



(It's because we're proud of you)

It's Because We're Proud of You is the sixty-third SFPA-zine (volume two, number forty) from Jeffrey Copeland. It is intended for mailing number 233 of the Southern Fandom Press Alliance and selected others. The text of *It's Because We're Proud of You* was composed using the T_EX typesetting system, and is set in 11-point Palatino. It was published by Bywater Press, 3243 165th Ave, SE, Bellevue, Washington 98008, on 30 May 2003.



You know, fathers don't like to admit it when their daughters are capable of running their own lives. It means we've become spectators. Bianca still lets me play a few innings; you've had me on the bench for years. When you go to Sarah Lawrence, I won't even be able to watch the game.

— Walter Stratford to his daughter Katarina in
Ten Things I Hate About You

When Liz was in the hospital last month, they put her on the maternity floor. So I had the experience of spending the afternoon after she was out of surgery dozing in a rocking chair next to her. It was all so familiar, and the only thing missing was a not-so-tiny infant nestled against my chest, banging her head against my chin, snoozing with me.

It seems not too long ago that Liz and I were hunched over the bathroom sink, and I was saying "wait, give me the directions ... are you sure that's what it means when it turns blue?" But the issue of this zine bearing the title *A Guide To Life With a New Baby* was actually eighteen years in the past.

It has been an interesting time. Allie has been a challenge and a delight from the day she came home from the hospital, a ten-and-a-half pound baby with a twelve-pound name. She has been fiercely independent since she decided that the pretty colors on the bookshelf were more interesting than the bottle she was being fed, since the day she starting walking and decided to pound on the door to go out and explore. And fiercely social since before the day she stood up in her crib at the Atlanta Worldcon and loudly demanded to "Go see people! NOW!" And dependent. And lovable. And a pain-in-the-ass. And contrary and cooperative and obsteporous and helpful and demanding and tempermental and generous and kind. And she's even made my words come back to haunt me: When I said that I would have succeeded as a parent if my children could stand toe-to-toe with me and say "Dad you're full of crap," I didn't mean for it to happen quite so frequently.

And now, somehow, seemingly a couple of days after we started, we've reached The College Milestone.

When she started looking at colleges she had a long list of criteria, including no snow, less than twenty thousand students, more than five thousand students (those last two drop a *lot* of candidates off the list quickly), good art and psychology departments. Since she wants to counsel teenagers, both of those academic requirements are important to her plan. Some places got dropped from the list for other reasons: Reed in Portland, good school though it is, has an on-going drug culture that's hard to avoid, according to Allie's friends who are now there. The very good schools in the Pomona group were crossed off because living in the smog of Southern California was out of the question for Allie. Sarah Lawrence, though

they were heavily cruising her, got dropped because of she'd be too close to my parents to feel like she was away from home. The schools of the right size in New Mexico didn't have the right mix of academics. The candidate list was narrowed down to three: Evergreen State College in Olympia, which does assessments rather than grades, and has a reputation for being the hippy-dippy college in the state; Western Washington University in Bellingham, with its Fairhaven College, an independent study and honors program, which requires a separate application and interview, and the University of Victoria, a campus with a flock of feral rabbits, who are rounded up once a year for vaccinations and exams, and a smiley face painted on the dome of its astronomy building.

In the end, she was accepted at all three — including being accepted at Fairhaven within twenty-four hours of the interview — which left her with a frustrating decision. Evergreen was out immediately, because when she sat in on a senior-level literature seminar on a visit, the insights offered by the other students were not very impressive. (How else to put it? She didn't want to repeat high school.) Fairhaven had some definite advantages — there was no border to cross, it is a small school with the resources of a larger one — but it has the disadvantage of being in Bellingham, which appears dull only because of its proximity to La Conner. In the end, she was sitting at the dining room table with her calendar trying to figure out when she could go up to visit Western again when she looked up and said “To hell with it, I wanna go live with the bunnies.”

And so: come the last week of August, we'll load her up in the van, and toss her across the border. Since she finished her last advanced placement exam a couple of weeks ago, life for the next couple of months will now be a whirlwind of visa applications, acquisition of supplies, and planning, interspersed with a cycle of graduation parties and the prom and actually finishing her last couple of classes.



Just as an added delight, each of the high schools are asked by the local paper to name two kids who've done really well in particular areas. So each english department names two good writers, and the science departments names two outstanding nerds, and so on. The outstanding artists from Allie's high school, which is Bellevue's art magnet school, are a big deal. So it was cool to find out that the art department was unanimous. As the department chair had to explain to the editor when he asked for the second name, "You don't understand: there's Allie, and then there's everyone else, so we can only name one student."

After that, the paper sent her a letter and asked her to bring in some of her artwork so they could see it. I had to convince her that a paper whose op-ed page runs Reilly and Charen but not Ivins might not see the point of her little sculptures from birth control pill containers and Barbies. In any event, I'm waiting with bated breath to see what they print about her.

Quick political notes:
I'm pleased that among all else, George Walker Bush has kept his campaign promise to not get us entangled in any nation building. Now we're going to just occupy Iraq.*

I have a note stuck here that says "Homeland security: Republican filibuster?" Yes, it turns out, the republicans in Congress, in the runup to the mid-term elections, prevented the Homeland security bill from coming up for a vote in the Senate. That gave them two things: first, they could claim that the democrats were unconcerned about terrorism because they hadn't passed the bill, and, second, by waiting to pass the bill until they had a majority in the Senate, the republicans could add wording that removed civil service protections from the employees of the department, and not have to argue about it in conference committee.

Here's the prediction for the employees of the new Homeland security department: they've been promised that there will be no changes in their jobs, even though they've moved from one department to another for two years. And because the executive branch is now relieved from worrying about those onerous civil service rules, the Homeland security employees will find themselves with an out-of-band pay increase in about August of 2004. Then when the two years they've been promised run out — let me count.... that would be just after November of 2004 — they'll find themselves shuffled and re-classified with nothing to protect them.

While we're at it, I notice that American Airlines hasn't been forced to declare bankruptcy yet, even though it's as much in hock to its banks as United was, and even though it got the same concessions from its unions as United did, and even

* Yeah, that's snarky of me: see my more thoughtful comments to Steve Hughes in the back.

though American's senior executives are insisting pay guarantees that United's didn't. Could this have something to do with the fact that by going into bankruptcy, the United employees (who own the bulk of United's stock) have to give up their seats on the board to the bankers? Nah, that would be too much of a coincidence.

I don't mind Shrub's guys lying. We've come to expect a little prevarication from our politicians. What's really starting to piss me off, though, is the transparency of the lies, and the convenience of changing goals. "It doesn't matter whether we find weapons of mass destruction." (It better: that's why we went to war.) "We aren't going to occupy Iraq." (Well, what were you expecting to happen?) "It's not the office of Total Information Awareness, it's the office of Terrorist Information Awareness." (Yeah, sure, and you're still planning to look at *my* credit card records.) "The aircraft carrier *Abraham Lincoln* was far enough out at sea that it wasn't possible to use a helicopter to get there, so the president had to fly on a four-seat transport plane." (The carrier was thirty miles off the coast of San Diego — closer than Camp David to the White House — and thousands of sailors coming home from a ten-month mission were kept at sea for an extra day so Shrub could look like Tom Cruise and have his picture taken.) "The battle of Iraq is one victory in a war on terror that began on September the 11, 2001 – and still goes on. That terrible morning, 19 evil men – the shock troops of a hateful ideology – gave America and the civilized world a glimpse of their ambitions." (That's from the speech he gave on that carrier, again attributing the September 11th attacks to Iraq.)

The universe is run by the complex interweaving of three elements: matter, energy and enlightened self-interest.

— G'Kar in *Babylon 5* episode "Survivors"

The week before the Kentucky Derby, in answer to a query about the mint julep, the *Washington Post* was kind enough to reprint the text of a letter from Lt Gen Simon Bolivar Buckner, Jr, to Maj Gen William D Connor, superintendent at West Point, on 30 March 1937. I reproduce it here for your amusement and edification:

My dear General Connor,

Your letter requesting my formula for mixing mint juleps leaves me in the same position in which Captain Barber found himself when asked how he was able to carve the image of an elephant from a block of wood. He replied that it was a simple process consisting merely of whittling off the part that didn't look like an elephant.

The preparation of the quintessence of gentlemanly beverages can be described

only in like terms. A mint julep is not the product of a formula. It is a ceremony and must be performed by a gentleman possessing a true sense of the artistic, a deep reverence for the ingredients and a proper appreciation of the occasion. It is a rite that must not be entrusted to a novice, a statistician, nor a Yankee. It is a heritage of the old South, an emblem of hospitality and a vehicle in which noble minds can travel together upon the flower-strewn paths of happy and congenial thought.

So far as the mere mechanics of the operation are concerned, the procedure, stripped of its ceremonial embellishments, can be described as follows:

Go to a spring where cool, crystal-clear water bubbles from under a bank of dew-washed ferns. In a consecrated vessel, dip up a little water at the source. Follow the stream through its banks of green moss and wildflowers until it broadens and trickles through beds of mint growing in aromatic profusion and waving softly in the summer breezes. Gather the sweetest and tenderest shoots and gently carry them home. Go to the sideboard and select a decanter of Kentucky Bourbon, distilled by a master hand, mellowed with age yet still vigorous and inspiring. An ancestral sugar bowl, a row of silver goblets, some spoons and some ice and you are ready to start.

In a canvas bag, pound twice as much ice as you think you will need. Make it fine as snow, keep it dry and do not allow it to degenerate into slush.

In each goblet, put a slightly heaping teaspoonful of granulated sugar, barely cover this with spring water and slightly bruise one mint leaf into this, leaving the spoon in the goblet. Then pour elixir from the decanter until the goblets are about one-fourth full. Fill the goblets with snowy ice, sprinkling in a small amount of sugar as you fill. Wipe the outsides of the goblets dry and embellish copiously with mint.

Then comes the important and delicate operation of frosting. By proper manipulation of the spoon, the ingredients are circulated and blended until Nature, wishing to take a further hand and add another of its beautiful phenomena, encrusts the whole in a glittering coat of white frost. Thus harmoniously blended by the deft touches of a skilled hand, you have a beverage eminently appropriate for honorable men and beautiful women.

When all is ready, assemble your guests on the porch or in the garden, where the aroma of the juleps will rise Heavenward and make the birds sing. Propose a worthy toast, raise the goblet to your lips, bury your nose in the mint, inhale a deep breath of its fragrance and sip the nectar of the gods.

Being overcome by thirst, I can write no further.

Sincerely,
S.B. Buckner Jr.

Reviews

I've added a four word précis to each movie review, in the style of the web site I've mentioned in the past, <http://www.fwfr.com>, "Four Word Film Review." [Now with four words.]

☛ You might expect that the only appeal to *Serving Sara* would be Elizabeth Hurley in short skirts. You'd be wrong: the only appeal is veteran B-movie actor Bruce Campbell (see *Xena* and *Hercules*, *exemplia gratia*, or his book *if Chins Could Kill*) in a hilarious supporting role. Otherwise, the movie has to descend to jokes about bull prostates to get any laughs. [Short skirts; bull fisting.]



☛ As I mentioned in the comments of my last zine, we saw family favorite *Real Genius* again recently. It's the story of some really bright kids at a not-quite-so-fictional Nerd School in Southern California, and some of the characters are based on people I know. The DVD doesn't feature anything more than the video tape does, but we do get to see the wide screen version of all that popcorn. [How nerds make popcorn.]

☛ In the introduction to *The Compleat McAndrew* Charles Sheffield says that even though the editors forced the title on him, there would be more stories about McAndrew. When he died last year, it became the definitive edition anyway, which is too bad. Even though the stories aren't always really about physics, like he wanted them to be, they're still (for the most part) good adventures. Sheffield's afterword, in which he discusses the physics in each of the stories — and which parts are science *vs* science fiction — can be a bit of a slog, but it's worth the effort.

☛ *The Transporter* is an absolutely wonderful rendition of "the last upstanding man." Ex-military guy successfully makes a living transporting objects and people for a fee. Until the day he opens the trunk and discovers a tiny oriental woman in a suitcase. Then it's things blowing up, kung fu fighting, and things get complicated. [Driver does Jet Li.]



From the Earth to the Moon is a twelve-part series Tom Hanks and Ron Howard did for HBO. It's based, in part, on Andrew Chaikin's book *A Man on the Moon* about the Apollo program. I plowed through all twelve parts while I was home with Liz after her hysterectomy. Since each episode is written and directed by a different pair, they're of varying quality, and each episode has a slightly different framing gimmick. The first, in which the Apollo I fire was investigated, has a stirring speech by Borman before a congressional committee that I think was actually delivered by Armstrong. The second, about Apollo 7, shows us the flight through the eyes of guys making a documentary about the flight. The Apollo 10 episode follows the real rocket scientists at Grumman building the Lunar Module, and finished with the chief engineer watching the next one getting loaded up and saying "that one's name is *Eagle*." There's an episode in which Jack Schmidt's advisor at Caltech, Lee Silver, turns a bunch of test pilots into field geologists. I think the most interesting one emotionally is the eleventh, which was directed by Sally Field and follows the wives of the second crop of nine astronauts as a framing device for the flight of Apollo 16. (Only two are still married – Lovell and Borman. Ed White, of course, died in the fire, and his widow later committed suicide. The rest got divorced.) They're certainly worth watching once, if you can find them at your local video store, and are willing to hunker down for twelve hours. [*Go to the Moon! Or: The Eagle has landed.*]

And there are more questions — How did you feel at liftoff? What color was the sky? Is it hot or cold in space? And Cernan answers them all, speaking well past the time anticipated, until a little girl asks the old standby: "What does it feel like when you're on the moon?"

Cernan smiles and bows his head for a moment. He begins to piece together an explanation. "You can move around very easily in one-sixth gravity, so it feels very comfortable. You're not warm because your suit is air-conditioned with water." Then he interrupts himself and tries a different approach, one from the heart.

"I'll tell you what it feels like. It feels like you're dreaming. You wonder when you're going to wake up. It's almost like your mom told you a wonderful story when you went to bed and, you know sugar plums — it's like Santa Claus has already come. Being on the moon is like Santa Claus just gave you your wish."


— *A Man on the Moon*, by Andrew Chaikin




Louis Sachar is a small, slightly shy man whose daughter and Allie were in the same Girl Scout (what's one notch bigger than a troop? company? brigade?) in Austin. He wrote a wonderful series of absurd stories for grade-school kids about a school whose blueprints are misread and which is constructed on its side,

Sideways Stories from Wayside School. He also writes stories for the middle-school set about teenagers who are somewhat out-of-place in their environments, always with the kid meaning well, but having disaster or embarrassment befall him — *There's a Boy in the Girl's Bathroom* is a perfect example. On the one occasion he spoke at a school board forum in Round Rock about censorship, the audience turned out to be loaded with a bunch of Shiite Baptists who were in favor of banning *his* books because his characters talk like teenagers. (It was apparent the Baptists hadn't read them, but only scanned them for exchanges like the character in shop class who says "If you don't leave me alone, you'll find out what it's like to get a hammer up your ass.") Sachar had to be escorted to the parking lot, shaking like a leaf.

In any event, this kindly man once wrote a book about a kid who gets sent to a juvenile rehabilitation camp straight out of Dickens for a crime he didn't commit. It's all the fault of the family curse, explains the grandfather. The book was called *Holes* and Disney optioned it for a movie, which is now out. It's wonderful for no other reason than we get to see a movie under the Disney banner that isn't about cloyingly sweet kids, or Mickey Rooney-wannabes, or teenaged girls sexualized to within an inch of their lives. Instead, we get a story about a kid who is someplace he doesn't want to be, for reasons he has no control over, who makes the best of his situation, even when he has to break more rules to do what's right. He even recovers the family fortune in the process. Signorney Weaver and Jon Voight do wonderfully in supporting roles — Voight's performance might explain why his daughter got to be so weird. Our newly-minted teenage boy — who is, after all, the intended audience — thought it was really cool. [*Kid breaks family curse.*] Or: [*Kid wins in jail.*]

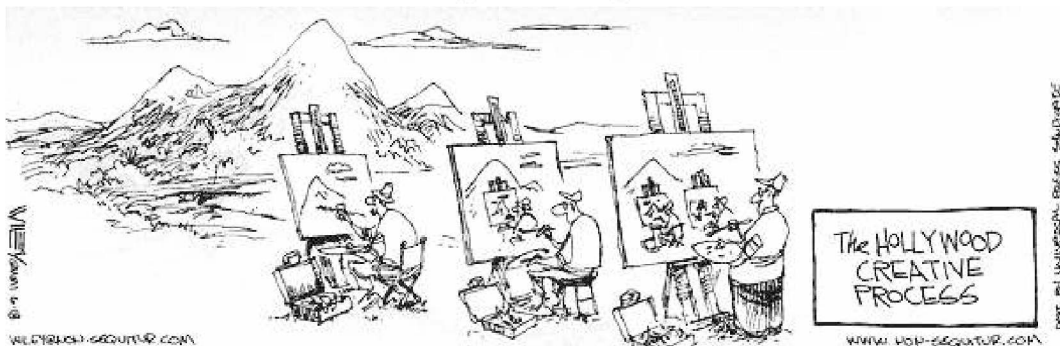
 On Alan Winston's recommendation, I picked up a Star Trek book entitled *The Kobayashi Maru* by Julie Ecklar. You'll recall there's a tossoff in *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* about how Kirk jiggered a command and character test at the Academy by reprogramming the computer. This book jumps off from that, and provides a setting in which Kirk and some of his merry band get to exchange stories about how they handled the test when their turn came. Surprisingly well done, with some background insight into each of the characters involved.

 A while back I got a copy Jan Tschichold's *The New Typography* from the library (and reviewed it here). I wanted to read it because Amazon had recommended it as a companion volume to Roger Bringhurst's *The Elements of Typographic Style*. Now I have a copy of Bringhurst's book in hand. He admits he intentionally mimics the title of Strunk & White's famous expository epistle, but he manages none of their pithiness. No harm is done, because his copious illustrations are well worth the effort, even though some duplicate those in Lee's

Bookmaking and Chicago's *A Manual of Style*. Like Tschichold's book, it's a timeless view of typography.

Among the pile of books that appeared from the library for Liz's convalescence was a Harry Turtledove / Martin Greenberg anthology,[†] *The Best Alternate History Stories of the 20th Century*. It contains some real gems, like Stan Robinson's "Lucky Strike" and Susan Schwartz's "Suppose They Gave a Peace". But it also contains dreck like Brad Lineweaver's "Moon of Ice" and Nick DiCharrio's "The Winterberry". (OK: "The Winterberry" is vaguely interesting *once* — see: JFK wasn't killed in Dallas, just severely brain-damaged and reduced to a seven-year-old — even if it's plot is madly at variance with the actual facts of the characters involved, but why does it have to be in every damned alternate history anthology ever published?)

Charade is a completely classic 1960s romance/thriller with tinges of comedy, starring Audrey Hepburn as a widow whose husband was not what he seemed and apparently stole a great deal of money, and Cary Grant as a mysterious stranger. It is a wonderful movie, directed with a light touch by Stanley Donen, who later brought us the original *Bedazzled*. It has twists and turns of plot, nothing is as it seems, and it ends well. [*Confused widow finds answers.*]



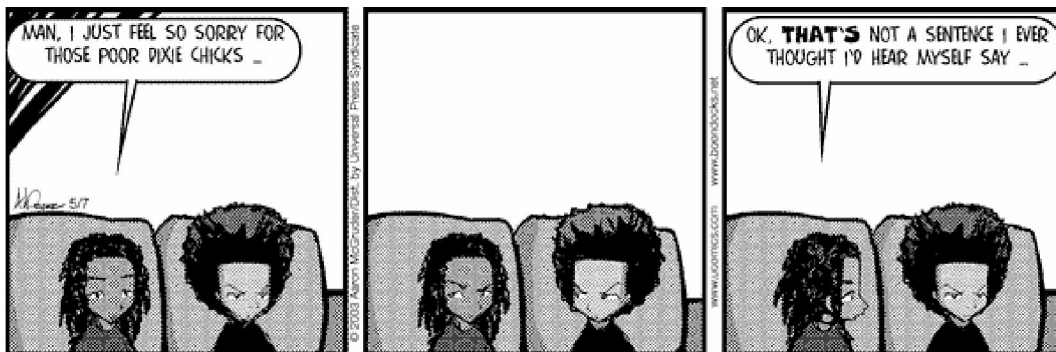
Since Hollywood can't leave well-enough alone, last year Jonathan Demme provided *The Truth About Charlie*, a low-rent remake of *Charade*, starring Marky Mark and Thandie Newton (last seen as the hot thief in the second *Mission: Impossible* movie). It substitutes chases for wit, artificial setup for real tension, and violence for plot. [*Stupid remake: don't bother.*]

[†] I suspect that when the aliens arrive on Earth after the fall of Man, and are trying to decode our language, there will be some confusion about this single word, "Martingreenburganthology"...

☛ Since Hollywood can't leave well enough alone, we've got *X2: X-men United* as the first summer superhero movie. It's a little disjointed compared to the original, but it's got the same mix of good guys, bad guys, not-so-bad guys, conflicted good guys, and clueless normal folks. Still nicely done, not least because Professor Xavier and Magneto are played by guys who can *really* act. [*Hot superheroes in jumpsuits.*]

☛ As a background thing, I've been re-reading **John LeCarré's** Smiley novels since Thanksgiving. I'd forgotten what fun they can be. The first two, *Call for the Dead* and *Murder of Quality* are run-of-the-mill murder mysteries, though *Call* exists in an espionage setting and provides some setup for later novels. LeCarré's breakthrough novel, *The Spy Who Came In From the Cold* is still *the* classic cold war drama of a conflicted hero in a dangerous setting. I'm still pouring through *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*, the first of the three "Karla novels," about the duel-by-proxy between George Smiley and his arch-nemesis in the KGB, known only as Karla.


☛ *Gun Shy* is a light movie with Liam Neeson as an undercover DEA agent who is on the verge of having his cover blown, Oliver Platt as a mobster-by-marriage who is just a little crazy, and Sandra Bullock as the nurse in Neeson's doctor's office. Pretty amusing. Lots of tension, twenty-two million dollars of soybeans, one shootout, one lost testicle, one mud-wrestling scene. [*DEA agent on drugs. Or: Undercover cop, crazy mobster.*]





☛ To riff off an old joke, I like neither kind of music: Country or Western. However, in my on-going desire to raise my middle finger to assaults against free speech,‡ I felt obligated to go out and buy meself some of them records by

‡ When Clear Channel Radio bans Rush Limbaugh and organizes "Grass Roots" demonstrations at which his books are run under steamrollers, I'll go out and buy some Rush Limbaugh books. Censorship is the tool of fascism.

them Dixie Chicks chicks. *Home* and *Wide Open Spaces* are the first and third albums by the Chicks. While they're remarkably twangy C&W, some of the songs are actually quite good, and nearly all of them tell wonderful stories, even if they're about a deep south that doesn't exist anymore if it ever did.

 *Two Weeks Notice* was the really dumb romantic comedy that Sandra Bullock tried to do with Hugh Grant. Liz's quip was "she even makes him look good." It's a pretty lame rendition of the oil-and-water-makes-romance formula, with Bullock playing the feisty public-interest lawyer, and Grant the self-absorbed billionaire developer who hires her as his corporate counsel with the promise of saving a community center in Coney Island, and allowing her to direct the firm's *pro bono* work. The only good joke in the film is during the title sequence, when we see a picture of Bullock's character as a child carrying an "Impeach Nixon" sign, followed by a picture of Grant's character as a child sitting next to Richard Nixon at a baseball game. Dana Ivey and Robert Klein play Bullock's parents, Alicia Witt is attractive in a supporting role, as is Heather Burns (last seen in *Miss Congeniality*). [*Grant isn't cute anymore.*]

 In 1996, Neal Stephenson and J Frederick George disguised themselves as Stephen Bury and wrote their second novel together, *The Cobweb*, a story about the run-up to the first Gulf War largely seen through the eyes of a small-town Iowa sheriff. In some senses, it's a dry run for Stephenson's *Cryptonomicon*. In some senses, it's a political thriller. In some senses, it's a story about half-a-dozen fully-formed, three-dimensional characters. It begins with a rifle hanging on the wall and it's a roller coaster ride from there. The only bad thing I can say is that I'm sorry that I won't be able to read it again for the first time.

 And, since Hollywood can't leave well-enough alone, this month we have *The Matrix Reloaded*.^o Middle movies of a threesome are hard, they get it both ways: they have to carry the story forward, and can't ignore the mythology from the first movie, but they can't conclude things, either. This one does move the story forward, and leaves a nice cliffhanger, but fills too much time with dialog like "the being that is nothingness *vis a vis* the Other in your ontology was superseded by the One who is all instinct" — I'm not exaggerating too much. There are three separate scenes with lines like that. However, the parts of the movie that aren't filled with philosophical drivel in search of plot are filled with wire fu, a *spectacular* car chase, and some other really nice special effects. Carrie Ann Moss is stunning as before. Laurence Fishburne's sunglasses deserve their own screen

^o Our tickets said "Matrix 2.0", which led to the quip, "So, next week, they'll issue a patch and it'll be *Matrix 2.1*, I guess."

credit, and Keanu Reeves cyberspace costume looks so much like a cassock that it's a little freaky. And even though her character being named Persephone really hacked off Allie, Italian actress Monica Bellucci is just inhumanly beautiful. It's entirely possible she didn't get more screen time because her costume was a feat of engineering rather than textiles. Elvis Mitchell's commented in *The New York Times* that the movie was rated R "for strong language and languorous, extended bouts of the slow-motion, meticulously staged violence that has fans trembling with excitement," which is only a slightly better description than his comment on Hugo Weaving's role as Agent Smith, "[he] brings an exultant beatitude to laminated malignancy." [*Empire Strikes Back ... again. Or: Smith's your father, Neo.*]

🐼 What moron at *Chevrolet's* advertising agency choose Meatloaf's *Let Me Sleep On It* as the song for their new commercial? Clearly someone who's never listened to the whole song, and doesn't realize (or thinks we're too stupid to realize) that in the next verse, the boy who began singing "Let me sleep on it", is now singing "I'm waiting for the end of time / so I can end my time with you." Probably the same folks who wrote the speech Ronald Reagan once gave in New Jersey, in which he praised Bruce Springsteen for being proud to be "Born in the USA." (Springsteen's only comment was to introduce that song at a concert the following night by saying something like "Maybe the President should listen to the lyrics this time.")

🐼 Like rape, Brian dePalma's movies about about violence, not sex, even the vaguely science-fictional *Femme Fatale*. It has Rebecca Romijn-Stamos and Antonio Banderas. It opens with a relatively hot sex scene in the restroom at the Cannes film festival to cover a jewel robbery, but even that quickly descends into a feast of bullets, threats, and mayhem. Romijn-Stamos' double-crosses and setups to keep the loot for herself are entertaining to watch. It has an interesting plot twist — that's what makes it science-fictional — but all that is not enough to raise the whole thing from a grade of C to B. [*Sex, violence, double crosses.*]

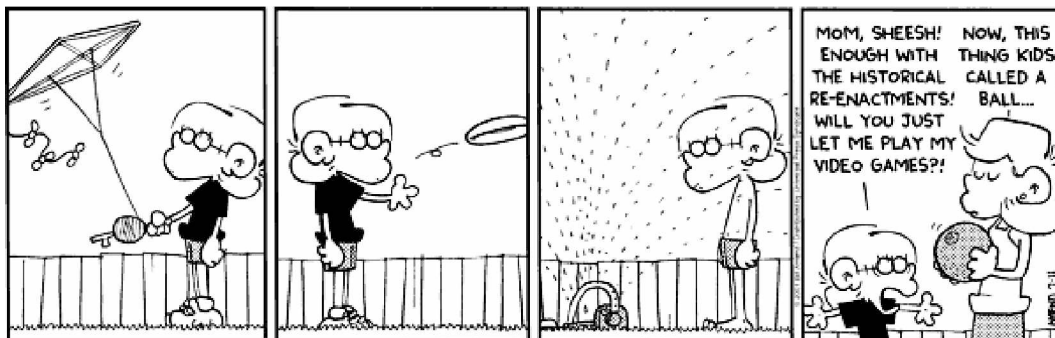
🐼 *Catch Me If You Can* is the roughly true story of a teenaged con-man being chased across the US and Europe by a very determined FBI agent. Leonardo DiCaprio didn't completely suck as the con-man. Tom Hanks provides a wonderful FBI man. Jennifer Garner is very amusing in a walk-on as a high-class hooker. [*Con-man doesn't shave yet.*]

🐼 I recently read two business books that provide recent history at variance with the world as I know it, and a third work of non-fiction that isn't worth the effort. The first was *Perfect Enough* by George Anders, an extended puff piece about Carly Fiorina and her taking the Hewlett-Packard stockholders for

a ride. Anders misses all of the subtleties of the HP corporate culture before Fiorina arrived, preferring to accept her press flacks' view of that bygone era. He fails to understand what Fiorina destroyed in her headlong rush to make the same mistake that Compaq had — when in doubt acquire another company — by acquiring Compaq itself. Anders never holds her to account for the hash she made of spinning Lucent off as a separate company from AT&T — among other crimes destroying a hundred thousand jobs and a pure research arm with a century of patents and Nobel Prizes behind it, not to mention puffed up stock value for a shell.

Then we have John Heilman's "insider view" of the Microsoft anti-trust case *Pride Before The Fall*, which focusses nearly entirely on the thorn-in-the-side-of-the-DOJ efforts of one small Silicon Valley law firm, and seemingly discounts the behind-the-scenes maneuvering of Scooter McNeely and Larry Ellison. Heilman provides gossip in place of information about what was happening inside Microsoft while all this was going on. If his purpose was to pick on the bad guys in Redmond, he succeeded, but if he was attempting to write history, he's failed completely.

Finally, if you think that Martin Campbell-Kelly's *From Airline Reservations to Sonic the Hedgehog: a history of the software industry* is a light read, forget it. It's an academic treatise that covers what it advertises, but it's about as dry as West Texas in August.



♥ We're only a couple of weekends into the summer blockbuster movie schedule, and so we have some *Coming Attractions* to look forward to. I want to see if the remake of *The Italian Job* is as bad as the other Mark Wahlberg remake, of *Charade* — this one at least has Seth Green, Charlize Theron, and Edward Norton in it. Even though it opens on the weekend of the deadline, we'll probably wait until my birthday early in June to go see it. Then, in August, we'll have *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, which will also either be wonderful or a disaster — again, we'll at least have Sean Connery on-board. I want to see what happens to

Neo and Trinity — not to mention get another chance to ogle Monica Bellucci — in *The Matrix Revolutions*, but that will have to wait for fall. The borrowed DVD of *Gods & Monsters* has been sitting by the player since Thanksgiving, and I want to see it. And I got *Kissing Jessica Stein* from the video store as an at-home date movie last weekend, and it may well be returned unwatched. JJ is agitating to see the new *Charlie's Angels* flick, which is probably a leading indicator of approaching teen hormones.

Meanwhile, stacked up on the bedside table are *Interface*, the other novel Neal Stephenson co-wrote as Stephen Bury, *Inside C#*, a geek book I really need to read for work, *Faking It*, Jennifer Crusie's followup to *Welcome to Temptation*, and two by Sarah Waters, *Tipping the Velvet* (which the author describes as "a lesbo-Victorian romp") and *Fingersmith* (which the Booker Prize committee describes as "on the shortlist"). And then there's the annual expedition through the Hugo short fiction — two hundred thirty thousand words worth, plus another ninety thousand of novel excerpts — which is now all available electronically. . .

Mailing Comments on SFPA 230

Tom Feller • Frequent Flyer ♦

ct Liz: "Allie would not have liked my alma mater, Ripon College in Wisconsin. It's located in a town of about 8,000 in the middle of Wisconsin farm country." Ripon would have failed the snow test, I'm afraid.

mike weber • Ascending Descending ♦

ct me: "Speaking of gorgeous women with brains — Brinke Stevens has a degree in Marine Biology; i believe at least a Master's." According to IMDB, she's got a Masters in marine biology from Scripps and has studied seven foreign languages. Apparently since then, she's majored in slasher films.

Janet Larson • Passages ♦

"I don't understand why Iraq 'has never sold as much oil as it was allowed to' under the terms of the export embargo." I don't either, but apparently part of it was that the US stood in the way of Iraq buying anything useful with the money, such as pipes to repair the plumbing in Basra (which is why even the British couldn't make the water flow after they occupied the city) and pencils (because they contain graphite, which could be used in nuclear research).

Gary Brown • Oblivio ♦

ct Lillian: "So, did I miss something or what are you doing in a motel in Thibodaux?" Maybe the same thing as those members of the Texas legislature who used to take suites

at the Stephen F Austin Hotel at the corner of Congress Avenue and Sixth Street when the lege was in session, so they could interview secretarial staff.

☞ “Sorry Challenger didn’t win the Hugo, but remember Susan Lucci. Seriously, you’ll hit it some day. Hang in there.” And, **Guy**: remember Mike Glycer, who didn’t ever win for fanzine through a decade when he really deserved it until there was a special category for *Locus*. Your turn, too, will come.

ct me: “Truth is, [invading Iraq] just might be fairly easy. But the cost still will be there. There are other ways to solve the problem.” I find it interesting that the aggregate amount the state budgets are short — 100 billion — just exactly matches the current estimated bill for Iraqi reconstruction. I also find it interesting that when that 100 billion figure was mentioned before the war, folks at the White House and Pentagon kept decrying it as an alarmist figure.

☞ “Speaking of watching movies, I seem to have this need to watch *Cast Away* every time it appears on HBO. I think I’ve seen the film at least a dozen times now. I can’t get enough of it.” I still haven’t seen it, and keep not having a chance. So much else to read and see.

☞ “I have wanted to read Richard Brock’s book *Blinded by the Right*, but kept hearing that half the book was his bemoaning his own stupidity.” Yes, you’re right. About half of the book is “boy, they picked on me after I stopped making up and repeating scurilous lies, but I’m a better person for it, even though I was a stupid drunk back then.” The other half of the book, which talks about the details of the scurilous lies is interesting as an historical data point. The in-between bits, which are just bitchy gossip about the internals of the Clinton-hating right, is fun to read for the nastiness.



Steve Hughes ♦ Comments ♦

ct me: “The end of the [first] Gulf War. ... I was very disappointed at the time that we didn’t ‘finish the job’ but understood the reasons.” The *New Yorker* web site recently reprinted an article by Elizabeth Drew from shortly after the first Gulf War,[•] detailing the

- “Letter from Washington” in the 6 May 1991 issue, if you want to look it up.

confusion within the [first] Bush administration about what they were supposed to be doing after they'd declared victory. It also points out that *not* taking Baghdad was explicitly in the charter of that war's coalition, though not publicized at the time of the war.

"I don't know who you're listening to but I've not heard anyone in the Bush administration claim there is a stable government in Afghanistan. What I've heard is a strong message that we are not in the nation building business." You're right: I've not heard Bush say something like "we have a stable government in Afghanistan." but I've heard him and his cabinet say things from which that sentence can be inferred. (Now that the White House web site no longer contains transcripts of things Bush says, it's really very hard to search for an example.) But, if we're not going to do nation building in Afghanistan, then our efforts there were for nothing. Hamid Karzai may have the title "president of Afghanistan," but in fact he's the mayor of Kabul. The Taliban are once again running parts of the provinces that Karzai-sympathetic warlords aren't. If the Taliban control the bulk of the territory, and are again providing a haven for al Qaeda, aren't we back where we were on September 10th, 2001? I'd suggest that if regime change in Iraq was important to America's vital interests, then a stable government in Afghanistan is more so — we have proof that the Taliban harbored al Qaeda, which we don't for Saddam Hussein. (And just as a side thought: if Al Gore were president, and the Taliban were hijacking convoys and executing members of the government they'd kidnapped, wouldn't we be hearing about it loudly from the Reillys and Limbaughs and Charens of the world?)

☞ *"There is no doubt in my mind that if Saddam gets nukes he will use them at some point."* And the most likely place he might have gotten them, annoyingly enough, might well be the nuclear-program-by-hire in Pakistan. *"So I'm all in favor of destroying Iraq's ability to make or buy them."* And, similarly, the best way to advance non-proliferation across the globe would be to strip Pakistan of their nuclear program, but to do that, you'd have to strip India of *their* program, and India won't give them up willingly because the generals in the Indian army are a bunch of racist pigs who are insecure about the size of their penises. Yeah, that's a pretty crude way to put it, but it's the closest way to express the truth. The other country that has to give up nukes in the region is Israel — but that won't happen until they come to terms with at least Syria. (The way that Africa's nuclear proliferation problem was solved was by South Africa giving up their nuclear program at the same time they gave up apartheid — I wrote a paper for a seminar on sub-Saharan Africa in college predicting dire consequences if SA didn't give up their program. So keystone countries giving up their nukes goes a long way toward solving the proliferation problem.)

☞ *"Linux in the home. We are definitely going there. Windows XP has delayed the process a little*

by being a whole lot more stable than the old version we were running on.” Yes, XP is more stable, and the current release of Windows Server is more stable still, though both of those effects are bought by keeping the device drivers under tighter reign, and in the case of Server, restricting the drivers that are shipped. (Something like 25% of Windows crashes are actually the fault of badly-behaved device drivers provided by third parties; high-end video drivers are particularly guilty.) In my experience, stock XP has never crashed — though I often managed to crash it when I’m working on a driver for it. On the other hand, I’ve never seen an XP system go for more than a year without a reboot, like I have with a system running Sun’s version of Unix. And, of course, to make things worse, any time you change configuration parameters on XP (or install most security patches) you have a forced re-boot. I have reason to believe that Microsoft viscerally understands how much of a problem forced reboots are, but I’d have to say “no comment” if you asked me a followup question.

☞ “Well bb guns shoot little round steel balls, are pretty inaccurate and have very little hitting power. Pellet guns shoot soft lead pellets, can be very accurate and have enough hitting power to kill small animals. Pellet guns are not toys.” Aha. Thank you for the explanation. As you know, I have little experience with guns, and don’t keep any around, so little tidbits like this add to my body of knowledge.

<p>“My name’s Tiffany,” she said, “I’m not actually a hotel clerk at all. I’m just working here to pay for my transcendental posture lessons. I’m really a model/actress.” — Connie Willis, “At the Rialto”</p>

George Wells : Somewhere, under the Danube... ❖

“Interesting what you say about Connie Willis’s putting aside her alien abduction novel due to 9/11 and our postponement of government agencies as villainous, or however you say it. A novel could be written where the FBI, in full co-operation with the X-Files and various mutant enemies of the FBI, join together to fight the 9/11 terrorists.” As I think I pointed out a couple of mailings ago, when we saw Connie speak locally a year or so ago, she hadn’t abandoned her alien abduction novel because it criticized the government — and as slow as Connie writes, by the time she’d finished it, criticizing the government would be in vogue again — but because images from September 11th stuck in her head. She’s started on a novel about time travellers returning to famous disasters. She read short passages about Pearl Harbor and *Titanic*.

mike weber : That Was the Year That Was ❖

Nice CD. I didn’t need the electronic copies of your zines, but the original TV version of *Casino Royale* is very nice to have. I’d only seen bits of it before.

Mailing Comments on SFPA 231

Ned Brooks : The New Port News ♦

ct me: “Cute cover! I was lucky — I never had a ‘pointy-haired boss’ in 39 years at NASA. Some of my bosses were more competent than others, but none of them were malicious.” I’ve actually met a pointy-haired boss or two in my time. One of the jobs I rejected out-of-hand the last time I was looking would have had me working for a guy who wouldn’t only be on the other side of the planet from me, but who I know from personal experience to be not just malicious, but less bright than he thought, more aggressive than any situation called for, and severely affected by attention deficit disorder.

ct weber: Your de la Bruyère quote, “The exact contrary of what is generally believed is often the truth.” is very nice and, in my experience, quite true. Though I guess that makes it its own counter-example. But to give three examples of things everyone knows to be true off the top of my head, Lewis Carroll wrote *Alice in Wonderland*,[◊] Sherlock Holmes said, “Elementary, my dear Watson,”[◊] and Humphrey Bogart said, “Play it again, Sam.”[▷]

Rich Lynch : Variations on a Theme ♦

ct Metca.f: “On fiction sequencing: ‘Allen Steele’s “Stealing Alabama” precedes his “Days Between” and reading “SA” first enhances “DB”.’ Exactly so. They’re both sections of Steele’s novel Coyote.” Ah, thanks. I was the one who pointed out the ordering of the Steele Hugo nominees to Norm, but understanding that they were both novel excerpts gives me more context. But I still think “Days Between” is really, really crummy as a stand-alone.

Since your comments to Norm come from my reviews of last year’s Hugo short fiction, it’s worth noting that I recently re-read Brenda Clough’s “May Be Some Time” in the annual Dozois collection, and while I thought it was nice enough the first time, I thought it was even better on second reading.

ct Lillian: You quote Guy’s “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.” and then note “Sometimes inferior candidates win, as we are only too aware by now.” As I pointed out last time: Arrow’s theorem says you can’t ever have a perfect election. What the preferential ballot buys us is automatic runoffs to guarantee a majority win. (“Australian,” by the way, is a misnomer: an Australian ballot is merely a

◊ He wrote a book entitled *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*.

◊ Basil Rathbone repeatedly said it in the movies, but the closest the literary Holmes comes is, “Interesting, but elementary,” in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, or simply “Elementary” in “The Crooked Man.”

▷ Rick’s line was (of course) actually, “You played it for her, you can play it for me.”

secret one. Ireland, Australia, and the foreign port of Cambridge, Mass, all use preferential ballots for various elections.) But Hugo elections aren't the only place where inferior candidates win, at least according to some people. The important difference is that for some transient ordering of preferences, the Hugo goes to the nominee who sucked least, which isn't always the case in, say, city council elections, or for the Oscars.

ct me: Thanks for refreshing my memory on the particulars of the Morgan custody case. "It's true that she had some supporters on Capitol Hill, but I don't think it took much to convince them of the unfairness of putting somebody in jail and throwing away the key for mere contempt." I still seem to remember that the main advocate for changing the law was her new boyfriend, who was federal judge, and that he'd originally proposed it as a private law applying only to her. "I actually don't remember seeing anything about it being proven that she lied under oath — five expert witnesses (for the father), child protection workers all, and the police all testified they could find no evidence of child abuse by the father. However, the treating psychologist testified that she did believe abuse had occurred (but she refused to provide her records other sessions with the child)." In the context of the seriously questionable claims of abuse around that time, and given how obviously vituperative Morgan was, I'm really surprised the judge believed the one psychologist (who essentially said, "trust me") over everyone else. "Morgan took photographs of the child in an attempt to document the alleged abuse, but was then charged with child pornography. (I'm not sure how that was resolved.)" Though, I've got to say, the notion of her being charged with pornography for that is clearly absurd. In any event, my memory of the case is a bit different than yours. It might be worth looking up the particulars. However, I think at this stage in the history of such cases, I'm inclined to disbelieve any claim of abuse. Probably not the best thing for the safety of the child, but it does throw out a lot of false accusations.



Guy Lillian ♦ *Spiritus Mundi* ♦

"(Another thing about the puppy: predictably, he was a chick magnet. Every time we took him out during our Florida journey, the girls flocked. Why didn't I discover this trick before?)" I once knew a married bisexual woman who had an Irish wolfhound. She claimed that part of the reason she had the dog was that when she wanted a lesbian dalliance, all she had to do was take the dog for a walk in the park. She came to visit her husband at the office one day, and brought the dog along — the interns and secretaries popping out into the hallway in her path were proof enough of her assertion.

"And Patty, princess that she is, started work on a new Challenger website for her annoying stepson-in-law. www.challzine.com. Checkitout." As I've already told you, I think Patty did a damnably fine job on this. Tell her it's a triumph of substance over form — and from a minimalist design curmudgeon like me, that's high praise.

"I tried to get permission from Tom and van Vogt (is he still alive?) to print the [letter] in Challenger, marking the 30th anniversary of the last human footprint on the moon." Van Vogt died back in January 2000.

ct me: "Dreadfully worried about Liz, but don't tell her. Good luck holding things together until she's back in the pink." Don't tell her that I was worried sick, too. I didn't realize just how it had upset my routine until my boss came into my office a month-or-so ago and asked why I wasn't getting anything done. That I was being unproductive *and hadn't noticed it myself* was a big hint.

☞ *"Tsk tsk. Never put an apostrophe in the title of Finnegans Wake."* Yeah, I know that, but my fingers won't let me leave it out. I always have to catch it in the proofreading step.

☞ *"No, no, the color mastheads on the OO marked Liz's OEship; the plain-jane business-only blue jobs you're running denote yours. Nothing fancy, nothing at all ornate, just good solid administration and silly Rule #4. Keep things the way they are."* Thanks for the kind words, but too late, I'm afraid. Color printing is easily available, and it seemed silly not to use it. Though, the twice-larger color masthead screws up the nice symmetries of my original monochromatic design.

☞ *"Gawk! Don't mention Entrapment, not after I've seen Chicago and the latest Esquire and begin to respect Catherine Zeta-Jones."* Hey, when you're in a foreign country and the only entertainment in a language you recognize let alone speak is *Entrapment*, you take what you can get.

☞ *"Although bin Laden has said that their object was to kill as many people as possible, shock our sense of well-being, and knock down a symbol of American capitalism, his goons could have done much more damage of the only kind that really matters to us: lives lost."* Well, that's because he's got a really warped sense of our sense of what's important. But this is a case where we should be heeding our British friends: it finally dawned on the Brits that the IRA wasn't going to go away by force, that they had to give Irish children a reason



to *not* join up with the terrorists. Tanks on the streets of Baghdad ain't gonna do it for Muslim terrorists. Though on bin Laden's side, blowing up buildings in Riyadh is only going to make the Saudis stop covering for him. (On the other hand, I did hear a good joke the other day: Who are blonde, voluptuous, look like twins, and are living in Paris? Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein.)

☞ "I doubt very seriously that Peter Sellers was caricaturing Henry Kissinger in *Dr Strangelove*; Kubrick made his movie in '63 and released it in '64, and Kings Seer didn't achieve fame until Nixon had set up his White House psycho ward five or six years later. Methinks Sellers was riffing on Werner von Braun — but mostly, creatmg his monster from whole cloth." Yes, I know it's highly unlikely that Sellars was actually caricaturing Kissinger in that role, and the stuff he spouts was much more likely to have come out of Herman Kahn, but if you think of that as being Sellars' take on a *particular* German lunatic, it adds a certain realism to the character. For that purpose, I'll accept Werner "I-senz-zem-up-I-don't-care-vair-zey-kum-down" von Braun instead of Heinz "bomb-Cambodia-even-if-it's-Christmas-and-illegal" Kissinger.

David Schlosser • Peter, Pan & Merry ♦

ct se,f: "My bad. I don't know where my head was, but Soc Sec is not included in the Federal income tax one pays." I haven't looked up the antecedent to this comment, but the social security tax you pay is included in the money you pay federal income tax on. (And I think that's a more egregious case of double taxation than paying tax on dividends for a US corporation with its offices in a post office box in Bermuda.) However, if what you mean is that social security tax isn't included in the amount classed as federal income tax, then, yes, I don't know where your head was either.

ct me: "Note that the Sharon visit to the Temple Mount seems a pretty shaky basis for the reaction it got." Yes, I guess you're right: the intifada re-starting because of Sharon's visit — provocative though it might have been — does seem way out of proportion to the provocation, which suggests that (too madly mix a metaphor) all Sharon did was

light the fuse on the dynamite that was already there. But the Likud PMs seem to have a penchant for inflaming Palestinian passion somehow.

☞ *"The relative good times between Oslo and the latest uprising should have been a clue that that was the way to go. Really makes one wonder about the true agenda on the Palestinian side."* As I've said...

☞ *"ct Lynch: I don't recall that particular custody case but as a point of interest why would a change in federal law apply? Wouldn't all that have taken place under state laws?"* I don't remember the particulars either, only that her case was the impetus for changing the federal contempt law.

☞ *"I don't recall any ID card with both a picture and SS#... Certainly not my driver's license."* There's a space on the Washington driver's license for social security number. Mine's blank since I won't give it to them. Of course, it's now supposed to be a federal requirement, so when it comes time to renew my license in a couple of years, I'm sure I'll have an argument.

☞ *"Now that you mention it, the story around the plot of Sum of All Fears (beyond the Ryan age) was indeed different in various directions. Of course it was still under Clancy's aegis so I'm sure he was careful about what changes were allowed."* What may be going on here is that he's attempting to re-start the franchise from a new baseline with a character reset. Certainly, an already-married Ryan with two kids played by Ben Affleck wouldn't have been as believable. *"As a side note I have to wonder if the Jack Ryan movies are going to become something of a Bond franchise with actors rotating in and out and story-lines weaved from different books (although that would be harder for the Ryan books than the Bond ones)."* Remember that in the Bond franchise, the stories in the novels started diverging from the plot of the movies at the second coming of Sean Connery, *Diamonds are Forever*. By the time we get to *Live and Let Die*, novel and movie have nothing in common.

Richard Dengrove ♦ Twygdrasil and Treehouse Gazette ♦

ct me: "Did General Franks allow the Taliban and al Qaeda to escape to keep this War on Terrorism con going for the Bush Administration? That's giving the Bush Administration too much credit for having vision. Most likely, the Taliban and al Qaeda just crossed the border into no man's land agreement or no agreement? And Franks' men couldn't see them to stop them." Now Franks has done that with both bin Laden and Saddam Hussein. *"We got him."* *"Never mind."* *"We got him."* *"No, we didn't"* *"We got him."* *"Oops."* *"We got him."* *"No comment."*

☞ *"I suspect Bach, as heavenly as his music is, is a human taste. Extraterrestrials, who in 100,000 A.D. come across a 21st Century space probe, will be puzzled."* I don't know. I think the reason for Bach is the mathematical precision and progression of, say, the Goldberg Variations or the Two and Three-Part Inventions. But what's the Clarke's White Hart story about music? Oh, yeah, *"The Ultimate Melody."* *"What we should do is*

see what symbols animals will recognize. While we can't guarantee extraterrestrials will be anything like them, at least the symbols then will not be limited to our species." The results may leave us in a philosophical quandry: As the experiments with gorillas have proven, animals have more symbol-processing ability than we'd suspected. When Koko the gorilla demonstrated that she could tell a lie, that raised some fascinating issues. However, we may come to an odd conclusion: our language (and hence our symbol-processing ability) is so heavily influenced by our physical environment that animals *must* have the same language base as we do. In that case, any ETs we would interact with physically would have their language influenced by the same physical laws, and hence would have a sufficiently similar language, that we could come up with translations. Or maybe I've seen too many episodes of *Star Trek*.

ct quotes: "CHURCHILL (p209). 'Everything for the war, whether controversial or not, and nothing controversial that is not bona fide for the war.' I know this is Winston Churchill; but while reading it, I couldn't help thinking: 'Spoken like a tme politician.' Rumsfeld said the same thing too recently." I don't think that's politician-speak at all. It's an acknowledgement that the war is the important thing going on, and pulling political fast ones under cover of the war is not fair, and ultimately not good for the country. If Rumsfeld said it, though, he was lying, because the Bush administration pushed a bunch of stuff through congress that had nothing to do with the war while the country was otherwise distracted, some of which amounted to gifts for their friends.



Sheila Strickland • Revenant ♦

ct me: "Ct Guy: 'The cats must be borrowing stuff to read.' Maybe that's what's going on around herc. A book will disappear from where I'm certain it was, only to reappear a few weeks later. Either that, or there's a wormhole." Around here what happens often is that I'll be carrying my keys, someone will interrupt me, and when I continue to the car, I'll realize I set my keys down, but have no idea where.

Guy Lillian • Thirty ♦

I'm really glad you're just banged up. I'd hate to have to write Rosy a condo-

lence note. "He may have been fubbo, but he was yours at least...."

"I flashed on an auto accident I'd witnessed in Birmingham when I was a kid. The lady kept asking for her glasses." Yes, of course. If you're already slightly disconnected from reality in the aftermath, not being able to see keeps you from psychologically getting your feet back under you. When I wake up in the morning, I don't even roll over before I've assured myself my glasses are where I left them. When I get a haircut, my glasses go in my shift pocket not on the counter. One of my more vital jobs with Liz in the hospital has been to take custody of her glasses at the last moment rolling into the operating room and put them back on her when she comes out of recovery.

Tom Feller • Frequent Flyer ♦

"As I mentioned in the last mailing, Anita and I are building a new house." That cover picture of you in front of an empty lot is evocative: When we had our house built in Austin, I took a picture from the corner across the street every morning for the entire hundred days it took to go from empty lot to fully completed house.

"Henry Kissinger was not famous enough in 1962 to be Peter Sellers' model for Dr. Strangelove. I have read that his model was John von Neumann." See my comments to Guy above. As I say, though, one wonders if Kubrick talked to Herman Kahn, to whom Kissinger was certainly known.

Steve Hughes • Weird Stuff ♦

"The body of the zine is printed on Hammermill 'Photo White' color copy paper. It's a 28# paper intended for color copiers and printers." But not that frighteningly high-gloss photo stuff you used before. I've been using Great White's 24 pound coated stock for inkjets at home, and getting good results.

"Epson has always been an innovator in low cost printers. I think I have the first model they made, an impact dot matrix printer that cost about \$700, in a box some place." If I'm remembering my history correctly, Epson started by building printing timers for the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. They were originally a Seiko subsidiary, and are still part of the same zaibatsu.

Gary Brown • Oblio ♦

I note in your comics of the year list for 2002, your first choice is *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* which, as I note in my reviews, I'm looking forward to the movie version of. Maybe it will have more staying power than *Mystery Men*, but won't spawn dumb sequels like *Men in Black*.

ct *The Southerner*: "I see mike weber has put through a CD and you gave it a 'O' page count. No doubt, as these become more commonplace, we'll have to figure out how to credit them..." It was mostly reprints of stuff that had already run through SFPA, so it wouldn't have counted for minac however we counted the pages. I gave it a zero page count in a snap decision while typing up the OO — mike already had pages in that mailing

— even though I knew that was the wrong answer. But how *would* you count it? The number of pages incorporated? How would you have counted the movie he included? *“It also would be nice if you’d say what is on these CDs for those of us still reluctant to open or play such items.”* I didn’t know myself until after the mailing went out and I’d read the insert in the jewel case. There simply wasn’t time to explore the whole thing before typing up the OO.

ct me: “It just dawned on me why you’re so far behind in doing mailing comments — you type the line(s) from the hook you’re commenting on first. That must take a lot of time, especially since you have to quote it accurately.” Actually, at this point, I use the hand-held scanner Liz and the kids gave me for my birthday two years ago — that’s a picture of it on the right — to copy the comment hooks. It’s not 100% accurate, though. I’ve left some of its mistakes this time, for amusement. Most of the goofs can be fixed with a little bit of software, I suspect. Guy’s typeface has “ll” that scans as “U”, and Janice’s quotes scan as “//”. The scanning is also often a victim of the “Wamock problem”. In the typefaces most often used on the PC, there’s not enough sidebearing in “r” or “n”, so “rn” (or “in”) looks like “m” to your eye (and to the scanner). This was first a real problem on the Apple Laserwriter, where people discovered that John Warnock, the president of Adobe, who’d built the printer firmware, became “Wamock.” ☞ *“Ofcourse, I’ll admit it’s a help to the rest of us who sometimes have no idea what an MC is based on.”* That’s why I started doing it. I got tired of reading old zines and saying “what the hell was I referring to?”



Janice Gelb • Trivial Pursuits ♦

“Nearly all of my fears about Bush being elected President have been realized. He’s pushing tax cuts for the wealthy, pushing us to the brmk of war, and attempting to curtail individual privacy. I still can’t believe that the Democrats weren’t able to make some inroads in the last election.” As for that tax cut, they keep telling me it’s not just for the wealthy. After all, even NPR points out that a married couple with two children, earning the median income in the country will have their federal taxes reduced by a third. You have to read the fine print to realize that most of the savings comes from the increase in the child tax credit that’s only in force until after the next presidential election, and the rest of the savings comes from presuming that that hypothetical couple have a bunch of their income from dividends — something that’s actually unlikely in that income bracket, if you look at the IRS statistics on income sources.

But think about some real cases here:

In our household, we'll save about \$410 between the child tax credit* (for JJ; Allie's now too old) Note that the one thing that would have saved folks in our tax bracket and employment situation some money — eliminating the Alternate Minimum Tax — wasn't really changed in the package. and the tax savings on the roughly hundred dollars in dividends we make each year, plus about \$500 because the 27% marginal tax bracket is now the 25% tax bracket. (I don't know exactly how much because the 15% bracket break-point has been increased, too, and I don't know to where.) Net savings, about \$1000.

In your case, Janice, I'm making the educated guess that you're in roughly the same income bracket and useless stock option situation we're in, so without kids, you'll get about half what we do, say \$500: that's \$10 a week. I'm also betting that your \$10 is going the same place as our \$20: since high tech salaries have not kept up with the cost of living the last couple of years, that represents what we lost to inflation last year.

I suspect that Guy Lillian and mike weber get nothing out of this tax cut. I'd have to look up how bond interest is treated, but I'm presuming it's the same as dividends, in which case, Steve Hughes cuts his marginal tax rate in half.

My boss saves some taxes on his salary and bonus because of income bracket reduction (35% instead of 38.6% of 800k = 29k), saves more than half the taxes he would have paid on the \$75 million dividend payment he got in February (15% rather than 38.6% on 75M = 17.7M), plus he'll save a quarter of the capital gains taxes he'd pay on the roughly 38 million shares of Microsoft stock he'll liquidate this year (15% rather than 20% on 2.85B = 142M).

OK: I don't begrudge Steve the reduced taxes. I know that his conservative investing strategy has hurt his income as interest rates have tanked along with the stock market, and since my parents are in exactly the same situation, albeit with a smaller pool of capital, I understand what difficult decisions that causes — in some senses, being *dependently* wealthy is easier. You and we and Steve and my parents could use some extra money, but aren't going to starve for it's lack.

But can anyone really argue that Bill Gates needs an extra \$171,479,000 this year more than Guy and Rosy and mike need to be able to pay their rent, and maybe go out for dinner or to a convention? If the point of this tax cut is to goose the economy, it makes no difference to whether Bill's going to reinvest his capital, but all the difference in the world about whether mike has money in his pocket to

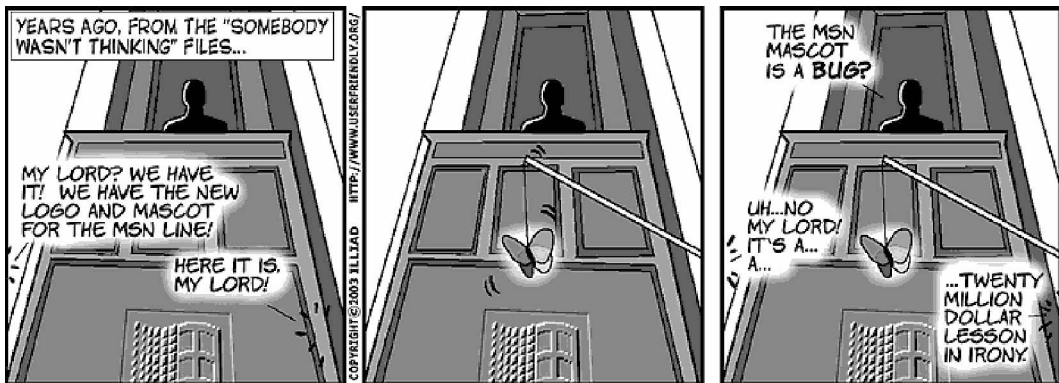
* And, note please, the recurring cynicism here: the child tax credits will be sent to individual tax payers over the summer in the form of a check. Of course, since the withholding tables are being revised at the same time, that check is actually a loan against your possible refund next spring, just like the last time Bush pulled this stunt.

actually put into the economy.

Further, if we're trying to stimulate the economy to fix a temporary situation, why are the dividend and capital gains cuts the ones that are most likely to be permanent? How can we claim with a straight face that it's unfair to tax dividends when the corporation has already paid tax on those profits? Even when the dividends were paid by companies with either no federal tax liability, or (worse) who've moved their corporate headquarters to the Bahamas so they don't have to pay US taxes. Yet you and I will pay 25% marginal income tax on the roughly \$6500 of social security tax we'll pay this year.

And that's not even thinking about things like the amount of grants that the states won't get to cover federal mandates like homeland security, or covering the cost of the war in Iraq, which hasn't fully shown up on the balance sheet yet.

That's my fiscal rant for the month. It's over. You can all come back now.



☞ I must say I enjoyed the Sipress cartoon you reprint from *The New Yorker*: the woman with the phone asking her husband, "It's the Democratic Party. Do we want to give money to their campaign to find themselves?" I think the problem here has been the the democrats want to find a single issue which will instantly ignite the electorate. It won't work that way. How long did Newt Gingrich have to run around hammering on the notions that became the Contract on with America before he got any traction? And he was using every bit of loaded language and schoolyard invective he could lay his hands on. "Our opponents are crazy!" "Democrats are liars!" "The government is stealing your money!"

ct me: "You say here that Israel's army is mostly populated by reservists, but that isn't true. They have a standing army of about 150,000, with additional reservists doing duty for one month a year, plus special callups when necessary." Thanks for the correction. I was quoting John McPhee and that's an uncharacteristic factual goof on his part.

☞ "You might be interested to know that many Israelis, even relatively hard-line ones, support

the removal of the settlements in the West Bank as part of a peace accord." That's actually a very cool data point, and makes me a bit more hopeful. Though on Monday of deadline week, in another big step forward, Ariel Sharon finally agreed to the "road map": "You may not like the word, but what's happening is occupation. Holding 3.5 million Palestinians is a bad thing for Israel, for the Palestinians and for the Israeli economy." I seem to remember an old Vulcan proverb, "only Nixon could go to China." Maybe only some Likud hardliner could push the government into something like this. (If Bush takes credit for this, after all the work Carter and Clinton did, I'm gonna be pissed.)

☞ *"I said in my review of Minority Report that it surprised me with better acting than I expected and you replied 'But "better acting?" with Tom Cruise? I scoff.' Precisely the point: I expected terrible acting and it turned out that Cruise did a creditable job..."* Quite so, and now that I've seen it, I see why you said that. Cruise turned in a credible performance.

☞ *"Yowza, Microsoft assumes some of its employees will be giving over \$12,000 in a United Way drive?!??? I don't think Sun even in its heyday would have made that assumption."* A couple of things to remember, two of which are generally available knowledge: Part of the reason Microsoft is so hot on contributions to charity is that Bill's late mother, Mary, was on the national board of United Way, so charitable giving is literally in his blood. But, if I'm remembering the timing correctly, it was his mom interacting with the chairman of IBM at United Way board meetings that spawned the initial contact between the two companies, in which case Bill owes United Way big time.

However, I also surmise that at a certain level within Microsoft, how much (and how publicly) one gives to United Way (or some other charity that you can make a big deal about, but preferably one under the United Way umbrella) has an immense effect on one's prospects for advancement within the company. I also surmise that that level is not that much higher than where I am now. Generally being public involves something like posting a note to the group before Christmas and saying "If you'll let me know what food you put in the box for the food bank, I'll go to the grocery store and match it, and then file the paperwork so the company will match us both in cash to the food bank." Managers under certain vice presidents are also told to personally harangue their staff for pledges, in part because I also suspect that VPs are judged on how much their groups contribute.

☞ *"Interesting to read this Tom Tomorrow cartoon about the lack of coverage of anti-war protests right after reading the front-page coverage of the massive war demonstrations held in Washington and San Francisco this past Saturday. Every article I've seen mentions the range of people involved: not just left-wing liberals but people all over the demographic and political spectrum."* But in the end, all that protest meant fuck-all. We've now learned that the decision was taken to wage this war was made back in December, and anything that happened after that was going to have no effect on the invasion. However, the protest did give the Bushies

a chance to label people as being unpatriotic and claim that they weren't anti-war, just anti-Bush.



Eve Ackerman • Guilty Pleasures ♦

ct me: "I'm sorry to hear about Liz's kidney stone problems. Were non-surgical techniques not an option because of the size? I understand there are some machines now that use sound waves to break up stones." The Stones will never break up: Mick Jagger's never met Yoko Ono. More seriously, though, they tried breaking up Liz's kidney stones with various sonic devices, and it no effect.

☞ "Your backcover cartoon was all too sad and accurate. One of the better lines on Will & Grace this year was Karen saying 'Last time I had a date Bush was president and we were about to bomb Iraq.'" I was realizing as I was writing my natter that even though it seems like yesterday that we brought Allie home from the hospital, in the outside world we've managed to launch two wars against Iraq, elect two Clintons and two Bushes to national office, and lose two space shuttles. It's been deja vu all over again. But as for the Tom Tomorrow cartoon on that back cover, see the Sinfest cartoon at the top of the next page.

Toni Reinhardt • Yngvi Is a Louse ♦

mailing comments from Hank:

ct me: "Let me get this straight. The Democrats in Florida couldn't understand the ballots because they were too complicated. Hmmm. I do remember that these same ballots were given to some 2nd graders, and they filled them out perfectly. Seems to me that the conclusion is that the Democratic voters don't have the sense of 2nd graders." As they say in Japanese, *iie, Hank-sama, chigamasu,*



which literally translates as “while I note your greater age and experience, what you say is at variance with reality.” Or as we used to put it in more economically in New Jersey, “bullshit!”

I’m sure we’ve been through this before, but the second graders were given a cartoon of the ballot, measuring $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$ inches with five or six names on it (as I recall, they were Disney characters), placed flat on the desks in front of them. (I cut the picture of that ballot out of the paper and had it sitting on my desk at home for a long time as an interesting example of misdirected argument.) The actual voters were given a ballot with nine candidate pairs squeezed into a height of $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches, on a stand four feet off the ground, which meant that to someone less than 5 feet 4 inches tall — the average height of an American woman — the apparent space between the lines on the ballot was $\frac{3}{16}$ of an inch. Now, you’re hale and hearty for your age, Hank, and you may be able hit a two millimeter spot at arm’s length every time, even if you’re voting for Samuel Tilden again, like you did at your first presidential election, and Tilden’s printed name is separated from the two millimeter spot by a four inch long arrow which is $\frac{3}{16}$ of an inch from the arrow next to Rutherford B Hayes’ name. However, not everyone is as hale and hearty, and it probably isn’t cause for questioning the sense of some Florida voters.

Anyway, I’m not sure the minutia of that screwup — even though they’re fascinating as a user interface case study — are relevant to the point I was trying to make in *Weasel Crossing*, which is that the exit polls in Florida being at wild variance with the votes that got counted was a really, really interesting piece of data. Claiming the system was broken because it didn’t tell you what you expected — which is what the folks at Voter News Service were trying to do — is the wrong answer to a bigger problem.

(And where are the mailing comments from Toni?)

Gary Robe • Tennessee Trash ♦

ct me: "I think you fingered the real reason that Israeli/Palestinian peace has been so elusive. The Palestinians are not really interested in stopping." Maybe not. Or maybe Arafat's not. Or maybe (like with the Republican party, and the Iranian parliament) the hardline assholes have internal political power out-of-proportion to their numbers, and are riding roughshod over the moderates.

☞ "Yeah, and if your Intemational Company does send you to New Zealand it is Robe's First Law of International Business Travel that they don't put paint factories anywhere near tourist attractions." Hmm, so how come the Tahitian Tourist Board doesn't include a Paint Factory on their beach tour? Wait a second, there may be a business opportunity here: nude Tahitian paint ball tournaments. Or maybe that's just a new reality TV show.

Randy Cleary • Avatar Press ♦

"I watched *The Other Guy* as a rental and had never heard of it beforehand. ...starring ...and Meg Tilly (*Bound, Bride of Chucky*)." Also, as a supporting player in *The Fabulous Baker Boys*, which is a really fine movie.

ct me: "I read Scott Adams' *Way of the Weasel*, recently. It was funny and depressing (as it's so true to my working life)." As I've said before, when *Dilbert* moves from comedy to documentary, I temporarily stop reading it.

☞ "Election 2000 — 'It's dead, Jim' to paraphrase McCoy." Yes, but only because it was wearing a red shirt, and took a phaser blast in the chest. But see my comments to Hank above about how fallout from the 2000 election has caused the news providers to do something stupid.

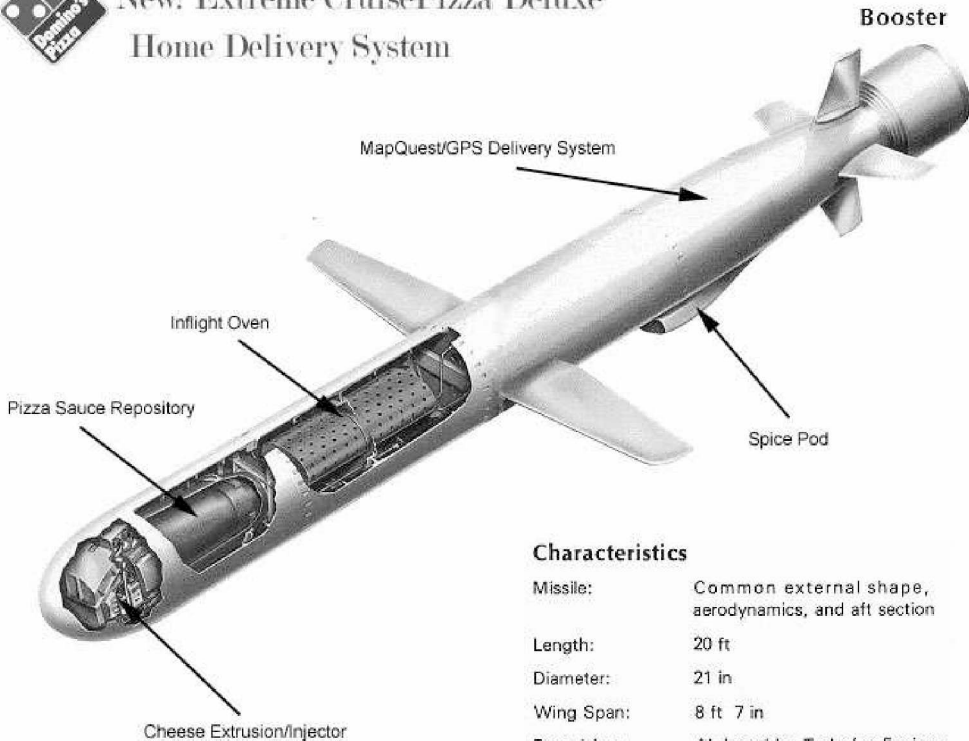
Norm Metcalf • Tyndallite ♦

ct Hugo Box Scores: "There doesn't seem to be a positive correlation between overall quality and the number of nominations. Your pages 3-4 listing by 'batting average' I think further illustrates the lack of correlation between quality and Hugo awards." As I observed above in my comment to Rich Lynch, you see the same thing in the Academy Awards. It's also a matter of what the competition is in any given year. In some sense (like with the Oscars) we're also seeing awards go to what's popular. (Though I think it's interesting to look at the folks with the most nominations: Silverberg and Ellison certainly benefit from longevity, for example.) As the Nebula and Hugo voting populations have gotten to be more distinct, it's also been interesting to see how different the nomination lists have gotten.

That's all for now, folks. More next time. In the meantime, here's a nice fake ad from the folks at DailyProbe.com.



New! Extreme CruisePizza Deluxe Home Delivery System



Delivered in 30 minutes
or it's free!

Characteristics

Missile:	Common external shape, aerodynamics, and aft section
Length:	20 ft
Diameter:	21 in
Wing Span:	8 ft 7 in
Propulsion:	Air-breathing Turbofan Engine; Solid Propellant Booster used for sea and ground launch
Approximate Range:	1300nm — Thin Crust 600nm — Deep Dish Deluxe

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Art Credits

The front cover: 9 *Chickweed Lane* from 16 Oct 2001. Page 2: 9 *Chickweed Lane* from 20 Aug 2002 — well, it's not the career I would have chosen for her, but each of our children needs to make their own choices. Page 6: *Arlo & Janis* from 11 Apr. Page 9: *Non Sequitur* from 18 Jun 2001 — it's the summer of the remake, the summer of the sequel. Page 10: *Boondocks* from 7 May. Page 13: *Foxtrot* from 11 Jul 2001 — some summer games are better than others. Page 15: *Arlo & Janis* from 8 May — OK, Steve, haven't you always wanted to do something like this? Page 19: *Foxtrot* from 22 Nov 2002 — some music *shouldn't* be replayed. Page 21: *Non Sequitur* from 12 May — nothing should be read into the placement of this cartoon. Page 23: *Arlo & Janis* from 5 May — they're picky eaters, hide our keys, and borrow our books. Why do we like cats again? Page 27: *User Friendly* from 29 Mar — that scratching you hear in the background is me writing 'I won't make fun of my boss' 100 times. Page 29: David Horsey from 21 May. Page 30: *Sinfest* from 26 Mar. Page 32: I ended up on an odd page, so this is blatantly used as space filler. Back cover: taken by Allie's photography teacher, Jason Moodie, this was one of the rejects for her year book picture.

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