, strong and smooth like good whiskey.

But my position backstage wasn't too good, and my feet hurt from standing for so long, and I looked around for a better vantage point – and found probably the best one in the house, not excluding the King, Queen, and Court of Endymion, who were viewing the performance from a table directly past the footlights. The ceremonies earlier had made use of this large stage-prop castle with a long stair leading up to it – and while people were sitting on the lower steps, nobody was at the top, so I climbed on top of a speaker crate, and shimmied my way up – no mean feat for someone of my bulk. And once I'd scaled to the top, I got another of those sensory-

overload moments.

Spread out beneath me was the entire scene, like I was a resident of Olympus: Fats and his band playing, the upturned faces of Krewe's court and guest superstars past the stage, the dark, roiling masses of the krewe members and guests on the wide Superdome floor (somewhere out there, I later learned, were Dany Frolich, designer of the parade, and John Guidry, chairman of Nolacon II, both friends of my youth); and on the perimeter beyond, the massive floats were drawn in a circle, lights still blinking, looking like they were a mile away, and beyond that, of course, the vast, dark spaces of the Superdome itself. I grooved on the whole scene, man.

Fats finished his exuberant, physical set by pushing his grand piano across the stage with his stomach and exiting to the wild cheers of the crowd. There was to be no pause between acts – the crowd, totally stoked now, probably would've rioted, formal gowns, white tie and all and the Beach Boys, occupying the other half of the large stage, started immediately.

Another part of my youth – earlier, to tell the truth, than Fats, an appreciation for whom I did not develop until somewhat later in my life – but for me, like I said before, the BB's represent the leading bards of the myth of the American Paradise – i.e., California, a land of sun and ease and topshelf babes, surfing and muscle cars, everything an adolescent could wish for.

Yeah, I know, maybe we know now that paradise might not, all things considered, have been totally paradisiacal, and is definitely not today, but when the legend outstrips reality, print the legend ... and all these years later, they're still printing it, and doing quite well, although as Rick pointed out, the original members no longer perform the very high harmonies on songs like "Hawaii" – too much wear and tear on the vocal cords. As a show, they were terrific, and the appearance of the Beach Boys cheerleaders were fully up to expectations: dancing, prancing, changing costumes at the drop of a hat, always getting a cheer when they'd run on stage ... of course, they excelled at "Be True to Your School", natch: pompoms, cheerleader outfits, doing handstands and back flips.

What impressed me as well, though, were the lengths to which they went to capture, in their live show, the complex instrumentation of their mid-60's albums, the "Good Vibrations" period: kettledrums, wind chimes, an array of objects to produce "found" sounds, and the like. Generally party music, good time rock n' roll, but with a musical depth that is surprising, and comparable to the Beatles of that period. Makes me wish that Brian Wilson had kept growing as an artist instead of going wacko.

The sets of Fats and the BB's were about 50 minutes each. When the BB's were finished, so were we, although the Endymion Extravaganza was far from over: a local band, the Nobles, was to follow and play till the bitter end. Since it was past 2 a.m. by this point, we decided to vacate. However, when we got to the dressing room, we found our escape was going to be a little more involved: Fats had left without us. We had to get a cab back to his house on Caffin, but still beat him home: he'd undoubtedly followed the usual routine and retired to a local bar with his buddies.

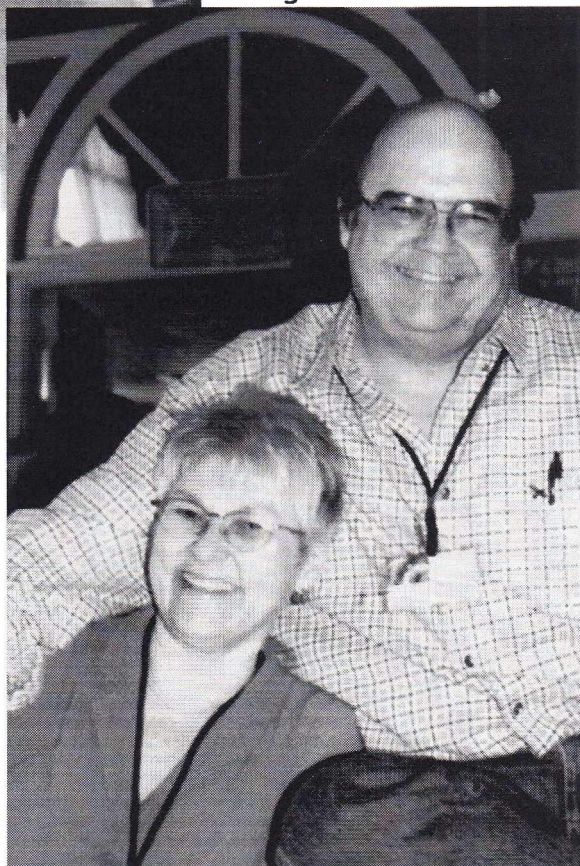
I didn't care. I was blissful. And over all of the other Images of the eventful night, one took precedence: how, when Fats sat down at the piano in from of the audience, four decades seemed to dissolve like sugar in boiling hot cafe au lait. Once more he's 25, and it's a boiling hot, humid, mosquitoey New Orleans night and he's playing in a joke joint about the size of your living room, which is packed to the rafters with about four times the number allowed by law ... and he's having an *incredible* time, and the music is pure magic: vibrant and rhythmic, and full of the joy of life. And may all of us be the same when we're in our 60's.



We met in the great Los Angeles apa, LASFAPA, and once we danced around the Watts Towers like kids around a Christmas tree. She played her guitar and sang a song she wrote herself, and beamed like a star when we applauded. She joined SFPA and came to Mardi Gras and graced Southern conventions. She has shot videos, written music, explored harmonic therapy, and made great and beautiful the world. Generous, hilarious, beautiful, brilliant ... and that's the living t'Ruth.

**The Challenger
Tribute**

Ruth Judkowitz



*Warren's a newcomer to Southern fandom but is really shaking up our rebel climes. This is his first appearance in **Challenger**.*

Space Rock Goes Indie

Warren Buff

Illo by BRAD FOSTER

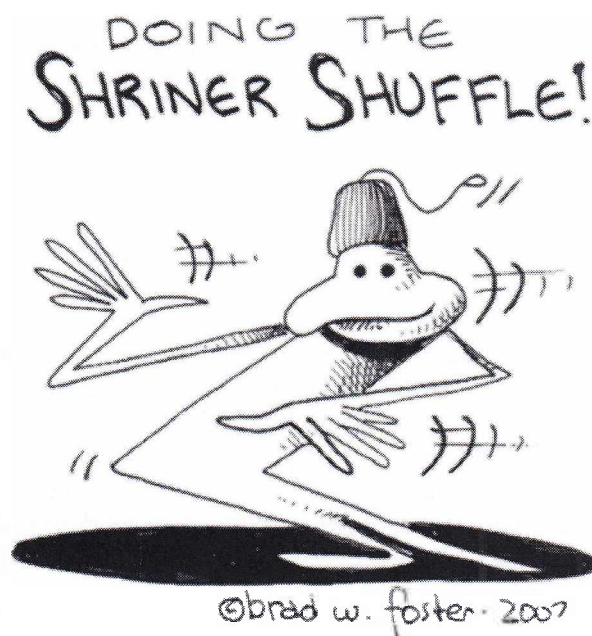
Back in the glory days of rock, all manner of mainstream bands were doing fannish numbers. Led Zeppelin is so well known for referencing Tolkien that (in a bit of literary roundabout to make a Modernist's head spin) their music was described on *The Venture Brothers* as "about love, and longing ... yes, and hobbits." You can't throw a d4 at a D&D game without hitting a Rush fan. The landscapes of Yes album covers have a definite science fiction vibe to them, although I'm still puzzled by many of the lyrics. Metal kept it going in the 80s with Judas Priest, Iron Maiden, and lately with bands like Dragonforce and Manowar. But where's a fan to rock out these days if he's not in the mood for head-banging?

The answer, as it turns out, is in the underground. Indie rock bands have been tackling fannish themes either full or part time for a while now. This appears to be the case all the way up from local acts through so-called "indie" bands who've been signed to majors.

Starting with my local scene, we've got a band called SNMNMNM (believe it or not, the letters represent the members' names). They went on a tour called "The Revenge of the Nerd Tour" with MC Chris last summer. (MC Chris brings us back around to an Adult Swim reference, and has rapped about none other than Boba Fett, too.) Most of their songs are about being a young nerd, but they've got one that stands out as positively science fiction. "The Line" is the story of an astronaut (although he could be a cosmonaut or a taikonaut for all we're told) on the first interplanetary mission from Earth. He describes some of the details of the mission (but leaves out the destination, we're left to fill in Mars as the most likely candidate), but the real strength of the song is in his angst over what to say when he becomes the first human being to walk on another planet. He laments, "I had the perfect line, and then I realized it wasn't mine at all." He feels like he's living in the shadow of "the last guy" who didn't even get it right. To top it all off, the song is pretty darn catchy, and has been a staple on my local college radio station since its release. Your best bet for finding more from them is their website,

<http://snmnmnm.com/media.html>

All right, a nerdy band with one truly science fiction song is a start, but my local scene has done them one better. A similarly themed band called 6 Inch



Voices, whose gimmick was mostly that they made fun of themselves, sounded like Blink 182, and then made fun of themselves for sounding like Blink 182 (they once played a show that was just a Blink 182 album, front to back, to see if anyone would notice) formed a splinter group called The Sons of Gondor. And they pretty much played in the style they'd developed (borrowed?), but sang songs about Middle Earth. And the indie scene enjoyed it. They've got a page up on MySpace at www.myspace.com/sonsofgondor

On a more national level, the internet-based musician Jonathan Coulton has quite a few fannish songs, most prominently "re: Your Brains". The song comes from the point of view of that annoying middle-management guy down the hall, Bob, only now he's a zombie. He tries to argue his way into a locked room, basing his case on the inevitability of the situation, and how busy everyone is, and off-handedly reminds the living of such minor details as "you're all gonna die / screaming." The chorus of the song is brilliant, with a zombie mob chanting "All we wanna do is eat your brains," followed by Bob's reassurance that "we're not unreasonable, I mean no one's gonna eat your eyes." The song's a blast, and decidedly more fannish than "The Line." Coulton has made most of his music available online on a fairly open model (listen for free, download any track for a buck, or get package deals) at <http://www.jonathancoulton.com/> His open attitude toward fair use has also led to many amateur music videos of "re: Your Brains" and other songs popping up all over the web.

Finally I'd like to look at the Flaming Lips, who've been kicking around for almost twenty years, and have put out a number of good albums on both indie and national labels. Their most recent two albums, *Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots* and *At War With the Mystics*, are both concept albums with fairly science fiction themes. *Yoshimi* is particularly appealing, with its story of a karate-trained city employee who must fight off the attacks of giant robots. While this theme comes straight out of anime, it also functions as a metaphor for a friend's struggle with cancer (which isn't particularly clearly stated in the album itself, but then, there's nothing in *Tommy* that indicates what Tommy saw, and when I learned that Pete Townsend had said it was a murder, I felt a little let-down). *Yoshimi* isn't just appealing to me as a fan, though – it's solid (if a little psychedelic) pop, and despite the underground status of the Flaming Lips, a great commercial success, and their first gold record. To top it off, according to *Pitchfork*, *Yoshimi* is being adapted into a Broadway musical.

The Lips followed *Yoshimi* up with *Mystics*, continuing in science fiction themes, to even greater success – it narrowly missed the US top 10, topping off at #11, and reached #6 on the British charts. It also garnered the Lips two Grammys and another nomination. While it clearly resides in the vein of fantasy, it's another solid album, and proof that science fiction material can be vastly successful in the music market. The Flaming Lips can be somewhat difficult to listen to for the casual rocker who'd prefer to zone out with something in the background, but are quite rewarding to the attentive listener. Thanks to the commercial success of these albums, you can find them in your local record store and national chain booksellers.

We may never quite get another stadium-rock band as blatantly interested in science fiction as Blue Öyster Cult ("Veteran of the Psychic Wars", "Godzilla") or Styx ("Mr. Roboto", "Come Sail Away"), and it would be far beyond reason to ask for another Queen, but there's still hope for good science fiction rock. Rather than being edgy and aggressive, science fiction rock has now passed into the realm of intellectuals and hipsters, leaving behind the stadiums for the smoky basement clubs. It takes a little more work to find good science fiction in rock and roll these days, and a lot of it relies on fans passing it along to fans, but then, isn't that the way it used to be?



I've italicized books and albums, changed single quotation marks (" ' ") to two (" """)but otherwise wouldn't dare touch this wonderful, exuberant paean to science fiction and rock'n'roll.

The dangers of reading Robert Rankin novels backwards

James Bacon



Initially when Guy mentioned that his next issue would have a rock and roll theme to it, I was at a loss. I thought about some prog rock I had occasionally listened to with SF connections and I thought about dubious links between heavy metal and comics and was all at sea. Hawkwind who performed at the 1987 worldcon, well before my time were in my mind.

I am not much a music aficionado or fan like I am of books and comics, it's just something to listen to, and I remember this when I wonder why not all SF readers go to cons. I like the heavier end of Rock, and grew up with Metal and Grunge. I have a few albums, I love Jimi Hendrix, Smashing Pumpkins, Metallica, Nirvana, Kaiser Chiefs, Air, The Stranglers, Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd and I really like Thinn Lizzy. Of course my logic side doesn't kick in and I e-mail Guy that actually I do have a sfnal connection with Rock Music.

Robert Rankin is an author of humorous weird books, Far Fetched Fiction even and I have been involved with his fandom, Sproutlore for about fourteen years and have been running annual events and conventions for ten. Music has had a big influence on Robert which seeps through to his novels and therefore stains me by proxy somewhat and I have had a tentative involvement helping to bring rock and roll and science fiction into a copulative fusion of fannish insanity. Robert is key to this though.

Robert told me about the time he made a demo in the seventies, at this time he was also writing poetry and using his time at Mowlem's to write what later become his first three books, but rock stardom was obviously the sparkle in the eyes at this stage.

It was in the late seventies, and I was working in Mowlem's in Brentford. I had a fancy dress party, and invited work mates and friends, they had a band, well more like a bunch of guys with instruments, and I said I could sing, and we then formed a band.

We changed the name of the band often, first off we were Astro Laser and the Flying Starfish from Uranus, then, Citizens Unrest and then The Plasma Jets, it didn't make any difference what our name was as we were rubbish.

In "Some Call Me Laz", that's Phil Cowen doing the instruments and me singing.

Our only attempt at making a demo record. The two of us went up to Rock Star studio's which was run by Gary Glitter's drummer, and it cost us thirty quid, and once they'd done it we sat down to mix it, and the guy went through it once, and he said what do you think, and I said "Well I think we'll..." he handed it to me and he said "There you go, now bugger off," so it never even got mixed and then didn't end up as it was meant to.

Of course being a fanboy, I immediately set out to reproduce about 200 copies of the demo using tape decks and patience. It was only a few minutes long and family members were coerced. We then sent these out free of charge. This was the first of many peripheral involvements with music, recording a tape, you can see the level I possess here.

Robert's works have featured Musical events as part of the story, here Rankin Fan and Expert of Brentford Lee Justiice explains;

Robert's book *Sex Drugs and Sausage Rolls* is of course a Brentford book starring our good old buddies Jim and John, and as usual the two likely lads are out to make a few bob doing what they do best – a bit of this and a bit of that. In this case however a bit of this and a bit of that is managing a rock 'n' roll band of soon to be epic proportions! (Nothing ever changes in Brentford does it?) Enter Gandi's Hairdryer and their amazing vocalist Litany whose voice can work miracles. Enter also the "fanboys from the future", a gang of ne'er-do-wells who just want to see all the best bands in history play all the best gigs they ever did. And if you're a fanboy from the future you really can see anyone anytime anywhere. You can even see the Beatles play Brentford with Elvis in 1999! And that can lead to all sorts of weird shit going down around the place. Weird shit like.

Robert's books have also had a Soundtrack which one could play along, if one tracked down the songs, as Dave Baker another expert, compiler of the A to Z of Rankin Characters and music fan did, here you will see the type of music Rankin espouses as the tracks listed shows and the obscurity of some of them that were a real trial for a hardcore fan to Find:

Many people have tried to get the soundtrack from *A Dog Called Demolition* together. And many people have failed. And it's not surprising really that they failed really. Well considering that Robert Rankin made it almost impossible to track them all down. I however want to be the first person to claim to have the whole collection. Even Robert does not have them all. Thanks to the Internet and a lot of research it was easy, still not that easy though. Here are listed the tracks, albums and where you might hope to find them or not as the case may be.

Magic Muscle - Free As A Bird (4.51) From the Album *One Hundred Miles Below* (Skyclad Trip 048). Found this one thanks to Robert who sent me a tape! You should be able to get this if you order it from you local record store. Track Type - Rock.

Juluka - Unkosibomvu (5.03). From The Album *Universal Men One* of the tracks you will be able to find in most record shops, or download from the net. Not that I support doing that in any way shape or form. Track Type - Ethnic African.

The Shamen - Christopher Mayhew Say A Lot (4.23). From the EP *Christopher Mayhew Says* (soma 3) Pretty rare track this one, comes from an EP that didn't chart. Old record shops or the net for this one. Track Type - Early Dance .

Rage Against The Machine - Killing In The Name Of (5.14). From The Album *Rage Against the Machine* If you can't find this one in a record shop, then you ain't got a hope in hell of finding the rest. The easiest one to get by far. Track Type - Rock.

Sonic Energy Authority - Addicts For The Out (4.26). From The Album *Sailors on the Sea of Fate* Tricky one this. Yes Sonic Energy Authority do indeed exist other than in the pages of Roberts works. I was lucky enough to get the CD from Cardinal Cox himself. You won't find this on the internet I shouldn't think, especially if I'm not on line. Track Type - Late 80's Electro Pop.

The Lost T-Shirts of Atlantis - Happy In The World (4.14). From the Album *More Reverb on The Duck* Yes this is available in the shops, you just need to order it at your local record store. Track Type - Skiffle cross country cross rock cross folk.

Mojo Nixon - Amsterdam Dog Shit Blues (2.08). From the album *Unlimited Everything* (Enigma Records CDP 77 3576 2) Another easy to find track, record shops should be able to get it in on import for you. Track Type - Mundo Bizarreo.

Peter Hammill - Nadir's Big Chance (3.20). From The Album *Nadir's Big Chance* Interesting track that was quiet difficult to get hold of, again I have to thank Robert for my copy. Track Type - Rock.

Brian Eno - Dead Finks Don't Talk (4.20) From the album *Here Comes The Warm Jets* an easy one to find. Track type -Typical Eno

Captain Beefheart - Big Eyed Beans From Venus (4.23). From the album *Clear Spot*. Track Type - Where did you put the splif man?

Sex Pistols - Anarchy In The UK (3.30) From the album *Pretty Vacant*. Kind of an easy one for me as I had it long before I read *Demolition*, This track is pretty much standard on any punk compilation album released. Track Type - Punk.

The Averts - Gary Gilmore's Eyes (2.21) From the Album *The Best of The Advert's*. The song about death row inmate Gary Gilmour who offered his eyes up for medical research. Track - Punk/Rock

The Kray Cherubs - Rot In Hell Mom From *The Seven Inch Rot In Hell Mom* (snakeskin SS002) Underground cartoonist Savage Pencil's band. There was only ever 300 copies of this seven inch single record ever made. I paid £10 for my copy from a second hand dealer in Sutton. Track Type - Very Weird!

The Almighty - Addiction (5.40) From The Album *Powertrippin'*. Available to order in most shops, the single charted in 1993 reaching the height of number 38. Track type - Rock.

Death - Pull The Plug (4.26) From The Album *Leprosy*. Track type - Thrash Death Metal.

Frank Zappa - Evelyn A Modified Dog (1.04) From The Album *One Size Fits All*. Frank Vincent Zappa 21. December 1940 - 4. December 1993. The shortest Track on the *Demolition* Album and one of my favourites. Track type - Brilliantly Silly Zappa.

The Sisters of Mercy - This Corrosion (10.55) (extended mix) From The album *Floodland*. Track Type - The start of the 80's Pop Rock, before Bon Jovi!

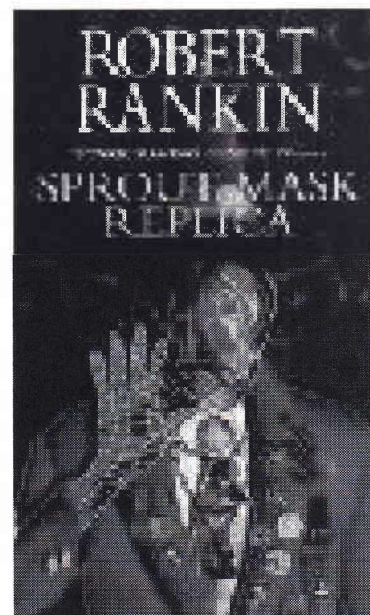
Blood Feast - Hunted, Stalked and Slain (4.10) From The Album *Chopping Block Blues* (Restless/Colossal #72628) Bitch to find. And why? Because the book refers to a band called Blood Priest. After much research and talking to an American Metal DJ from Iowa I found out it was Blood Feast. Track Type - Thrash Metal.

Beck - Motherf**ker (Everyone's Out to Get You) (2.03) From the album *Mellow Gold*. Ok you can understand that Robert wouldn't want the word Motherf**ker written in his book, But that's what its' called. Everyone's out to get you is repeated in the chorus. Beck's first major label album. Made with \$200 bucks. In the shops folks - Track type - Very early Beck. Nothing like Loser or Devils Haircut.

Metalica - Ride The Lightning (6.28) From The Album *Ride the Lightning*. Classic Metalica - Track Type - Metal.

Jimi Hendrix - All Along The Watchtower (4.03) From the Album *Electric Landlady*. Well what can I say about this track that hasn't already been said. Just a brilliant track played by an excellent guitarist. Track type - Its Hendrix, don't sound like no one else!

Dangerous Toys - Demon Bell (3.57) From the Album *Shocker* and The B Side of Megadeth's *No More Mr Nice Guy 7"* (SBK 12 SBKP 4) Ok we can probably forgive Robert for misleading the



world on this one. The Book states that it's a Megadeth Track, and although it sounds like Dave Mustaine singing, it isn't. The Group is Dangerous Toys, who have, or had, quite a big following according to web pages read. Though it was on a Megadeth website by a German who had been good enough to write his site in English where I found the answer to why I couldn't get the track! Released in two places, and you will more than likely find it in the second of them. Released on the B-Side of Megadeth's cover of Alice Cooper's "No More Mister Nice Guy", (The Twelve inch Single version only has it) or on the soundtrack to the Film Shocker, which would probably be easier for your local Record shop dealer to cope with. Track Type - Rock.

Cypress Hill - Insane In The Brain (3.32) From the Album *Black Sunday*. Track type - Rap.
Robyn Hitchcock - Out Of The Picture (3.40) From the Album *Snake Diamond Role* (Rhino CD R2 71820) Pretty damn fine track to end a Compilation album like *Demolition* on. Track Type - Rockish (Great Track).

A lot of work for any fan to take on, but it gives you the feeling of the intended linkage between music and the man.

Robert had the band Sonic Energy Authority featured in the following books, *The Suburban Book of the Dead*, *The Brentford Chainstore Massacre*, *Nostradamus Ate My Hamster*, *Raiders of the Lost Car Park*, *The Most Amazing Man Who Ever Lived*, *Sprout Mask Replica* and *Apocalypso*.

With lead vocals supplied by SF fan Cardinal Cox and bass guitar Panay Clouddrunner they play under the motto "If it's too loud, you're too old." Some of their releases are the album *Sailors on the Sea of Fate* which includes the track "Power Armour", Their sixth album is *Requiem For A Drowned Pope*. A few of their more well known singles are "Hi Ho Silver Lining", "Weren't the Sixties Fab" and a brilliant version of "Johnny B. Goode".

Simple things such as titles of Rankin's books also point out his own appreciation, *Sprout Mask Replica* being case in point indicate the influence that musicians such as Capt Beefheart has had on Robert. This is reflected by the unfounded assertion that many Rankin fans have a copy of *Trout Mask Replica* on their shelves and my only evidence is that I happen to have both Vinyl and CD of this album and it's not a bad at all.

The real link though came when Robert accidently ended up fronting his band, The Rock Gods as he explains,

Ah... BIG ROCKIN' IN LITTLE BRENTSTOCK. Once upon a time there was a man called Pete Johnston who had a dream, put on an event to raise some money for Brentford football Club. The world is a wonderful place and people are wonderful people. The now legendary Billy Sterling lined up Robert Johnson (not to be confused with the other Robert Johnson). And a chap I am proud to call my buddy, Andi Evans, offered to bring the band he plays drums in, Soliloquy, all the way down to Brentford, for nothing. Amazing. And then there was my mate Colin, lead singer for the now sadly defunct Brighton Nu Metal band Q Tones.

Of yes and there would be one other band appearing, Robert Rankin and the Rock Gods. Not that I was to know that yet.

The first band to arrive were Soliloquy, it had taken them four hours to drive down and they were going to sleep in their cars for the night. Which in my opinion was a pretty Rock 'n' Roll thing to do and I was pretty impressed.

Next to arrive were The Rock Gods, although I didn't know they were the Rock Gods yet. They were Sally's brothers, Kevin and Jonathan Hurst. Kevin does have Rock God status, he played in Spanglehead at the Woodstock Reunion. Wow! Kevin had been driven up from Wiltshire by Steve Wikes, an ace lead guitarist.

I thought they were going to play a few numbers to start the show off. They were, but they didn't have a lead singer. They wanted me to be the lead singer.

Well, many many years ago I did have a band, we died ungracefully, I hadn't sung with a band for over a decade.

"So, what do you think?" said Kevin.

"Lead me to the mic stand," I said. "What numbers are we doing?"

Tricky. What numbers did they know? What songs could I actually remember? We settled for "Johnnie B Goode", "Hey Joe" and "All Along the Watchtower". We were also going to do "Blue Suede Shoes" and "My Generation", but I felt that if we could actually get through three then we would have achieved something.

And of course there was something else to think about here. Brentford Football Club had never had live music on before. This would be the first time. We would be the first band on. I would get to sing the first ever song in there. It HAD to be "Johnnie B Goode".

And it was.

Of course, if this was to come true, we would need a PA system. Soliloquy hadn't been able to bring their's, they only had so much room in the cars. Jonathan had brought his drumsticks and Kevin his guitar. I could feel the seeds of panic beginning to ... but no, in came Flat Pig and Berserkus and in came big Marshall speakers and all those wonderful bits of Rock'n'Roll paraphernalia. We were rockin'.

And we were.

I won't dwell upon just how truly great Robert Rankin and the Rock Gods were. It was a bit like Woodstock. You were either there to see it, or you weren't. But even if you weren't, the legend somehow touches you and I'm sure that many who were there will tell their grandchildren, "we were there".

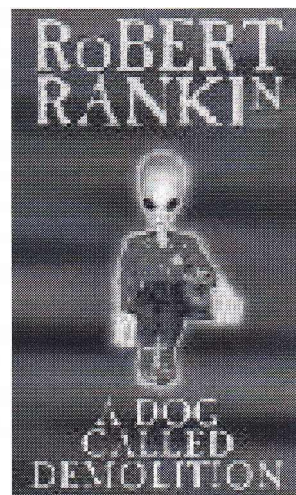
The Rock Gods played a blinder and I only got a few of the verses wrong and came in at the wrong times and sang in the wrong key and did my harmonica solo over the top of Steve's lead guitar solo by accident and ...

It went pretty well and the charitable crowd clapped.

The Rock Gods reformed a total of three times, subsequent events were associated with the club and book launches, the charity event had brought out something in Robert that he both enjoyed and fans of his books yearned to see, a match made in rock and roll hell.

In August 2003 the Rock Gods reformed to celebrate the release of The Witches of Chiswick, this event was a trial, and my first introduction into how horrible it might be to work with musicians. The venue eventually had to stop the music, some musicians were prima donnas, it was pretty hard work and to be honest Robert and his guys were the easiest part, as Ian Brown reports

The headliners were Robert Rankin and the Rock Gods, and they ROCKED big time. They are indeed Gods of ROCK and roll. Opening with a sterling rendition of Johnny B Goode they ROCKED. (Do you get the impression that this band ROCKS?) The vocals were inspired, the guitars roared and the drums beated. They were loud. They were good. They ROCKED. Awe



prevents me from remembering all the details but the set also included a reggae version of Blue Suede Shoes and (slightly Rankined) War, What is it Good For? This closed the set with an audience participation number (all together now “absolutely nothing”), and a promise to return later in the evening. This shows the real inconsistency between organisation and just being an attendee.

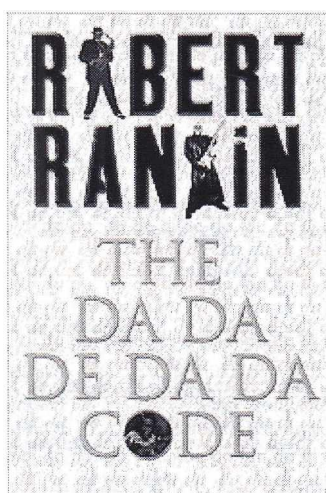
Music continued apace and a year later at Brentcon 1, it was reported in the Chiswick and Isleworth Times newspaper as follows

The weekend kicked off on Friday with a high-octane start at the launch of the Knees Up Mother Earth in Stripes bar, a music venue, which is part of Brentford football club. But this was no ordinary book launch with glasses of wine and a reading!

Sponsored by the book publishers Gollancz, Robert Rankin performed live with his band The Rock Gods, and then later he sang with Derby group Soliloquoy as they truly rocked the night away, to a rapturous reception. Stripes regulars, supporters of the Brentford FC and Councillor Luke joined Rankin fans in this celebration, and the venue was packed out. Pete Johnston of the supporters club commented “Absolutely Brilliant.”

No one will ever know how much hard work went into Brentcon, and the purpose was multi faceted as the big surprise on the Sunday Proved, when in the grounds of Brentford Library, where one of Robert’s characters had sat in many a book, looking at the racing papers, we unveiled “Pooley’s Bench” as he called it, with a special plaque commemorating the connection between Robert and the borough of Brentford and his fans.

Music continues apace, we had another gig in Brentford after the Brightonomicon Bus Tour and this was the last outing of The Rock Gods in 2005. It’s all a bit manic, it’s not normal to have a book launch and gig and fannish activities and much beer, but that’s the nature of this corner of UK and Irish fandom.



This year Robert’s Book, *Da Da De Da Da Code* featured a free CD with all 18,000 hardbacks, which is impressive, this CD had tracks by himself, his wife Rachel, who happens to be one of Europe’s leading steel pan artists, poetry and songs, mixed with music by Rankins’ own son William, known to all as High Rankin and finally Dry Rise a Brighton band who feature in *Da Da* and it is truly an eclectic mix.

The book launch coincided with a museum exhibition of Robert’s work and also his third wedding to the same woman, the first having been in Las Vegas with Elvis performing the ceremony. It was a superb weekend and of course there was a gig, Dry Rise played, as did Dark Society, a band fronted by Robert’s Son the aforementioned High Rankin and of course Robert sang while his wonderful wife Rachel played the eukalalle.

It was amazing. The venue rocked and then as an afterward, we danced and jumped around all night to rock music.

It’s an amazing thing and now you can see how I must have been insane to think that I knew of no links between SF and Rock and Roll. I forgot man...

*Many thanks to Dave Baker, Ian ‘Red’ Brown, Ian Case, Lee Justice and Robert Rankin for permission to use their writings, which on occasion have appeared in the pages of **The Brentford Mercury**, the periodical of Sproutlore, The Now Official Robert Rankin Fanclub. www.sproutlore.com*

AN ASTRONOMICAL NOTE

And so, I saw it.

In mid-October Shreveport enjoyed a couple of decently clear days, interspersed with a couple of decently clear nights. Occasionally I'd take Rosy's binoculars and try to peer through the glare to the northeast – find Polaris and Cassiopeia, and the astronomical prize lurking, I'd been told, just port of the line between them. But the glare from Shrivelpport and Bossier City was too much. No sign of Messier 31 – the Andromeda galaxy.

But I wasn't about to give up. I have a Robert Gendler photo of Andromeda as wallpaper on my work computer. The fact that it is the furthest and the largest thing visible to the naked eye turns me on. Not only that, but it's a galaxy, much like our own – I've wanted to see it for years. I'd been kicking myself that I didn't look for it that night we passed through Death Valley en route to Las Vegas. We even brought our telescope to OutSideCon in the vain hope that I'd be able to seek it there.

So on one of our nicer nights, I took Rosy out to park on a lonely country road south of the city. There was a time when I'd've had better things on my mind than looking at the stars, but I'm old now and look at the stars I did. Bright, jagged Cassiopeia was easy to find in the northeast. I scanned the area through Rosy's binocs. Nothing. Still too much glare.

All right, then, damn it. If south of the city puts too much Bossier City between me and Andromeda, I'd put it behind me! The next night, I again bundled Rosy into the car, glanced once more at my star map, and drove to the sticks well north of Shreveport, Bossier, and their annoying lights. But we still had trouble finding a dark area to look from – we found a promising site adjacent to a golf course, but I sensed suspicion from the residents nearby. Folks park there on dark nights for healthier reasons than galaxy-hunting.

Rosy wondered why I hadn't contacted an astronomy club at LSU-Shreveport, or at least found a nice dark public park for my observations. Stung by her Vulcan logic, I headed home in defeat – but stopped for one last try at a church parking lot. True, it was lamentably well lit – but the view to the northeast was clear.

Looking through the binocs, I found that the glare in my immediate vicinity wasn't much of a problem. I could make out dimmer stars with relative ease. So okay ... there was Cassiopeia, shaped like an irregular W ... if I followed a line through one of its Vs ... it should be just about ... *there*.

In the earliest description of the Andromeda galaxy, the Arab astronomer Abd Al-Rahman Al Sufi called it "a little cloud." I saw something that looked like that – a little cloud, a featureless oval smear in the sky. I adjusted the binocs. I'd been fooled before by clusters of stars that sharpened into individual points of light when I messed with the focus. This time ... this time it stayed "a little cloud." A little cloud composed of hundreds of millions of stars, two and a half million light-years away.

"Huh!" I said. "There it is."

And I could be sure, if probability means anything in this universe, that to a mathematical certainly *intelligent beings live there*. *Someone was looking back at me*. I waved. 2.5 million years from now, maybe he'll wave back.



Chall pal Gary Robe reported on being kidnapped in **Challenger** #26. Thank heaven he now tells us of a marvelous adventure – and a musical one.



My World Tour with *Guns 'n Roses* – Mexico City

G² (a.k.a. Gary R. Robe)
Illos by Charlie Williams & Bryan Norris

Most of the time I love my job, but there are some times that stand out as better than others. I am a chemist working for Eastman Chemical Company at the corporate research center in Kingsport, Tennessee. Just in case obscure Tennessee geography isn't your hobby that is way up in the far northeast corner of the state. The area is known as Tri-Cities due to the confluence of NASCAR famous Bristol, Johnson City, the home of East Tennessee State University, and Kingsport, which can best be described as a mill town. I describe Kingsport as a great place to live; it is quiet at night for sleeping and it has roads that lead elsewhere. Kingsport is what you might call centrally isolated. It is right in the middle of many interesting places, it's just not close to any of them. In any event, my job usually protects me from developing cabin fever. I speak

fluent Spanish so part of my job is to provide tech service and development support for Latin America for my area of expertise which happens to be adhesives and coatings. I get to travel extensively in the region which means I have a nearly inexhaustible supply of travel stories to pass off as party conversation. Some of those can be scary like the time I got kidnapped in Peru. Others can be as over-the-top as what happened to me during my trip to Mexico in June 2007.

Sometimes an unlikely chain of events puts you in the right place at the right time. This particular sequence started at 4:30 am EDT on Monday June 4 as I rolled out of bed to prepare to catch the 6 am flight from Tri-Cities Non-ternational Airport to Atlanta. I had just returned from a week-long backcountry wilderness hiking and camping trip to Cumberland Island, Georgia with my son's Boy Scout troop. At least the red-eye flight is reliable since there is usually at least one airplane that has ended its previous day at Tri-Cities. The only notable thing about the flight from Atlanta to Mexico is that I don't remember it. I had a window seat and I conked out asleep as the plane pulled away from the terminal. My next conscious thought was the jolt of landing in Mexico City.

My layover between Cumberland Island and Mexico was so short because I had no control on the timing of either trip. Our reservation for Cumberland Island for May 27 through June 2nd had been made six months prior to our stay. The only time the meeting room was available in the Club de Industriales in Mexico City for me to give a seminar on nerdy aspects of adhesive formulation was on the evening of Monday the 4th.

I arrived in Mexico City at about 1 pm CDT. The lecture started at 6 and lasted until 8. After that there was a cocktail reception that I didn't get to enjoy much because of the line of questioners I had at the conclusion of the speech. The Eastman salesman for Mexico City, Carlos Cota, then herded a group of important customers over to me for private consultations. I didn't get all the questions answered until nearly 10 pm. By that time I had been on my feet and talking continuously for four hours.

My good friend and esteemed colleague Marisol Cosio rescued me by asking if I wanted to go grab a drink and something to eat in order to separate me from the last batch of inquisitors. Marisol and I have had a lot of fun working together over the years after I taught her how to sell solvents using the Eastman Solvent Selector Chart. She is now responsible for marketing communications in Mexico so she had the job of handling the logistics for the seminar. I felt since the two of us had done all the work in putting on the show Eastman owed us a drink or two. She suggested that we go to the Celtic Pub across the street from the Club de Industriales. Simple decisions can sometimes be more important than they seem at the moment you make them.

At the bar Marisol and I ordered beers and a light meal. We were having a nice conversation between ourselves and some others patrons when a guy walked up to the bartender to order another round. Marisol's eyes suddenly got big and she pointed to the guy standing behind me. "I know you," she exclaimed, "You are Izzy! You play for Guns 'n Roses!"

"Yep, you're right!" he said. "We're in town for a show tomorrow so we're out with the gang seeing a bit of Mexico City tonight."

"I know!" replied Marisol, "I've got tickets to the show! I'm gonna be there!"

Before you ask and get all excited, Axl Rose and Slash were not out on the town with the rest of the band. They had played a gig in Guadalajara the night before and were going on stage in Mexico City on the following night and Axl was resting, so I didn't actually get to meet him. Slash has left Guns 'n Roses to go solo but I met his replacement. What I did get to do was party the night away with Guns 'n Roses to the point I was given an Official Band Nickname before dawn that morning.

On hearing Marisol's excited conversation with Izzy, Duff, the bass player and several of the roadies had come over to the bar to make sure they weren't getting in trouble with groupies. Marisol is an attractive young lady so as soon as the band realized that we weren't going to go all

Wayne's World on them, they started to chat with us. After a few minutes the band members started to ask Marisol where her seats were for the concert.

"Oh, they are way in back." Marisol shrugged, "I'm inside the place, that's all I care about."

"That won't do at all!" replied Dan, one of the crew members, "Let me give you my cell phone number. All you have to do is text a message to me and we'll have you backstage."

A flurry of cell numbers were exchanged as Dan and others convinced Marisol she would be very welcome backstage during the show. We continued to talk for a while. We asked them about the tour and they asked us about what we did in Mexico. After about an hour Dan said that they wanted to see more of the city. He produced a list of proposed bars to hit for Marisol to look over.

Marisol bit her lip and looked over the list. "You don't want to go there!" she pointed. "This place will be crowded and noisy if that's what you like. This place is really cool but it won't be open on Monday. These are all OK, but the best place I know isn't on this list."

"Wow," said Dan and Izzy, "you really know this city!"

"Well, I do live here," retorted Marisol.

"Great! You guys want to come with us then?" offered Dan.

At this point I am thinking about bowing and shouting "We are not worthy! We are not worthy!" I also felt the angel and devil perched on my shoulders whispering in my ear. "How many times in your life will you get invited to go bar hopping across Mexico City with Guns 'n Roses?" asked the red guy with the pitchfork. "You've been up 20 hours and you have to work tomorrow!" retorted the white guy with the feathers. What I said was, "What are we waiting for?"

Mind you I was dressed in a full business suit, and carrying my laptop like a total nerd. Marisol was wearing a nice black dress, and the band was dressed like off-duty rock 'n rollers, so we were a diverse bunch to say the least! We got into their bus and Marisol directed the driver to a bar across town in the Zona Rosa. While in the van we learned that Izzy's real name is Anthony. Everyone in the band has nicknames. Dan's last name is Ruff, so his nickname is Dandruff. The tour manager's name is Gary and there are several other Garys in the crew so his nickname is OBG for Original Black Gary.

We bounced around several bars only to find that the cool places were either closed on Monday or so full that even whispering "These guys are Guns 'n Roses" in the doorman's ear couldn't get us in. Most places were crowded and noisy so there wasn't much conversation. We finally did end up in a small bar in a basement that was quiet and pleasant and not full. At this point the fact that I was from Tennessee came up and the topic of the conversation turned to whiskey.

Izzy told me that he drinks a bottle of Maker's Mark before a concert in order to get himself in the spirit.

"I know something about Makers Mark that you don't know." I confidently told him.

Izzy said, "That'd be pretty hard because I know a lot about it. I've even visited the distillery in Kentucky to watch it being made!"

"Yes," I retorted, "but I know the recipe for making the sealing wax on the bottle!"

"No way!" said the group.

"Yes way!" I said "That wax is actually a modified hot melt adhesive and I helped to develop the formula. The guy who makes it is a retired Eastman salesman, Tom Hammond, who took his retirement money and installed a hot-melt mixer in his garage. No adhesive company wanted to crap up their vats with the pigment, so Tom mixes it up at his house in Lexington, loads it into the back of his pickup, hauls it over to Loretto, sells it for 10 bucks a pound, and pockets three quarters of a mil every year for his trouble. How about that for a retirement plan?"

"And. You. Can. Make. This. Stuff?" they asked with big eyes.

"Sure, you want some?" I said, knowing the answer.

Dandruff took my business card so that when they get off tour he can contact me for a sample. Izzy wants to take it and decorate his guitar with it.

And that, my friends, is how I earned a nickname with Guns 'n Roses. Henceforth I am known as GG or simply G² which stands for Genius Gary. If all goes well soon my work will be displayed on the Izzy's guitar.

By this time it was about 1:30 and the bar scene in the Zona Rosa was winding down so the band decided to return to the Camino Real Hotel to continue our movable drink in the all-night bar there. We end up talking about stuff in general until 4 am. I feel pretty good that stories of the goings-on at SF conventions were wild enough to impress a band Rock 'n Roller's on a world tour!

I had a lot of fun talking to the guy who does the pyrotechnics for the shows. There is a lot of technology that goes into making big, loud, bright, sparkly explosions on a stage that don't endanger anyone – much. There are also an unsurprising number of wheels that need to be greased in order to get the permits. It cost about \$25,000 just to stage the pyrotechnics for the Mexico City show alone.

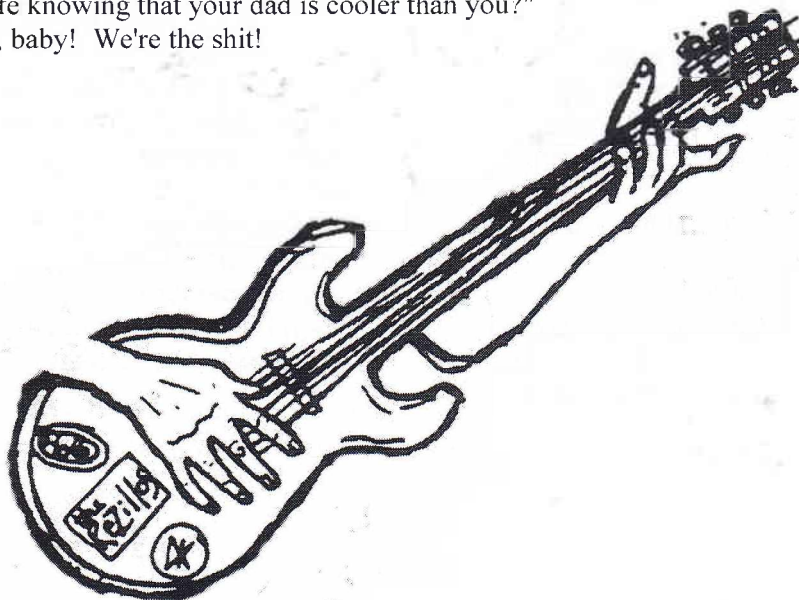
At 4 am we all decided it was time to pumpkinify. I needed to get up the next morning at 8 to get to the office at 9 so I could meet with Carlos for the drive to Puebla to visit a customer. The band saw us to a taxi and waved us goodbye. Marisol promised to contact them that night to get the backstage pass.

Once we were in the taxi Marisol and I turned to each other and squealed in unison, "WE ARE SOOOOOO COOL! Are we cool or what? We aren't just cool, we are the shit!" Yeah, we didn't go ga-ga or anything! We were just as cool as they were! Oh, man, I can't believe that really happened! Is it really after 4 in the morning? I don't care! That went up to 11! How many times do you run into Guns 'n Roses in a bar in Mexico City and end up bar-hopping until 4 am? I'm trying to imagine about how much cooler you could be than that and the answer is – none!" The conversation continued in a similar vein all the way back to the Polanco neighborhood where Marisol's car was parked and where I was staying in the Nikko hotel.

The next night Marisol did go right backstage just as promised. She did get to meet Axl and had cell phone video of the concert taken about 20 feet away to prove it. They all asked where G² was, but at the point I got back to the Nikko, at about 4:30 that evening, I was going on 25 hours with the only sleep being the flight from Atlanta to Mexico City. I had traveled all the way to Puebla that day and back – 90 miles each way. I was just too tired to consider going to a Guns 'n Roses concert that wasn't going to start until at least midnight.

A week later I related this story to some friends at the end of a Scout troop meeting. One of the boys turned to my son Isaac and said, "How does it feel that you're going to have to live the rest of your life knowing that your dad is cooler than you?"

Yeah, baby! We're the shit!





What I Did on Friday Night and the Nice Man I Met

James Bacon

Okay, I am really sorry to have to gloat a little, but I do love living in London sometimes. Look at this nice man I met. His name is Alan Moore.

Jim de Liscard took the picture.

Mr. M is working on a novel, called *Jerusalem*, sounds very interesting, he was very gentle, friendly and just an example of how a professional can deal with fans, no rush, happy to sign, happy to chat and take zines and just a great and humble bloke.



anyway I'm backpacking

Mike Estabrook

with 3 or 4 others who I don't know
and we pass beneath
this high archway of rock a bright cave-
like
entrance into a wide rubbly plain at the
bottom
of an expansive pit the walls
mostly boulders rising-up all around
rising-up as high as you can see
and I walk out into the plain when
suddenly
one giant boulder up at the top breaks
loose
and drops straight down
the people I'm with are still protected
in the archway they see the boulder
and start yelling waving their arms

"get out of the way get out of the way!"
but I'm paralyzed with fright
unable to move a muscle
not knowing what to do about this giant
boulder dropping straight down out
of the sky at me but then I snap out of it
run
full speed out of the way and
the boulder hits the solid rock floor
with a tremendous cracking boom
bounds
off towards the other side and I stagger
into the protection of the archway
my companions hug me hold me
then I sit with my head in my hands,
pale, sweating, shaking.

Still and all, I'd love to see Carrie on stage ...



Music(als) of the Spheres

Mike Resnick

Illustrations by KURT ERICHSEN

Guy Lillian tells me that the theme of this issue will be music. I don't know enough about music to set myself up as an authority, but if there's one thing I *do* know, it's the musical theatre – and you'd be surprised at how many musical plays are, by definition, either fantasy or science fiction. (You'd be surprised at this instant; hopefully when you finish the article you won't be.)

The list of shows and thumbnail sketches doesn't purport to be all-inclusive; I mean, hell, there are a lot of flops that I never got to see, hear, or even know about. But I'd say, in all immodesty, that it's about as complete a list as you're likely to find until Laura Turtledove, my long-time musical video/audio/bootleg trading partner, sits down and adds to it.

There are certain shows I'm not going to include, because they're just a little too marginal to claim they are true-blue science fiction or fantasy. Examples would be *Stop the World – I Want to Get Off* and *Tommy*. And there's another class of show I chose not to list, and those are musicals that accept the divinity of Jesus Christ and the truth of the Holy Bible, shows like

Jesus Christ Superstar, *Godspell*, and *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*; I'm going to proceed on the assumption that if you are a Christian you don't consider these shows to be fantasy, and to suggest otherwise would be offensive to your beliefs, a line of argument I'll leave to the Islamic Jihadists.

Okay, all that said, here is the list of musicals that can, by any reasonable definition, be considered fantasy or science fiction. I think you'll find some interesting surprises on it.

Aladdin. Hard to complain about a Cole Porter musical, especially with a libretto by S. J. Perleman. Originally produced for television, with a cast including Basil Rathbone, Cyril Ritchard, Anna Maria Alberghetti, and (o well) Sal Mineo, it was later mounted on the British stage.

Amour. Michel Legrand has scored over 200 films, and won some Oscars. He's done a lot less musicals, and for his first in decades he chose *Amour*, a brilliant and charming fantasy based on the French fable about a man who walks through walls. It ran for years in Paris, and to New York's everlasting shame, it ran for only three weeks back in 2002, despite a cast that included Tony-nominated performances from Malcolm Gets and Melissa Errico.

The Apple Tree, the first show written by Jerry Bock and Sheldon Harnick after their wildly-successful *Fiddler on the Roof*, this is actually three one-act musicals, the first ("The Apple Tree", from Mark Twain) and third ("Passionella" from Jules Feiffer) are fantasies. It made a star out of Barbara Harris in 1967, and reaffirmed star status for Kristen Chenoweth in a 2006 revival.

Bat Boy, a camp "sci-fi" piece of nonsense with songs by Laurence O'Keefe, is more bad parody than bad science fiction, but has just enough of the latter to qualify. And be instantly forgotten.

Beauty and the Beast. Unlike *The Lion King*, with its wildly creative costumes and sets, if you saw the Disney animated version of *Beauty and the Beast*, there's no reason to spend your money on the Broadway version. The Howard Ashman/Alan Menken score is fine, the actors were excellent, the story is classic – but the score was fine (and just about identical) in the movie, no one on stage was going to match the voice-overs of Angela Lansbury and Jerry Orbach, and the story was the same.

Big, the musical version of the less-than-brilliant film about a 12-year-old boy who suddenly finds himself in an adult's body, has a score by Richard Maltby and David Shire, every bit as unmemorable as the plot, and is yet another of those endless musicalizations of mediocre movies that makes you wonder why anyone bothered in the first place.

Brigadoon. Lerner & Loewe's first hit, it's a pleasant fantasy about a Scotch town than comes into existence once every hundred years. The movie was turned into a Gene Kelly vehicle, but the play, though not among the top rank, still holds up.

The Bone Room. Tom Jones & Harvey Schmidt's artiest play, this is about a menage a trois at the Natural History Museum between a young girl, an old man, and Death. It was shown to invited audiences only, back in 1977.

Camelot. Anything that includes Excalibur and Modred has to qualify as a fantasy, including this Lerner & Loewe hit. Every scene was nice – but there were so *many* of them. I felt like I'd read all 250,000 words of the book when the play finally let out.

Carousel. Rodgers & Hammerstein's second major hit (after *Oklahoma!*), part of it takes place in Heaven, and Billy Bigelow comes back to Earth after his death to advise and guide his daughter, so it's clearly a fantasy.

Carrie. This is generally considered the single worst big-budget musical ever produced. Based on Stephen King's bestselling novel, it is so notorious that a book cataloguing the Broadway Musical Flop from the 1940s to the present is titled *Not Since Carrie*, because whenever a new turkey opens, the reviews tend to begin with "Not since *Carrie* (has there been such an abomination)". The wild part is two of Broadway's great divas agreed to play *Carrie*'s mother. Barbara Cook created the part, realized just what she'd stepped in, quit, and they then hired Betty Buckley, who got to sing an aria and two reprises to snickering audiences while being drenched with blood from a severed carotid artery.



Cats. Every character is a cat, and one of them ascends to Heaven while onstage, so it's clearly a fantasy. Brilliant dancing, totally without any meaning. (What do I mean? Every dance in *West Side Story* furthers the plot. Every dance in *Cats* serves no purpose except to show you that the performers can dance.) Pedestrian score, mediocre lyrics.

Celebration, by the brilliant team of Tom Jones & Harvey Schmidt, is an allegory about the Winter Equinox, and about youth and age. It should have been performed on a small off-Broadway stage like the same team's *The Fantasticks*, rather than in a huge Broadway theater where it lost all its intimacy and charm. The play flopped — I blame the theater, not the cast or material -- but all small-theater revivals have been successful.

Charly and Algernon. It's an easy argument to make that "Flowers for Algernon" is, if not the single greatest novella ever to grace the field of science fiction, surely one of the half-dozen best. But absolutely nothing about it lends itself to becoming a musical, even with that old Phantom of the Opera, Michael Crawford, playing Charly Gordon. It opened in London, flopped, got rewritten/revamped, came to the States, substituted P. J. Benjamin for Crawford, and flopped again.

Cinderella. Rodgers & Hammerstein created this for Julie Andrews as a television original, but because they were savvy marketers it didn't end there, and the play (without Andrews) eventually hit the New York and London stage, complete with fairy godmother.

City of Angels. A brilliant conceit, with libretto by Larry Gelbart and featuring Cy Coleman's finest score. This is the story of a mystery writer who is selling out to Hollywood, and it is also the story he's busily emasculating, told on one half of the stage in black and white, while his own story is told, in color, on the other half. It qualifies as fantasy, because at one point the private eye steps out of his own story to confront the author and castigate him for selling out.

A Connecticut Yankee is a 1927 play with a score by Rodgers & Hart, based on a 19th Century Mark Twain tale about a modern man who winds up in King Arthur's court, and proves that when you're good, it doesn't matter how old you are.

Damn Yankees. Pleasant show, pleasant score. History has come full cycle. This play, about a ballplayer on the Washington Senators making a deal with the devil, only works when you can hate the New York Yankees, so no one performed it in the late 1960s and the early 1970s. Then George Steinbrenner bought the Yankees and pours hundreds of millions into them, and it's been popular ever since.

Dandelion Wine. At least most of the flops listed here made it to New York, or at least into production *somewhere*. Not Ray Bradbury's *Dandelion Wine*, surely one of the most beautiful books to appear in the 20th Century. I have the studio demo tape, and there's a reason: not only are the songs completely unmemorable, but no boy whose voice is still a falsetto can carry a musical play for two hours.

Dracula – The Musical. About what you'd expect. Big budget, fancy costumes, unexceptional music, totally uninspired lyrics. Big yawn.

Evening Primrose. Not really a Broadway play at all, but a written-for-TV musical that was performed only once, back in 1967. By the brilliant team of Stephen Sondheim and James Goldman, it's based on John Collier's horror fantasy about people passing themselves off as manikins in a department store, then moving about at night. Fine songs, but totally unnecessary to the story. I include it because, despite its history, there are two different cast recordings.

The Fantasticks. A charming fantasy by Tom Jones & Harvey Schmidt, it plays games with time and with reality, it pulls actors it needs out of a stage trunk, it has a wall that looks and feels exactly like a yardstick – any way you analyze it, it's a fantasy. And since it's the longest-running play in the history of the musical theatre – 42 years! – I'll be damned if I'm going to be the one to criticize it. (Besides, I love it.)

Finian's Rainbow. Burton Lane has some classics in this score, such as "Old Devil Moon", but the play *and* the score are pretty antiquated. Still, there's a leprechaun's role that actors from David Wayne to Fred Astaire to Malcolm Gets kill for, so I guess it'll keep getting revived, antique or not. And, thanks to the leprechaun and his magic, it's a fantasy.

Frankenstein – The Musical. This one had some promise, primarily because it followed the book and not the movie, and hence presented the monster as an object of sympathy – but the score and libretto just weren't good enough.

The Frogs. Stephen Sondheim's musical based on the play by Aristophanes, this one's lasting fame comes, alas, not from its quality (it hasn't got much), but because it was first performed in the swimming pool at Yale, with Meryl Streep and a couple of other future superstars in the chorus. It has singing, dancing frogs, it borrows characters from all over history, and is unquestionably a fantasy. Nathan Lane rewrote the libretto and starred in a Broadway revival; it didn't fare any better than the original.

Goblin Market was an avant-garde off-Broadway two-woman show, as strange as a musical version of *Waiting For Godot* would have been. It's based on a fairy tale in verse, more about sex and fear than fantasy, and it sank pretty quickly. I don't believe it's ever been revived, and I'm not surprised.

The Golden Apple, a lost classic (i.e., critics love it, audiences don't), this musical is based on *The Illiad* and *The Odyssey*, as is another further down the list. This one's by far the superior show, but it's pretty antiquated.

Greenwillow. The lovely fantasy novel by B. J. Chute was Frank Loesser's only flop, but it was the book that was weak, not the score. Tony Perkins starred as Gideon Briggs, the young man cursed with wanderlust, and while his voice wasn't much, he was well-trained and managed to hit all the right notes in a score that was written for a much better singer.

Grover's Corners. Tom Jones & Harvey Schmidt's musical adaptation of Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*. Probably their most brilliant work – and since everyone in Act 3 is dead, it certainly qualifies as fantasy.

High Spirits, a musical version of Noel Coward's comedy *Blithe Spirit*, with songs by Hugh Martin and Timothy Gray, was everything it was supposed to be: funny, witty, irreverent, sophisticated...and one thing it wasn't supposed to be: forgettable.

Into the Woods. Broadway's reigning genius, Stephen Sondheim, turns a bunch of fairy tales into a dark, grim, adult entertainment. Far from his best score, but so far above average as to put you in awe of what he can do when he's not at his sharpest.

It's A Bird, It's A Plane, It's Superman! Pay no attention to the horrible, emasculated version of this that played on late-night TV a couple of decades ago. The Broadway show was a delight, with a wonderful Strousse and Adams score, a pair of hilarious star turns by Jack Cassidy and Michael O'Sullivan, a proper Superman in Bob Holliday, and sets that looked like they were comic book panels.

Jekyll and Hyde – The Musical. Broadway just seems to love mounting big-budget turkeys based on great horror novels. This one was better than *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*, actually ran for over a year, was well-acted and well-sung, had gorgeous sets and costumes – but it had the usual problem: mediocre, unmemorable music and lyrics.

Kiss of the Spider Woman. Based on the straight play (and movie) of the same name, starring Chita Rivera, this qualifies as a fantasy simply because the prisoner spends half the play fantasizing about Rivera's singing and dancing Spider Woman.

The Lion King. Silly story, good but not outstanding music – but it also has the most imaginative costumes and sets ever seen on Broadway, and some wildly creative choreography.

Li'l Abner, the hit musical based on Al Capp's classic comic strip, isn't on this list because it's a comic strip. (*Annie*, you'll note, isn't here.) Nope, it's because at one point the women of Dogpatch pay some scientists to turn their men into gorgeous beach bums...but then the men just lay there, admiring their muscles, and the women have to come up with the money to put 'em back the way they wuz (to quote one of the songs).

Little Shop of Horrors may be the only science fiction (as opposed to fantasy) musical that was a bonafide hit. (Of course, playing in a very small off-Broadway house with a low overhead didn't hurt.) There's no getting away from its charm, most of which was supplied by the magnificent Ellen Greene, who reprised her role in the watered-down budgeted-up movie. Very witty score by Howard Ashman and Alan Menken.

Lord of the Rings. I haven't seen or heard it – it's still on its tryout tour somewhere up in Canada as I write these words – but it's clearly a fantasy, and given the popularity of the books and films, I'd have to say it's a cinch to hit Broadway sooner or later no matter how inept it is. Since we're going to be stuck with it regardless, let's hope it's a good one.

Mary Poppins. Another Disney movie turned into a Broadway musical – and as with most of them, if you saw the film, you already know the story and songs, and no one's going to perform them better than Julie Andrews and Dick Van Dyke, so why was this trip necessary?

Merlin was an interesting conceit. Veteran film scorer Elmer Bernstein moved to Broadway to create a musical about Merlin the magician. It starred (read: wasted) Chita Rivera and Nathan Lane, and existed only to let magician Doug Henning, who could neither act, sing nor dance, dazzle the audience with his tricks as Merlin. A two-hour magic show would have had a much longer run and more appreciative audience.

Metropolis. This travesty was based on the creaky old Fritz Lang silent movie, and starred Brian Blessed, who should have known better. We saw it during previews in London, and thought it surprising that 5th row orchestra seats were still available. It became a lot less surprising ten minutes into the play, when, to show the working conditions for the oppressed underground, the stage was flooded with smoke – which immediately turned left and spread out over the first dozen rows of the audience, choking and blinding us. And it did the same thing *four* times during the performance. So we had to rely on our ears, but the audience (those not yet overcome by smoke) was so busy laughing and snickering at all the tragic scenes that we never did find out exactly what anyone was saying. Probably just as well.

The Odyssey was one of Mitch Leigh nine consecutive musical flops after he wrote *Man of La Mancha*. Based on *The Illiad* and *The Odyssey*, it starred Yul Brynner and Joan Diener, and it was *awful*. They re-wrote songs, they rewrote the libretto, they re-cast everything but the two leads – and it was *still* awful. And then one of the producers got a brilliant idea: okay, the play stinks, it'll never go in New York – but most of the people out there in Hicksville have never see Yul Brynner, so why don't we lengthen the pre-Broadway tour from six weeks to eighteen months? And they did, and they played to packed houses (and bad reviews) everywhere, and by the time they opened in New York under a brand-new name – *Home Sweet Homer*, they'd made their expenses. The play ran for a single performance – most Manhattan critics argued that it should have folded by the middle of Scene 3 – and was never heard from again. But because there were Greek gods, at least when I saw it during its pre-Broadway run in Chicago -- it's a fantasy.



Olympus on my Mind is a musical based on *Amphitryon*, or, to put it in more palatable terms (and I wish the librettist had), it's kind of a song-and-dance version of Thorne Smith's *The Night Life of the Gods*, but with maybe a tenth of the wit. Still, any play that's got Jupiter coming down from the mountain cruising for chicks has to qualify as a legitimate fantasy.

One Touch of Venus is the great Kurt Weill's one musical fantasy, with lyrics by Ogden Nash, about what happens when the statue of Venus comes to life. It was made into a rather dull film with Ava Gardner, but the play is actually quite a funny low comedy.

Out of this World, one of Cole Porter's few flops. This, like *Olympus on my Mind*, is based on *Amphitryon*. Didn't fare any better, though of course it has a far superior score.

Peter Pan. Everyone remembers Mary Martin "flying" on very visible strings in one of the many TV versions of this hit Broadway musical, but the play had a lot more to it than her Pan and Cyril Ritchard's Hook. For one thing, it had fine lyrics by Jule Styne, Betty Comden and Adolf Greene, and excellent direction/choreography by Jerome Robbins. (Almost forgotten now is that Mary Martin didn't originate the part; the first, and longest-running, *Peter Pan* was Maude Adams.) (And another side note: the name "Wendy" didn't exist until James Barrie created it for the original play.)

Portrait of Jennie. This musical adaptation of Robert Nathan's fantasy novel, maybe the first and surely the most moving time-dilation romance, won the Richard Rodgers Award for best off-Broadway musical about a quarter of a century ago. The brilliant score consists of music by Howard Marren and lyrics by Enid Futterman.

Return to the Forbidden Planet. A totally unmemorable British musical (I don't believe it ever made it to America), it's got a derivative score and a silly script and, alas (or given its quality, maybe not so alas) has nothing to do with the classic movie, *Forbidden Planet*.

The Rocky Horror Show. It's a pretty silly play, with totally forgettable music, but there are enough references to science fiction, and enough out-and-out weirdness, that it qualifies. Too bad; I wish it didn't.

Seussical. Nice enough score by Stephen Flaherty and Lynn Ahrens, but that was close to the only nice thing about this fantasy musical based on the poems and stories of Dr. Seuss. Even Rosie O'Donnell's joining the cast couldn't save it; in fact, a considerable body of opinion feels that her performance hastened its death.

Shinbone Alley. Originally just a record featuring Carol Channing and Eddie Bracken, they finally turned it into a charming full-fledged musical play. It's based on Don Marquis' "archy and mehitibel" story-poems, and every character in it is a cat or a cockroach.

Spamalot, the Eric Idle-scripted musical based on *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. The music is totally unmemorable, and the play is totally uncreative – by which I mean, the audience continually laughed *before* the punch lines. It was written for Python-worshippers, and while there were enough of them to put the show into profit, I don't think it's going to be revived very often, nor should it be.

Starlight Express, another of Andrew Lloyd Webber's mystifying hits (in England; he's only had three major hits here), every cast member in this one is a train engine or train car, and each of them is on roller skates for the entire show. A major race between Steam and Diesel takes place through the entire theater, with the performers skating on ramps just a few feet above the audience's heads. There was a certain charm to parts of it, but the overall impression you come away with is Silly.

Starmites. This one's almost forgotten today, though it got six Tony nominations just a few years ago. With a score by Barry Keating, it's a musical about a teenaged girl who builds a fantasy world populated by her favorite comic book characters.

Tarzan. It probably seemed a good idea. Disney created musical plays that were wildly creative, as well as a shade above mediocre in quality, with *Beauty and the Beast* and *The Lion King*, and came away with two long-running megahits. So why not do the same with *Tarzan*? Well, singing dancing apes, and a star fresh off American Idol, were two pretty good reasons why not.

Two by Two, written especially for Danny Kaye's return to Broadway, was the musical version of Noah (hence the title). Unfortunately, despite a score by Richard Rodgers, it didn't have a single memorable song or scene in it, and Kaye so offended the rest of the cast that no one worked very hard to keep the crippled ark afloat.

Urinetown. The play's an allegory, but since it's about a future in which an Evil Corporation controls every restroom in town, it qualifies as science fiction. And very witty science fiction, too, with a score by Mark Hollman and Greg Kotis that's almost *too* clever.

Via Galactia. Unquestionably the worst science fiction musical ever to make it to Broadway (*Carrie* was a fantasy), this hodgepodge was so confused and confusing that the producers attempted a never-before-tried innovation: they handed out a synopsis along with the Playbill, so the audience would have some slight notion of what was going on. It didn't help.

Weird Romance should be of special interest to science fiction fans, and I'll bet 99% of them have never heard of it. The score is by Alan Menken, and it consists of two one-act musical plays. One was adapted of a *Twilight Zone* episode; the other is a musical version of James Tiptree Jr.'s "The Girl Who Was Plugged In."

Wicked. A delightful, charming musical based on the bestseller about Oz's Good Witch and Bad Witch when they were friends back in school. Idena Menzel won the Tony as the Bad Witch, but it was Kristin Chenoweth as Glinda, the Good Witch, who charmed the sellout crowds and came away a superstar.

The Wiz. A hit all-black musical based on *The Wizard of Oz*, with songs by Charlie Smalls. Geoffrey Holder's direction, choreography and costumes (he's a man of many talents) helped audiences forget that they knew the story inside-out and that the songs in the MGM movie were better.

Zombie Prom. The title, alas, says it all. Dana P. Rowe and John Dempsey created a score that was too good for the plot, which is about a high school zombie who wants to attend the prom and reclaim the love of his popular girlfriend. Honest. So don't ever come up to me and tell me an idea is too dumb to make into an expensive musical flop.

One month later:

Well, like I said, the *real* expert is Laura Turtledove, Harry's spouse and the mother of all those beautiful and talented girls. I showed her the article this afternoon and asked if I'd missed anything. When you want to know, you go to The Source. Here's her answer:

All Shook Up. I hate jukebox musicals. This was the Elvis one from 2004, but it featured a magical jukebox. How else do you cram 20 Elvis songs into a show without actually having Elvis in it?

Assassins. Sondheim and Weidman's revue about successful and unsuccessful Presidential killers. Any show that has assassins from different centuries hanging out in a bar together deserves to be on this list, though my theatre major daughter vehemently disagrees with me.

Babes in Toyland. From '03. No, 1903, as in Victor Herbert. The evil uncle of two tots wants to get rid of them, but they wind up in Toyland, where the toys and Mother Goose characters help them thwart the uncle. Some of these songs still get hauled out at Christmas.

By Jupiter. Rodgers and Hart's last original show, 1943, starring Ray Bolger. Queen Hippolyta and her gals hold the upper hand over their wimpy guys because the queen has a magic girdle that gives her strength. The Greeks, led by Theseus and Hercules, invade to help the males get the girdle, and they find their talents in the bedroom work better than those on the battlefield. It might have run longer, but Bolger left to entertain the troops.

Cabin in the Sky. Vernon Duke and John Latouche's 1940 fable of the battle between the forces of the Lord and those of the Devil for the soul of Little Joe Jackson (Todd Duncan). Ethel Waters' only book musical, this one produced the hit, "Taking a Chance on Love." Choreography by George Balanchine.

Chitty Chitty Bang Bang. 2002 British hit based on the Sherman brothers' movie (itself based on the Ian Fleming kids' book) about an inventor, his kids, and their flying car. Um, don't ask me for details about the plot since I last saw the movie in 1968. But the car flies!

A Christmas Carol/Scrooge. There are at least five versions of Dickens' tale, the significant ones being Leslie Bricusse's *Scrooge*, for which he did the music, book and lyrics, and was based on his film version. It ran in Britain in 1992 and 1996m then toured the US in 2003-2004 in versions

with Davis Gaines and Richard Chamberlain in the leads. Mike Ockrent directed and Susan Stroman did the choreography for the Lynn Ahrens/Alen Menkin production that ran in NY every holiday season from 1994 through 2003. The Scrooges over the years included Walter Chalmers, Terence Mann, Tony Randall, Hal Linden, Roddy McDowall, Roger Daltrey (!), Frank Langella, Tim Curry, Jim Dale and F. Murray Abraham. These shows packed the 5,100-seat theatre at Madison Square Garden.

Dance of the Vampires. The 2003 multi-million dollar flop based on Roman Polanski's film, *The Fearless Vampire Killers*. It started out as a German production, and after heaps of revisions, lurched onto Broadway with Michael Crawford as Count von Krolock.

The Day Before Spring. Maybe this early Lerner and Loewe work (1945) is only a marginal fantasy, but it does feature the heroine getting advice from talking statues of Freud, Plato and Voltaire, as well as lots of speculation (through ballet) about alternate history. At a college reunion, a couple meet up with Alex, the guy the wife was going to elope with ten years ago, but his car broke down. Alen then went on to write a novel about what would have happened had it NOT broken down. At the reunion, the events of ten years ago begin to unfold again.

Doctor Dolittle. Leslie Bricusse's movie score about the doctor who could talk to the animals got revised for the stage in 1998. The Jim Henson workshop did the animals, and Julie Andrews was the recorded voice of Polynesian the Parrot.

Dorise/Dorian/Dorian Gray. There have been at least three attempts at doing Wilde's story of the fellow with the magic portrait. Doesn't seem to work.

DuBarry Was a Lady. 1939 Cole Porter hit show starring Bert Lahr as a washroom attendant who takes knock-out drops by accident and dreams he's Louis XV. Given that much of the show is a dream sequence, I think this should count as a fantasy. With Ethel Merman as Madame DuBarry and Betty Grable to flash those legs.

Dude. A weird allegorical rock musical (1972) from the creators of *Hair*. Dude (aka Everyman) wanders the universe in search of understanding, and good and evil battle over his soul. They performed this disaster in the reconstructed Broadway Theatre...with seat sections renamed "foot hills," "trees" and "valleys."

A Fine and Private Place. Based on the Peter Beagle novel about the old man who lives in the cemetery and talks to the ghosts of the recently deceased. The songs are faithful to the story, but the music is unexciting and the characters don't generate the warmth they had in the book (though I know a guy who saw this show live and swears by its greatness). This ran at the Goodspeed back in 1989 and they reassembled the cast 15 years later to record the CD (music by Richard Isen, lyrics by Erik Haagenen). Gabriel Barre, a fine talent who has since turned to directing, was the Raven.

Flahooley. Yip Harburg/Sammy Fain fantasy satirizing American industry and greed. Debut of Barbara Cook, 1951. It's got a girl who can hear puppets talk, Arabs trying to get their magic lamp fixed (because they've run out of oil in Arabia; told you it was a fantasy), a genie that makes wishes come true, and many satiric shots at capitalism, which helped kill the show when it opened during the Korean War. It's been revised (cutting political/social commentary) as *Jollyanna*.

Follies. I wouldn't include *Grey Gardens* on this list, even though ghosts show up in the second

act, but the ghosts of Sondheim's *Follies* are an integral part of the plot. Set in an aging theatre during a reunion of former showgirls, *Follies* focuses on two couples (Ben and Phyllis, Buddy and Sally). Ghosts of their past selves play alongside the contemporary characters, and everybody has a big breakdown near the end, performed as *Follies* numbers reflecting their mental states. Yes, *Follies* has a flawed libretto. That hasn't stopped me from seeing it every time I get the chance. One of the greatest scores ever written.

Forever Plaid. This was a smash hit off-Broadway in 1990. The Plaids were going to perform at a concert in 1964, but their car got hit by a bus of girls going to see the Beatles on the Ed Sullivan show. They are granted their last wish, to come back to earth to perform the concert they were about to give on the night they all died. Lots of tunes from the late 50s and early 60s.

Great to be Alive! A flop (52 performances) from 1950 about ghosts in a mansion (who can only be seen by virgins ... and the audience, er, regardless of sexual status) who try to prevent a rich lady (Vivienne Segal) from buying the place from the descendant of the original owners. Book and lyrics by Walter Bullock, music by Abraham Ellstein and Robert Russell Bennett, who became better known for his great orchestrations.

Have I Got a Girl for You! A parody of the Frankenstein movies from 1985 (so they were probably stealing from Mel Brooks, whose *Young Frankenstein* is about to open as a musical in November 2007 – and not the other way around). It lasted a couple of weeks off-Broadway.

Happiest Girl in the World. Another musical set in ancient Greece, complete with gods. This one has a funny pedigree: it's based on Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* (where the women of Athens try to stop the war by refusing to have sex with their spouses), with lyrics by Yip Harburg and music by 19th c. French composer Offenbach.

Happy as Larry. Burgess Meredith directed and starred in this turkey (3 performances) from 1950 about an Irish tailor telling his pals about his grandpa, who had a good wife and a bad wife. Using witchcraft and "Three Old Ladies from Hades" (the Fates), they all go back in time to see the wives for themselves and help solve Grandpa's murder. What can you say about a show that lists among its songs, "The Flatulent Ballad?"

Here's Love. Meredith Willson wrote *The Music Man*, one of the classics. He also wrote *The Unsinkable Molly Brown*, a decent enough show. Then there was *Here's Love*, based on the movie, *Miracle on 34th Street*, which lasted for nearly a year, but just wasn't much of anything.. Maybe it was too hard to get excited over the mystery of whether the old man really was Santa at any other time than in December.

It's a Wonderful Life: The Musical/A Wonderful Life. As far as I can tell, there have been three efforts at turning the classic movie into a musical. Two never got beyond regional dinner theatre, but Joe Raposo and Sheldon Harnick's 1991 version was also done as a 2004 benefit for the Actor's Fund.

Just So. Cameron Mackintosh produced this 1998 take on the Kipling stories both in the UK and at the Goodspeed Theatre. Music by George Stiles, lyrics by Anthony Drewe, and it starred Gabriel Barre. But nothing ever came of it.

Ka-Boom! Okay, I know nothing about this show except what I ran across in one of my fat musicals books. The plot concerns the survivors of a nuclear attack...who decide to put on a show called "Creation, Part II." Music by Joe Ercole, lyrics and book by Bruce Kluger.

Somehow, it ran off-Broadway for 71 performances in 1981.

The Little Prince. Lerner and Loewe's last original score was for the decidedly peculiar movie version, but there have been three tries for the stage. John Houseman produced a version in 1993 starring Daisy Egan (from *The Secret Garden*) that ran a few months at the 28th Street Theatre. A. Joseph Tander's version lasted a week of previews at the Alvin in 1982. John Barry did the music, Don Black the lyrics, and Hugh Wheeler, the book; and Michael York as the Aviator. The early closure led to a court case in which the theatre owners (the *Nederlanders*) had to pay Tander a cool million.

Marie Christine. I've never seen this show, but the score is chilling (Michael John LaChiusa, with kickass orchestrations by Jonathan Tunick). I'm guessing it didn't succeed because the subject matter was simply too intense to bear watching. It retells the story of Medea, updated to late 19th c. New Orleans. Marie Christine (the astounding Audra McDonald), from well-to-do Creole family, falls for a white sea captain, Dante. She ultimately kills her brother to be with him and bears him two sons. When he begins to make a name for himself (partly thanks to her voudon magic in taking out his rivals), he dumps her for a white woman. She kills the woman through a cursed gift and then kills her own boys so Dante cannot have them. Buy the album and shiver.

Narnia. The NY State Theatre Institute tried adapting C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, The Witch & The Wardrobe*. It lasted two weeks.

Nightingale. Based on the Andersen fairy tale. This ran in London in 1983, with music and lyrics by Charles Strouse. It starred Sarah Brightman, who wasn't yet Mrs. A. Lloyd Webber. Or ex-Mrs. Lloyd Webber.



Hmm. The first thing we need for this musical is a
matinee-star-gorgeous leading man...

Once on This Island. Graciele Daniele (who also directed *Marie Christine*) had the honors of putting on this early Ahrens/Flaherty show based on a Caribbean fable of a peasant girl who is rescued from a storm by the gods. She then rescues the injured son of the landowner and makes a deal with the gods, giving up her life for his, since she thinks the power of love will help her overcome death. The rich guy lives, but spurns her, whereupon the gods turn her into a tree, which will live forever. It's charming, told in the format of a mother calming her own daughter during a storm through storytelling.

The Phantom Tollbooth. Arnold Black and Sheldon Harnick tried adapting Juster's kids' fantasy about Milo, who drives his car into the Land of Wisdom to save the two princesses, Rhyme and Reason. But Black died, so Harnick tried doing the music on his own, and the production never got beyond Cape Cod.

Raggedy Ann. Joe Raposo, who wrote so many great numbers for *Sesame Street*, wrote the score for a *Raggedy Ann* animated movie, which then got used in this piece that lasted five performances in 1986. Marcella (the little girl) is sick with fever and having strange dreams about her dolls. Raggedy Ann gives her heart to Marcella to save her life, whereupon Marcella wakes up and her doll is missing its heart. Apparently, this show went to the Soviet Union before the Broadway run (now *that's* playing out of town!) and the Russians loved it. Go figure.

Rainbow Jones. A one-night wonder from 1974, featuring a girl that can't connect in life, so she brings her magic book of Aesop's Fables to Central Park, where her only pals, the critters in the tales, pop out and keep her company. Until she meets a jogger who helps her straighten out her head. Could I make this up?

Say Hello to Harvey. This version of *Harvey* (the invisible giant rabbit, remember?) ran in Toronto in 1981, but Washington and Broadway openings were aborted.

Shangri-La. As in James Hilton's *Lost Horizon*. Luckily for Hilton, he died two years before this clunker made it to Broadway in 1956. Yes, high in the Himalayas (constructed of Lucite), there's a place where no one ever ages. But without Ronald Colman, who cared? The talent for this was actually pretty damn good: Music by Harry Warren, lyrics and book by Lawrence and Lee, directed by Albert Marre, and starring Dennis King, Jack Cassidy, Harold Lang and Alice Ghostley. At the opening night party, Cassidy introduced Bock to Harnick, which was more important to showtune history than singing Lamas.

Steel Pier. An unsuccessful Kander and Ebb show from 1997, starring Karen Ziemba, Daniel McDonald, Gregory Harrison, and Debra Monk (with Kristin Chenoweth in a hysterical bit part, trilling for all she's worth). Ziemba plays Rita, a dancer who is secretly married to nasty, cruel Mick (Harrison), who runs dance marathons (it's set in 1933). Bill (McDonald) is a barnstorming pilot...who actually died three weeks ago, but is claiming the extra days since he got cheated out of his dance with Rita when his flight schedule got changed. She learns he's really a ghost at the end, but he gives her the courage to leave the abusive Mick at last. Susan Stroman's choreography was a tribute to all the dances of the 30s. For some reason, audiences didn't go for it. Me, I liked it, even if the hero was a dead guy.

Time and Again. Based on the Jack Finney novel about the man who goes back to the 1880s. produced by the Manhattan Theatre Club in 2001, with a score by Walter Edgar Kennon, it starred Laura Benanti, Lewis Cleale, and Christopher Innvar, which is a good cast. It had been in development for eight years and lasted three weeks at the City Center Stage

Three Wishes for Jamie. More Irish magic, but not enough (even with lead John Raitt at the top of his talents) to have a long run. In 1896, Una the Fairy grants Jamie three wishes: travel, the wife of his dreams, and a fine broth of a lad who will speak Gaelic. Naturally, there are complications on the way to getting the wishes to come true, including getting out of a pre-arranged marriage, ending up in America, and, since his wife is barren, adopting a mute kid, who miraculously says his first words in Bulgarian. I mean, Gaelic. Everybody said it was a rip-off of *Brigadoon* and *Finian's Rainbow*, which it was, though Raitt always felt it was one of his own favorites.

The Wind in the Willows. Based on Kenneth Grahame's classic kids' story of Toad, Ratty, Mole, and Badger. There have been several attempts to do a musical of *Wind*, mostly in Britain, but this one got briefly to NYC in 1985 and vanished under a heap of wretched reviews. The late David Carroll was Ratty, Vicki Lewis was Mole, and Nathan Lane chewed the scenery as Toad. Poop poop!

The Witches of Eastwick. Michael Crawford was supposed to do this one back in 2000, but Ian MacShane ended up stuck with it. Cameron Mackintosh sank heaps of pounds and endless revisions into this wreck. Maybe a magic spell might have helped....

The Wizard of Oz. Aside from *Wicked* and *The Wiz*, the Baum novel itself was heavily revised into an early Broadway success in 1903: a puppet version (Bil Baird Marionettes) in the 1960s: and the classic Harburg/Arlen movie score was adapted for the stage in the late 1990s, with Mickey Rooney mugging as the Wizard and Eartha Kitt (later Jo Ann Worley) as the Witch.

The Woman in White. I don't know if this should be on this list or not, because I'm haven't seen/heard/read it and don't know if the woman really is a ghost. This was Andrew Lloyd Webber's latest catastrophe (2006 on Broadway), based on the Wilkie Collins novel. No doubt Sir Andrew has been looking for more Victorian horror novels to adapt. Michael Crawford, then Michael Ball, donned fat suits as evil Count Fosco, and Maria Friedman soldiered on as the female lead despite getting a diagnosis of breast cancer during rehearsals.

A Year With Frog and Toad. Far superior to *Wind in the Willows*, I urge all parents looking for good music for their kids to buy the album and see the show. Based on the books by Arnold Lobel about inseparable pals Frog (Jay Goode) and Toad (the endearing Mark Linn-Baker), Lobel's daughter Adrienne acted as one of the producers. Music by Robert Reale, book and lyrics by Willie Reale. It's sweet and funny and the score is adorable. I defy anyone to listen to the "Cookies" song and not smile. Alas, along with *Amour*, it got swallowed up at the 2003 Tonys by the juggernaut that was *Hairspray*.

Other bits: I know there's a *Ghost and Mrs. Muir* musical running around; it starred James Barbour, whose sexy baritone must have made a yummy ghost, and had a brief run out here in LA two summers ago, but I missed it. *Young Frankenstein* takes the Great White Way next month, as does Disney's *The Little Mermaid*. And Bruce Kimmel has a show that just got rave reviews at a festival for new musicals: *The Brain From Dimension X*. Apparently, the show's highlight is the solo by the disembodied brain.

Mike here again: I can't believe I missed some of those. I've seen *Assassins* and *Follies* over a dozen times each. I've seen a third to half of the others. But only the remarkable Ms. Turtledove could add them to the list. Is it any wonder that I plan to run off to Broadway with her the next time Harry and Carol go (yawn) bird-watching?

IN THE BOTTOM OF THE TORNADO IS A WOMAN WITH A METALLIC FACE.

Mike Estabrook

I.
The two of us leave
town, wander through fields
as an orange sun sets. We
feel
like Reapers
looking out over the golden
grain sheaves and haystacks
majestic in the stillness
of Harvest.

II.
Suddenly! Thunder!
Thunder!
from somewhere but how can
this
be? We raise our heads,
a Storm in
the West; dark gray funnel
dropping
from an Angry Sky
becoming
a Tornado moving toward us,
swirling, whirling,
shuddering, clattering
with debris; closer & closer.

III.
We stand alone, unprotected,
in this open field,
nowhere to go, no place to
hide. It threads
it's path heedfully
around the simple houses,
around my house too.
I'm stiff with fear,
mouth open. It stops
before us, whirling,
clattering,
Wind

blowing cool over my face
& neck, blowing back
my hair.

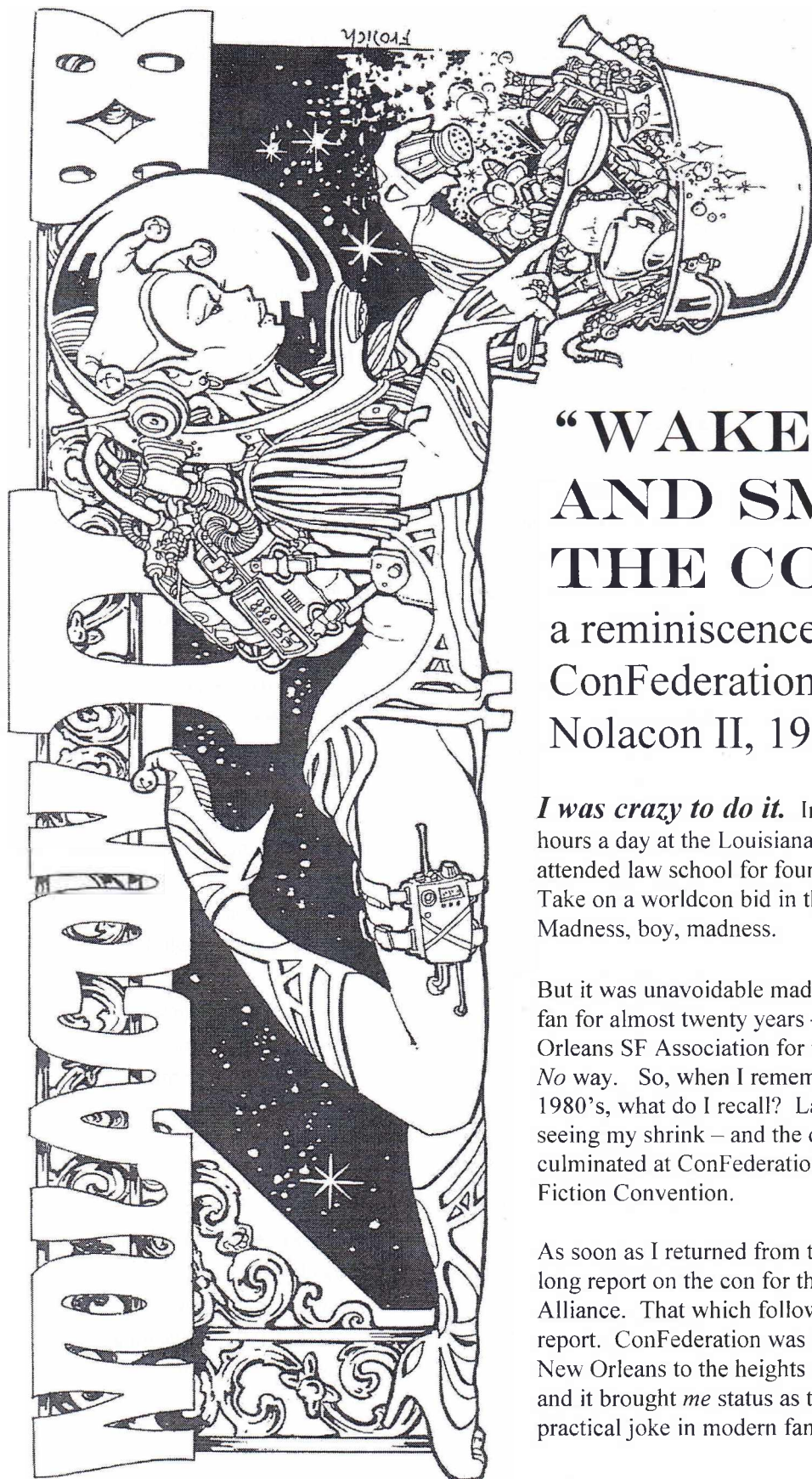
IV.
There in the bottom of
the Tornado is a Woman,
a metallic-faced Woman,
dark blue eyes unblinking,
sticks & leaves
& little fishes swirling
around Her, stuck in
Her long black hair.
(All this motion, spinning,
blurry, hard to see. Is that me
in there? No. Impossible.
Of course not! I'm out here,
looking in.) Her shining
eyes stare out as She
says I
must choose the houses to
be cleansed, to be purified.

V.
Purified? Purified?
I'm confused. What can this
mean? I shake my head.
I won't make
this decision, won't
hurt anyone. "No no I can't,
no no I won't!" I try to back
away. But the Face remains
solid metal, eyes
unblinking,
insisting. "No, I can't!
I'm not responsible. I
shouldn't
have to decide
this. I won't." But my
words

are unheard. She
tells me if I don't choose,
She'll destroy every house,
including mine.
I want to cry, but don't.
I want to run, but can't.
Taking a deep breath
I decide to choose troubled
houses
for purification. Yes!
That's reasonable, choose
houses
already with problems --
drugs or poverty or crime or
HIV.
I name names, point out
these homes.

VI.
Off She goes in
Her clattering Tornado
leaving
the path clean in
Her passage through the
town.
She guts some houses.
They vanish or remain only
rubble; others She merely
strips off clapboard or
removes the roof.

VII.
And we remain standing,
watching,
helpless, in the open
field at Harvest knowing
we have the Power, but not
knowing how
to use it.



*Guy
Lillian*

“WAKE UP AND SMELL THE COFFIN!”

a reminiscence of
ConFederation and the bid for
Nolacon II, 1986

I was crazy to do it. In 1986 I was working eight hours a day at the Louisiana Unemployment Office, and attended law school for four hours almost every night. Take on a worldcon bid in the midst of such busy-ness? Madness, boy, madness.

But it was unavoidable madness. I'd been an active SF fan for almost twenty years – and part of the New Orleans SF Association for most of that. Stay away? *No way.* So, when I remember the middle years of the 1980's, what do I recall? Law school – the UI office – seeing my shrink – and the quest for Nolacon II, which culminated at ConFederation, the 1986 World Science Fiction Convention.

As soon as I returned from that convention, I wrote a long report on the con for the Southern Fandom Press Alliance. That which follows is adapted from that report. ConFederation was quite a moment. It brought New Orleans to the heights of science fiction fandom ... and it brought *me* status as the butt of the greatest practical joke in modern fannish history. Read on.

Pre-lims

My secret enemies say I'm paranoid, expecting not only the worst, but the most god-awful worst. So the events of August 1986 did not impress me as mere pockets of putrid luck, as they would a sane person, but as dire portents for the cause for which I had labored for many months: the New Orleans bid for the 1988 World Science Fiction Convention.

Within a single week all of these joys rained upon my head:

I was told that although I was the #1 candidate for a fat promotion at the Unemployment Office, where I then worked, a black woman had gotten the job to silence her affirmative action lawsuit. Since two wrongs do not make one right, especially when one of those wrongs is on *me*, I was livid with outrage. Unfortunately, I forgot that if two wrongs do not make one right, neither do three, and through my outrage made myself sick. Bronchitis laid my ass low for three whole days before anti-biotics and the cool touch of a lovely lady – my doctor – brought me back from the shores of oblivion.

A few days later, chomping down on stale pizza, I lost a huge filling. Worse, the dentist had implanted a tiny peg in the tooth which, left behind as a lonely sentinel of oral hygiene and regular professional care, ripped the bejusus out of my inquisitive tongue.

Finally, and almost ultimately, on the very day that I had a new filling packed into place, all but one of the studs gripping my car's right rear wheel to the axle snapped. I came close to losing not only the wheel but the *works* in the middle of the Mississippi River Bridge.

That night I left my crippled Grand Prix with the Bridge police and caught a ferry home. Lost in dismay, I leaned on a railing and stared forlornly at the passing waters. Despite the recent endorsement of Andy Porter's *SF Chronicle* and the bountiful optimism of the rest of the Nolacon II krewes, I was worried. Our bid had three rivals. St. Louis was nothing if not tenacious. Cincinnati was rumored to be loaded. (Our shoestring bid was on its last strand.) Neal Rest's Boat Bid – to hold the worldcon on a cruise ship in the Bermuda Triangle – was, according to scuttlebutt, winning convert after convert. I could

not help but imagine my personal misfortunes to be harbingers of DOOM DOOM DOOM.

But: the meaningfulness of all events rests in Point of View. X-rays showed my lungs to be as clear as polar air. The dentist charged nothing to refill my tooth. Goodyear gave me new studs & lugs for my tire, and the Bridge cops' mechanic installed them, likewise *gratis*. Want a real harbinger? Try the grace of *unexpected gifts*.



My pre-con paranoia about possible defeat at the polls had not infected other Nawlins workers, among them John Guidry, Justin Winston, and Dennis Dolbear – already, as now, friends of a lifetime. But there was plenty to worry about. Could it have been imaginable that in Atlanta, home base of the Coca-Cola empire, not a single Coca-Cola spigot fountain could be found? Due to a Labor Day Jazz Fest and a Jerry Lewis telethon, we could turn up nothing but zippo plus zilch for our Nolacon party. It began to look like New Orleans in '88 would have nothing better to serve than genuine Atlanta tap water.

A more expensive and onerous alternative – to buy discount drinks in NOLA and U-Haul'em up – was decided upon, and done, by NOLA's noble *Dr. Who* aficionados, Charlie and Cheryl DuVal. More

pressing was the problem of the party locale. Marriott International, to help win a convention for one of their hotels, had promised to comp us a suite at the convention site, the Atlanta Marriott Marquis. Trouble was, they'd given us a smallish, "2-bay" space – utterly inadequate for a bid party. Onto one luckless clod devolved the task of securing the best and biggest space available, the suite which would match all opposition, attract and convince the multitudes – *win the worldcon*.

Guess which Orleanian would be first to Atlanta? At least my tongue didn't hurt anymore.

The night before my departure was bedlam in the home of Justin Winston. On certain of the New Orleans in '88 flyers a dance had been mentioned, to be held at the Downtowner, Tim Bolgeo's Southern Hospitality hotel. We were told that this notice angered the Marriott managers as it undercut the Marquis (it turned out, of course, that they hadn't even noticed it). Nolacon could not afford to offend the Marriott chain by advertising an event in its nemesis inn. Cringing at having to mutilate my impeccable product, I snipped the vileness from our publicity.

Some of us dealt with pre-convention nerves more productively. John Guidry – whose dream the convention was, and whose political genius had won our bid essential SMOF backing – applied that talent to peeling tape off Mardi Gras beads. Handing out beads and doubloons as a campaign schtick had been John's idea – and it had worked beautifully. For months Dennis Dolbear had haunted garage sales & flea market auctions, garnering a dozen plump boxes of Carnival treasure to haul to Atlanta. Only a few beads were blighted with masking tape. But John declared each strand essential, and so sat and peeled, far into the night ...

The Journey

The Southern Crescent leaves New Orleans at 7:30 A.M., and 11 hours later chuggachuggas into Atlanta, a pretty trip through the pretty South behind it. Asleep on the Crescent on Saturday, August 23m 1986, my bliss was shaken to wakefulness by a dirgeful drone, a bassoonish murmur – a black-clad, rooster-necked geezer seated nearby, half-singing/half-moaning gloomy, toneless hymns.

Gad!

I fled to the club car, far from the fuliginous angel of death. There a pompous kid in a Mumford teeshirt broadcast 5-cent thoughts in 50-cent words to a coed, who listened, either adoringly or stunned. Too fannish to bear. Fortunately, as a butterfly tossed its yellow wings beneath Birmingham's I-65 overpass, and a painted clown waved hello from a Golden Flake Potato Chip truck, a family of Mennonites boarded our car. The clarity of their temperament mellowed the day. So pretty the ladies in their simple blue bonnets.

Then: Atlanta. I was met at the tiny station by the statue of Samuel Spencer, 1847-1906, first President of the Southern Railway, and by the living form of Mike Weber, brother SFPAn and volunteer Lillian-fetcher. "The Office" was our first stop – the Roswell Road HQ of the 44th World Science Fiction Convention. Ever wonder what a worldcon looks like 48 hours before the fact? It looks like an office racked with tables, phones, computers, typewriters, walled with posters, letters, charts, memoranda, stacked with flyers, circulars, freebie magazines and books, the latter being collated by coolie labor into thousands of registration packets. Among the sweatshop slaves were Penny Frierson, remarkably non-crazy for a convention co-chair, the ever beautiful Sue Phillips, pianist Mike Rogers, cane-wielding newlywed Jim Gilpatrick, and the extremely luscious Judy Sutton. All were encouraging to the New Orleans bid, though I was warned, time and again, "It's close! The boat is making its move!" I shuddered – even though I knew that none of those people had seen any ballots.

We jaunted to the SF & Mystery Bookstore, where I was greeted with a hey from owner Mark Stevens, my host for the evening, a handshake from Mike Bishop, a shriek of dismay from Jerry Page, and a plea for a vote from Julian Bond, who wandered in politicking for a seat in Congress. It was a genuine high to meet Bond, whom I thanked for his courage at the Democratic National Convention in 1968. Too bad his election didn't go as well as did ours.

When Stevens and I left, I noted a surprising chill to the air – a drop in temperature hardly typical to Atlanta in August. While it made me shiver, the cold was a boon to New Orleans. The Cincinnati bid had been running ads warning conventioners about murderous Southern heat. This cold snap made that aspersion seem silly. Fortunately, no one mentioned

hurricanes ...

I crashed that night on Stevens' murderous foldout couch (a.k.a. "The Cruncher"), watching on VCR *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. The classic film had debuted, appropriately, at the original Nolacon. The next morning I girded in my bestest rags – brought for this very reason – and went forth to do battle for its successor.

It's difficult now to remember the rumors that had pecked and gnawed at the Atlanta worldcon: bad finances, internecine warfare, poor organization. Everyone arrived at the convention expecting disaster – until they got a look at the Marriott lobby. Then *sensawunda* took over. HOO MALOOKEY what a *space*! How did fans describe it? "*Things to Come*!" "*Forbidden Planet*!" To me, the incredible vault of the Marquis atrium suggested *Alien* – as if we'd been sucked like so many motes into the lungs of a galactic Giger monster. All pre-convention concerns vanished in the raw cathedral power of the hotel's 44-floor open atrium, spun with a red cloth Cristo sculpture, awesome, immense, a celebration of vastness. *Space – the final frontier*. Where better could the science fiction community hold forth?

My problem was where, in that void, should the New Orleans bid place itself?

Our need was for a facility with room for mobs of partygoers and adjoining bedrooms for storage and SMOFFing. Problem: all the 3-bay suites with two adjacent bedrooms were located on the 39th & 40th floors, miles above the convention areas. An elevator trip thither took several minutes – at best – and required a transfer between cars. The 9th floor, on the other hand, was a quick run down a cool spiral staircase from the ConFederation consuite, where all elevators stopped. It boasted a nice 3-bay, room 940. It had a flaw – only one connecting bedroom – but the accessibility argument won me over. Not an ideal situation, but diddly close. I committed us to 940.

That afternoon, the ConFederation concomm held a business meeting, and I hung on to observe. Among those in attendance, Rick Albertson, the con's techno-wizard, and Samanda Jeude, champion of the disabled. Her fannish symbol for handicapped rights anchored each of Nawlins' flyers. I loved the way Jim Gilpatrick opened matters – rushing in to place at table's center a pyramid of milky stone – Georgia Cherokee marble – topped by a gleaming chrome

rocket. Hot damn! The ConFederation Hugo!

Problems, problems ... As co-chairmen Ron Zukowski, Penny Frierson and Co. went over theirs, I mulled ours. It's the privilege of paranoids to worry, and despite Filthy Pierre's assessment that the '88 race was "a lock," I did just that. Most of the parties were located in the Hilton – should Nolacon have a room there too? Was the inviting elitism of the Boat Bid enough to win it majority allegiance? Fret, fret, fret. And so I went blind.

I have since learned that the technical term is *ophthalmic migraine*. I get one about once a year, and the one for 1986 came ... just then. The familiar inverted neon C grew across my eyesight, blotting everything from my vision, including Judy Sutton, curse the luck. The ragged op-art arc flared and faded, leaving me fogged, drained and seasick. Nauseated as I was, I was still grateful that the migraine had chosen an early moment to strike. And that the next two days would be spent far from this madding crowd.

As weber and I left for the train station, we met a blonde lady in the lobby clad in *Star Trek* regalia. She was, of course, there for the worldcon. Her name was Sue Ryba – and she was the First.

Greensboro

I spent those two days in Greensboro, North Carolina. I have never known a lovelier place, with its leafy



**The 44th World Science
Fiction Convention
August 28-September 1, 1986
Atlanta, Georgia**

sights and gentle breezes. People lived there then and live there still as meaningful to me as most any that walk this world. I saw Beth, my first wife. Since she had not yet voted, I carried her ballot back to ConFederation. Beth is still in Greensboro, and I pray heaven she's happy.

I was happy about Fred Chappell, my tutor/mentor/advisor for the Masters of Fine Arts I earned at UNC-Greensboro in the early seventies. My M.F.A. hasn't meant squat to me financially, but I'll always value what it did for the inner lad. Fred is him what done it, those two nutty years I spent staring at Marianne G—'s legs and shooting my mouth off about A*R*T. Fred it was who tweaked my nose and taught me the Lesson of Lessons: *listen*. In '86, this future Poet Laureate of North Carolina was still at UNC-G, a line from Blake on his blackboard, a new novel on his shelves. As a boy, Chappell attended the New Orleans worldcon, and secured Fredric Brown's autograph in his program book. Allowing myself a moment's confidence, I invited him down for II.

The interval over, I choochooded back to Atlanta, reflecting on the title of Fred's new novel, so true of me and Greensboro and fandom: *I Am One of You Forever*.

The World Science Fiction Convention: Wednesday

A beautiful and most welcome sight awaited me at the train station: Sue Phillips. Also most welcome was an *un*-beautiful sight: Cliff Amos. Cliff had come straight from Louisville and hadn't yet seen the Marriott. Sue and I accompanied him there, and he rubbed his palms and got to work.

Cliff was marking a return to fandom as the suite manager for Nolacon II. The founder of

Rivercon, the '79 Rebel winner, chair of NASFIC ... Suite 940 was in the best of hands. It was Wednesday, 8-27-86. The con would open the following day. But fans were already on hand, and we had to be ripe.

Yes ... fans were on hand, and let's start at the top. Forry Ackerman showed in the Hilton lobby. Recalling how his papa's death caused him to turn back from Nolacon, the only worldcon he'd ever missed, he pledged support for Nolacon II. Bald pate a'gleam, arm about a sexy twenty-year-old Georgia peach, enter Julie Schwartz. Talk about Great Men, here was perchance the Greatest I have ever known, the guiding hand of my boyhood enthusiasms, the

patient publisher of my earliest fame. We would see much of Schwartz during ConFederation — though I'd miss his slide show of early SFdom, damn it.

As I trotted hither and yon, finding places to stack Nolacon flyers, friends too long absent came to eye: Doreen Webbert, honchess to the Phoenix NASFIC, with tales of Jolt Cola (all the sugar, twice the caffeine); Deb Hammer-Johnson, with her Ben and Roger, hawking ConFederation tee shirts (I never bought one, for shame). Bobbi Armbruster walked by and I pointed the Woman Beyond Women

out to Hammer-J, ever the student of myth and mystery. Dave Schlosser of LASFAPA appeared and, in Staff Registration, my old comrade from the Little Men, Tom Whitmore (who told me that alas, Fannish Mama Quinn Yarbrow would not attend).

Oh God, *no!* Walsh! It's Walsh! Don Walsh at ConFederation! New Orleans' demon gun magnate, now of Bangkok, Thailand, appeared like a portent at the door to Suite 940. Who was that with him? Why, t'was Meade Frierson, friend, President



Emeritus of the Southern Fandom Confederation, legal mentor, guide to the girly shows of B'ham, too long in gafia. And who better to complete this unholy trio but the Patrick of Tulsa himself: R.A. Lafferty, Nolacon Saint (or Associate member), author of too much wonderful writing and too many gloried lies to mention. Finished now, he said; he'd quit writing when he reached 70. That brought a twinge: I could have All of Lafferty now, I realized, and there should never *be* an All to Lafferty...

Business. I picked up my reg packet and scanned Charlotte Proctor's beautiful program book. Would that I had bought a print of Doug Chaffee's masterful cover painting. Wade Gilbreath's interior portraits of the Guests of Honor were his best work, ever; I'm told the pro GoH asked to view the original. Most to my concern, Nolacon's ad – the Dany Frolich harlequin atop this article, with a grateful (if somewhat sloppy) text by me – was by far the most striking in the book. Ron Lindahn told me later that he'd been awed by Dany's skill. Was this a mothweight of optimism I felt fluttering by?

With reps of the other '88 bids, and several folks from '89's only contender, Boston, I joined Jeff Copeland and Liz Schwarzin in their room, deciding that which had to be decided about the actual taking of votes. How able and fair Jeff and Liz, in charge of not only the convention balloting but the Hugo voting, as well! How spiffy the adorable toddler Allie, who studied me with wide-eyed disbelief and solemnly freed me of Mardi Gras beads! (Allie graduated from college in 2007; I'm told she's considering law school.) Once we'd done what had to be done, Jeff and Allie and I went to the train station to recover NOLA's fearless leader Guidry, newly haircut, girded for battle.

While we waited, I did my best to educate Jeff's child into the ways of the world. I pointed at the train. "*Airplane!*" I told the child. "*Spaceship! Ocean liner!*" You can never teach them too much too soon.

Back in 940 our party was setting up. Charlie and Cheryl DuVal had arrived with a dozen bags of Mardi Gras throw-cups, drawn by Frolich, collected by Dolbear, and a U-Haulful of Cokes, brews and booze. Ann Layman Chancellor appeared with decorations to complement my Julie Kahn Mardi Gras posters. She also brought our #1 harlequin costume, which she had

made by hand, worn so memorably by Michelle Watson at the '85 NASFIC. NOLA had no party Wednesday night, but we would not be invisible. We packed a local dish named Carol into the costume, loaded a flunkie down with beads, and sent them forth to bear the Word to the earlybirds.

Two targets were keyed for the jester (jestress?). One was a poolside party at the Downtowner, a swarm with our people – the Southern crowd. JoAnn Montalbano was there, and Southern legend Hank Reinhardt, boycotting the con itself due to a weapons policy he considered idiotic. Charlie Williams was there – the ever-prettier *female* Charlie. So was the tawny Texan S. E. Woodard-Vladyka, draped across the knee of the immortal Bob Tucker. Beads flew.

We then turned our elegant, bead-wielding symbol towards the stronghold of the enemy – with a daring *midnight raid!*

St. Louis was hosting a wowser party in a magnificent 40th floor suite. (With an incredible view of Atlanta. *Our* suite overlooked my Travelodge and a jumble of highway construction.) Though we regarded the Arch City as the least dangerous of NOLA's rivals, it was also the nicest, with a cute symbol (a dragon dressed as Indiana Jones) and the loveliest campaigner in the '88 race, Michelle Tenney (now Zellich). Never one to miss the chance to goose the opposition, or to push my face in front of a beautiful lady, I brought the Nawlins harlequin up into nosebleed country and turned her loose.

It was a mark of the class of the entire St. Louis bid, particularly Michelle, and the genuine friendliness with which the '88 campaign was run, that Tenney/Zellich & Co. greeted our good-natured umbrage with good-natured laughter. Michelle even wore her beads. Then, now, forever: *class act*.

Thursday

With Thursday morning's first blush of sunrise the 44th World Science Fiction Convention officially opened – as did on-site balloting for the 1988 site. The voting booth – or "vooting boath," as Guidry, with his infinite capacity for malapropism, called it – was located on the hotel's convention level. It was staffed by the four bids, a system that sucks. Collecting ballots and fees, checking the '86 roster and writing receipts should have been

ConFederation's responsibility, not ours, but at least I got the chance to sit by Michelle. Bravely she asserted that "one or the other of us" would trample the other bids. I admired her "Never say die" spunk. I was frantic with worry, of course.

Madness! For two hours the votes poured upon us, the first wave in a record flood. Joe and Mary Gay Haldeman voted. David Brin voted. Forry voted, for an inadvertent second time, and guess who drew the joyous chore of telling him we couldn't accept his ballot. I finally got Guidry to vote, and even coerced a ballot out of Walsh. (He bought a pre-supporting membership in 940. His number? 007, of course!) Relieved at noon-thirty or so, I staggered up to 940, napped, awoke, lurched to the bathroom, entered unbuckled ... and found a gorgeous blonde nymph at the mirror drawing a *moustache* above her eminently kissable lips!

Non-plussed? Me? It is to laugh. "Who the *BLUE HELL* are *YOU?!?*" I screamed.

She was Sarah Fensterer, a pretty and petite lady with waist length yaller locks, a voice like silver bells and a sweetness to match, and it was cat makeup she was applying. I thought her naught but a teenager, but some people defy their years: Sarah was thirty. Romantic me – I shoved beads into her hands and begged her to go forth and campaign for Nolacon. Later she did an unforgettable stint as our harlequin.

More old friends appeared. Gay Miller came up the escalator as I went down. "Hi Guy!" "Hey Gay!" Nolacon Board member Craig Miller, no relation, was more preoccupied with L.A.'s troubled 1990 race against Holland than with ours. Rival Kees van Toorn – met at last; strong handshake – has the same advantage we had: his site is closer to the voting. England's in the Hague's backyard. Craig's lady Genny Dazzo was also there, thanked profusely for her nice ABA write-up. Lafferty expert Bob Whitaker and his redheaded frau Giovanna Sirignano, a.k.a. Giani Siri, came by and brightened life; bracelets and necklaces jangled with Giani's every movement, and they were movements both several and interesting. (She was annoyed because Somtow Sucharitkul had abandoned his plans for an Hawaiian-shirt wedding at the con, and she'd brought two, to make a sarong.)

Up on the 10th level a "Meet the Pros" party was in progress, so I trotted up the convenient spiral

staircase and met a few. Pros – Pournelle, Clement, Williamson (Lafferty shouted to Jack's escorts, "Take care of him! If he dies, *I'm* the oldest!"), the impossibly teasing Frank Robinson with Paul King. Silverberg burst onto a crystal 'vator, rode two floors, burst right out. No sign of Gordon Dickson or Poul Anderson ... Was that Fred Pohl over there?

Fan buddies there were. Walt Baric strode the floor in perfect riverboat gambler gear; he'd sport his outstanding male harlequin costume often throughout the con, breaking feminine hearts and winning their votes. Janice Gelb brought her curly head into the proceedings. Bill Warren, filmic expert of LASFAPA, told me all about Lock Martin, "the guy in the Gort suit."

Booming with friendly bluster, Karl Edward Wagner rolled in, claiming that after the disaster of Nutriacon II, Nawlins owed him a membership. I heard rumors of a new Kane novel all week, but none from Karl's own bushy mouth. Alas for their heartsick pals, we could no longer speak of "Karl and Barbara" – but when Barb Mott burst forth from a clot of lesser humanity to throw her sweet arms about me and donate a happy squeeze, I could tell that all was well with her.

I spotted Nicki Lynch, the elfin charmer, in a group with Tucker. (Bob got all the women.) I rushed up to greet her, and only then noticed who else she accompanied, the focus of the crowd, the nexus of the convention, a great white shaggy bear of a man – Ray Bradbury. A kid asking for his autograph accepted it with shaking hands. I knew how he felt.

It was my one moment of proximity all con long to ConFederation's Pro Guest of Honor, and I handled it about as well as the quivering boy before me. I recall a firm hand about mine as I babbled thanks for his help with my article about Julie in *Amazing World of DC Comics*. I had much more to thank him for – don't we all? – but *poof*, he was gone.

Along with dragons to slay (remember St. Louis's symbol!) I had maidens to rescue. The damsel in distress was Suzi Stefl, a stunning Michigan buh-lon-duh SAPS member who'd entranced me at the '85 NASFIC with her "permanent teardrop" mole and staggering smile. Now the entire woman was staggering. "Hypoglycemia!" she cried. "Food! Orange juice! Help!"

I hurried Suzi to 940, where Bill Bowlus, in armor behind the bar, ignored the clamor of the multitudes before it and passed Suzi a jolt of Vitamin C. The immediate crisis passed, we made our way down and out into the unseasonal chill ... to the most popular place in all Atlanta that weekend: the Dunk'n'Dine, a greasy spoon fortuitously placed a block from both Hilton and Marquis. It was packed to capacity 24 hours a day – we saw Marty Cantor and Hal Clement elbow-to-elbow at the counter. Suzi and I found seats and eats within its oily walls, saving Ms. Stefl from the throes of hypoglycemia and winning me some fascinating company. We talked about fandom and Heinlein and writing and children (hers) and dreams (our each). It was an island of personal peace in the tumult; I miss Suzi in today's fandom.

In the Marquis' Grand Ballroom Baen Books hosted a raucous dance. I dropped by for a while, first to observe, then to do. Linda Riley's fault. Linda was from Bumminham, Alabam', with beautiful red hair and jus' thuh suh-weet-est l'il ol' accent ... Could any Rebel buck with red gore in his veins resist such a Southern belle? I dragged Linda into the music's center and held her helpless in my grinding grip. Soon she stabbed me in the eye with a fingernail and made her escape. Heaving with hormones I limped back to 940. Justin Winston and Annie Hebert had come in; good. But better than good: *Rosy* was there.

I'd first known her as Rose-Marie Green. Now she was Rose-Marie Donovan, but in the 8 years since last I'd set eyes upon her, little else had changed. Still dark & curly in hair, sculpted and upturned in proboscis, huge and expressive in eye, slim yet bountiful in figure – still Rosy, that is: model-beautiful, model-cool, model-poised. In 1977 she'd made wonderful the Birmingham DeepSouthCon and the Miami worldcon. In 1978 she'd dumped me like a load of garbage, and by 1986, I thought I'd sighed the last sigh with her name on it. But when I walked into 940, and sitting there next to Walsh, she met my eye ... ahh-WHOOF! who took away the *floor*?

What do you say? You gotta be cautious.



Eight years is a long time in the real world, but as my yammering heart and sparking brain told me, they were as instants in the inner life. Eggshells were underfoot: an awkward word, a bitter tone could spin feelings into chaotic gyres of grief. But you must move despite your caution, GHLEIII – other ardent swains of your generation swarm about: Walsh, Joe Celko, John Ellis. *Say* something, stupid!

"Hi. Rosy."

We hugged. And life changed forever.

I remember little about the rest of the evening. I rented my personal room in the chintzy Travelodge down the block. From my window I could see our suite, wherein lights blazed far into the night.

Friday

Bruce Pelz was not only a man I loved and admired, he was also my fellow Nolacon II Board member. It

pained me, therefore, to find him only as human as the rest of us. I was working at the "voting booth", when up came Bruce. Former worldcon co-chair ... Noreascon II Fan GoH ... yeah ... you'd *think* ...

"I ... I need my ballot back," Bruce said, sheepishly as ewe or me. "I ... I forgot to mark my choices."

I put in two hours at the table – was the heavy turnout good news or fatal? – made a run to Nolacon's safety deposit box, then hied myself to the Hilton. When one wears the purple ribbon of Program Participant, one is not late for one's panel. This one was entitled "Introduction to APAdom", a topic with which I had passing familiarity. In picking my personnel I tried to represent all different types of apas, and failed. No one from a rotating, Cult-type apa showed. But we did boast some distinguished names: Marty Cantor, to talk about FAPA and LASFAPA, Fred Patten, to discuss comics-oriented K-a, Nicki Lynch to tell about quarterly SAPS, John Guidry to discuss ERB-APA and the other author – oriented groups, and me to handle Southern regionals. As usual with fan programming, the audience was just as knowledgeable as the panel.

I enjoyed our little overview of our hobby, as we praised such giants of apahackery as Harry Warner and Lon Atkins and Dave Hulan, described record-length SFPA 100 (subject of a future article here), SAPS' gory history, the great K-a tribute *It's For You, Fred*, my difficulty in quitting FAPA ("Death will not release you," said Dave Schlosser. "No, *Seth* will not release me," I countered. Seth Goldberg was FAPA OE, y'see). Rather nervily, I credited SFPA, which effectively founded Southern fandom, with the very existence of ConFederation. Everyone spat at me in agreement.

John and I ran into Ken Keller on the way back from the panel. The chairman of MidAmeriCon – Big MAC – was ten years past his worldcon, first of the modern behemoths, but on the central steering (chuckle) committee for the Boat Bid. Ever since the American Book Association meeting the previous summer Ken had called us leaders, but he scared me poopless when he revealed that "We took in \$600 in pre-supporting memberships last night."

"Oh my GAWD!" I shrieked to Guidry once Ken was gone. "Six hundred dollars! We're *dead*!"

"Guy," calmed John, whose name for me had long been "Guy Who Panics", "remember: the Boat

charges \$20.00 per membership. How many people is that? 30? How many pre-supporters did we pick up last night? 100? *Smell the coffee.*"

(Oh! How I wish that John had, at this moment, given forth with one of his classic Guidryisms. "*Wake up and smell the coffin!*" How perfect, in retrospect, that would have been. But life is not perfect, and John was simply right, as he usually was.)

Friday night was the first of 3 biggies in a row for ConFederation, the GoH speeches on deck. At first Meade Frierson and I planned to kiss the whole thing off and go to one of the Hot Atlanta nudie bars that so tantalizingly lined Peachtree Street – but a genuine Nolacon crisis had arisen. Paul Watson, the Chattanooga disco king, had packed his equipment down, expecting to put on a Nawlins fling Friday night – only to find that the bid now wanted nothing to do with the dance site, the Downtowner. Tim Bolgeo had reserved an expensive party suite for Paul, which he would have to pay for. The suite was only three interconnected rooms – could that even hold a disco? Watson and Robert Neagle, New Orleans' resident sound technocrat, declared the space completely unsuitable. So the whole thing was a flounce. But when the gods smile, they smile. Bugged by misplaced guilt, Bolgeo himself paid for Paul's room. The snafu was ours, not his, but hooray for a generous, good show.

That crisis assuaged, I went to the ballroom. Regrettably, I'd missed the speech of Terry Carr, the Fan Guest. The Main Event, however, was just on.

He stood in the spotlight's center, flanked by twin images on huge convex screens. To the world he *is* science fiction; to science fiction he *is*... something of an alien among aliens. Great, oh yes, undeniably Great, but so untechnical, so dramatically unscientific, so ... so *poetic*. This genius, so famous, so yes-of-course Important ... my God, he believes in *words*. To science fiction, language is a secondary consideration. His ideas are ideas about people, not theories of physics. He barely writes the stuff anymore, too.

But he's *Ray Bradbury*, and we have all been touched by him. Through his books, his influence, and now, by the greatest Guest of Honor speech ever voiced at a science fiction convention. Oh, it was a corker, a stem-winder, a boomer, evangelical and explosive. No logical progression of scholarly

thought, the bombast of Bradbury, but a rich and robust career through SF's greatest career. From the tutelage of Julius Schwartz – who sold almost all of *Dark Carnival* – to the faith (and voice) of John Huston (Ray's impersonation was A+) Bradbury recounted a grateful passage.

And he laid credit for that passage on science fiction – “the loves,” he said, “I’m still in love with”, “the writers of Ideas,” confounding negativity, celebrating, inspiring and creating the future. He recalled an introduction he penned to a 1960 pb of *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, comparing Nemo with Ahab. “The Ardent Blasphemers” it was called, and I nearly wept, because I remembered that essay so well, remembered how his paean to Dreamers had engendered a burst of intellectual excitement in my boy’s brain. And I remembered how it felt to finally understand *The Martian Chronicles* that wonderful first time ...

What a figure stood before SFdom, an artist and thinker whose love has resounded through a generation and enriched and moved our lives. Anti-technological? Don’t be idiotic! The science of science fiction has never known a more articulate or passionate spokesman, hailing the growth of the Wit of Man from cave wall drawings to computer screen imagery. He trumpeted his celebration of our species – “*We are the Idea Beasts!*” – and the worldcon went apeshit. Huzzah! Huzzay! Ray Bradbury was with his people!

As he left the room, surrounded and applauded by the people of science fiction, harlequin Fensterer approached Bradbury and placed about his neck a splendid set of Mardi Gras beads. I felt my head hit the ceiling, 44 floors up.

Boogie, you bozos! Suite 940 was packed with partisans! A beauteous bellydancer from Baton Rouge bobbled her bangles. Above the crowd a five-foot inflated Godzilla scudded its scales, amidst creatures at least some bit as strange. Not quite as strange, Rick Norwood came through. It was altogether fitting and proper that Rick should appear, for Norwood was there at the genesis of The Dream, the 1964 founding of the New Orleans Science Fiction Association. What a priceless moment to stand the first NOSFAns all together – Walsh, Winston, Guidry, Norwood, Doug Wirth. If Don Markstein felt at that moment a sudden thrill in the

Phoenix air, it was because his place was open there too. The founders of NOSFA – the first Dreamers of Nolacon II – poised on the Brink. Tomorrow would be the Day.

Saturday

The day was come.

“Guidry!” I screamed. “Get me *relief!*”

How do *you* spell relief? I’d been at the voting booth – gahh, he had *me* doing it! – for three hours. Rosy had been by, to speed my heart, and Steve Glennon and Karen Schaffer had come by to ask me to a lunch I could not make. Bloody hell! Glennon was a LASFAPAn, a tall and lanky fella who once sent me a tape of *Cimarron*. Good smile, and good reason for it: Karen, one of those bright, spontaneous women who just happen to be the natural incandescence in the world. When I saw Karen’s photograph on the cover to LASFAPA 100, it was like being rabbit-punched: she wore a spangly bellydancer’s headband and ... well, *my* me to that epic mailing waxed breathlessly over that picture and now here, smiling like real, was the pretty lady herself. With her boyfriend, but this is not yet a perfect world.

But I was stuck at the table, where the ~~voting~~ voting surged on and on. Rosy disappeared; Glennon and Schaffer ate without me. When the wonderful fan, psychologist and therapist Diane Hughes came by to drop off her ballot, I was so happy to see her I almost trembled. (You will learn why in good time.)

Eventually, thank God, my replacement did come, and I was free. I staggered about the convention floor, idly paralleling a longish line, wondering what was at its head. At its head sat Harlan Ellison,, scribbling his lightning-jagged signature in book after book after book onetwothree. No surprise to see him here; he was to conduct the Manly Wade Wellman auction. I wouldn’t talk to Harlan during ConFederation, but one thing about him – whether he was doing an auction for a late, great friend, or brushing aside TV reporters (who asked him to cool the cussin’ while they were on the air), or reading “Paladin of the Lost Hour”, or swooping through a thousand autographs, you always knew he was there.

Ah, a joyous surprise to lift spirits dejected

by my ugly impatience! *Ellen Vartanoff* joined me for lunch. It had been 12 years, at least. The gentle Ellen had unique work in the Art Show, and reported that her sister, the immortal comic letterhack Irene, was now married and a mama. We ate one of the excellent lunches at the hotel's Market Place. Before us a faceless statue studied a spouting fountain. Behind us a family wrangled. I'm seldom struck dumb in public, but those people did it. An exhausted, irritated father, a girl friend, two kids, including a pre-teen son who *would not shut up*. The man grew more and more impatient and angry. But the kid stopped his father, and every conversation within earshot, dead, flat cold.

"I'll tell Grandma!" he threatened. "I'll tell her I don't want to live with you anymore!"

Daddy was a lot quieter after that. Guy H. Lillian Jr. and Nancy K. Lillian celebrated their 39th wedding anniversary the following September 11. I felt reminded to thank them.

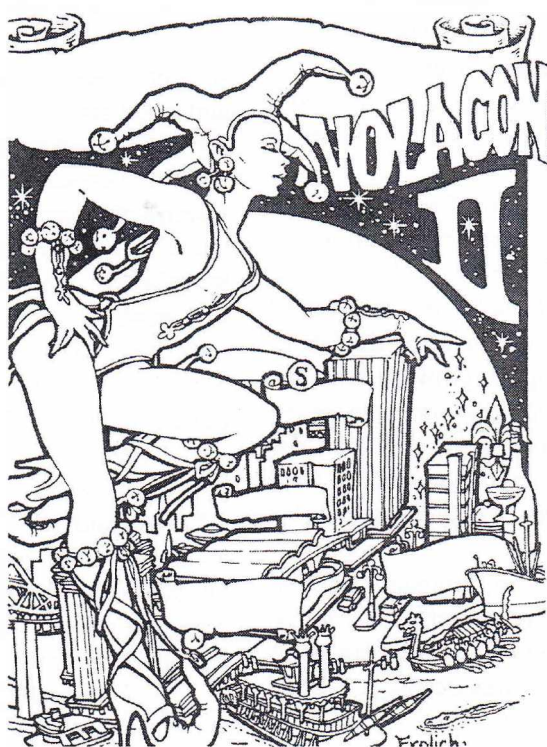
I attended a SFPA party that afternoon in the Downtowner, where I got to see many of the South's noblest folk, members of the Southern Fandom Press Alliance: Gary Tesser, Hank Davis (who gave me a videotape rife with future significance, *Picnic at Hanging Rock*), JoAnn Montalbano, George Wells, Jim Cobb, Ward Batty, Alan Hutchinson, Gary Brown. JoAnn told me about the trip to B'ham to see our noble comrade George Inzer, recovering from a bout with illness, and gladdened my worries with good reports. It was a great time, but I made the mistake of asking those who hadn't voted to do so quickly, as the 6 p.m. deadline was nigh. Come, oh SFPA! Join in the glorious Nolacon campaign! Ride with the City that Care Forgot into the stellar magnificence of the ultimate fannish experience! Only \$20.00! I was

howled back to the Marriott.

Where quite a bevy of *real* (*sniff*) SFers waited – getting their ballots in at the last minute. Barb Mott was among them. The clock ticked down, the list of ConFederationites grew more and more checkmarks, showing they'd voted – and we amassed a record total, over 1800 ballots. Liz and Jeff Copeland, ConFederation's official tollsters, appeared, and the last vote was taken – Jennifer Levin, a McCaffrey fan from ... New Orleans. I dropped her ballot into the box myself. The contenders from St. Louis, Columbianatti, New Orleans and the Boat shook hands all around, to congratulate ourselves for a friendly race. Which was – at long last – at long, long last – over.

Jeff carried the ballot box and the receipt books back to their room. I tagged along. Had to see our gal Al again, and besides, there were these little rockets atop marble bases in the corner ... the Hugos.

A young fella polished the chrome with alcohol. The room was tangy with it. There they were ... the trophies that got me into SFdom in the first place. A beautiful rocket, a unique and beautiful base: the



ConFederation Hugos.

urk An inadvertent shudder coursed me as I eyed the needle-sharp rockets thrusting ceilingwards, like spikes on a bed of nails. Picture this: GHLIII wins his long-deserved Hugo, trips on his way down from the rostrum, the Hugo catches him right in the –

I was given a great honor: Allie, in her pack, was strapped to my back for the voyage cross-street to Dave Schlosser's LASFAParty. Quite an experience. You're not just walking for #1 anymore – there's this overriding importance riding over your shoulder. So you duck a little lower and take a little more care and

so that's what it's like, huh?

I enjoyed Dave's LASFAParty – Karen Schaffer's smile warmed the place, and Schlosser's friend – now his wife – Kay McCutcheon was a delight as she discovered fandom. Also boosting the evening were my apamates Glennon, David Bratman, Chris Kostanick, Gavin Claypool, Chuck Donahue. They talked about *Bored of the Rings* and, according to a note Liz scribbled in my little notebook, I fell asleep.

So maybe I'm *still* asleep, there in Schlosser's LASFAPA soiree. Maybe everything since has been but a dream ...

Well, if so, a pretty amazing part of that dream came next: the Hugo ceremonies.

I stood against the wall, near the front. Lovely Seattlite Amy Thomson knelt on my right; a nervous Jeff Copeland agonized on my left. The dais was covered with a peaked black tent. Behind us Rick Albertson poised over his control console like the Phantom of the Paradise. Bradbury, Schwartz, and other poobahs were escorted to their premiere seats by ushers in Regency garb. The lights dimmed to stygian dark – "Also Sprach Zarathustra" pulsed over the loudspeakers -- the ConFederation symbol flashed onto the screen.

Laser rays of blue and red danced over the stage – flashed off the mirrored ceiling – dipped to glitter off rockets of gleaming, alcohol-polished chrome ... the *Hugos*.

The crowd went ape! Worldcon has never since seen a more stunning opening to its Hugo ceremony.

Bob Shaw -- Toastmaster to this convention, star of Bumminham BoSHcons, twice a Hugo-winner himself – came out from backstage. A superb job by Shaw kept the crowd entertained with tales of his amazing and often absurd career, each award's

presentation followed by another chapter in a past so checkered it was practically plaid. Though his brogue was a bit hard to penetrate at times, and he forgot to read the Fan Writer nominees, Shaw was terrific, especially when handling a nasty situation completely new to worldcon.

But first there were Awards. And what a trophy followed the Campbell (given to Melissa Scott): the First Fandom Award. Who should trot on stage to present but Ray Bradbury, and to whom should he present it, with gratitude and love, but the greatest man in the room? He founded fanzines. He sold Bradbury's first short stories. Bald and bucktoothed is beautiful! Hail Julius Schwartz, King of Earth!

More cheers followed. Julie graciously shared First Fandom's honors with Donald A. Wandrei, ailing and not in attendance. The E.E. Evans Big Heart Award went to beaming Rusty Hevelin. How many times have I mentioned that Rusty and I went to the same junior high school, 20 years apart?

The Hugos began to go forth. Mike Glycer got the first, for Fan Writer. I'd warned him that marble base was heavy. (Heaviest Hugo *still* to date.) I cheered the Best Fan

Artist trophy to Joan Hanke-Woods. Joan had drawn a great harlequin illo for our bid (see here), and her honor reflected well on us. George Laskowski, coonskin cap in place, took the Fanzine trophy for *Lan's Lantern*. *Locus* won another *yawn* SemiProZine award and Mike Whelan won his 6th straight trophy as Pro Artist. He withdrew from the next year's honors, but was back for '88. And then it was time for Best Pro Editor.

Judy-Lynn Del Rey died in April, 1986, having made her point against the stroke that had rendered her comatose the previous November. Ben



Bova had published a letter in the fan press urging SFdom to honor her memory and her contribution to the field. So we did, nominating her for our highest award. Trouble was, Lester del Rey had subsequently written to ConFederation, attempting to remove his late wife's name from the list. Trouble continued as the letter arrived one day too late for the ballots to be amended. ConFederation let the process continue. Judy-Lynn won ... and, through a spokesman, Lester rejected the award. Copeland collapsed beside me.

I didn't like it. Even if Judy-Lynn did hate posthumous awards, and even if she *should* have been nominated before, surely the grateful spirit behind this Hugo should have been evident. It was no insult for fandom to express that spirit. Perhaps ConFederation should have ignored all votes for Mrs. del Rey, according to her widower's wish. But Lester should have restrained his bitterness and shown some understanding. In any event, for the first time ever, a Hugo was left on the dais, refused. And who must get up in front of a stunned fandom and restore the evening but ... Bob Shaw.

Shaw told me later that he *took his time* getting back to that mike.

Well, he did what had to be done, and he did it ably. A few conciliatory words, another wonderful autobiographical interspersed, and on with the Hugos we went. Though *Brazil* got the loudest applause, the big money movie won, as it always does: *Back to the Future*. *Science Made Stupid* won the Non-Fiction Award, probably on the strength of its title. Familiar names won the short fiction Hugos – Fred Pohl for "Fermi and Frost", Harlan for "Paladin of the Lost Hour", Roger Zelazny, who wasn't there, for "24 View of Mt. Fuji". When I was in Greensboro, a bookstore clerk had asked me if I was Orson Scott Card, who lived there. Now that pretty place on the Piedmont had the first of many Hugos to come within its boundaries, the Best Novel of 1985, *Ender's Game*.

As I left the ballroom, chatting with Schwartz, a glass elevator descended. John and Justin rode it. Justin bore a bucket with ice and champagne. They hustled towards the Convention Level's Chablis Room. They would meet the other bids and Jeff & Liz there. And count the votes. It was 10 p.m.

I rode up to 10th, watched a bellydancer – ours was better – talked to Suzi Stefl, to S.E., then smoothed the negligible hair I had left and rode up

the dardh vator to the 22nd floor. I had been invited to a party there – a small, quiet gathering, just what the hostess wanted. The hostess was Rose-Marie Donovan. The room belonged to Joe and Patti Green.

What an entrance! Back in the Pleistocene – 1978 – I got the very strong impression that I was a bit hysterical, sloppy, and wiseass for the Greens. They had too much class to say so, but ... who could dispute it? So when Patti greeted me with a sweet hug the first words out of my mouth were "I've changed! I've changed! I promise!" And the first thing I did to prove that I'd changed was to knock over a drink.

groan Silence fell. Everybody gave me one of those *looks*. You know... embarrassed *pity*. Seeing that expression cross Rosy's face was like having a hatpin shoved into my eye. Had the door been open I'd've gladly leapt for the Cristo sculpture in the atrium and not cared much if I'd missed.

Perhaps I molded mountains out of mashed potatoes ("This *means* something!"). Certainly, once the damage was towed up, the party became really pleasant. The Greens told me not to fret about New Orleans – though it was second nature to me now, like breathing out and breathing in – and talked NASA. Fran, their buddy from California, was there, well remembered from Suncon, a very pretty brunette who had bestowed upon a certain blonde NOLan thereat the soubriquet "Dixie-boobs". Good yappin' with good folks, which almost drove the Chablis Room and the events in progress there from mind.

They were gone for sure, when Rosy asked me to walk with her. Like everybody else, sometimes she just has to walk – and talk things over.

We strolled about the vasty deeps of the Marriott atrium. Fearless, Rosy leaned out over the protective bars to peer through 20 stories down – while I tried to claw my way into the wall *geh*. But the lady's effect on me was deeper than the view. Clearly the Rosy Green who had stuffed me into a Glad Bag and left me by the curb 8 years back in this very town was not the Rosy Donovan who stood with me over the gulfs of science fiction space, touching her eye, her forehead, in gestures I had not forgotten and found I could never forget.

I had no hope of hoping. I had no way of knowing. I would not know for twenty-five years that Confederation was teaching me a lesson at this

juncture as it had at every other.

How far we travel. How far we go. How importantly our lives interweave. We never forget. And we never stop. We can't stop. We *can't*.

We *haven't*.

It was getting late, but 940 remained an impassable sweatbox as the party rioted on, awaiting The Word. They had hurricane cocktails to distract them. Me? No such luck.

Four times I wandered down towards the Chablis Room. The door was just ajar; vague shapes and shadows moved silently within. Each time I stayed but a moment, chatting with ConFederation staffers, like Jim Gilpatrick, who carried the Del Rey Hugo, baffled and a little hurt, I thought, by Lester's refusal of the honor.

The night wore on. The door to the Chablis Room went from ajar to closed. My nervousness was obvious to Mike Resnick up in the Nolacon suite. Large-hearted, large-talented Mike had, with wife Carol, supported the New Orleans cause from the beginning. It had begun as a negative stance against the "Columbiannati" bid, but it had developed into more. Resnick was smiling and confident. "I wish I could handcuff myself to you, Guy," he said, "and keep reminding you, *we're going to win*."

The Chablis door opened. It was 1:45 a.m. Jeff Copeland came out. "We just finished ... validating the ballots," he said. "Three hours and 45 minutes validating the ballots. Now we count."

Outside the elevators a friend wandered, looking lost. Her promised crashspace had closed itself up and she had no place rest her weary head. I don't understand people who cut out their friends like that. I offered to let her snooze at my own place but – who was I kidding? She went off towards the Downtowner. I returned to the Chablis Room.

The door was still closed. It was nigh onto 3 in the morning. I plopped down in a chair, propped my feet up, and stared at the Chablis Room entrance. It had all come down to this. Two years shy a month had gone by since John and Justin had been contacted by the New Orleans Tourist Commission. They were told that a west coaster, Chauntecleer Smith, had reserved the Rivergate Convention Center for Labor Day, 1988. This same Chauntecleer had rung me up a few weeks before to try to persuade me to chair a bid. I had gently laughed him off. But when John and

Justin heard that someone was trying to move in on our city ...

I was brought in. Dolbear was brought in. Ann Chancellor was brought in. "Minister without Portfolio" Michael Sinclair joined the cause. I fought and won the battle for a strong New Orleans identity, then called Charlie Williams and commissioned our first ad, using the harlequin symbol I'd dreamed up, and created the slogan, "Catch a Doubloon". I went to L.A. and approached Pelz and Miller. From Walsh's abortive bid for '76 I got the name of our progress reports, *The Con They Call the City of New Orleans*. We sent John to MidWestCon, where "The Barons", fandom's powerbrokers, came to regard us with favor. We went to local fans, convinced them of our sincerity, beckoned their help on board. *En masse* we went to Austin's NASFIC, partied like blue demons, and won over the people, emerging as the leaders in the '88 race. And we weathered the inevitable insurrection; the leader of the doomed uprising wandered ConFederation like a rootless ghost.

Me? I did the p.r.s, I traveled, sold pre-supporting memberships, spoke. Sinclair did the same thing fivefold. He was upstairs, in 940, working the party, waiting like I was, for that door to open.

The door opened.

Copeland came out, bearing a single sheet of flapping paper. He walked past. "It's going *badly*," he said.

What? What?!? What did he mean? Badly how? Impossible! I followed him into the convention HQ. He stood at the copier running the sheet through. I remember thinking he could tell me nothing. I just stared. "Badly"? He returned to the Chablis. I sat back down. A moment passed.

The door swung open. Guidry stormed out. He grasped the edge of the door and slammed it shut. He shouted a dirty word. And ran off. I stood. What? What? The Chablis Room disgorged people. Rich Zellich, the St. Louis chairman, ran off with a mate, laughing, leaping. Finally, Liz, Jeff ... and Justin, strolling, hands in pockets, rue on his face.

"*What's the matter with John?*"

"We gave it a good shot, man," said Winston. "*Seven votes.*"

I was rocked. The St. Louis people bounded off towards the elevators, talking of champagne. St. Louis? *But – but the Boat was the dangerous ...* Liz

and Jeff stood with an angry, flustered John in the hallway. I overheard Liz say how we could always bid for 2000 – and by then *rueful chuckle* *Allie* would be old enough to be a harlequin! *Aaaaaahhhhhhhh*

We went to 940. The journey up escalator and elevator took mere weeks. I tried to cry. But I couldn't. People don't cry in shock. Three thousand of my own dollars. The shards of my credit. But much more than that – the *work*. The *hope*. "Do you think we could ride the elevators all night?" Justin asked, wanly. "That's going to be one hell of a business meeting!" Guidry muttered.

(My pals. The ratfinks.)

We crowded into the bedroom adjacent to 940. John and Justin pulled Amos and Sinclair into the bathroom and slammed the door. Duval stood behind me, eyes wide, baffled.

"What?!" I heard Sinclair shout in dismay, "What did you guys *do* in the last 3 weeks –?"

It is not true – as John and Justin claimed, in their *Mimosa* piece on this incident – that I sank to my knees, whimpering. As a matter of fact, I'm certain I gave Charlie a look of doubt as we stood (n.b.) with our ears to the door. Nevertheless, when the quartet came forth, we simply stared at them. Tableaux.

"Good news and bad news," said Michael. Winston's hand strayed to a bag of doubloons; I noted the fact, but not its significance.

I was too weak to say naught but "What?"

"The bad news is, it was closer than we thought it would be. The good news ...*you're going to have to put on a worldcon, boy!*"

VICTORY!

Justin beamed me with doubloons. We shrieked as one.

VICTORY!

The tally sheet came forth. 7 votes, indeed –

7 votes more than 50%! *First ballot win.*

VICTORY!

We filled our mitts with doubloons. The door to the party was bashed aside. In we charged, doubloons flying like shrapnel to the ceiling, incoherent whoops of joy telling the tale for all to know. Victory! **VICTORY!** Nolacon II was REAL.

Cheers! Hugs! Handshakes! My head felt full to bursting! I plumb forgot to hate Guidry and Winston. Through the crowd we plunged, cheering, hugging, handshaking. Don't be arrogant, now, we'd been warned. Mustn't gloat. But *gloat shmoat!* LET ME HOWL!

I went to 10. Plenty of fans on 10. Have a doubloon. New Orleans has won! Squeals of delight

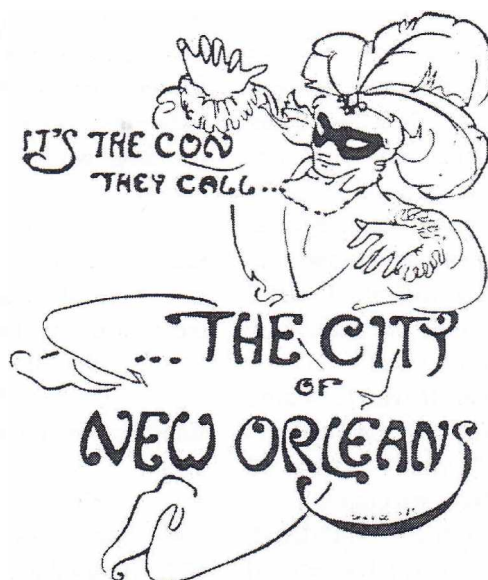
– Judy Sutton, Mary Ann van Hartesveldt, Barb Mott – even a few worthless guys – hugs and handshakes – Thanks – thanks –

Before me appeared a familiar bearded face, Neal Rest. We both nearly wept. His Boat Bid had come in second, with nearly a quarter of the votes. An hour before I'd feared the Boat Bid like I fear flying. Now, I escorted Neal – wearing his "Off Duty" tee shirt, saved for this moment – down to 940, where no one celebrated as happily as

he. (Relief is a wonderful thing.)

Ken Keller came by. He knew my job with Nolacon II – editing progress reports and the program book. He knew also that I'd been at his MidAmeriCon, and seen the late Tom Reamy's masterful hardback. Grasping my shoulder, Ken said, "Guy, I put onto you the charge of Tom Reamy: do it better." (I couldn't – who could? – but it was fun to try.)

I went about the hotel, and *told*. I wasn't supposed to, but I had to. Specifically, I had to keep a promise and tap on a door on the 22nd floor, and tell the sleepy exquisite within that we had won. Rosy



was very pleased.

The elevators were impossible so I used the stairwell to climb towards the St. Louis floor. I wanted to thank them – Michelle, obviously – for a good, clean race. But then as now I was out of shape; the 18 floors winded me and I gave up. What a fantasy that brought on: to die alone in a concrete stairwell, doubloons a'scatter about my corpse, on the night we'd won the worldcon. Not an altogether unpleasant thought.

So this is it? Two years of work and hassle, and this is what you get. The thrill of victory. The best of convention joys? Short of a Hugo, I guess so. And it is just fine, ain't it?

Victory. Not a smug word. A proud one.

Sunday

I went back to 940 the next morning. The suite was a nuclear waste. In the midst of ruin, the mad trio Amos, Walsh and Lafferty sat beaming, exulting in the golden morning-after glory. "We whupped 'em!" they shouted. "Yankee factory trash!" they jeered. "Pasty-faced mechanics and shopkeepers!" they hooted.

I took Rosy to breakfast – regaling her with the atrocity visited upon me the night before. Traitorous wench, she laughed. We got Guidry to the baffling business meeting to announce our Guests of Honor – one of whom, Roger Sims, I'd just met the night before. John insisted on going down accompanied by not one but two harlequins, New Orleans beauties Nancy and Jan Mayberry. T'was worth a lot to see him waltzing with both outside the meeting room door. He had waited a very long time for the pleasure.

Charlie DuVal set up a membership table at the erstwhile voting booth (notice that I didn't put "s around the words anymore) and the conquered lined up to convert. In a wonderful, wicked way it was like collecting ritual tribute from the partisans of vanquished foes. Had I been more conscious I'd've loved it. We moved the receipt book and cashbox to 940 later, as the sudden but slowly-realized metamorphosis *bid to con* continued.

Rumors attendant to worldcon politics began to fly. The ripest nonsense was the account I overheard of the "gentlemen's agreement" between New Orleans and St. Louis, that we'd insured a clean

contest by promising to pay some of St. Louis' debts. Since it was a "gentlemen's agreement" I guessed blackguards like John, Justin, Dennis, Charlie, Mike and me weren't allowed in on it. On a better plane, I kept overhearing folks saying, "We won!" I'd never seen most of them before.

The day came alive as evening fell. Eschewing the masquerade (which looked stunning on the intra-hotel video hookup), I found Rosy and we hit the parties. Up at the edge of the sky, suite 4014, we attacked a hot and incense-reeking Tor Books bash. Photographic honcho Jay Kay Klein could take neither eye nor lens off la Rose-Marie, and who can blame him?

We went to the Hilton and the SFWA party there. Only got in because John Ford – the author of *The Dragon Waiting* and *How Much for Just the Planet?*, not the comparatively insignificant movie director – knew Joe Green. It turned into one of finest moments of ConFederation. John Varley came by in a Hawaiian jacket with a beautiful lady friend, likewise appareled. How funny is fate: years later, Ricia Mainhardt and I became friends. Diane Hughes recounted the death of Theodore Sturgeon; she was in the room, and Lady Jane was on the phone with Robert Heinlein, when Sturgeon's boundless heart gave way. Patrice Green and I talked about the *Challenger*. She had seen them, seen them rise and fall ... *Tell me about her*, I wanted to stammer – *tell me what she said and how she looked* – but this was not the place. Besides, I think I already knew.

Finally, Rosy and I returned to 940, where the celebration continued. Every day of the con, Dennis Dolbear and Bill Bowlus had driven across Atlanta to fetch a grand's worth of booze – and it was not going to go to waste. Guidry came up, upbraiding me for leaving – the party needed workers. "I understand that," I said, "but you see, I got kidnapped." And indicated Rosy.

"Well," said John, "I always say that if you're going to get kidnapped, you might as well go *first class!*"

So *smooth*. I was lost in admiration. If Guidry had gone into politics, he could've been *mayor*.

Monday

When I walked into 940 for the last morning of

ConFederation, Rosy and Patti were there. They waited for Joe to finish a panel so they could head home to Florida, and had dropped by to say goodbye. I was dragging it out as long as possible when Mary Wismer roused me from contemplation of *la belle* Rose. A panel in the Hilton demanded the presence of a Nawlins rep, and I was the only one available.

"Goodbye," Rosy said, and was gone.

I went to the Hilton and destroyed Nolacon in advance. Forget Wollheim and Sims, I told the folks assembled. Our real guests of honor would be *Jimmy Connors* and *Vanna White*. After all, though they say Professional Guest of Honor, they don't say Professional *what*, and as for Vanna, well, *Wheel of Fortune* precedes *Star Trek* on L.A. TV, and she sometimes leaves the set on after checking herself for cellulite. That qualifies her for Fan GoH at a worldcon, doesn't it?

Actually, I had little specific info for the crowd, and so winged it. My usual riposte was "I don't know." But I warmed to the task when someone asked about the area surrounded our hotels. *Mon dieu!* The specifics of dealers' tables and suchlike will be resolved in good time. *But nuzzing will change zee Franch Quartair! Laissez les bons temps roulez!*

Weeks before, aware of how rough an event like this can be on one's emotional guard, I'd written Diane Hughes and asked her to save me a lunchtime at convention's end. None of the tragedies I'd anticipated – romantic rejection, political disaster – had developed. In fact the exact opposite had been the case. Charlie Williams (the beautiful lady) once told me that my whole trouble was that I always thought things worse than they were. Maybe so: at Confederation I'd had my work and my worth confirmed and reconfirmed, had been astounded, re-

astounded, and astounded again. Nevertheless, for a jumble of neuroses like myself, victory can be as confounding as defeat. I needed to talk.

We found a table at the Hilton coffee shop and did just that. We talked about attractiveness, a big issue with me, and men and women, a big issue with almost everyone, and some particular men and women (Diane's opinions were enlightening). We talked about the events of this convention and what they told us about our lives. Diane – who looked just like Jim Rockford's lawyer girl friend – has enjoyed quite a passage through life, which resulted in a woman compassionate and funny and courageous and bright. She recalled to me the joyous contradiction of Christa McAuliffe, that *superb people are everywhere.*

ConFederation would have been complete then and there. But one or two more encounters deserve note. In the 940 party that night, Nolacon II had some special visitors who didn't have to pay the \$15.00 conversion fee: Donald and Elsie Wollheim. Charmers! We ensconced them in the guest room and allowed a favored few to come in and pay court to Nolacon's Guest of

Honor and his lovely lady.

Among the few was a new writer whom we thought might be able to talk Wollheim into a sale. Fred Pole or Poll or something was his name, and with pluck and hard work he might just make a name for himself in science fiction. I got the two titans talking about the early days by mentioning Julie Schwartz' slide show of the first worldcon. "Oh?" said Pohl. "What was it like inside?" I got the impression that Don and Sam Moscovitz still didn't exchange cards on Buddha's birthday. I told the tale of my ridiculous Saturday evening, and they too considered John and Justin's joke a howl.

(Fiercest among those enjoying my anguish was Linda Krawecka, whose then-husband was that



year's TAFF delegate. I was delighted to hear that Guidry had signed her on as Nolacon's European represent-ative – a Metairie girl gone Brit.)

A long talk with Dealer Extraordinaire Dick Spelman sent me on my way. We'd begun the transition indeed, from bid to con, from Dream to Duty. Paula Lieberman kept greeting me with a cheery "Hello, *sucker!*" I got that a lot.

Two final images to ConFederation. That evening I walked with Samanda Jeude as she drove her motorized cart to convention HQ. She was

already planning for Nolacon II. A long ramp led down to the headquarters level from the lobby. She pointed her cart straight down that slope and let'er rip. "SMALL JAPANESE TREE!" she shouted.

And – this is true – as I lurched out of the Marquis on Monday night, ready for bed, train, return to real life, I peered into the shallow pool beneath the hotel elevators. Coins dappled the bottom. One was large. Silverish. It shone like a promise.

Doubloon.

The artwork in this article was all done for the Nolacon bid, by Dany Frolich, Brad Foster, Joan Hanke-Woods, Ned Dameron, and our beloved Ann Layman Chancellor (that's her doubloon design opposite). We miss her now – as we miss so many other wonderful friends mentioned here. Bill Bowlus – Meade Frierson – Ray Lafferty – Bruce Pelz – John Ford – Lan – Jack Williamson – the Wollheims – Karl Edward Wagner – Bob Shaw – Julie Schwartz – Hank Reinhardt. We shall not see their like again.

John and Justin did indeed write up their version of the balloting joke for *Mimosa*. I have never gotten over the gag. Well, it *was* brilliant: everyone in that room had to extemporize his/her part on the spot, and all did so impeccably ("You can bid for 2000!" indeed!) All the conspirators are marked for terrible vengeance. *It has been told.*

As I needn't tell you, Nolacon II was much more fun to bid for than put on. Everyone attending the 1988 worldcon loved our city, most had fun, we introduced Sfdom to Morgus the Magnificent and Novalyne Price Ellis, and I'm proud of our program book, but let's face it: organizationally, we sucked the cheese. Nevertheless, bidding for Nolacon II remained and remains one of the great pleasures and privileges fandom has brought me, and will forever rank as the greatest success our city's fandom ever attained. I don't regret a minute of it.

Will New Orleans ever bid again for a worldcon? Before our forced move to Shreveport – and before Katrina reduced the Crescent City to ruin and fable – Rosy and I were giving the idea some thought. Now?



IN MEMORIAM

"Everything I wished I was, my creation would be. Where I was shy, he would be aggressive. Where I was cold and withdrawn, he would be warm and outgoing. Loneliness would be unknown to him, disease and pain and death, all unknown. And oh, Alan, he would be perfect. That was my dream: a perfect version of myself."

GEORGE GRIZZARD

1928-2007

The Twilight Zone "In His Image"



PRaise THE WOLFLOrD!



HANK REINHARDT

JANUARY 18, 1934
OCTOBER 30, 2007

HIMSELF

Julius Henry "Hank" Reinhardt, 73, a widely known authority on medieval arms and armor, and an icon of Southern science fiction fandom for over 50 years, died Tuesday morning (October 30, 2007) at an Athens, GA, hospital following complications of heart surgery.

Known widely as "Hank," he had written numerous articles on swords and knives, and was in the process of writing a book on the history and use of the sword at the time of his death. He produced two videos with Paladin Press on the sword, and was a columnist for *Blade* magazine on swords in the movies. He was a cofounder of the mail order business Museum Replicas, Ltd. and a consultant to many sword makers. Unlike many experts, Reinhardt insisted on actually making and testing the weapons he wrote about, and through his various activities he has been instrumental in increasing the popularity of arms and armor in mainstream America.

Hank, born and raised in Atlanta, was a founder of the first Atlanta science fiction club, ASFO, organized in 1950. Since then he has been guest speaker and entertainer at numerous science fiction conventions, where he staged panels on medieval arms and armor, plus exhibitions of the fighting techniques of that era, most recently at Dragoncon in Atlanta in September.

Reinhardt also founded units of the Society for Creative Anachronisms, a medieval re-enactment society, in Alabama, where he lived for many years, Georgia, and Louisiana. He received numerous awards for activities in science fiction and for his work with bladed weapons, most recently the Industry Achievement Award given at the 2006 Blade Show in Atlanta. Hank will appear in the *Reclaiming the Blade* documentary due for release in 2008.

A sword and knife buff from early teen age, Reinhardt received an education in both during Army service in Europe in the 1950s, visiting famous museums. Upon returning to the United States, he worked at various jobs before meeting Bill Adams, founder and president of Atlanta Cutlery. Together in the 1980s they launched Museum Replicas Ltd., making accurate and battle-ready replicas of medieval weapons, and selling them via mail order throughout the world. Reinhardt enlisted as a business contact Ewart Oakeshott, the head curator of the Tower of London Armories. Oakeshott wrote the authoritative book on European swords, and at the time Reinhardt was the only outsider allowed to enter the Armories and make photographs of its treasures. Because of these visits, Museum Replicas, Ltd. for years made quality arms and armor.

He was preceded in death by his first wife, Janet. He is survived by wife Toni Weisskopf Reinhardt; two daughters, Dana Gallagher and Cathy Reinhardt; grandchildren, Hannah and Owen Gallagher; and the many, many friends he made throughout his life.

Services will be held Saturday 3 p.m. at Bernstein Funeral Home, Athens, Georgia.



This obituary was written by Jerry Proctor, retired editor of the *Birmingham News*. It is, of course, skillful and comprehensive. But as Jerry would be the first to state, his lines only hint at the breadth and depth of the Reinhardt story. When, on November 2, he and I joined many others in eulogizing "the wolflord," each speaker came at Hank's life from a different angle, illuminating part of his legend. None of us, alone, was up to the task of summing up the whole package. Perhaps the lot of us couldn't do it. Summing up any human being is a task beyond mere mortals, especially when the human being is such a gigantic soul as Hank's.

What made Reinhardt "gigantic" was not the outlandishness of his SCA persona – Ulric of Wolfhaven the Conan-esque Wolflord. That personality was indeed larger than life. But it only

reflected Hank's total commitment to a life of courage, humor, tolerance and integrity. His hugeness was a matter of spirit. He never refused a friendship. He never betrayed a trust. He devoted himself to his family and his friends. If Hank was celebrated for being a character, he was *loved* for being a man of character.

Hank's accomplishments in life and fandom – substantial though they were – weren't the point. His *example* is what mattered. Several of "his boys" spoke at his funeral of Hank's qualities as a *teacher*. They went to him as teenagers for instruction in knife-fighting and stayed for lessons in manhood, on how to live with – again – courage, integrity, humor and tolerance.

SF fans learned from him, too. Hank was Southern fandom's Main Man, its center, its mentor, its model, not only our senior dude but the guy who showed us *how it was done* – *how to be a*

fan. SFers and anachornists must constantly deal with the contumely of the world. Hank had *the* answer for that. *Courage* to create the self you want to be – the *integrity* to live life as that self – the *humor* to understand the bafflement of the uninitiated—and the *tolerance* to let others be themselves in return.

I was Hank Reinhardt's friend for 35 years. I cannot imagine fandom – *life* – without him.

Hank's widow, Toni Weisskopf, is collecting donations for the education of his grandchildren, at 196 Alps Rd. #2-385, Athens GA 30606.



Remembering Hank

Greg Benford

I heard of Hank Reinhardt's death while at the Jules Verne conference in Nantes, France. The resonance could not be more profound. Hank believed in our future. He wanted to live there.

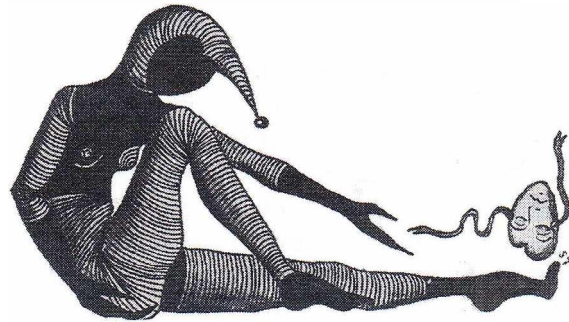
I met him when I was 13, at the only meeting of the Atlanta SF Organization I attended. That meeting thrilled me and my brother Jim: here were *fanzines*, published by people who knew *the one true genre*. Yes, I thought: *Dreams made solid*.

Hank stood square at the center of the meeting, older and solid and wise. The first fan we ever met.

He has been solidly there for me all my life. He had the right ideas and the rough wit I respected. He came from the same hard origins, knew more and knew how to tell it. I could always count on him. Funny, smart, opinionated as are we all—and often right.

Damn, I'm going to miss him.

THE CHORUS LINES



From the Mike Resnick listserv:

John Teehan

jdteeahan@sdf.lonestar.org

I just stumbled upon an interesting bit of trivia. While doing some preliminary research on a short article on superhero names, I discovered a claim on Wikipedia that Guy Gardner, the Green Lantern of Earth (late 80s to early 90s) was named after our own Guy Lillian III and Gardner Fox. This may be old news to some, but new to me. Seems kind of big to me to have a comic book superhero named after oneself – even one as flaky as GG.

Guy, have you ever written anything about this? Or care to make some comments?

Julie Schwartz, under whose editorial guidance the Silver Age Green Lantern came to be, never told me Guy Gardner was named after me and Mr. Fox, but then he never told me he wasn't, either. So ... Sure he was!

And let's not forget Lex Luthor's late mother on Smallville ...

Now, about Challenger #26 ...

Earl Kemp

earlkemp@citlink.net

It's really a heavy, impressive zine. It's really crammed full of The Good Stuff! It's not only informative; it's enjoyable and a real keeper.

The Benfords' "Asia Emerging" was a very good read, at times almost making me want to have been going along with them on their fantastic trip. I have visited a few of the places they stopped at, but never Sri Lanka. I first met Arthur Clarke in 1952, I believe it was, at Beastley's on the Lake (a.k.a. Midwestcon) in Ohio. Our paths crossed a few times after that and, once he moved to Ceylon, we continued corresponding for a while. Hard to believe he's

90...and I'm still sooooo young. Great Charlie Williams artwork too.

"When Funny Got More Laughs Than Dirty," by Michael Resnick, was also a good read. I liked it better than "Homes Away From Home."

Your "A Show of Hands" was the most impressive piece in the whole issue for me. It was extremely well written...an example of what reporting should be like ... carrying all kinds of subtle undertones along with the narrative. I liked especially your comments about Alexei Panshin, both in the article and in the LOCs. To my way of thinking, Panshin *is* The No. 1 Authority on Heinlein, regardless of Heinlein's opinion. Besides, his doesn't count any more and mine does.

Alexei has done more than any single person to enshrine RAH as a master scribe ... only he made the mistake of being honest about it. Honesty is the one thing that RAH could never handle. Even now he's probably rolling around in his grave demanding total control. Such a pathetic person.

Alexei, Joseph Major, and I are currently having a bit of fun about the upcoming RAH major celebration for several days in two major big-time hotels. Going through the program book we're looking for things relating to RAH the man and find almost nothing...only things related to praising him as some sort of made-up mythical figure created by ass-kissers who have nothing better to do.

Of the entire list of names of people allegedly attending or participating, only three are recognizably old-line SF Related ... Arthur Clarke, Fred Pohl, and David Gerrold. I seriously doubt if Clarke will make the event and Pohl might not know why he's there ... leaving only one possibility and David's always there, pen in hand, ready to sign most anything...

Not one name known to be an authority on RAH and his works is visible anywhere.

It's sure to be a wonderful affair.

*Something tells me you don't really mean that.
The Heinlein Centennial is past, now. Anyone
attend? How'd it go?*

Gary Robe's "How I Escaped My Peruvian Kidnappers" was a delightful read, even though obviously tense for him at times. Fortunately he was ready to do physical battle if necessary. Something I was not able to contemplate when I was scooped up by the Dreaded Peruvian Secret Police (I'd rather face them any day than street hoods) in Lima airport awaiting departure, hustled into a bare interrogation room, searched and quizzed on the subject of why I had too much money on me.

Too much? I never knew there was such a thing, especially on a month long leisurely vacation. It actually involved much the same as Robe's problems, an inability to use Soles (Peruvian currency) any where except within Peru. It has *no* value internationally.

And I was leaving and I had my pockets full of Soles and going through the airport shops just buying things to get rid of it. That's when I was picked up and taken away.

After about an hour of that third degree, with the airplane waiting, loaded on the runway for me, the pilot and chief stewardess (Argentine Airlines by the way) came to the secret police interrogation room, pounded on the door and demanded either my immediate release or lock me up because the plane would wait no longer.

At the time I was loaded down not only with Soles, but with illegal pre-Columbian art (all erotic), pockets stuffed with cocaine leaves...and a money belt ... and a bunch of bills ... all legal and all mine. The police let me go and I grabbed up my stuff and ran, hand in hand with the pilot and stewardess to the plane, onto the plane, amid loud cheers from the irritated, waiting passengers, and it took off immediately.

With the Soles that I couldn't use at all anywhere else, I bought all the wine on the plane and had it passed out to the passengers.

It is not possible to not like Curt Phillips' "A Tucker Story ... and A Tucker Story." It is not possible to not like Bob Tucker.

What can I say except that you made my day?

Alexei Panshin

bzorp@entermail.net

Thanks for the followup on your Shootout piece.

Tom Collins sent me his account, which you saw on stencil, in the form of a limited circulation fanzine, *Transient* 31, dated 29 May 1974. He also sent me your account in *Transient* 34, no date, but clearly done shortly afterward. The two mimeographed versions, now beginning to flake at the corners, have been in my Heinlein folder ever since.

I don't agree with everything you've written. Particularly, you characterize my actions and motivations in ways that I wouldn't. For instance, in the original – which is the account I think at this moment that I'd prefer to follow precisely because it was closer to the event – you say: "Panshin left with Collins." That is what happened. Heinlein repeated, "Good day, sir." It was clear he didn't intend to talk with me, and I saw no point in argument, so I left with my wife and Tom. In the new version, you change this to: "Panshin *fled*. There is no other word for it." Dear me – fled, did I? And there are other things you say in this version that seem like projections to me – how you think you would have felt, but not necessarily how I did feel.

But I don't want to "correct" you. I simply want to post what various people who were there had to say about the event at the time. To the extent that my own home movie goes differently, that will be expressed in my own account.

As Tom Collins said after publishing what you wrote: "As often happens with conflicting versions of an event, the truth is likely not either, but some combination of both. Reconciling our differences, and determining whether Guy's account supports or undermines some of my own conclusions, is left as an exercise for the indefatigable reader should there be any so inclined."

The incident from 1974 was still being discussed at the last L.A. Con. Your understanding of why this is so – and the different perspectives people bring to the event – is generous. Speaking of Tom Collins, I hope he won't mind my saying how much I've valued his friendship since our days at UC Berkeley.

Joseph T. Major
1409 Christy Avenue
Louisville, Kentucky 40204-2040
E-mail: jtmajor@iglou.com
<http://members.iglou.com/jtmajor>

I've been beginning to wonder about the *Bowling Alone* thesis. Robert Putnam was discussing the erosion of "social capital" — how the neighborhood is eroding, so to speak. The network of social groups that cushioned the family and directed it — the "village" that it takes to raise a child, so to speak, and I bet you recognize that — has been eroded away.

The Internet, far from providing a global village, has turned out to be a dividing, or perhaps fracturing feature. To veer off on a tangent, consider the problem of anorexia. Previously, while a girl might be faced with skinny models, she would also have not only a family but school organizations, social groups, and other local organizations that would say, "You don't look well." Now, she retreats to her room, logs on to her anorexia chat room, checks out the anorexia vlogs, surfs from anorexia site to anorexia site, and is confirmed in her belief that having all her bones visible is a step in the right direction.

And so, while heretofore Cho Seng-hui would have dealt face to face with other people, now he could be Ismail Ax, the coolest player in Second Life. One is all image, with no there there beneath; and eventually the image will collide with reality.

It is particularly poignant for us because it did touch us. Once we had dreams of altering the world. There were the political ones, the Michelists who would forge a new future. There were the scientific ones. Now, we realize we can't even change the community. Perhaps that encourages retreating into manufactured dreams.

I can't say much against any of the trip reports here. But I do remember that *Lan's Lantern* declined when it got into running nothing but long trip reports, with little if anything to do with SF.

Resnick could mention a really good example of his thesis about "When Funny Got More Laughs Than Dirty" — the movie *The Aristocrats*, a number of comedians (add quotes if you like) all telling their own versions of the same joke about a vaudeville performance of gross

sexual acts, done by a team calling itself "The Aristocrats".

There's a website devoted to that gag-worthy gag.

"A Show of Hands": I think the operative relationship here was power. If you had to have something from RAH, he could graciously grant it. If RAH wanted something from you, that was an imperative. Writers should be read, and not met, as Will Cuppy said.

Unfortunately, the adulators are still around, mostly talking to one another and thinking they are an entire universe. Their response to Earl Kemp's recounting of his nightmarish experiences was that these were old fogies who didn't matter. Not one bothered to respond to Earl.

Fred Lerner: I bet you were at MidAmeriCon, too. I was reminded of how much things have changed when I ran across their lavish Program Book (hardback! Unique!) [*all hail Tom Reamy!*] and saw that there was basically one and a half program tracks. L.A.con had over 1000 program items.

But then how little we knew. The big thing at MidAmeriCon was their play. That preview room for that flick called "The Star Wars" hardly got mentioned ...

I sat two or three rows behind the Heinleins at that play — "Sails of Moonlight, Eyes of Dusk" — and noticed that RAH's head sank onto his chest in the second act. I agreed; I liked the first segment (Twig) and the costumes, but staggered out stupefied before the curtain. As for the panel on "The Star Wars", that's where I met Mark Hamill — terrific dude.

Thank you for the [*Hugo nomination*] congratulations. And congratulations to you yourself for your like accomplishment.

We'll get 'em next year.

In re *To Kill a Mockingbird*: do you prefer Catherine Keener (*Capote*) or Sandra Bullock (*Infamous*)?

Keener and Capote. Though she and Seymour Hoffman didn't physically resemble Harper Lee and Truman Capote as well as did Bullock — great nose — and Toby Jones, their performances were much, much stronger. When their characters shared a screen I nearly wept, seeing so much talent in one place. Capote has it all over Infamous, anyway: one is about the terrible demands of the writing art, the other an insipid gay love story; one is an invaluable companion

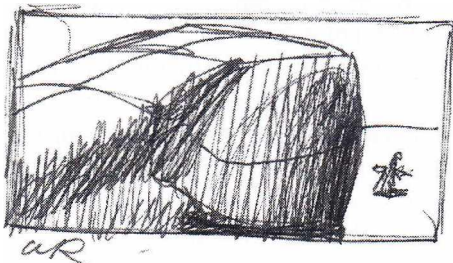
piece to *In Cold Blood*, the other barely watchable.

Hugo nomination pins: Evelyn Leeper used to attach all of hers to her badge, until it got to the point where her badge was being pulled off.

John Purcell: Someday in the course of moving books around the house I will find the Pohl collection with the story about the ultimate euphoric. It was a drug that was easy to make, utterly soothing, and totally non-addictive. As a result, no one ever got off it, since they could at any moment. (There is physical addiction and psychological addiction.) So, with the technological advances available these days it is so easy to do a knock-'em-dead fanzine that everyone is going to do one RealSoonNow.

Mary Ann van Hartesveldt
209 Oak Street
Fort Valley GA 30310

Thank you so much for printing my article on Scientology in issue #25. I got an enormous charge out of the positive comments



from your readers. Thanks also for running my self-portrait in issue #26. It's nice to remember that I once looked like that.

I didn't know you drew that yourself! And I could have sworn it was done from life just this year...

Greg Benford, for whom I have a lot of respect, *cannot* have meant to say that America is "an underpopulated country." No one who has driven across Atlanta in rush hour could believe such a thing. In the last 200 years we have lost 50% of our wetlands, 90% of our northwestern old-growth forests, and 99% of our tall grass prairie. Every day about nine square miles of rural land is lost to development. Georgia, Florida, and Alabama are battling over dwindling water resources and that conflict is repeated all over the country. We may not be as

overpopulated as some Asian nations, but we are a long, long way from being underpopulated.

I must take exception to Jeffrey Copeland's idea that mental health service providers should be held responsible when those whom they treat commit crimes. The result of such a policy would be that there simply would be no mental health services available at all. Want to see what that is like? Visit Georgia. For the bulk of the population, whose insurance coverage for mental health treatment is severely limited or nonexistent, there might as well be no psychiatric clinics. The result is enormous suffering by people with serious brain disorders and their family members.

I greatly enjoyed Greg Benford's article on Carl Sagan. The man was such a voice of reason. I thought of him a few weeks ago, when there was a tragic case in the headlines in Georgia. A couple was charged with murder in the death by starvation of their infant son. The father had screwball ideas about nutrition, and when relatives urged the couple to take the baby to a doctor, the father refused. He didn't believe in doctors. The jury sent both parents to prison. In effect, they said, "No, you can't ignore scientific facts and make up your own fantasies about medicine and science, and enforce them on others." But how many of those jurors support teaching creationism in the public schools? We have had free, compulsory public education in the South for almost a century, but you wouldn't know it from reading the paper.

Creationism, whatever its faults, doesn't kill people. As for the reasons behind its popularity, check out Greg Benford's "Law of Controversy" earlier on this issue.

Martin Morse Wooster
P.O. Box 8093
Silver Spring MD 20007

Many thanks for *Challenger* #26. Mike Resnick says that Writers Guild members summoned to Los Angeles to meet with producers have to by contract, "be flown first class, driven by limo, all meals paid for, and stay in five-star hotels." Gee, how can I get a contract like that? I'm lucky if someone pays me to stay in a Motel 6! But I do like Resnick's stories of the high life, and I hope

he has many more of them to share with *Challenger* readers.

As for your comments about “the only duty of an artist is to tell the truth” – well, again, artists shouldn’t kowtow to a finicky public or ham-handed editors. But reasonable editing and reasonable requests from fans ought to be taken in stride. Of course fen can sometimes be swill; I remember in the great documentary *Trekkies* DeForest Kelley recalling how someone asked him for a blood sample “for my collection.” (Apparently, the doofus made the request more than once.)

I’d like to know who contributed to that collection.

But writers shouldn’t be like Anthony Burgess, who, I was told, would take any book sent to him for a signature and sell it. I just read a profile of Sir Paul McCartney in *The New Yorker* where McCartney explained that he’ll happily sign anything admirers bring him, but he won’t allow any photos. That seems fair to me.

You interviewed Robert A. Heinlein! Can I touch you? [No!] But seriously, “A Show of Hands” was a good piece, and I’m glad you dusted it off. I’m sure you’ll hear from Heinlein fans about it – and I hope you don’t hear from those who think their hero was flawless. (And do you still just collect the autographs of Hugo winners, or have your tastes changed?)

*If you ever read **Challenger** #1, you’ll read how I wasted much of my first worldcon – in 1969 – bugging writers to sign their books. A fan could spend the whole con doing that. So now that I have better things to do at a convention, I only go out of my way to get autographs on award winners ... or classics ... or first novels ... or anything else that catches my eye. FAN BOY FOREVER!*

I’m sure many of the comedians Mike Resnick speaks of were really funny. (I know the names of at least half of them.) But where is someone who is interested in these comedians going to hear their work? How many radio stations broadcast comedy? Many record stores have cut their comedy sections to a bare minimum. So it’s perfectly understandable that no one under the age of 60 has ever heard the work of Severn Darden or Mina Kolb.

Greg Benford is right that no one has really replaced Carl Sagan, and that Sagan did

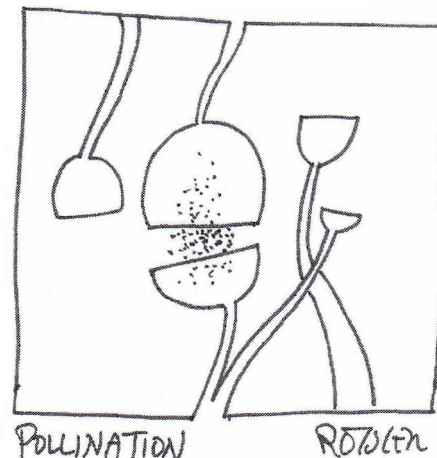
more good than harm. But isn’t the reason there’s no Sagan successor the natural reluctance of professors to popularize their work? Britain has many “TV dons” who are good at popularizing history. We certainly need more scientists who are good at explaining science to the public.

*Best I’ve seen as an adult, Jacob Bronowski of **The Ascent of Man**, but even he couldn’t compete with “Mr. Wizard”, Don Herbert, just recently passed beyond the physical world to the place where all things are known.*

Chris Garcia

Garcia@computerhistory.org

Susan Russell’s piece on the cover is a big switch from Taral’s cover for the last issue. Each works wonderfully in totally opposite areas.



It’s a great cover and one that stuck with me. It reminded me, probably intentionally, of the drawings from the 16th Century that ships would bring back of things they saw ... or thought they saw. A beast with a man’s head would fit right in on that scene.

One of the first books my Dad let me destroy from over-reading when I was a kid was the image books from Pioneer Saturn and Venus. There were some many impressive photos, and since my dad was 14 years, 11 months to the day when Man came to the Moon, he was always a giant space buff. I read those books over and over, and on Space Mountain in Disneyland, I’d always stay behind because on the way out there were photos from those books on the wall and I’d just stare at them over and over. I’ve never managed to see much in the skies myself, but I love being

in areas where I actually can see a blanket of stars. It's one of the reasons I like driving to and from Vegas in the dark hours of the morning.

I rail at myself for forgetting to look for M31 the last time I was out on the desert – what a perfect opportunity to find it. I have since (see elsewhere).

There's a strange collision of my worlds that has recently raised its head. A fannish friend of mine's being railroaded for a crime he didn't commit by a DA who is a friend of mine from a Film Festival I work with. It's rough, especially since I know he's innocent of the crimes because he was at a Con, but no amount of evidence seems to be enough. He's been sitting in jail, waiting for his trial for almost five months now.

I must know details.

I had to explain Virginia Tech to The Little One, who was just in preparation for her 8th Birthday Party. Not an easy task for a girl who knows almost nothing of human death yet. It wasn't easy, but I got her to the point of understanding that I suspect she'll try and find out more as she grows. She also recently asked about the IRA and I had to explain that to her. That was harder. It's easy for a kid to understand a single gunman full of rage shooting people than to grasp the political fortunes of two countries and their people.

That's a great illustration with the Benford piece. I love stuff like that! It sounds like a wonderful visit and it's another thing I'm fairly certain I'll never get to do. I'm not a good flyer and even something as simple as getting to St. Louis by air, which I'll be doing in a couple of months, requires a lot of mental prep. I gotta agree with ACC about one thing: We should be building a space elevator instead of fighting with each other.

*Well put. As you know from reading **The Antipodal Route**, my DUFF report, I too am a lousy air traveler, and look forward to hearing how you handle transatlantic travel should you win TAFF.*

Mike Resnick talks about something that I know a lot about: comedians. Mort Sahl was hilarious and a deep wit, but it's comedy that has aged poorly. Lenny Bruce still holds up. Far better than anyone else on the list with the possible exception of Tom Lehrer. A few folks at my college wrote a musical using various Lehrer

songs and Tom blessed it. I've never gotten to meet him despite his nearness to me both when I was living in Boston and out here in the BArea. I never had much use for Mike Nichols or Elaine May. Ernie Kovacs and Sid Caesar were OK, but both were ground-breaking TV. Jonathan Winters changed comedy forever. Without him, there's no Robin Williams and most likely no Steve Wright or Mitch Hedberg, both of whom are modern geniuses. Woody Allen was a great stand-up and there's a recording of his time at the hungry i out there that's fantastic. Sadly, Mike leaves out my three faves of the 1950/60s: Richard Pryor, Bill Cosby and Freddy Roman. They wrote their own jokes and can still knock a guy on his ass on CD. I did a little stand-up and some improv in my day, but I always liked the idea of the Algonquin Round Table: be funny when you're with your friends. Laughter around a dinner table is equal to all the performances you could ever give. There are still great comics. Mitch was one, and Steven Lynch, a musician and comic, is another. If you've never seen Dan Lustrum you're missing out as he's one of the greatest political wits ever. Plus you've got Louis Black and Maria Bamford too.

I must figure out how to get Julia Morgan-Scott to do some art for me. That piece with "Salad for Breakfast" is brilliant. Eve's article is really great too. I've always wanted to go to Israel, but again that whole flying thing. It's nothing but trouble, I tell you. I really keep kosher, though once in a while I make it a week or two, but my Grandparents have in the past forced it on us for various periods of time. These things happen.

I've only met Astrid Anderson Bear a few times. Nice woman. I've got one of her old fanzines in my traveling collection. The illo of the Bat and the Bitten was a great one too. I've seen the photo of it so often, but that's a much better interpretation. *[All hail Charlie Williams.]*

Also a shoutout to the Little Men. We're having the first Little Men meeting in years at Westercon in a few weeks.

It's not easy being a guy who has never been able to fully appreciate Bobby Heinlein. I don't know why, but I can't get into him.

Carl Sagan was an important figure for making science that was honestly beyond most people seem like something everyday and

understandable. Greene is the closest thing we have today. *Nova* is still on PBS, promoting science as a popular distraction and sometimes succeeding. There is a need for a new scientist to come forward and try and make particular areas of science interesting. For a large portion of Sagan's life, he had Dr. Asimov also speaking and publishing popular science-type books. Wolfram was doing the same for math, Ted Nelson for computers. There was a backbone of popular science types and now there are few. We're cutting the chances of another great pure scientist coming up by not having enough of the Big Name Scientists around.

I'm not the kind of guy who could keep his head on straight in a situation like being kidnapped in Peru. I could barely keep my head on when there's a traffic jam in Mountain View. That was also a great illo from Kurt. I've been lucky enough to get a few pieces from Mr. Erichsen and he's on my list for every major award for next year. It's weird that every year a long-standing fan artist seems to change slightly and makes a solid impact. Last year was Brad Foster and this year it seems to be Kurt. I'm not sure how, I'd have a hard time pinpointing it, but it really seems like his stuff is different of late and we're all the better for it!

So let's get him – and Alan White, and Marc Schirmeister, and Charlie Williams, and Randy Cleary, and and and – a Hugo nomination next year!

The best hotel I've ever stayed at is the Hollywood Roosevelt. I've stayed at the Beverly Hills hotels of every stripe, mostly in suites (they put you up in them, four or five to a room, when you're working on movies) the Presidential at the Four Seasons, St. Francis and Palace in SF and the Millennium Broadway and Caesar's Private floor in Vegas, and nowhere comes close to the Roosevelt. I absolutely fell in love with the place. I stay there whenever I can.

Again another amazing illo for a great article. People's Park is still there. Now it's the hangout for drug dealers and has been a favorite place for sex pushers of all stripes. It's a shame, but every time any agency tries to clean the place up, the aging hippy community that has claimed "spiritual ownership" of the park rises up and thwarts it. They let it get as bad as it's gotten.

Great issue, Guy! I can't wait for the next one!

Richard Dengrove
2651 Arlington Drive, #302
Alexandria, VA 22306

My first comment has to do with the Virginia Tech incident, which you and others wrote about so eloquently. I feel for the fans who lost children.

Nonetheless, I do have a problem with most analyses of that tragedy. We can wring our hands all we want about socio-economic-politic-cultural woes until doomsday; but let's face it: it could happen under any socio-economic, etc. Seung-Hui Cho was a nut; and nuts, we will always have with us. In fact, there will always be people who want to kill a lot of other people. And where there's a will there's a way.

I admit Cho might not have done it if he wasn't so alienated. Cho did not have the social controls in college that had reined him in in high school. He was even in therapy on a regular basis in high school. Also, I admit Cho might not have done it if it had been more difficult for him to get his hands on weapons.

However, we can overdo alienation and access to weaponry as reasons. At all times, Cho had people who were rooting for him and sought to rein him in. Furthermore, even in trigger happy Virginia, there were some controls on firearm ownership. Cho just slipped through the cracks.

I bet someone could under whatever are optimal social conditions.

Next, I want to comment on your article on meeting Heinlein. There, once again, Heinlein claimed he didn't rewrite. I believe Isaac Asimov. He claimed Heinlein admitted to him that he rewrote plenty. I can't see how any writer can get along without rewriting.

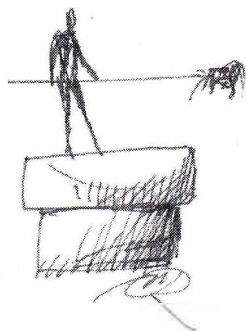
I bet, in other ways, that tough old naval officer could be a put-on. For instance, when he claimed there was no difference between *Stranger in a Strange Land* and *Starship Troopers*. There is a world of difference. In addition, I gather he wasn't working on both novels at exactly the same time. According to Joe Major's book, he had worked on *Stranger* since the '40s.

Next, I want to comment on Mike Resnick's article on mega-luxurious, mega-expensive hotels. Somehow or other, through the

power of free association, I was reminded of two hotels I once stayed at. There was one on Eye Street in Washington, D.C. I hear it was where the Peace Corps deposited its workers after their tour. Some of the rooms smelled something awful. But what could you expect for \$15 a night?

However, that wasn't the very pits. The very pits was a place I stayed at in France for about 60¢ a night. That included the price of a beer. I doubt it had been stayed at for several years because you had to clear away six inches of dust from the bed.

After discoursing on hotels, I would like to comment to Lloyd Penney on the Martian canals. I agree the universe is a colder, duller place because the canals were exposed as an illusion. However, we shouldn't look to the facts for romance. Their job is to allow you to avoid open manhole covers.



What we should look to for romance are our fantasies, our whimsies, our conceits, and Edgar Rice Burroughs. The argument against doing that is that our fantasies, our whimsies, etc. don't exist. Of course, they do. I have them all the time.

Furthermore, I would like to thank Robert Kennedy for complimenting me on my review of Joe Major's *Heinlein's Children*. While I am at it, I would like to respond to John Purcell on his view of Heinlein. He says he never cared for Heinlein's sprawling tomes of the '60s and '70s. I have to answer: Who does?

Finally, I would like to comment on your article about the People's Park. I suspect Reagan's men believed that toughness was a cure-all. While that struck them as realism, it is in reality as sentimental as any warm and fuzzy conceit.

It is just one more failed attempt at a substitute for common sense. In the case of the People's Park, they sought to cow the hippies and New Leftists into submission; instead, they created symbols and martyrs.

John Purcell
3744 Marielene Circle
College Station, TX 77845
j_purcell54@yahoo.com

I could easily go on forever with a loc about your latest issue. There is so much to comment on!

When I first heard of the Virginia Tech tragedy, everyone on the campus where I teach was shocked and stunned. Almost immediately our college administrators were examining school policies toward student behavioral issues and the appropriate responses. Then I heard that Jamie Bishop was one of the victims. Now, I had never met Jamie, but had met Michael Bishop at a long ago convention. As a father myself, I cannot begin to imagine how Mike feels. My heart goes out to the Bishop family. Thank you for sharing the address of the Jamie Bishop Scholarship. This is a cause worthy of contribution.

Now that I have a chance to meet, relax, and talk with Greg Benford, reading his travelogue was a fascinating look into the various cultures of Asia that he and Elisabeth visited. It still blows me away to think that they were sitting on the beach of Sri Lanka with Sir Arthur C. Clarke. If that had been me there instead of Greg, I would have been so tongue-tied it would have been pathetic.

The other Benford piece in here reminds me that my next door neighbor when I was a kid, Ron Keith, attended Cornell College as an astrophysics major and Carl Sagan was Ron's doctoral advisor. When my dad learned this, he asked Ron if his doctoral dissertation was a ten-minute spot on the *Tonight Show with Johnny Carson*. Also, I just double-checked: Dr. Keith is an Associate Professor of Physics at Emporia State University in Kansas. Good to see that he's doing well.

One other thing I'd like to say - even though, as mentioned, there is so much good stuff in this issue - is that I agree with Mike Resnick that modern stand-ups don't really make me laugh that much. Having a foul mouth does not equate for funny, unless the comic uses it judiciously for great effect. The best example I can think of is when I was watching a Bill Cosby HBO special with my folks at their Utah home back in the mid-80s, and Cosby was doing a bit about smoking marijuana. Someone had told him that smoking

dope enhanced your natural self, and Cosby responded with, "But what if your natural self is an asshole?" It killed the audience, plus it was the only bad language that he used during the entire hour-long show. Well, there may have been an occasional "damn" or "hell," but Cosby made his mark by telling very funny stories about his family and friends. Great material that just isn't covered anymore, and I miss that kind of humor.

I get your point, and Mike's, but I must confess to hapless lust for Sarah Silverman and to enjoying Kathy Griffin's potty-mouthed flailings from the D-list.

Finally, thank you for reprinting that Tucker article, "How Dull Was My Weekend." It serves to beautifully illustrate how Tucker wrote with such wonderful humorous effect. Keeping Lee Hoffman's illustrations with it was a perfect touch, too. This was greatly appreciated. Thank you, Guy.

Mark Plummer

mark.fishlifter@googlemail.com

This is something of an iron/striking/hot response to *Challenger* – or specifically to Taral's letter in "The Chorus Line". He says:

"At the moment I lag far behind Stu's record – six nominations and losses – but so far as I know that's as bad as it gets. Of course, plenty of fan editors, writers, and artists have had more nominations, but I think one or more wins as well. Do any of your readers have enough time on their hands to ransack their own program books to compile actual stats?"

Well, personally, no, but the good folk at *Locus* online have already done the work for us. See: <http://www.locusmag.com/SFAwards/Db/HugoTallies.html>

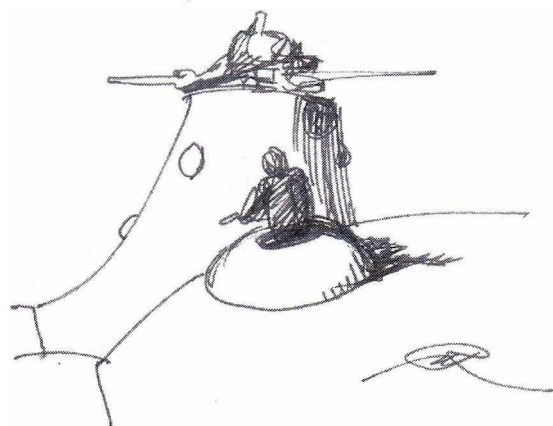
This puts Stanley Schmidt at the top of the list of never-winners (29), but in the fan categories the questionable laurels are shared between Arthur Hlavaty and Evelyn C Leeper with 12 nominations. I was surprised to see that the biggest (so to speak) loser is actually Mike Glyer, although he does have eight rockets to balance his 39 non-winning nominations. Even more remarkably, Dave Langford is joint sixth on this list, having lost almost as many Hugos as he's won.

It's good to have something to aim for, isn't it?

As of Nippon, I've lost ten. Look out, Arthur, I'm right behind you!

And in regards to my DUFF report, The Antipodal Route ...

I'm a big fan of substantial trip reports, whether as a result of fan fund or otherwise, but I have a special affection for accounts of journeys through Australian fandom.



We've been to Australia four times now, most recently this June, and I'd certainly second Naomi Fisher's praise for Adelaide as both a city to visit and a fine fannish centre. But as you suggest, there's just so much of the country and so many places and people to see that you can only cover a small fraction unless you're in a position to take one of these epic multi-month trips of which most of us can only dream. Thus, for instance, we've never made it across to Perth or anything else in WA, something I particularly regret as Perth fandom seems to be such a distinct entity. Maybe one day, although we usually try to coincide our trips with conventions – get to see the maximum number of fans that way – and Swancons tend to be at Easter which means they clash with our own national convention.

And on a recent issue of The Zine Dump ...

Now just a small gripe, in the nicest possible way. Please can you update our address in whatever records you keep. This bundle of stuff went to Claire's old house which hasn't been her mailing address since 2004. As you can tell, it still reached us – the current occupant is a friend – but if it had gone to my old address it would probably have vanished forever as my post office forwarding has long since run out. Thing is, I have mentioned this before, at least once and possibly

twice in response to you kind notices in *The Zine Dump*. God, even Rodney Leighton has noticed that you haven't noticed – his review of *The Zine Dump* in the last *Knarley Knews* – and he's not even on our mailing list.

Mea maxima culpa ... that Zine Dump was based on an obsolete template which held your old address. It has been changed.

Shelby Vick

shelvy20012000@yahoo.com

It's obvious why *Challenger* has been nominated for and won so many awards. Number 26 is just another step in the same direction.

Understanding Virginia Tech and its like ... well, we just can't! It's not just that there's an irrational mind behind it (I can get pretty irrational myself, at times, as I imagine all of us can) but something beyond irrational.

Greg and Elisabeth Benford and Arthur C. Clarke and moving Sri Lanka five degrees; hey, that's quite a feat for Clarke to pull off! (One of the advantages of being a successful author!)

Mike Resnick got it square-on about Funny. I think there are many so-called "humorists" who'd be out of business if it wasn't for smut and filth. Of course, I'm old-fashioned; I still think Jack Benny is/was funny. Or, for that matter, Walt Willis.

And, speaking of humor, you reprinted that classic Tucker piece, "How Dull Was My Weekend". Great! ... But I must correct one item: Paul Cox and I did *not* pass out!

Brad W Foster

PO Box 165246

Irving, TX 75016

bwfoster@juno.com

<http://www.jabberwockygraphix.com>

Looking through *Challenger* #26, (and so much nicer for us old-school zinesters to flip through a copy than try to scroll a screen. I am *so* old!), I hit Taral's letter. Teddy Harvia started up a fantastic site to track all nominations and wins for all categories of the Hugo awards, though he has not up-dated it for the last year or two. Still, a great source of info. Titled "Hugo History at a Glance", check it out any time at http://web2.airmail.net/tharvia/hugos_at_a_glance.html. We need to get a campaign going of people writing to Teddy to get him to update the thing!

The core of Mike Resnick's problem with comics being remembered or forgotten seems to revolve around anyone who performs in an unrecorded medium. There is brilliant stuff being done all the time, now as well as back then, but if it is not recorded in some way for people to see/hear it later, of course those people will be forgotten over time. Sad but true. I knew just about every name on all of his lists.

There were also a lot of bad comics back when those great ones were performing. There are also a lot of great comics today, not just the couple of examples he gives of how bad things are. But then, I am a fan of funny, often leaving the Comedy Central channel on in the background while I am working in my studio, and when they do a day of stand-ups, treated to hundreds of clever observations along with some of the poor ones. Many of those great comics I have seen/heard *only* in that one recorded performance that showed up. Movie stars are remembered more than theater actors because we can watch them again and again. It's the only reason some people have ongoing fame, and some are forgotten.

Great to see you at Shrivelport's Red River Revel!

Lloyd Penney

1706-24 Eva Rd.

Etobicoke, ON

Canada M9C 2B2

A nice, big slab of paper labeled *Challenger* 26 arrived about a week or so ago...I guess Canada Post had to sniff it good to make sure nothing bad was arriving before handing it on to me.

I agree that there's nothing as wonderful to see as deep space photos, usually courtesy of the Hubble telescope. We see the depth of creation, and our increasing understanding of what's out there. And yes, we also see the depth of human beings, and how low some of them can go. There's been times I'd happily change my species, for I'm quite fed up with my current one. Why did we call it common sense when it seems to be so uncommon? We're just too eager to kill each other, too happy to massacre others because we're angry or unhappy or frustrated, yet we consider life sacred. How hypocritical we are.

Arthur C. Clarke is someone I would like to meet. I know the deck is stacked against me, but still, it's good to know that while aged, he is

still doing well. I had hoped to see at least one of the Benford brothers at the International Space Development Conference in Dallas ... perhaps the next one we go to, which will probably be in Orlando in 2009. Carl Sagan is someone I'd wanted to meet, too. Popular scientists like Bill Nye, and in Canada David Suzuki, make science fun, accessible and understandable. Sagan did that, too, but got little reward for his efforts.

*I disagree about that, unless world fame and the opportunity not only to create **Cosmos** and **Contact** but the Pioneer and Voyager plaques are considered "little reward."*

The feature on Astrid Bear reminds me of our own costuming days. Yvonne and I competed in Worldcon masquerades in the early to mid-80s. The Spirits of Fire, Young King Neptune and Pet, and our award-winning Royal Canadian Mounted StarFleet. We had a good time, but it soured quickly when some of the people we competed against forgot that the competition was supposed to be friendly. We left masquerade in the late 80s entirely because of backstabbing and people screaming in our faces, and all the fun was gone.

Tom Feller's article on insurance in post-K NOLA is timely ... I've so much footage of wide-spread flooding in England. There may be the opportunity to learn something here.

All award systems are flawed in that no matter when happens some measure of bias can creep in. They are inherently subjective. So, any complaints about the Hugos or FAAns or Auroras or any other award should be taken with a grain of salt. Fan programming is also subjective, but many worldcons are almost unaware of what fan programming consists of. IIRC, Torcon 3 had almost no fan programming, and a fanzine lounge I didn't find until the third day of the convention. There was some measure of fan programming at L.A.con IV, and Milt Stevens' great fanzine lounge.

Speaking of whom ...

Milt Stevens
6325 Keystone St.
Simi Valley, CA 93063
miltstevens@earthlink.net

The cover on *Challenger* #26 is quite impressive and definitely in keeping with the Yeats poem. That certainly looks like a rough

beast, and gloating seems to be an appropriate emotion. While that particular poem was written about Hitler, it always seems to be current. It's as if all of history has a sense of impending doom attached to it. Or at least, most of it.

I looked at The Atlas of the Universe [www.atlastoftheuniverse.com]. Wow! That's enough to make just about anyone feel tiny and insignificant. The universe is so much bigger than it used to be. Cosmology has proven to be a goshwow growth industry. If only you could invest in it...

Back in the early eighties, my then wife was taking Astronomy 1 at a local junior college. She asked me for some help on the course. I told her I'd like to help, but half of what was known about astronomy in 1980 hadn't been known when I took the course in 1960. What is known about astronomy now has probably doubled or tripled again since 1980.

I agree that looking at the night sky is always calming. When I was in the Navy out west I used to go up to primary air defense and look at the stars at night. I regularly took the 0330 to 0730 watch in main communications, so I'd usually go up there around 0300. We were usually running with a minimum of light which made for good observation. Sometimes we were conducting air ops at that time, and observation conditions weren't as good. Wars will come and wars will go, but the stars will outlast all of them.

My regard for Robert Heinlein was similar to yours. When I was a kid I thought writers and editors were godlike entities who resided in far off New York. After joining fandom, I discovered writers and editors were just as mortal as the rest of us and had just as many flaws. Even with that realization, Heinlein and Campbell still retained a certain godlike quality. Most mythic figures don't survive encounters with reality, but there can be exceptions.

Greg Benford's revelation about Carl Sagan not being admitted to the National Academy of Sciences was interesting in a strange way. Of course, I've heard of Carl Sagan. However, I don't think I've ever heard of the National Academy of Sciences before. I thought the French were the people who had national academies.

Reece Morehead
reecejb2001@yahoo.com

I just finished reading your interview with Alfred Bester in *Challenger* 25. I'm envious. I got to meet him at MidAmeriCon, too, for the first and only time. Alas, my experience was not a happy one. After hearing him at a panel discussion, I went up and asked if he would autograph my program book.

His response devastated me. He did sign it for me, so I supposed I can't really kick – unfortunately, he was so unpleasant that I was very taken aback. I was as polite to him as I was to any author/pro whose autograph I wanted; he acted as if I had just ordered him to give me a blow job there in front of hundreds of people. After he signed my book, I thanked him, then got away from him as fast as possible. I'm completely mystified three decades later as to why he behaved that way. He had been one of my most respected SF writers. I can't fathom his reaction to my request.

It was even worse than the time at the 1996 Dragoncon when I asked my favorite writer, Robert Anton Wilson, to autograph some of his books for me. I had gone to the convention specifically to see and hear him and get one or

more of his books autographed by him. When I spoke to him outside an elevator, he flatly refused. My wife, Susie, was so upset that she berated him for not autographing any of his books I had so lovingly brought with me. He still wouldn't.

C'est la vie. She badmouthed him for the rest of her life and practically spat his name every time I mentioned him. Most exceedingly strange, both times.

Bester was charming in his public appearances at MAC and polite to me. No way to know why he seemed offended when you saw him; perhaps it was nothing more than a bad moment.

As for Wilson, I don't know him, so am not qualified to comment on the seeming arrogance of his attitude. Whatever reason he had for denying you an autograph, he certainly owed you an explanation for refusing such a simple, harmless, and complimentary favor. Any SF writer who accepts the hospitality of a convention and then refuses to interact with fans should quit the arena.

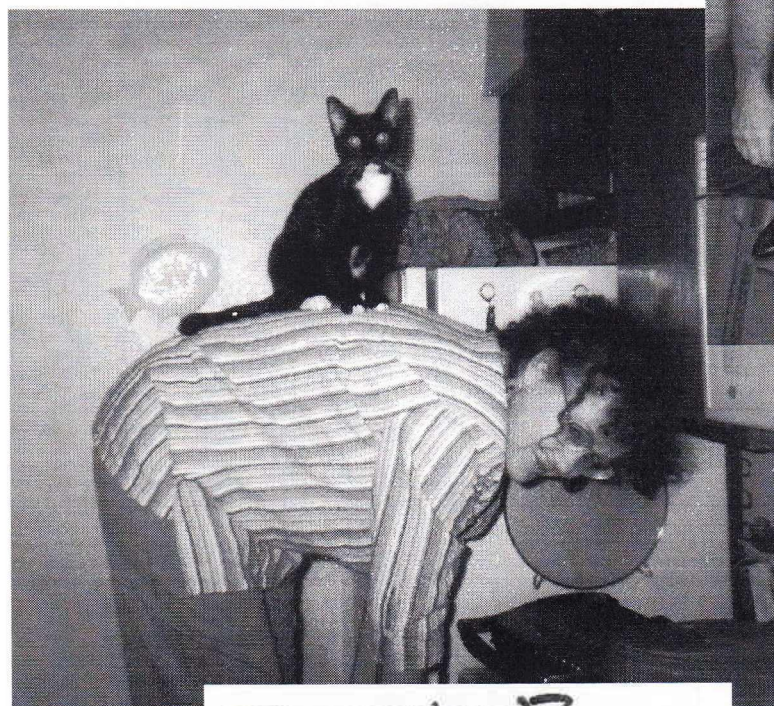
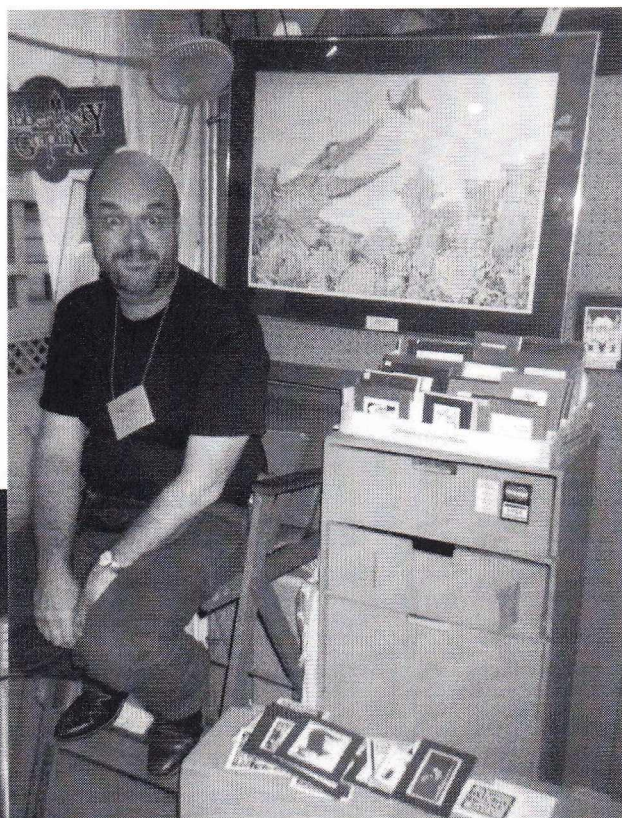
WAHFle House: Alison Burton, Bruce Gillespie, Barry Hunter, Julia Morgan-Scott, James Pelan (“the Galouye project is still alive”), Henry Welch



At Libertycon in Chattanooga, Mary Ann van Hartesveldt raised \$200.00 for the Memorial Scholarship Fund for Jamie Bishop, son of SF writer Michael Bishop, by selling fancy cakes and cookies. Those who wish to contribute to the fund can send a check to Gift Accounting, University Development, Jaime Bishop Memorial Scholarship, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA 24061.

A TALE OF TWO KITTIES ... & one Brad

Brad Foster appears for Shreveport's Red River Revel ... *la belle* provides support for our female cat, Whistler ... and at September's OutSideCon/DeepSouthCon, North Carolina's **Laura** and another kitty steal the show. Finally, the late Bill Rotsler has the last word ...



THIS FANZINE
IS OVER!
YOU WILL
LEAVE

