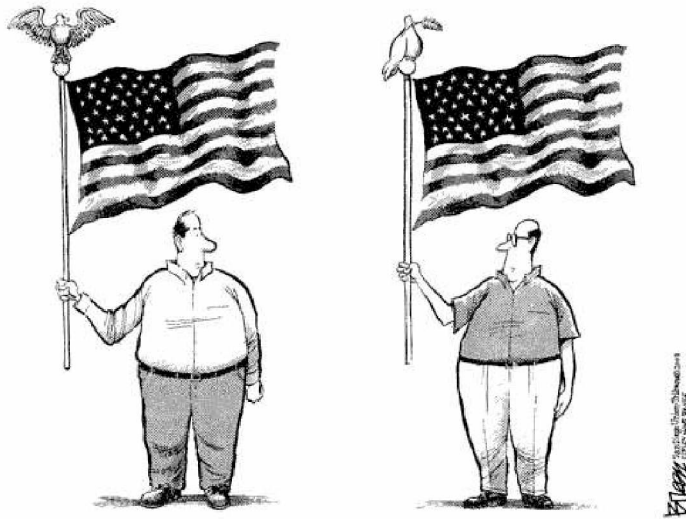




**Hello Kitty 40000** is the sixty-second SFPA-zine (volume two, number thirty-nine) from Jeffrey Copeland. It is intended for mailing number 232 of the Southern Fandom Press Alliance and selected others. The text of *Hello Kitty 40000* was composed using the T<sub>E</sub>X typesetting system, and is set in 11-point Palatino. It was published by Bywater Press, 3243 165<sup>th</sup> Ave, SE, Bellevue, Washington 98008, on 28 March 2003.





**A**ND SO IT BEGINS: After months of saber-rattling, weeks of threats to Security Council members, days of countdown, the second Bush's Iraqi war has begun. Even though the size of his coalition of the willing (even counting those countries who don't want their names revealed) is half that of the coalition which fought the first Gulf War.

As both the cartoon above and the cover imply, I am conflicted about this. I cannot believe that questioning this war is unpatriotic. On the other hand, we may be doing the right thing for all the wrong reasons.

Four things are required to wage a war. You must have a reason for which you're willing to go to war — Saddam Hussein has declared the *Anschluss* of Kuwait. You must have a triggering event — Archduke Ferdinand was shot.\* You must have clear completion criteria — Eisenhower's orders were very direct: "You will enter the continent of Europe and ... undertake operations aimed at the heart of Germany and the destruction of her armed forces." And you must have an idea of what happens afterward — we'll sit the Germans down at Versailles and make them sign an armistice that will bleed them dry.† ‡

If the Bush administration has a clear idea what any of these are, they are

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\* Though occasionally — the Tonkin Gulf incident comes to mind — it's a bogus one.

† Though occasionally, the aftermath gets made up on-the-fly, like the Marshall Plan.

‡ Alan Prince Winston, who read and provided helpful criticism on a very early draft of these arguments, was kind enough to point out that adherence to these four principles allows you to even launch a War on Poverty or a War on Drugs and stand a chance of them being successful.



not sharing them. The public pronouncements have changed so frequently in the run-up to this conflagration it is almost a Monty Python sketch: *Our main demand is disarmament. And regime change. Our two main demands are disarmament and regime change. And turning over all members of al Queda.*<sup>o</sup> *Our three main demands are disarmament, regime change, and turning over all members of al Queda. And democracy for the Iraqi people. Among our demands...*

We have heard a lot of excuses for this war. But I have yet to hear anything like a reason. David Belasco said it best: "If you can't write your idea on the back of my calling card, you don't have a clear idea." Nothing I've heard is that simple or concise.

Even ignoring that we haven't finished the job in Afghanistan, there are other serious international problems that we are ignoring in our rush against Saddam Hussein. The Bush administration, in its determination to throw out anything that Bill Clinton was involved with, withdrew from our agreements with North Korea, agreements that gave North Korea fuel oil and food in exchange for turning off their nuclear programs under international monitoring. North Korea has missiles that can reach Alaska, Seattle, and possibly San Francisco. Even the wildest estimates of Iraq's missile capability doesn't allow them to toss a warhead farther than Israel. North Korea probably has one or two nuclear warheads in storage, and could be turning them out at the rate of one a month. They also have a history of selling weapons to Arab states — the US recently stopped a ship in the Persian Gulf containing North Korean missiles bound for Yemen. Our preoccupation with Iraq also causes us to ignore both Russia, with their unaccounted-for weapons of mass destruction, and Iran, which has restarted its own nuclear program.

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<sup>o</sup> Pop quiz: How many of the September 11th hijackers were Iraqi? Zero. How many were citizens of our "coalition partner" Saudi Arabia? Fifteen. Half the American population thinks those numbers are reversed.



Because our government did not want to do the homework that the first Bush administration did, we have managed to damage the UN, NATO, and our relationships with the EU. There has been a fair amount of French-bashing going on, which is undeserved — the French and Germans have been backfilling the American forces on the ground in Afghanistan; the Germans, despite their opposition to this war, are providing troops to defend Turkey against Iraq; France and Germany have rolled up more al Qaeda cells and tried more members than the US has.<sup>°</sup> Even though the French and Germans have been no better at clearly outlining their objections to this war than the United States has been at outlining their reasons for it, the way in which we blew them off will cost us when it comes time to rebuild.

Nonetheless, Saddam Hussein is an evil man. I have consistently argued in these pages that he should have been stripped of his weapons of mass destruction after the Gulf War, and it was happening under the UN inspection programs. I would have liked to have seen one of two things happen after the 1998 withdrawal of inspectors: either continue bombing each and every suspected weapons site, or forcible continuation of the inspections. Neither happened.

As I say above, this means it is entirely possible that George Bush is doing the right thing, even if it's for the completely wrong reasons — no matter how unclearly he's stated them.

However, if we're going to do this, by God, let's *do it*. Dropping a bomb down Hussein's chimney at 5am last Thursday morning was a brilliant opening maneuver. One wishes it had worked, and killed him and his sons. We have

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<sup>°</sup> As Molly Ivins points out, accusing the French of being cheese eating surrender monkeys is unfair. One reason France folded so quickly under the assault of the Wehrmacht was that they lost one-and-a-half million men in World War I and were undermechanized; nonetheless, one hundred thousand more Frenchmen gave their lives putting up what resistance they could before Paris fell.

spent two of the last four days dropping bombs and cruise missiles on palaces and military installations in Baghdad. The Iraqis claim two hundred-odd civilian casualties, which is simply amazing — that so few have been killed accidentally is an amazing tribute to the accuracy of the US and UK bombing campaign. Let's not let the House of Saud call "time out" in this round. Let's roll our tanks down Fourteenth of July Street past the Al Rashid Hotel, grab Saddam Hussein and put him on trial. Let us not flag or falter. The sooner we finish this, the fewer innocents will be hurt or killed.

US Central Command Gen Tommy Franks — the man who let Osama bin Laden escape — said on Saturday that capturing or killing Saddam Hussein was not a priority. Not to put to fine a point on it, but that's simply unacceptable. If one of the purposes of this exercise is regime change, capturing or killing Hussein *must* be a goal.

Similarly, senior members of our government have said there will be no post-war "de-Nazification" of Iraq. That, too, is a bad idea. Once this war is over, we must purge the new government of Iraq of anyone connected to the Ba'ath party. Those neo-Nazis<sup>•</sup> must not be allowed a toe-hold after the war. They are criminals.

Lt Col Tim Collins of the Royal Irish regiment was quoted extensively by the BBC — see <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/2866581.stm> — as his men prepared to cross from Kuwait into Iraq: "The enemy should be in no doubt that we are his nemesis and that we are bringing about his rightful destruction. ... As for ourselves, let's bring everyone home and leave Iraq a better place for us having been there. Our business now is north."

... ..

[It is always dangerous to write commentary on a fluid situation. The above segment of this piece was completed over the first weekend of the war, 22-23 March. I'm going to leave it as is, as a snapshot.]

**T**he surfeit of data we have because of 24-hour news coverage and embedded reporters doesn't serve us nearly as well as the information we'd have if that data had been through some intelligent filtering. Raw data is nice if you're on the front lines trying to figure out where to send a particular squadron of tanks; if you're trying to evaluate what the overall picture is, unconfirmed rumors and first-hand reports of particular firefights merely cause anxiety. I'd be the first, though, to argue that reporters *do* belong with the troops, covering the war as Mauldin and Cronkite and Murrow did. I'd just rather have clearer news of the strategic picture

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<sup>•</sup> And I'm not just throwing that term around: Saddam Hussein has consciously modelled his style, his party, and his government around the Third Reich.

rather than the emphasis on the tactical one.

However, this much is clear by Tuesday, the 25th: We have seen American troops taken prisoner, some of them apparently publicly executed. In addition, Iraqi troops have lured American troops into ambushes by carrying white flags. A hospital flying a Red Crescent flag was actually an Iraqi militia headquarters. The British are bogged down outside Basra, and it appears there are upwards of seven thousand Iraqi soldiers still in Basra.

Twelve years after the first round of this war, the Iraqis have learned a few things about not fighting the American armored cavalry in open desert. They are fighting a guerilla war — the bastards are acting like Vietcong.

None of this bodes well for a quick and simple conclusion to this fight. None of it bodes well for maintaining the patience of American and British soldiers, or their willingness to honor the the Geneva Conventions when their opponents are not.

And worse, chemical weapons haven't been used yet, so if Iraq does have stockpiles of them, they will be used in the defense of Baghdad.

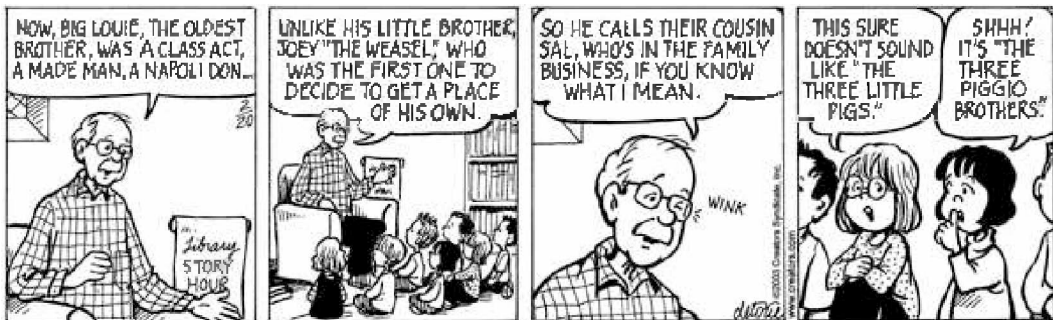
This must end badly for the Iraqi army, it is merely a matter of when. As Col Collins put it, "I expect you to rock their world. Wipe them out if that is what they choose."

War will never cease until babies begin to come into the world with larger cerebrums and smaller adrenal glands.

— H L Mencken

You will recall that some time ago I recounted an alternate version of the Three Little Pigs, in which the pig in the brick house picks up the phone once the wolf starts huffing and puffing. Shortly, two pigs in dark suits and black fedoras appear in a large black car, beat the ever-living crap out of the wolf, and throw him in the trunk. "My cousins, the guinea pigs," explains the pig in the brick house.

In the same vein:



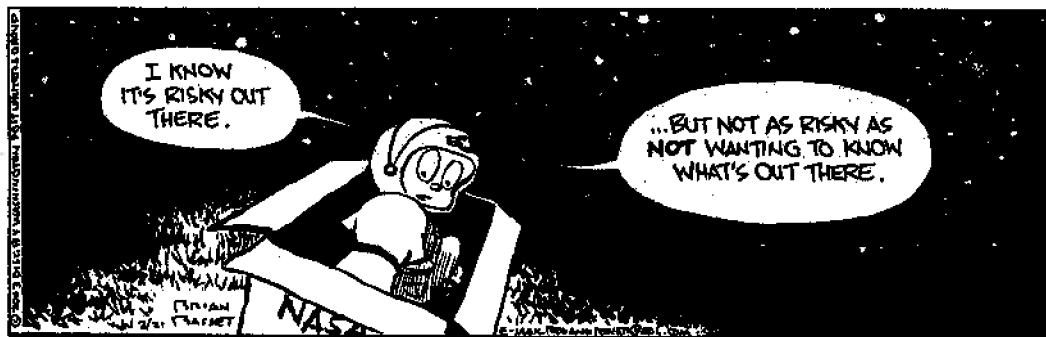
We can't escape bad news, it seems. We've lost Meade and Bruce in the past couple of years and February brought the death of the Hermit of Hagerstown, Harry Warner. Allie and I passed through Hagerstown on our flying visit to DC over Christmas, but we didn't want to impose on the most private of fans. Now we'll never be able to. Wearing my OE hat, I know that I don't need to say more about Harry (save wondering where he'll find a corner in heaven to set his typewriter so he can write letters to Terry and Cyril and Bruce and Seth) because elsewhere in this mailing Rich Lynch memorializes him much better than I could.

In the larger world, we lost television pioneer Fred Rogers, a Presbyterian minister with a unique congregation consisting of puppets, toy trolleys, and our children. As Scott Simon pointed out on NPR, Rogers may have been a caring and gentle man, but in forty years of dealing with network executives and people lampooning his style, he'd developed a spine of steel. Both aspects will be missed.

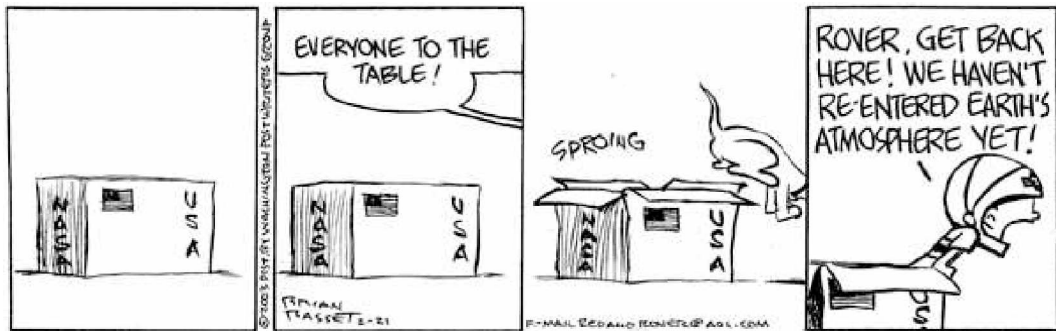


Backing up to February first, when I finished the last installment of this zine, *I Send Them Up*, in my distress and upset, I talked about that day's loss of the *Challenger* and all hands, not *Columbia*. I knew what I meant.

Ever-wide-eyed space-buff Red and his dog Rover noted the tragedy in their own way on 21 Feb:










But, oddly the cartoon Brian Basset archived on his web site — which appears above — was different. Certainly the print cartoon speaks directly to our upset and determination, while the archived one could be unintentional salt in our wounds. I wonder if the print version was substituted after the accident, and the web site didn't catch up. (But see the back cover.)

## Reviews

 *Bloodwork* is last fall's Clint Eastwood thriller from a Michael Connelly novel. Eastwood plays an FBI agent who is taunted by a serial killer and then has a heart attack while chasing the guy. After he gets a heart transplant, he's approached by the sister of the donor, to find her killer. We follow twisty passages all coming back to home. Good work all around.

 Jennifer Crusie's *Welcome to Temptation* is a novel about the children of a con man coming to roost in a small town in Ohio to make a movie at the behest of the town's success story — the high school ingénue who went off to Hollywood. The hereditary mayor-for-life, his mom, his political rival, the other loony city council members, the police chief, the ingénue's self-important news anchor husband, the mayor's daughter, a boy dog named Lassie, and a freezer full of Dove bars round out the cast. Witty dialog, good sex, a pool table, and a tone reminiscent of Westlake's *Dancing Aztecs* make it worth the slog through the 80-odd pages that set up the action. Then they start to make the porn movie, and it gets really amusing.

 Even if Bob Fosse is dead, his musical *Chicago* couldn't exist without his choreography. The opening number, which is perhaps the best in the movie, is clearly Fosse all over. We've got Catherine Zeta-Jone and Renée Zellweger as a murderous showgirl and a showgirl wannabe, Richard Gere as a tapdancing

lawyer, and Queen Latifah, who did a song-and-dance number in which I didn't catch a single lyric. I'm not sure it's worth the hype, and except for Latifah, the women are all a little too accurately built for their roles in the 1920s, but it was certainly fun.

☛ Meanwhile, we have Ben Affleck playing this month's version of Stan Lee's tortured superhero, *Daredevil*. Jennifer Garner plays Elektra. Michael Clarke Duncan and Colin Farrell play bad guys. It's an action-adventure movie, not great cinema, and relies on special effects shots and wire fu even more than *Spiderman*.

☛ *The Banger Sisters* has Goldie Hawn and Susan Sarandon as middle-aged ex-groupies. Hawn's character has just been fired from her job as a bartender at a club in LA — "See that bathroom? Jim Morrison passed out in there one night. With me underneath him." — and heads to Phoenix to look up her old buddy. Except that Sarandon is no longer a groupie, but rather a very staid suburban wife, with two teenaged daughters. Geoffrey Rush provides amazing counterpoint as the guy picked up by Hawn on her cross-desert trek. An interesting exploration about getting in touch with your past.

☛ If *Jerry McGuire* was reason to shun Cameron Crowe, and *Almost Famous* was reason to re-admit him to the company of human society, then we also have to give him credit for *Say Anything*, a simply wonderful exploration of teenagers in love. John Cusack does wonderful work as the Army brat kickboxer in love with the class valedictorian off to England on a fellowship. Ione Skye is torn between her loyalty for her new boyfriend and her loyalty for her father who is a tax cheat. Great acting. Great script. Wonderful monologue by Cusack's character on his career plans that beats the "plastic" exchange in *The Graduate*.

☛ *Formula 51* is a Hong Kong action movie which takes place in Liverpool, starring Samuel Jackson as a pharmaceutical genius wearing a kilt. It has Meatloaf as a drug entrepreneur and Emily Mortimer<sup>◊</sup> (yum) as a contract killer. Action. Football hooligans. Explosive drug interactions. Golf-fu. An amazing shag in a bathtub. Two thumbs up.

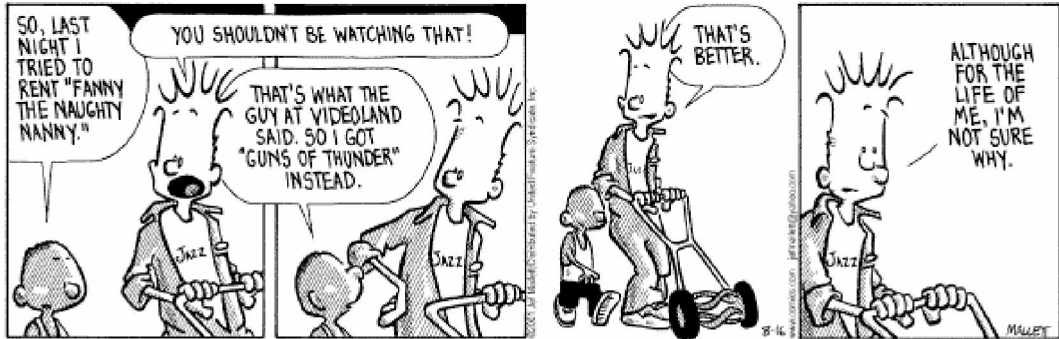
☛ In *American Beauty*, Sam Mendes managed to get a great actor to do some spectacular work. In *The Road to Perdition*, he's gotten another great actor to transcend everything he's done before — Tom Hanks, playing a father and a hired killer, gives a monumental performance in a career of monumental performances; Mendes even gets Paul Newman to step outside of his normal character

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◊ Daughter of John Mortimer, British barrister and creator of Rumpole

and give a grittier performance. Even more than *American Beauty*, this film is beautifully photographed, and gorgeously designed. Each shot captures an intended mood. Each mood builds to an inevitable conclusion. This would be my choice for Best Picture at the Oscars, but at the very least it deserves Best Director, Best Cinematography, and Best Art Direction.

🐼 *Ballistic: Ecks vs Sever* is a ninety-one minute chase and shootout sequence in which things blow up. JJ liked it a lot.



🐼 Boy gets girl. Boy obsesses about girl. Girl dumps boy. Boy thinks about killing himself. Boy meets new girl who is better for him. Lots of movies match that description, more or less. *Better Off Dead* has the advantage of being amazingly surreal, and starring a frighteningly young John Cusack. My sense is that it was intended as a series pilot. That the series didn't get made is a shame because it would have been a lot of fun, particularly if the casting of Cusack as the boy and David Odgen Stiers and Kim Darby as his very odd parents had been maintained.

🐼 *Zodiac* is a completely atypical Neil Stephenson novel. It preceeds in a linear fashion narrated by one character. In this case, it tells the story of Sangamon Taylor, ecological detective who rides around Boston and environs in his trusty Zodiac raft, chasing down toxic waste. Very entertaining, as Stephenson often is; add good storytelling and a genuine McGuffin to be sought and you have a very nice book.

🐼 Mark Crispin Miller, in *The Bush Dyslexicon* talks about quite a bit more than our only president's dyslexia. His thrust is that the media in 2000, by paying attention to issues of form — Bush's verbal gaffes — completely missed issues of substance — what his plans were if he was elected. He suggests that Bush's team was more successful at managing the media than Clinton's team during the 1992 and 1996 elections.

🐱 *Kate & Leopold* is last year's Meg Ryan romantic comedy. It's fun because it's got Hugh Jackman before he took his shirt off in *X-Men*. It's fun because it's got time travel. It's fun because it's got romantic bits. It's fun because it's got a bit of a mystery. Basically, it's a fun movie.

🐱 So the *Academy Awards* came and went, interspersed with war news. I was pleased that *Chicago* won as many awards as it did. I was surprised that *The Pianist* won a best director award for exile Roman Polanski. (Though I'm not sure "there's an arrest warrant out for me" beats William Wyler's "I'm flying a bombing mission over Germany" as excuse for not picking up your best director award.) Perhaps this win means the movie will be shown places other than New York and Los Angeles. I was disappointed *The Two Towers* did so badly. One hopes *Return of the King* wins more than craft awards next year.

Nicole Kidman's win as best actress demonstrates that I'm not the only one who thinks she can act. And surprise best actor winner Adrien Brody will be well remembered if only for that twenty-minute kiss he gave presenter Halle Berry — not quite Roberto Benigni's level of demonstrativeness, but close. Conrad L Hall couldn't pick up his well-deserved cinematography award for *Road to Perdition*, since he died in January; his son (cinematographer for *The Panic Room*) gave a gracious speech.

In the dress sweepstakes, Halle Berry and Nicole Kidman won, I think, with Queen Latifah's corset and cleavage and Renée Zellweger's red backless number coming in close seconds. I was also surprised to find out (from the *New York Times*, of all places) that Jennifer Lopez' dress (which oddly for her covered more skin than it revealed) was originally designed for Jacqueline Kennedy. I bet Jackie wore underwear with it.



As Teddy Roosevelt suggests, via Calvin, we do what we can, and unfortunately, I'm again going to have to short you all on mailing comments. I apologize for not keeping up my end of the conversation.

# Mailing Comments on SFPA 230

**Ned Brooks • New Port News ♦**

*ct me:* "The rational content of the cover eludes me — is it a food ad?" It's a box of Japanese candy. It's what the title says "sushi gummy" — it's a marshmallow with a little gummy-candy piece of fish on top of it.

☞ "It seems to me that modern science should easily extend to the design of a nerf door that could not be slammed. The body of the door could be made acoustically dead, and with some synthetic foam on the jamb and some damping in the hinges the door should be quite impossible to slam." Actually, for purposes of the internal door that gets slammed the most — the one that separates the upstairs from the downstairs and keeps the feline subpopulations separated — a bit of foam on the jamb might go a long way. Thanks for the suggestion. "The self-closing doors in industrial and commercial buildings cannot be slammed as long as the damper cylinder in the closing mechanism is properly maintained." Alternately, I could put automatic hinges on that door, like we have on the fire door into the garage. That would make it close automatically, and no one could accidentally slam it trying to make sure it closed.

**David Schlosser • Peter, Pan & Merry ♦**

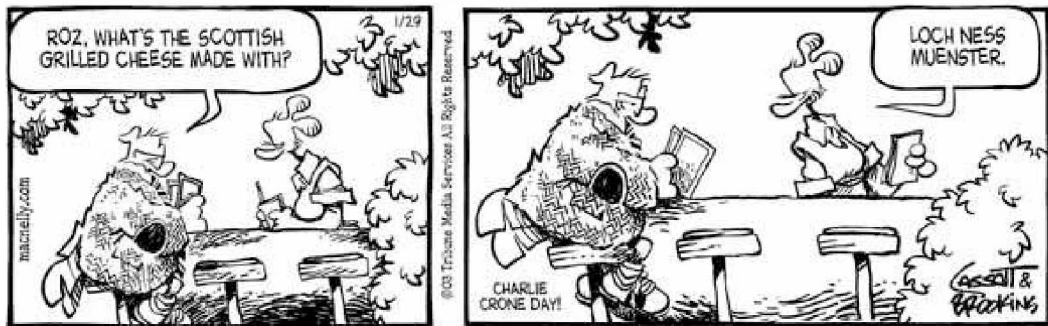
*ct me:* "Risk is inherent in exploration, that doesn't make it a reason to not do so." I've taken this out of context. It just seems fitting and prophetic six weeks after the *Columbia* disaster.

☞ "The problem with us 'needing Russians' as an outlet is that Bush keeps changing them. Hmm. We seem to be losing interest/focus on Al Queda. Let's invoke some other nasty countries as dire dangers. Even if I agree with parts of the premise I find the manipulation involved disgusting." That's the problem with slippery slopes. I agree that Saddam Hussein is a bad guy. I agree that it would be in everyone's best interests if Iraq was a democracy. I think it's likely that Shrub is doing the right things for the completely wrong reasons. But it annoys me immensely that France and Germany — who we're vilifying because they think our venture in Iraq is a bad idea — both have more interest in Afghanistan than we do, and have tried more Al Queda members that we have.

☞ "Next question — what mechanism gets put in place to allow people to go to someone with their voting receipt and get a redo? Better might be something like what my Credit Union has for their phone service — it repeats back your request for a transfer offunds and you have to verify that it's correct to finalize it. So maybe a receipt that would print up and allow you to say 'Yes, that's right' or 'No, you think I'm crazy!'." Here's how I envision the ideal all-electronic voting machine working: The ballot appears on the touch screen. You select the candidates you want. Your selected candidate appears in bold and the other candidates are grayed out or otherwise de-emphasized. Repeat through as many sub-ballots or screenfuls as necessary. A final screen appears, summarizing your votes — President/Vice

President: Martin Sheen/Michael Moore ... US Senate: Jimmy Stewart ... US Congress: Harlan Ellison ... Proposition 2 (Legalize Prostitution):<sup>4</sup> Yes ... and so on — with a big “are you sure” button. If any of the choices are wrong, you touch them to revote in that category. Repeat as necessary. When you touch the “are you sure” button, you get a printed receipt that says “you voted for these candidates and measures,” without any identification of who you are — after all, the machine really shouldn’t have that information.

Now, generalize this to the traditional lever-pull voting machines. These have pretty much disappeared except in places like New York City. On those machines, the feedback was immediate. You pulled the individual lever next to the candidate name. The machine had mechanical interlocks to prevent you from voting for more than three city councilmen, or voting both “yes” and “no” on the proposition proposition. You could inspect your votes and change them as you wanted, but when you were quite sure you were done, you pulled the big lever at the bottom, which registered your votes on the punch tape in the machine and opened the curtain obscuring your actions from view. It seems a simple matter<sup>5</sup> to retrofit those machines — or construct the moral equivalent — that print a receipt and electronically record the votes.



### Rich Lynch • Variations on a Theme ♦

*ct me/Hugo Hysteries:* “On the nominees: ‘I have been unable to find the nominees lists for 1953, 1955, 1956, or 1958.’ That’s because they didn’t exist — the 1959 Worldcon was the first one to have a preliminary ballot to select nominees.” Thanks. I suspected that the early few Hugos were chosen by committee fiat, rather than voted, but was unable to find confirmation anywhere.

<sup>4</sup> That’s the “proposition proposition.”

<sup>5</sup> In much the same way that my quantum mechanics prof used to talk about “a simple matter of arithmetic...”

*ct me:* "On movies: 'I'd forgotten how cool a caper movie [Bound] was.' Yep. It was made by the Wachowski brothers, the same guys who later made The Matrix. Very slickly made, and it even has Joe Pantoliano in it." You're not the only one who pointed that out to me. I knew it, but kept forgetting it. There's a teenager sitting across the room from me who's counting down the days until the new *Matrix* movie comes out. And speaking of Joe Pantoliano, the other child, the one who's started wearing sunglasses in the house and dancing around the living room to Bob Segar, needs to see *Risky Business*.

### **Arthur Hlavaty : Confessions of a Consistent Liar ♦**

*ct Brooks:* "I believe a lot of Joan Aiken's works are short children's books." Are the rest of her works for tall children, then?

*ct me:* "I think I learned reading by osmosis." Some kids do. A colleague finally figured out, when they were sitting in the OB/GYN's office preparatory to the arrival of their second kid, that their first kid had learned to read when they heard a small voice leaning over their shoulders reading off the form the wife was filling out: "Welcome to the Fort Collins Women's guh, guh, .... what's that next word, Mom?"

☞ "I have heard that after the DC cops announced that they had found Chandra Levy's remains and taken them away, someone found a shinbone nearby." Which is of a piece with the competent way in which the DC police investigated the crime.

☞ "I programmed in assembly language back when FORTRAN was a Wonderous New Thing. I was in the Columbia Science Honors Programs (which later produced Gregory Chaitin and Richard Stallman, among others) in 1958." I actually started using assembly language later: I first learned to program in naked machine code.

☞ "By now my reaction to strippers is a blasé lack of curiosity." Quoth the Transylvanian Transvestite: "If you want something visual / that's not too abysmal ..."

### **Norm Metcalfe : Tyndallite ♦**

*ct me/Hugo Hysterics:* "Jeff, I thank you very much for this tabulation of the Hugo awards." My pleasure. There were a variety of reasons for providing it in printed form, but I've had a spreadsheet of them for personal reference for quite a while.

*ct me:* "You seem to have been rather unimpressed by Brenda Clough's 'May Be Some Time'; Jack Dann's 'The Diamond Pit', a tribute to F Scott Fitzgerald (I guess that it wasn't ritzy enough for you); Andy Duncan's 'The Chief Designer' and Vernor Vinge's 'Fast Times at Fairmont High'." Of that list the Clough and the Duncan were the better ones. In fact, the Duncan actually told an external story; the Clough was all internal conflict. I knew that "The Diamond Pit" was a nod to Fitzgerald, but then I never much liked Fitzgerald. But see my comments in that mailing about how the state of my universe is narrowing the range of fiction I'm finding interesting for the moment.

☞ "This reminds me of proofreading a book that a friend had written. When it was published all of our corrections had been accomplished, but it was full of new errors. I asked the editor about it.

He said that he'd made a mistake and had a second typesetter correct the first one's errors." I seem to recall that the making the corrections to the proofs of *Finnegans Wake* actually introduced more errors.

✍ Thanks for your discussion about your discussions with Doc Smith. I really do have to read the Lensman stuff some day.

**Richard Dengrove • Twygradasil and Treehouse Gazette ♦**

I didn't realize your Mom was a courtroom sketch artist. These drawings of hers are fascinating to see. I like the back-cover sketch of Mick Jagger in court. (Did he get satisfaction?)

*ct my frank "Luke Skywalker is Gay": "One last thing. While the public may associate people interested in TV series as get-a-lives, you have to be educated to want to write. So these fan fiction writers would be educated."* Educated and able to write doesn't mean being able to write well. The best technical writer in Canada was testing a web-browsing product the other day, and was reading random fiction sites, since he knows a thing or two about writing fiction, too. Turned out that a porn-story site heavily used some browser features that he needed to verify. His comment to me: "most amateur-written porn is just bad. Bad. BAD."



*ct me: "The spectre of Saddam using germ, chemical and atomic warfare. About gas warfare, he chose not to use it in the Gulf War."* He was warned not to use them in the Gulf War: in the last couple of days before the war, James Baker went to Switzerland to sit down with the Iraqi foreign minister and ask "are you sure you want to do this?" When the answer was "yes," Baker apparently explained that use of chemical weapons would result in hellfire and brimstone raining down on Baghdad.

✍ "On the other hand. I bet Clinton believed that the Republicans were more likely to shoot themselves in the boot with the Monicagate hearings. Which they did." Except that they didn't really shoot themselves in the long run. They kept the Clinton administration from making any policy decisions for nearly three full years. His impeachment



has prevented Clinton from being a power broker within the democratic party, and made it impossible for him to productively campaign for other democrats.

☞ “I’ll have to remember Kartoo. But there are a bunch of search engines, created solely for advertising purposes I can forget. More all the time.” One of the things I really like about Google is that it doesn’t do ads, *per se*. It will put up no more than three or four “sponsored links” to the right, which are commercial sites that paid for the placement based on your query, but no advertiser gets to buy a higher place in the regular results.

☞ “So much for web mailboxes and calendars being less complicated than an intranet or LAN. But everything is in the direction of greater complexity anyway. Not less.” Sir Charles Anthony Richard Hoare (Tony to his friends), in his Turing Award\* lecture, noted: “I conclude that there are two ways of constructing a software design: One way is to make it so simple that there are *obviously* no deficiencies and the other way is to make it so complicated that there are no *obvious* deficiencies.” Or as as the illuminated calligraphy on colleague Dick Dunn’s office wall read, “Simpler is better.”

☞ “It isn’t a thinking man’s position to support Whole Language because the Fundamentalists oppose it. One would think the Educationists would have looked at the merits of the thing. Or lack thereof. But we know better.” As I’ve pointed out before, fully half of the PhDs in the US are awarded in education. I suspect that most of them are obtained to allow their owner to get a bump in pay grade, and as such each of them represents a badly-designed, ill-thought-out research project which is accepted as dogma by the next bunch of PhD candidates. This means that education researchers are even worse than psychology researchers for lack of experimental discipline.† And thus are we saddled with nonsense like the New Math. And the New New Math. “Also, I have peered into the McGuffey’s Readers. The darling of the Fundie schools. Its world is a world that no longer exists. ...” I’ve also discussed Seymour Hersh and the core knowledge movement, which has also gotten tagged as being a tool of the crypto-fascist counter-revolution in education. In fact, Hersh’s goals are pretty simple: here’s a bunch of stuff — history of western civilization, some non-bowlderized short fiction that’s age appropriate, some science experiments that are easy to conduct — that kids should know; use this book of that core knowledge for half the curriculum, and the kids will have a common grounding in fundamentals. “Also, I bet [a world] where kids were older when they learned to read. The vocabulary struck me as fairly large.” It is the case — firmly denied by educational theoreticians, but confirmed by every bit of management theory and personal experience I know — that on

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\* The Turing Award is computing’s equivalent of getting a telegram from the Royal Swedish Academy.

† See the discussion of experimental design in *Surely You’re Joking, Mr Feynman*.

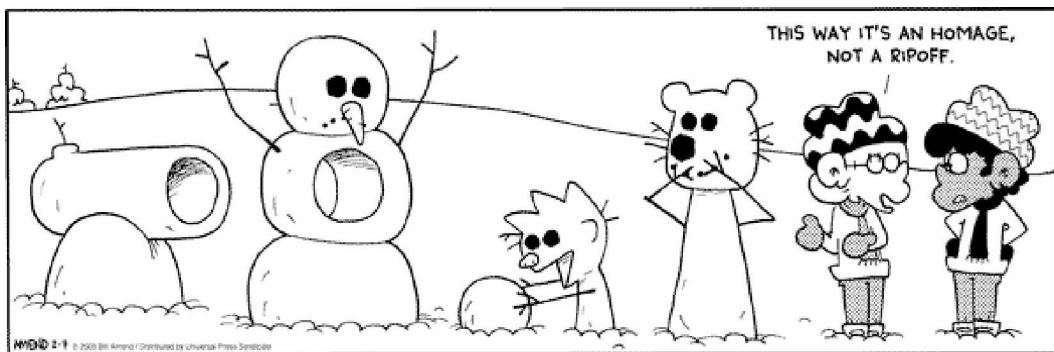


average, kids rise to meet the expectations we make of them, given our backing those expectations up with real help, and that with a little encouragement and some atta-boy's, they'll exceed them. If we expect them to learn to play chess, they can. If we expect them to read at third grade level in third grade, they will. If we say that supercalifragilisticexpialidocious is a reasonable word for a fourth grader to know, or that a fifth grader should understand the main points of the Treaty of Versailles, or a sixth grader should be able to rattle off the safety rules for using a drill press, they'll do it. So vocabulary is arbitrary, once they've got a basic understanding of the rules of reading.

☞ "I myself was impressed by Penelope Ann Miller as the widow in A&E's Nero Wolfe episode 'Motherhunt'. She did a great job as Lucy Valdon..." I generally enjoy Miller in everything she does. She's not as great an actress as Jodie Foster or Nicole Kidman, but she's fun to watch. Unfortunately, she's no longer young enough to trade on being the ingénue, like she played in *Other People's Money* or the almost never-seen *Year of the Comet*. (The latter is notable also because it was written by William Goldman, after he wrote *The Princess Bride*.)

☞ "How well does your Tablet PC for word processing work?" I have no idea, since I've never actually used one, but I do know the handwriting recognition is being done by a team that's worked on it for fifteen years, and seems to have made some serious progress. The group's architect is an old college classmate of mine.

☞ "So did any Israelis die in the World Trade Center blast? ... You do, however, say that four Egyptians are dead and missing. They count for Arabs. How many Israelis are?" The map from the London *Times* I've been referring to says Israel 113, Turkey 131, Egypt 1 dead, 3 missing, but identifies no other countries from the middle east. It also lists only one confirmed Pakistani death (though notes 650 Pakistanis worked at the WTC), and at least 50 Bangladeshi dead, but doesn't quote casualties for India. Similarly in Europe: Britain 100 confirmed dead, Belgium 60 missing, Denmark 5 missing, Sweden 1 missing, Germany 270 missing, Italy 57 missing, Spain 9 missing, Ireland



4 dead, 20 missing, France no confirmed dead, some missing, Portugal 5 dead. Anyone who claims that attack was on the United States alone didn't look at the victims.

☞ "Isn't there platform software so you can run Windows applications on Linux?" Yes, it's called Wine, but I have no idea how well it works, since I have an emotional attachment to the inverse product that allows me to run Unix software on Windows platforms.

☞ "About other possible terrorists acts at airports or on airplanes, no way can we prevent every one." Didn't we start this discussion by my quoting Malcolm Gladwell to the effect that if we make airplanes harder to hijack, we end up with smarter and bolder hijackers?

### **Guy Lillian : Spiritus Mundi ♦**

You talk about Stephen Ambrose's funeral: "McGovern — looking very good for his age, especially considering his recent family tragedy — was a surprise." I apparently missed some news. What happened?

"I sat my client down and told him that the whole community had given him their faith, so — just in case — Q.F.A.!" QFA!?? ¿Qué?

ct OO: "AGGH! Note for the future to all OffEds and archivists: there's no '#' in front of the issue number on Spiritus Mundi. There is a '#' in front of the issue number of Challenger and every other zine I do, but not Spiritus Mundi!" Duly noted, and my apologies. I'll fix it from now on, and in the future indexes. "Now ... ask me why I care. I don't know. But nevertheless, please, no '#'!" Doesn't matter why you care. We each have our own house style, which is why your boldface titles get transcribed into my zine as italics.

☞ "Yipes! \$25 extra to receive SFFA first class!?! Obviously I need to think about this before the next mailing, when my dues are due. There. I thought about it. Count me in, as ever." Boy, you thought about that one longer than I expected. It wouldn't be such a hit if they hadn't made distance a factor in priority mail rates above one pound, rather than

the five pounds it had been before. I keep trying to figure out how to accurately guess what the differential is going to be and can't figure out a clean way to predict it or backfill it other than assume two three-pound mailings and four two-pound mailings a year.

☞ *"I note some screwiness in this version of the SFFA Constitution."* Yes, that first sentence — "The Official Editor receives bundles of publication from members and distributes them in bimonthly (January, March, May, July, September, November) bundles to all members." — is ugly, but it serves. On the other hand, the word "membership" is missing from Article IV. How did nobody notice that before? Liz, Toni and I have all published from exactly the same file, give-or-take the November 2000 amendments.

*ct Strickland:* "And it's disturbing that Connie Willis' abduction novel has been 'put on hold' since 9-1-1 because it's critical of certain government agencies." She's certainly working on a book that makes clear reference to the tragedies of September 11th — she read the first chapter when she was up here last spring. As for being critical of certain government agencies, see Malcolm Gladwell in the March 10th *New Yorker* on how picking the wheat out of the chaff in intelligence is really, really hard. His jumping off point is that the Israeli military intelligence agency didn't believe an attack was going to be launched in 1973 when the Egyptians and Syrians marched troops right up to the border.



*ct Reinhardt:* "I continue to be astonished by revelations about Judge Ronnie Bodenheimer. The latest headlines quote from wiretaps of conversations held with restaurateur Al Copeland (founder of Popeye's)..." There's an excerpt from some of the Bodenheimer wiretaps in the most recent *Harper's*. I'll tuck them in with your mailing. As for Al, when my kid brother was living in Alexandria, he used to take clients to the upscale restaurant Al owned at the time near the Pentagon. It wasn't called Copeland's, so it was a while before Ian twigged to why the service he got there was always frighteningly attentive.

☞ “Why wouldn’t stun guns be just as effective as regular gats in such a setting?” Because they aren’t as accurate, even in close quarters, and aren’t guaranteed to work. There was an incident a couple of years ago here where a psychotic attacked a grocery store security guard, and proceeded down the street brandishing a knife. He was surrounded by half-a-dozen cops who tried a number of non-lethal means to stop him, including tasers (note the plural). Unfortunately, the guy lunged at one of the cops with the knife, who pretty much were left with no choice but to shoot him. Now: coming from someone who’s still not completely sure Amadou Diallo wasn’t murdered, that I’m saying the cops were right here might take on some added weight.

ct Liz: “That is a truly gorgeous quilt design on your cover. Earth colors, right? Whatever, it’s beautiful.” Mostly greens and golds. The lighting on that shot is crappy, and the reproduction is muddy, and those are my fault. The piece is much better than the photo shows.

ct me: “It still hurts to see Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade given the winner’s checkmark over Field of Dreams — another absurd ‘victory’ for the Australian rules ballot.” You can disagree with the results, and you can make some theoretical arguments against various voting processes.‡ However, given that you can’t repoll the voting population, what the Australian ballot gives you is automatic runoffs. It allows the election teller to say “if we were going to have a runoff, we’d eliminate *Tom Sawyer* at this point, and re-hold the election with a shorter ballot, but we can’t. We can assume that everyone who voted for something else wouldn’t change their vote, and fortunately, we know how the folks who voted for *Tom Sawyer* would have voted next.” If single-elimination voting like that was used in Florida. . .

I’d love to hear alternate suggestions for doing the Hugo voting. The Cambridge City Council election variant of Australian ballots doesn’t count, by the way, since it’s *a priori* rigged. And I’m not sure that the Academy Award’s requirement of simple plurality on the final ballot is any better.

And, as for *Field cf Dreams*, there’ll be another Kevin Costner baseball movie along in five minutes.

☞ “[The Washington DC snipers were] two dudes merging themselves into one identity, and that claiming deific power ... more reminiscent of Leopold & Loeb than other black serial killers or mass murderers, like Wayne Williams or Mark Essex, ... Anyway, Muhammad had ties to both your area and mine — he lived for a time in Seattle and was born in Baton Rouge.” Yeah, Muhammad got

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‡ You’ve read the piece — hell, you’ve *published* the piece — that includes these arguments, but to recap: Arrow’s theorem, a fundamental result in economics and political science, says that there’s no way to have a perfectly fair election if there are two or more voters. This turns the nineteenth-century work of both Cordocet and Borda on its head.

around. The thinking the last time I looked was that he was actually out to kill an ex-wife, since she'd had his visitation rights with the kids revoked and had a restraining order.

However, I'm surprised that you aren't all over the questioning of Malvo, the seventeen-year-old. During the period of six hours after the case in one jurisdiction was dropped, his court-appointed lawyer found himself without access to his client, because he was the public defender for the wrong jurisdiction. And until the charges were filed in the next jurisdiction, Malvo couldn't ask for a new lawyer. And so during what six hours did Virginia interrogate him? Yup, you guessed it.

☞ "Why a Hugo nomination for *Amelie*? I loved the movie, of course, but there was no fantasy element." Because there are entertaining fantasy elements in it. In the end, though, it didn't make the cut for my shortlist.

☞ "Bonnie Dunbar's quote about the dangers of exploration — and the refusal of pioneers of whatever era to surrender to them — is wonderful. She could be a worthy successor to Christa McAuliffe." All the more so now. Though, I must say that whoever wrote Shrub's February 1st speech for him was just bloody brilliant. It surpasses the quality of the contingency speech Bill Safire wrote for Tricky Dick in case the Apollo 11 mission failed.

In an age when space flight has come to seem almost routine, it is easy to overlook the dangers of travel by rocket, and the difficulties of navigating the fierce outer atmosphere of the Earth.

.....

The crew of the shuttle *Columbia* did not return safely to Earth; yet we can pray that all are safely home.

— George W Bush, remarks on the loss of space shuttle *Columbia*, 1 Feb 2002

☞ "Esquire described that evil French skating judge as a woman they loved — even though they knew they shouldn't." I still haven't seen a picture of this evil woman, and I'm still not completely clear what the behind-the-scenes payoffs were. But I'm heartened that figure skating has descended to the level of football for criminality. "Title IX wasn't good enough! Sissy sports are good at being crooked, too! We want an equal number of convictions!"

☞ "W recently removed North Korea from his 'axis of evil' ... again, probably because he's afraid of a country that could actually fight back. That was, to be fair, before his crack State Department discovered that the North Koreans had nukes." If you read the subtext, you'll notice that they knew about it long before they announced it. The nice folks at the State Department didn't want to confuse Congress while it was busy passing the ~~Tonkin Gulf resolution~~ resolution authorizing an Iraqi war.

No one today can claim that the path of war will be shorter than the path of inspections. No one can claim that it would lead to a safer, more just, more stable world, for war is always the sanction of failure.

.....

This message comes to you today from an old country, France, from a continent like mine, Europe, that has known war, occupation, barbarity. It is an old country that does not forget and is very aware of all it owes to freedom fighters who came from America and elsewhere.

And yet France has always stood upright in the face of history before mankind. Faithful to its values, it wants resolutely to act together with all members of the international community. France believes in our ability to build together a better world.

— Dominique de Villepin, French foreign minister, 14 Feb 2003

*ct Dengrove:* "Of what were the James Bond movies parodies? Of themselves, I think: the attitudes and expectations of the viewers. Like all parodies, they were best when they were the most subtle: Goldfinger, for prime instance. Occasionally they were superb spy movies too: From Russia with Love and For Your Eyes Only, my favorites." Okay, I can understand *From Russian with Love*, but why *For Your Eyes Only*? It's not that good a spy movie compared to, say, *The Living Daylights*. Is it the car that turns into a submarine? It can't be Barbara Bach's magnificent cleavage.

*ct Ackerman:* "Raphi's 'learning experience' involving his keys, his roommates, and the sad advice given him by a bitter patrolman to trust nobody remind me of a story from my college days which I'll be telling in the next Challenger. That guard is right; college kids live for the delight of destroying their best friends. Raphi's only chance is to destroy them first." There's a certain *Spy vs Spy* sense to one of the subplots in *Real Genius*, a movie which I adore since many of the characters were modeled after real students I went to college with. (The hyperactive young lady is a composite character, for example, partially based on Mike Gunderloy's ex-wife. Val Kilmer's character is based on a guy who's now a nuclear scientist at Livermore. He was cured of pronouncing it nu-cu-lar by his girlfriend: he said "Nuclear, new-cu-lar — what does it matter?"; she responded "It only matters if you ever want to get laid again.")

*ct weber:* "I'm not surprised Chuck Jones & Co timed Wile E. Coyote's falls to the frame." Actually, my memory from *Chuck Amuck* is that all those cartoons were timed to the frame. They had a minimum length and the studio wasn't going to let them use up a second more time than the minimum.

•By the way, shortly after I started working for Microsoft, you asked if I'd

clapped eyes on the Chairman-and-Richest-Man-in-the-World yet. I said I'd seen him at a couple of things. However, today, at the release party for the most recent operating system — Windows Server 2003, if you care — I was standing relatively close to the stage listening to the presentation, and finally noticed that the guy standing next to me waiting his turn to go up and talk was Bill. I don't know if he managed to sneak away from his security guys, or if I just didn't spot them because I'd been drinking. (Which is why I'm sitting in my office on a Friday afternoon finishing my SPPA zine rather than writing code: I had a two-hour three-beer lunch, and I'd be dangerous doing anything but SPPA.)



### Janice Gelb • Trivial Pursuits ♦

*"I still can't bring myself to watch GWB giving presidential speeches; I may now have to stop watching the news altogether."* I was in the habit of reading his speeches, which wasn't quite as bad, but now the White House is only putting streaming audio and video up on their web site, and not transcripts. Oh, well, I guess one will have to cut-and-paste some audio to have Shrub say something amusing and post it on one's own web site to get them to restore the transcripts. How 'bout: "There are no guarantees about Vice President Cheney's pretzel and my good friend Tony Blair. They're as long as it takes. May God bless their forty-eight hours."

*ct me:* "You mention realizing too late that Bruce might be a source of information for lists of missing Hugo nominees, you might want to try George Flynn in Boston." I think I've got it settled now, but I'll keep George in mind for future reference.

☞ *"Regarding your serrated knife accident, glad it wasn't permanent bad damage. It might interest you to know that hospitals have reported an upswing in bagel-slicing related accidents every weekend."* Yeah, bagels are vicious and fight back. There wasn't any permanent damage, and the finger's mostly grown back, but it still occasionally tingles annoyingly.

☞ *"Thanks for the tip about the Four Word Film Reviews site. I liked the one for Star Trek IV: 'Beam up a fish'."* Apropos my mentioning *Real Genius* to Guy above, "Nerds get



*better revenge."*

☞ *"Regarding the Compaq/HP merger, someone local said it was like merging the Titanic with the Hindenburg."* Ouch. There's a new book out called *Perfect Enough: Carly Fiorina and the Reinvention of Hewlett-Packard*, which, judging by the reviews I've seen and the press release for the book tour is nothing but a puff piece. "... the challenges of changing a culture that doesn't want to change and the tangled legacy of the founders and their enormous family foundations ..." Give me a break. A book entitled *Carly Fiorina and the Reinvention of Hewlett-Packard* should probably be 175 pages each of which reads "my way or you're fired." There's a reason the "HP Way" existed, and it wasn't for massive profits by stock speculators and being in the commodity computer business. It was to build good, solid products.

☞ *"My laptop weighs less than 3 pounds and [I take it] on the road for email, writing, and downloading photos from my digital camera. But if I'm not going to be away for longer than 4 days or so, I just carry my Palm and take my travel notes in that."* As I said, I really don't want a computer on most vacations. *"Plus for the trip, I have stored in the Palm all the reservation numbers for the hotel and air travel, plus directions, restaurant recommendations, or other related info. Have I mentioned that I love my Palm?"* Now, I actually do that. I like having the plane ticket locators and hotel reservation numbers in my Palm, tied to the calendar entries. However, for directions and other things, I print them and keep them in transparent file sleeves in the outside pouch of my briefcase.

☞ *"As for the tablet PCs, the conclusion around here is that they weigh too much and are too large for what they do except for specific professions that can use them, but that the next generation might be better."* As I said elsewhere, I still haven't used one. Of course, in my part of the world, it's the best thing since sliced bread. We'll see.

*ct Feller: "I'm really fond of 'Greater Tuna' myself. My brother was in a production in LA a few years ago and he had a lot of fun playing the various characters."* Y'know in all the time we lived in Austin, we never saw "Greater Tuna", which was a local favorite.

*ct Brown: "Glad you enjoyed the Blue Man Group."* And speaking of things we've missed seeing, our hotel room at the Luxor a year ago was a couple of floors above the theater where the Blue Man Group performed, and we didn't get down to see them.

**Janice Gelb : The Giants Win the Pennant!, etc ♦**

OK, as for the cartoon on the cover where Sammy Sosa asks Barry Bonds "rally monkey?", what the hell is a rally monkey?

**Sheila Strickland : Revenant ♦**

*ct me: "Thanks for putting this together, Jeff. I suppose most of this could be pulled off the web, but I like having things down in print like this."* My pleasure. It's the reference thing I wanted. *"Of course, now I have the dilemma of whether to keep it with the rest of the mailing or pull*

it out to keep as reference. Maybe I'll even go through and read some of those stories!" Maybe I've got a spare. (Shuffles down the hall to the office. Rummages through extra zines pile. Swears at paper cut. Yells "aha!" after unearthing the last copy.) I'll toss it into your bundle, along with an extra of the Hugo Box Scores, though I'll have to reprint that one.

*ct me:* "I enjoyed seeing Tolkien artist Ted Nasmith..." Boy, I'm getting sleepy — or maybe it's the paper cut — I read Mike Nesmith, who's a different cat altogether, heir to the Liquid Paper fortune, experimental film maker, patron of a think tank, and, yeah, one of *The Monkees*.

*ct Ackerman:* "I can sympathize with Raphi locking himself out of his room. I managed to do that one time, myself. I finished my shower, and got back to the room and my roommate was gone. I had no key. I had my robe, I think, but not my glasses, so I was at a disadvantage." What I didn't tell Guy in my comment above about Raphi's door is that I went to college at a place where doors — especially in the dorms — were rarely locked, so the once I *was* locked out of my dorm room it was quite deliberate. Some of my housemates dashed into the bathroom while I was showering on the evening of the last day of spring exams, grabbed my bathrobe and towel and ran off. I finished my shower, and dripped my way down the hall to my room, only to discover that they'd also locked my door. Which is why if I ever run for Congress, I'll have to explain the picture of me at twenty-one years old, in a dormitory hallway, stark naked and dripping wet, flipping off the photographer.

*ct Liz:* "Does Allie think she's heading for the U of Victoria? That's a beautiful area of the country. After WorldCon in '93, I went up to Seattle to visit a friend. One day we drove up to Anacortes and took the ferry over to Port Sidney(?) through the San Juan Islands. It was gorgeous. We took the bus down to Victoria and walked around a bit." It's Sydney, I think, like in Australia. In any event, it's at the north end of Vancouver Island, opposite from Victoria. I don't understand why the Anacortes ferry goes to Sydney, rather than Victoria, but there's now a passenger-only hydrofoil between Victoria harbor and downtown Seattle. And, yes, that's a spectacularly pretty ride from Anacortes.

As for Allie, she's still up in the air about where she really wants to go. It'll all be settled by next mailing and I'm not going to jinx it by reporting the preliminary returns and exit polls.



Out of space. Out of time. I didn't get through the whole mailing. And worse, I'm beginning to sober up from the release party. Fortunately, Liz is going to come collect me and we're going to go out to dinner, so I don't have to be *too* sober.

Until next time, then. I hope by then there will American and British tanks sitting in Baghdad's Zawra Park, having secured, and keeping, the peace.

## Art Credits

This issue's front cover features a graphic from <http://onastick.net/>. Page 1: Breen in *The San Diego Union* from 19 Mar. Page 2: *Sinfest* from 19 Feb. Page 3: *Sinfest* from 20 Feb. Page 5: *One Big Happy* from 20 Feb. Page 6: *Get Fuzzy* from 10 Mar — Farewell, Mr Rogers. Page 6: *Red & Rover* from 21 Feb — the original print version. Page 7: *Red & Rover* from 21 Feb — the archived version. Page 9: *Frazz* from 16 Aug 2001 — I've had that trip to the video store with James. Page 10: *Calvin & Hobbes* from 24 Feb 1992. Page 12: *Shoe* from 29 Jan — a bad pun for Mr Schlosser. Page 14: *Helen, the Sweetheart of the Internet* from 6 Mar — Page 16: *Calvin & Hobbes* from 6 Feb 1992 — while there's still winter in some parts of the country. Page 17: *Foxtrot* from 7 Feb — eleven years later, a nice reference to Calvin & Hobbes' snowmen. Page 18: *Foxtrot* from 18 Jun. Page 22: *Helen* from 2 Nov 2002. Back cover: *Red & Rover* for 16 March — count the clumps of stars and name them: Grissom, White, Chaffee . . . Scobee, Smith, Resnick, Onizuka, McNair, Jarvis, McAuliffe . . . Husband, McCool, Anderson, Chawla, Brown, Clark, Ramon.

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Red and Rover by Brian Basset

