

Time Keeps on Slipping into the Future is the thirty-second SFPA-zine (volume two, number nine) from Jeffrey Copeland's intended for the Southern Fandom Press Alliance's 204th mailing and selected others. It is published by Bywater Press at 1085 Albion Way, Boulder, Colorado 80303. The text of *Time Keeps on Slipping into the Future* was composed using the T_EX typesetting system, and is set in 10-and-11-point Optima, Palatino, and Avant Garde. The original of this publication was printed on 24 July 1998, and it was reproduced by the Xerographic process.



We choose our title with a tip of the hat to the Steve Miller Band (not to mention artwork by Salvador Dali) because we are really pressed for time. I ran way long on the makeup zine of leftover comments from mailing 202, which were supposed to be in 203, and I hoped to have earlier in 204. We are off on vacation on the normal deadline day. It looks like I'll need to spend a few days in Canada either immediately before or immediately after the deadline. Then I'm back to Canada shortly after we get back from vacation.

Meanwhile, to add to the confusion, I'm going to try something different: Rather than doing discrete natter, review and comments sections, I'm going to compose this in the order in which I've got notes, setting the types of text off by different typefaces. We'll see if this works. No fancy dropcaps, but since I'll be making up pages as I go, I won't have to go back and madly insert artwork before printing. It also means that you get it in the order in which I composed it. With luck my choices of typefaces won't clash outrageously. Onward...

Deep South Con was fun. I'm good for about one convention a year, since it serves to prevent me from becoming a younger version of Seth Goldberg: closeted in my house, tossing fanzines out over the transom, and not talking to people face-to-face. Worldcon is too big anymore, but DSC has the right mix of friends old and new in a convenient size. Though it's a pain to get to from the Rockies. Great to see you all. Even if we had to go to a third-world hotel to do it.

The following interesting item crossed our desk recently...

Morning Coffee Edition for Thursday, July 02, 1998

***** Fla. man says injured by dancers' breasts**

A Florida man has filed suit against a nightclub, claiming he suffered whiplash when a topless dancer knocked him out with her oversized breasts, the Tampa Tribune reported Wednesday. "Apparently she jumped up and slammed her breasts on my head and just about knocked me out," the newspaper quoted plaintiff Paul Shimkonis as saying. Shimkonis, 38, filed suit seeking more than \$15,000 in damages from the Diamond Dolls club. The dancer, known as Tawny Peaks, was not named in the lawsuit. According to the lawsuit, Shimkonis and friends visited the bar on Sept. 27, 1996. Because he was the guest of honor, the dancers asked him to sit on a low chair, rest his head on the back of the chair and close his eyes. The lawsuit said Peaks danced in front of him, and without warning or consent "jumped on the plaintiff forcing her very large breasts into his face causing his head to jerk backward." (Reuters)

So, not only is hanging out in strip clubs numbing, as Guy discussed a while back, or boring as I suggested in response, getting hit in the face by silicone boobs can cause whiplash.

Deep Impact was our first summer movie this year. It's got characters, a plot, a quickly-solved minor mystery, plot, subtlety, and only once did I lean over to Liz and say "Bzzt!", the dreaded sign that they'd blown a point of science. In a summer with two asteroid movies, we've been thinking of this one as the chick version of the plot.

The movie is an assault on the eyes, the ears, the brain, common sense, and the human desire to be entertained. No matter what they're charging to get in, it's worth more to get out.

— Roger Ebert reviewing *Armageddon*

On the other hand, most of *Armageddon* is simply wrong. The science is bad. The characters are cardboard, down to one who uses the old "hey, you're the one with the dirty pictures" line to a shrink. The plot is a pale rendition of the story in *Deep Impact*. But things go *boom* a lot. Which one do you think will win the awards? (They get some points for having a farewell scene in the wreckage of Pad 34 at Cape Kennedy; they lose them all and then some for lingering over the plaque on the concrete to make sure everyone noticed where they were.)

Ned Brooks ♦ *It Goes on the Shelf* ☉ You comment here that you have ten thousand books, and 70 shelf-feet of fanzines. The former, as I've pointed out, compares interestingly with the Library of Congress, which lost all three thousand of its volumes when the British (the bastards) burned it in the War of 1812. It was restarted when Thomas Jefferson sold his personal library of 6487 volumes, "the largest and finest in the country," to Congress in 1815 for \$23,940. * On the other hand, 70 shelf-feet works out to somewhat more than forty thousand pages of fanzines.

Ned Brooks ♦ *The New Port News* ☉ ct Hlavaty: "Survival of the fittest' is just a shorthand for the Darwinians theory - in theory, the only criterion for 'fittest' is that they survive long enough to reproduce." So those guys who show up on the Jerry Springer show for genetic testing to see if all the kids are theirs qualify as "the fittest". Eeek!

Speaking of evolution: I tripped over a creationist web page the other day, which began with the argument that "evolution doesn't exist because we've never seen a new species created in the hundred years we've been paying attention." Which, of course, missed the argument that Darwin made about the origin of the species all together.

* I just double-checked the dates and number of books on the LC web page; I initially remembered that Jefferson donated 3000 books, which was wrong.

ct me: "Amazing that Knuth could write a general program for triangular dissections of a decagon!" Remember that Knuth is actually a mathematician – in fact, a combinatorialist – not a computer scientist. His books, even *The Art of Computer Programming* take a mathematician's approach to computers. (On a related subject, see my further comments about Dick Feynman in the vicinity of comments to Toni's zine, below.)

So God shows up in the Garden of Eden mid-week following creation. He's carrying a paper bag.

"So, Adam, Eve: how's it going? Having a good time?"

"Yes, God, everything's just wonderful. How are you doing?"

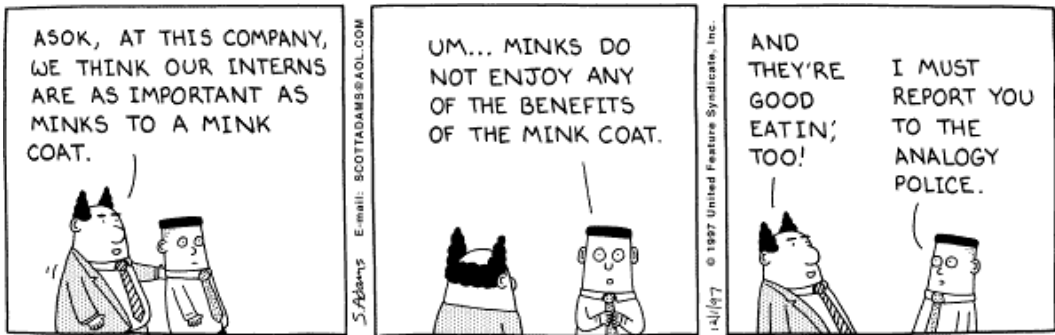
"Well, I'm recovering from goofing-off for five days and then pulling that horrendous all-nighter. But look, I found some leftovers."

"What do you mean leftovers?"

"Well, when I finished with creation, there were some odd-and-ends that I didn't need, and I thought maybe you could use them." He opens the bag and looks inside. "For example, who wants to be able to pee standing up?"

Adam immediately jumps up. "Oh, me, God! That would be really a useful thing. Think about when I was out hunting or working in the field or whatever. I just wouldn't have to stop to take a leak."

"OK!," says God, "done. Now, let's see what else we've got. Oh, yeah! Multiple orgasms..."



Binker Hughes ♦ Seasons ❁ Well, I don't envy you having to wait while your parents levelset their expectations about getting help. But, even with as much crud as there is to do around here, I'm not sure I could stand having live-in help, even if we were willing to spend money on it, so I sort of understand their reluctance to give up their independence, too.

ct *The Southerner*: “You all just keep doing nifty color work with your printer.” Well, as I explained last time, much of it was done in a lump and stockpiled.

ct me: “If I wanted the raccoons dead, I could shoot them or . . . call the county ‘animal control’ agency.” I know. I know. I goofed, and didn’t press the “sarcasm” key when I typed that sentence.

continuing a conversation from DSC: It struck me on the way back to Atlanta that the calculated demonization of Iraq and Saddam Hussein discerned by your colleague is corroboration of something I’d suspected for a long time: the Kuwaiti invasion was just the excuse; the real intent of the Gulf War was to strip Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction, and, as a distant second goal, to replace the ruling junta, if possible. Incidentally, the war being a set-up for the purpose of destroying Iraqi nukes is the taking-off point for Frederick Forsythe’s novel *Fist of God*.

Dick Lynch ❖ Title Goes Here ❖ Since you keep trying to make the web version of *Mimosa* look as identical as possible to the print version, down to the columns, how come you don’t just scan it in? Oh, of course, because then readers of the web version have to download a huge image, not just text. But why the use of columns on the web version? The problem with them is that you have to flip down the page to read one column, flip back up to the top to start the next one, and flip down again, since my screen is almost certainly not as long as your columns.

When I first saw a trailer for *As Good As It Gets*, I thought (and reported here) “Jack Nicholson plays Guy Lillian.” Now that I’ve seen it, I have to report that even on a *bad* day, Guy is at least an order of magnitude less neurotic than Nicholson’s character. Nonetheless, we get a study in how crazy someone can be, and still be sufficiently functional to make a living. We get to see how complicated relationships can start, and to see Nicholson’s writer start to come out of his shell and make friends with his gay next-door-neighbor, and to actually start to feel some affection for the only waitress who will serve him at the neighborhood restaurant. It’s clear that both Helen Hunt and especially Nicholson deserved the Oscars they won for their performances here — and Greg Kinnear earned his nomination — but why *Titanic* won Best Picture over this stellar character study is a mystery to me.

One of the fun things for me here is that we don’t end on a “happily ever after.” It’s not completely clear that this is going to work out, and we don’t tie things up in a nice neat package: life is like that, and that’s just fine. I certainly don’t want there to be a sequel *As Bad As It Gets: the Breakup*.

Dick Lynch ❖ This is not a Minaczine ❖ Nice to have a repeat of your postcards from Eastern Europe trip report. I like it.

"I was hoping to find the NCAA basketball tournament finals on Eurosport. . . " When I was in Japan during the summer Olympics one year, I watched the TV coverage transfixed: they operated in the original "Wide World of Sports" mode, lobbing event after event after event at you. My Japanese is not good enough to keep up with the broadcast, but I knew enough to tell that there were no cutsey little "what this star athlete overcame to get to the Olympics" featurettes, just coverage of people competing.

ct OO: "I don't recognize the painting you're featuring on the front page of *The Southerner*." For SFPA 202, the masthead was "Le bonheur de vivre" by Henri Matisse. In general, I make note of the *Southerner* masthead artwork on the art credits page of my zine.

ct Hlavaty: "I looked up [Hlavaty] in my Slovak-English dictionary, and it means 'big-headed' or 'obstinate.' Doesn't sound like you at all." Oh, Arthur's got just enough anal-retentive in him that I think obstinate can be made to apply. Of course, he's also one of the least ego-centric people I've ever met, so I'm not sure big-headed applies at all.

ct Gelb: "(I'll spare you the details on sciatic nerve pain.)" It almost sounds like a pain in the ass.

Lucky You is the new Carl Hiaasen. Woman wins half of the Florida lottery jackpot. White supremacists win the other half, and steal the woman's winning ticket, so they can have it all and save America from the NATO troops massing in the Bahamas. The MacGuffin doesn't matter, because it's just the launching point for silliness. For example, it's not giving anything away to tell you that the militia is self-styled as the White Aryan Brotherhood. You could just hear Dave Barry reading the manuscript and saying "That would be a great name for a rock band!" because everyone who hears the name says something like "Yeah, I heard them open for Climax Blues Band last summer."

The Lost Boys was Orson Scott Card's first foray into horror writing. It was a masterpiece and with its careful blend of religion, family life, corporate existence out of the Dilbert Zone, and fantastic occurrences it had the ability to scare different people in different ways. His current **Homebody** is a pale imitation, much more in the Stephen King mold, with ghosts, haunted houses, little old ladies who are more than they seem, dead ex-wives and children.

We finally saw the movie of **Starship Troopers** on video. It wasn't the disaster that I feared. In fact, it's designed to look like a propaganda film, which is an interesting approach, since the original book was a reflection on the importance and responsibility of citizenship. Of course, that's beside the point, because director Paul Verhoeven — a man who moved to Hollywood because it was one of the few

places in the world where someone as sick as he is could feel at home — has the goal of seeing how close he can skate to getting an NC-17 rating.

Irv Koch ♦ *Offline Reader* ☼ This spreadsheet is fascinating, but wouldn't it be easier to use Quicken or Managing Your Money to keep this data? I keep all our investments in Quicken, and just update prices and check on our net worth once a month when I balance the checkbook. (Of course, the time horizon for most of our investments is twenty years, so keeping track of daily fluctuations is actually counter-productive, which is why I only check once a month.)

May I offer you, in addition, a little advice? Bear in mind that the amateur professional is peculiarly rapacious. This applies to both women and to people who play cards. If you must back horses, back them at a reasonable price and both ways. And, if you insist on blowing out your brains, do it some place where you will not cause mess and inconvenience.

Your affectionate Uncle,

Peter Death Bredon Wimsey

— A letter to his nephew the Viscount Saint-George, in *Gaudy Night* by Dorothy L Sayers

Richard Dengrove ♦ *Twygdrasil and Treehouse Gazette* ☼ *ct SHughes*: "I get unlimited access service on both my ISPs but I refused to give out my password when one of these web site publicizing services asked for it." Good move. They didn't need it. Anyone who legitimately needs your password has administrator access to the machine where the web page is, and so doesn't need your password. Sounds like a scam of some kind to me.

ct Lichtman: "As for instabilities, I hear they are absent from Linux, which comes at a minimal price. . ." Price depends on whose distribution of Linux you install. As I was explaining earlier, Linux is no more difficult to install and administer than Windows 95, but it just uses different symbols to achieve the same ends.

ct Hlavaty: "George Bernard Shaw said that the Pope should have no opinion about sex because presumably he has no experience with it." Well, that's easy for Shaw to say even though he had only a little more sexual experience than the Pope.

ct Liz: "*ct Schlosser*. Yes, there seems to be a new form of justice, which not only applies to sexual harassment. It's justice by feeling." I think you're overstating just a bit. "Justice by feeling" is something that those Nixon-Reagan-Bush appointed judges are trying to get away from. Indeed, one of the last things handed down during this Supreme Court term appears to pretty much codify what constitutes sexual harassment. I haven't read it yet, since the only person I've been interested in sexually harassing

recently is sitting over my shoulder in her armchair reading some mystery book.

ct me: "There are pluses and minuses to the fact that atomic bombs were too deadly to use. Fortunately, we had relatively sane people ruling the world during the Cold War." Well, I still find it significant that only two countries have used weapons of mass destruction in anger since 1944: the United States and Iraq.

In the same breath, I'm also pleased that during the negotiations for the treaty instituting the International War Crimes Tribunal, *India* wanted use of nuclear weapons included as a crime against humanity.

☉ I'm sure that those two verses out of the Song of Songs spring from the same Hebrew. The King James *vs* modern English translation of "You are beautiful my beloved, also our couch is leafy" is no doubt the problem.

☉ "When I did research at the MIT Science Fiction Society Library in the early '70s for a short spell, the students there were fascinated by the idea of SF porn. There were two examples they trotted out. . . Deep Thrust . . . and . . . Sin in Space." My favorite example of the sub-genre is probably Vic Koman's *Saucer Sluts*, which was originally serialized in an LA sex-ads paper. Koman is an LA fan, and I seem to recall the the editor of the paper at the time was someone named Ruth Judkowitz. The book was later picked up and published in one volume by Hustler Press, who insisted on changing the name to *Starship Women* because the folks at Hustler thought that the original title might offend people. The story actually involves the old science fiction plot of a planet where all the men have died off in some biological disaster, but in rebuilding society, the women have adopted complete anarcho-libertarian principles. Oh, yeah, they fuck a lot, too, even when spouting on about free-market economics. We have an autographed copy around somewhere.

ct Frierson: "I heard the Titanic is as boring, ponderous and pretentious as all the other blockbusters I have attended." And the chap we know in the Academy says the old fart members feel it's safer to award best picture to a big, flashy costume drama, than to something really innovative like *Good Will Hunting*.

ct Robe: "Access seems to be a useful little program. Microsoft for once can be proud of its software." Well, except for the fact that it doesn't conform to any of the relevant standards for data bases that I can detect, it's just fine. Actually, it appears to be a useful utility, but my attempts to use it keep getting thwarted because of their failure to work like any other relational data base software.

ct Larson: "I certainly scan every mailing for mcs. Sorry, you're not the only one." Part of the confusion of having SFFPA assembled in our living room is that I often read comments to me four times. I egoscan zines as they come in, when I get delegated to handle the incoming mail. I egoscan the whole mailing in a lump when it's finished. I read comments to me again as I'm reading the mailing marking thing I

want to comment on. And I read them a last time as I'm typing up the comments. The problem is that I'm often trying to remember which mailing I read a comment in, since this approach means I'm essentially reading comments to me from two mailings at once.

ct Metcalf: "People... always say that 1984 was predictive, even though we live closer to the libertarian 'paradise' than that totalitarian hell." Ask the Freemen in Montana if they agree with that assessment. Hell, ask me if I agree with that assessment as we get closer to mandating that we can use data encryption in the US only if we agree to give the government the keys.

ct Charlotte Proctor in Weisskopf's zine: "I think Richard Feynman remained a kid throughout his life... But he was a fun kid, not one known for his tantrums, rebellion and moral indignation." As I said earlier, he was certainly a nice guy from about 1962 forward, but during the fifties, he apparently went through a streak where he was an asshole to everyone, including sleeping with the wives of his grad students.

☉ Changing the subject: The more I read your descriptions of working for the government, like your discussion last time of trying to distribute a brief on working with Netscape, the more I'm put in mind of Arthur's comment some time ago that "A corporation will do things too dumb for an individual to do. A government will do things too dumb for a corporation to do. The bigger a corporation becomes, the more it resembles a government." Part of the reason my attempts to work for corporations of more than a hundred people have been disasters is that the bullshit inherent in getting that many people to get in the same direction makes me crazy. And you do it every day.

Playing God is yet another movie in which all the good bits can be seen in the trailer. It's an attempt to catch some of the weirdness of *Pulp Fiction* while trading on David Duchovny's fame from *The X-Files*.

Godzilla is your basic monster movie. Lots of special effects, lots of computer animation. A whole sequence in Madison Square Garden swiped from *Jurassic Park*. Allie's one liner: "The thing just *wouldn't* die."

The HP Way is Bill Packard's book about how he and David Packard ran their company for half-a-century. While it's interesting, I suspect that Dilbert often provides better documentary evidence of actual management practices in large corporations.

The X-Files movie is a disappointment. It's just a two-hour episode of the TV series, with the added tease of Mulder and Scully maybe kissing. But worse, Chris Carter is beginning to show signs of Gibson's Disease, that progressive malady of science-fiction writers who have only one plot in them.

Someplace we were talking about Hugo nominees for best fanwriter and best fanzine. I had mentioned that Evelyn Leeper had narrowly missed being nominated on our watch of administering the Hugos. Then I discovered that her home page was among the list of web pages that Ned provided a few mailings ago.

After checking out her writings, it's apparent to me that she has been nominated for volume, not for weight. She has a large number of articles on nothing, and a whole bunch of con reports from the "we saw Bob and Sue, and had dinner, then we saw Fred and Ellen" school. In general, I make a better candidate for best fan writer than she does, except that I don't put my fanwriting on the web, carefully don't participate in `rec.arts.sf.fandom`, in short don't do fandom except for this single limited-distribution fanzine. The problem, of course, is that it's much harder to get nominated by weight than by volume.



Arthur Hlavaty ♦ *Confessions of a Consistent Liar* ♦ *ct SHughes*: "It's the old IBM secret: Make them buy new stuff every few years by giving them something better. It doesn't work if the upgrade isn't a big enough improvement." My favorite of these was the original PC: because IBM knew they were barely able to do product turn-around in three years, but needed new products every eighteen months, they shipped half of each new thing they developed now, planning to ship the other half in a year-and-a-half.

ct Schlosser: "Your mention of Disney World reminds me to put in a good word for Carl Hiaasen's Team Rodent. . ." It is a book-length diatribe, well worth the time. I read it on the plane to DSC.

ct Gelb: "If it worked as well as drug tests, one's effluent would test positive for Marxism after a viewing of A Night at the Opera." An amusing thought. Though my feeling about drug tests was best expressed by a former employee of mine: "I'll be happy to pee in the bottle, but you've got to hold it and, I'll warn ya, my aim isn't real great."

ct Weisskopf: Thanks for the alternate view of the order in which to read Heinlein's collected works.

David Schlosser ❖ Peter, Pan and Merry ☼ *ct Hlavaty: "I've seen at least one editorial wondering how some of the civil rights protests would have worked out [if the RICO statutes had been used for a counter-attack, like with the anti-abortion protesters]. . . . It's an interesting argument, but too much of a stretch for me to buy into since 'racketeering' involves some level of (at least implied) violence that wasn't there with the civils rights stuff."* Exactly: A sit-in at a lunch counter is simply qualitatively different than backing a barely pregnant woman up against a building and screaming in her face. Walking from Montgomery to Selma in the face of snarling police dogs is not quite the same as blowing up a woman's clinic, and then setting another bomb to go off twenty minutes later to kill those who try to help. The Freedom Riders were explicitly non-violent; the Shiite Baptists are terrorists, plain and simple. As far as I'm concerned, the government wimped out by not prosecuting Jerry Falwell and the Roman Catholic Cardinals of New York and Los Angeles for incitement. (As a board member at Allie's school says to me: "Don't hold back, Jeff, tell us how you really feel about this.")

ct Lichtman: "It's not just. . . hemp wallets [that] are too small to be really useful. . . . I suspect a trend of some sort." Good thing Seth Goldberg died when he did: a small wallet just wouldn't work for my internal picture of Seth.

ct Brown: "In talking with Kay, I also thought about Liam Neeson [as Rick in a Casablanca remake] – but Kay figures him as Victor Lazlo. We also knocked around the idea of Billy Crystal as Ugate." Or better yet, Michael Keaton as Ugate – after all, he was magnificent in Branough's Much Ado About Nothing. And I think we'd certainly get Guy's vote for Michelle Pfeiffer (♡ Pfeiffer ♡) as Ilsa.

☼ *"Why would employees of any company give a shit about how a policy that screws them helps the stockholders? It's like a bad take on the old joke about 'Lie back and think of England.'"* Which brings up another bad joke: A Frenchman is hauled into court for necrophilia. He gets in front of the judge, finds out what the charge is, and declares "Morte! Mon, dieu! I thought she was English!"

Gary Brown ❖ Uncle Lon's Unofficial Box Scores ☼ Let's see if my page count this time will help catch me up with the Lillian guy.

Janice Gelb ❖ Trivial Pursuits ☼ *"I'm really happy that they're going ahead with the Microsoft antitrust case."* Unfortunately, the June 23rd Appeals Court ruling puts a serious ding in the case. How the Circuit Court could decide that Internet Explorer is an integrated part of Windows 95 is beyond me. And I should be able to figure it out, because I've got the twenty thousand words of the decision sitting here. Basically, it looks like the court invented new logic by saying that to be an integrated product, Win95+IE must pass two tests. First, it has to be different from what you can create on your own out of two separate products. (Win95+Netscape provides the same

functionality as Win95+IE, except for the icons, so look-and-feel must be the critical difference.) Then, the integration also has to provide additional functionality, “it must be better in some respect.” (Again, there’s no advantage to IE over Netscape, except where Microsoft has broken the WWW and HTML standards, so failing to conform to the IETF’s standards-making ability must be “better.”)

☉ The other problem going on is not just that Microsoft is using its profits from operating systems to fund and push its applications business, it’s now also using its leverage with operating systems and Internet Explorer to enter other markets, entirely. That is: Microsoft won’t only be a software company, they’re now using MSN to push their role as a content provider in completely unrelated fields like television and travel.

ct Brooks: “. . . reminds me of an old bit of Internet humor that revolved around the double-entendre inherent in the phrase ‘mouse balls.’” Another bad joke, told me by a college classmate who is now a professor at Iowa State. (Visual humor: chap stands with hands about three feet apart.) “What do you have if you have a moth ball here” (bounces left hand) “and a moth ball here?” (bounce right hand) (pause for contemplation) “A *really, really* big moth!”

ct SHughes: “My paranoia about noises in the night has certainly gotten better now that I’ve been in the place a while. . .” I don’t remember if I told you the story about the first night I spent alone in our house in Mount Washington. We moved in on Friday, and Liz left Sunday for a meeting in New York. Monday night I came home from work late, and pretty much plopped right into bed. About midnight, I woke up to the sound of someone walking across the roof. I quietly snuck out of bed, grabbed a flashlight and the nearest weapon, which was a broom. I followed the guy walking across the roof from the area over the master bedroom to the hallway, to the kitchen. He stepped onto the patio, and started crunching across the dead leaves. I flipped on the back light with one hand, the flashlight with the other hand, opened the door with the other hand, and with the other hand brandished the broom . . . right in the face of a ‘possum, who had this “just who the *fuck* are you, and what are you doing bothering *me*?” look on his face.

ct Lillian: “I found [Hiaasen’s] later books a little too weird.” A rock band, half of whose members are black, called the White Aryan Brotherhood? Nah, not too weird.

ct me: “. . . I definitely spend non-work time at work (chatting in the hall, getting coffee, reading corporate e-mail)” I don’t know, I’ve always considered those a legitimate part of work. Of course, working with a bunch of unreconstructed nerds, talking in the hall is often about last month’s POSIX meeting, rather than about last night’s baseball game.

☉ “I keep trying to tell people that now that the Hordes are on the net, you’re going to get

the same percentages of jerks and people who like porn as you do in Real Life; it's not the medium that's the cause." And yet, there's a segment in the government that wants to try to legislate those things away on the net, which is what spawned such nonsense as the Communications Decency Act. Worse, the FBI is using child pornography as the rallying cry for having a backdoor to all encryption algorithms, even though they only prosecute three or four child porn cases each year, as compared with hundreds of bank robberies.



Janice Gelb continued...

☉ "I think the Rolling Stones concert 'senior citizens discount' cartoon wasn't because of the age of the band members but the age of the ticket buyer." I know, but as old as the Stones are, one wonders if they get the AARP discount on their hotel rooms when they're on tour.

☉ "If you get lonesome being around the only guys at your computer lab, go down the hall to the technical writing department, where the percentages are reversed." Not at Softway: our technical writing department is a chap who taught science fiction in the English department at Waterloo before realizing that he was never going to get six figure advances and so technical writing was going to be more lucrative. At Softway, the women are all in the marketing department, carefully protected from us nerds by hiding in the office in San Francisco.

☉ "Looking forward to hearing your comments about the Microsoft antitrust suit!" Like I said in the last zine: I'd really like the outcome to be that Gates is publicly beheaded.

ct Schlosser: "I hope the government doesn't go with one of the proposed plans that involves people being able to invest their own social security funds." Remember that part of the original reason for the Ponzi scheme we now know as social security was that after the crash of 1929, the government had to bail out all the people who'd squandered their retirement and pension money in the stock market. If we're going to allow people to invest their retirement money as they wish, then, by God, they have to sign a waiver that they understand they're operating without a net, that the government isn't going to bail them out, and if they fuck up, the social security administration

will provide them with a cardboard box and a tin cup and good riddance.

ct Markstein: "... reminds me of the time some fans came by a table at K-Paul's where Ed Bryant was digging into his lapin appetizer. [When quizzed] Ed, without missing a beat, said 'Thumper.'" Mike Gunderloy used to give the ground beef in our freezer labels like "Bossy" and "the black and white cow with the sad brown eyes." On the other hand, Allie, our vegetarian daughter, saw a trailer for the sequel to *Babe* the other day, and suggested that the second sequel should bear the title *Babe: the Other White Meat*.

I dodged the bullet, and don't have to go to Canada before vacation. I still need to spend a week up there mid-August though. I'll just take SFPA with me for airplane reading.

Apropos what we've come to all the "Winston Rule", to wit, it isn't a real programming language if you can't use it to write a program to print out all the words to "A Hundred Bottles of Beer on a Wall", I found a pointer on Eric Raymond's web page the other day to <http://www.ionet.net/~timtroyr/funhouse/beer.html>, which is a collection of programs to do just that. We are amused.

Good Will Hunting may be the best movie I've seen in the last year – it certainly resonated more for me – but it still had flaws. We get to see this amazing internal transformation in Will, as he comes to grips with breaking away from his friends in the 'hood, and his genius. We get to see Robin Williams playing Will's therapist, but we don't get to see any of the real work they go through. OK, the real work in therapy is messy, and boring, and internal, but I never had any sense that it was going on: we only get to see the magic *after* it happens, and the "aha!"s were just too trite. I *do* now understand why Williams got the Oscar for best supporting actor rather than Greg Kinnear: there's good, and then there's really, really good.

Small Soldiers could have been a scary movie for the intended eight-year-old audience, if the violence hadn't so clearly cartoon violence. Amusing. There's a magical quest, some science fiction handwaving, good guys, bad guys, and a look into the corporate Dilbert zone. Borrow an eight-year-old for cover and go see it.

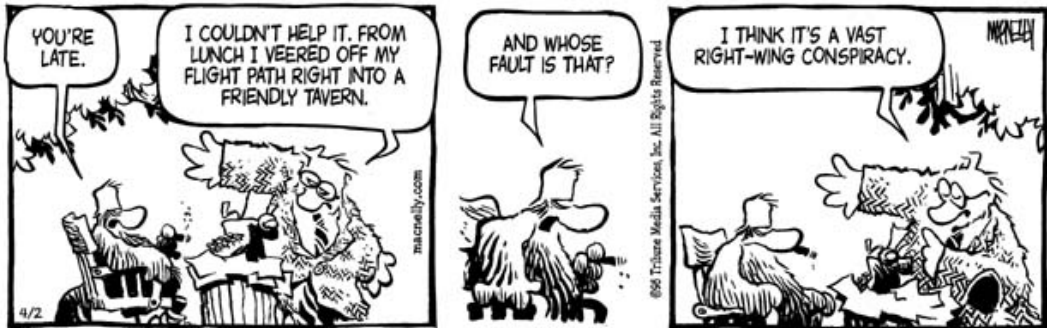
S+S Hughes ♦ The March Creek Gazette ☉ Congratulations! (Your intimate wedding was still bigger than ours, which had twelve, including the minister — though the reception had about thirty. My brother beat us both: his wedding had eight, including the priest.)

And your view of vacation matches mine "Anguilla . . . is a place to go to stay at beautiful beaches, relax and be fed well." Any vacation that involves sleep, companionship, sun, booze, food and reading material in adequate quantity and excellent quality is just perfect. I still fondly remember our trip to Spain a few

years ago — ok, more than a few, since JJ was only eighteen months — when we left the kids at home, and resolved to sit on the Med beach until we couldn't stand the inactivity. We lasted eleven days, I think, before we felt the need to go see Gibraltar.

Roger Ebert said that *Spice World* was the movie that asked the question "Do you need to have talent to star in a movie?" The answer: "No." It's true, but the movie, which our pet teenager picked out one evening at the video store, has a plot reminiscent of *Help* and *A Hard Day's Night*. Beyond that, even if they can't act, they can sing, which makes up for it.

The Client is a John Grisham thriller. Kid witnesses mob lawyer commit suicide, lawyer tells kid secret before he pulls trigger, mob wants to shut kid up, US Attorney wants to compel kid to talk. Yadda, yadda, yadda. Nice plot, bad implementation. The kid frequently talks like a 30-year-old, even in his internal dialog, and the voices of the other characters are never clearly differentiated, so it's never clear who's talking.



Steve Hughes ♦ *Comments* ❁ *ct Hlavaty*: "I came to the same grim conclusion, that exercise had to be a regular part of my life some time ago." It's a pain for me that exercise is not so well-integrated into my life as when I didn't have a car and was bicycling to work. It's the pain of carrying an extra ten pounds around the middle. And since that extra weight, for me, means higher blood pressure and higher cholesterol, it's not especially a good idea.

ct Lillian: "Actually, I've never wanted a job like yours where I could have that kind of impact on a person's life." It's a recognition of what you're good at, which *isn't* giving people advice, including advice to keep them out of jail. And you aren't the only one who hates giving job advice: I avoid it like the plague.

ct me: "How do you like [the] latest little scandal: allowing the export of sensitive missile technology...?" I don't like it at all, but it's got nothing to do with politics: I

didn't like it when the Bush administration started allowing the export of missile technology to China. The whole thing goes against my hard-line notions about non-proliferation. If the technology was transferred illegally, then that's something to really be concerned about, unlike the Lewinsky noise.

☉ *"Life is too short to let trivia get in the way of friendship."* Quite true. I was realizing — as you talk about in different terms on your next page — that I'm investing far too much stomach lining worrying about politics. I excised a three-page-long piece about politician's peccadillos out of *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*, part B, because it wasn't worth the ink or the potential annoyance to my readers. If there is no levity in it at all it's probably a good sign to back away: the *Shoe* cartoon at the head of my comments to you captures a good balance. In any event, expect to see less steam coming out of my ears — in print, at least (sorry, Liz) — about national politics. (I'm reserving the right to laugh at and whine about the Boulder City Fathers, who still aren't sharing whatever hallucinogens they're taking.)

ct Koch: "Suzanne and I are just starting to look into the question [of health insurance]." Sounds like a reason to set up a corporate front, through which you could buy health insurance, and do other miscellaneous stuff too complicated to do as an individual. On the other hand, as retired employees of Nova, could you still be included in their group rates? Certainly that was one of the arguments used on us at Interactive, when Kodak bought us and they tried to get us to fold into their group insurance plan: we could still get the group rate when we retired. Hell, I was thirty at the time! I was planning to *die* at the keyboard.

☉ *"Update: the HP [printer] is doing a good job . . . but it can not be left unwatched."* Well if you have to check it every page, or about once every eight minutes, then you can just tune the television to TBS, and check it at every other commercial break.

ct Dengrove: "You get into real problems when a program installs a newer version [of a DLL], or even worse, and older version. . ." The root problem is that Windows has no notion of versions for the loadable libraries, so that the installer can't tell if it's wiping out a newer version, or what.

ct Schlosser: On DVDs, I discovered two interesting things the other day. First, that part of the trick is that the disk has two layers of data, and the laser is able to just focus through the inner layer to get to the outer one. The other is that I was wrong when I suggested last time that DVD was at HDTV resolution: DVDs have about 500 lines, but HDTV is double that.

Meanwhile, I like your strategy of starting to buy DVDs to have in collection for when you finally buy a player. I think I'll wait until the HDTV thing is a little more clear before I follow your lead.

ct Gelb: "A few days ago, Suzanne and I had dinner with a friend whose husband suddenly

died. It was a case of going into the hospital one day because of chest pains and dying the next." Part of why I had such a miserable time crossing my fortieth birthday was that Russ Lederer, who gave me my first programming job when I was 15, died of a heart attack just shy of his fortieth birthday. Of course, it was his third — his first was at 31 — and he was not careful about either diet or exercise.

ct Robe: "I want to show her the caves in Kentucky and that would make a good duel purpose trip." This is either an artifact of your scanning the proof copy back in, or it's the typo of the mailing. Would your choice of weapons in the cave be sword or pistol?

Allie picked up a *Reader's Digest* condensed edition containing *To Kill a Mockingbird* from the freebie pile at the local bookstore the other day. It had a version of *The Shoes of the Fisherman* in it, which struck me as being ponderous, so I got the full edition out of the library, which was even more ponderous. I waded through to the end, and then, since the badly-rendered story just stopped in the middle, picked up the Morris West's two followup volumes *The Clowns of God* and *Lazarus*. I got about a third through *Clowns* and then with the battle cry "Life's too short for shitty fiction" took them all back up to the library. This was a disappointment: the movie of *Shoes* actually had interesting plot and character development, much of which was apparently invented out of whole cloth by the screenwriters.

Toni Weisskopf ♠ Yngvi is a Louse ☼ I was thinking some more about Charlotte's discussion of Dick Feynman from last time.

Feynman observed that he didn't get the Nobel Prize until he'd married Gwen and become a model citizen, and that when he thought back on it, the Academy had been checking up on him from the late fifties until they gave him the Prize. This matches the observation I'd made, which is that only nice guys who are generous teachers and researchers, or guys who are politicians, get to go to Stockholm to pick up the big check. Of the half dozen Nobel Laureates I've met, about half were really nice guys: Dick, Jim Rainwater, Willie Fowler. The others were politicians: Leon Lederman, who ran the lab at Columbia when I knew him, and later became director of Fermilab being the prime example, though Murray Gell-Mann falls into the politician category, too.

On the other hand, I think that when the Swedish Academy thinks you're a hopeless jerk, but you've done some good work, they give you Crafoord Medal. Which is how Gerry Wasserburg and Seymour Benzer at Caltech got it: they're both generally acknowledged by their grad students to be assholes.

But that wasn't what I started to say: Meeting Feynman gave me a bar with which to measure other people who did intellectual work. (And let's say at the outset that measured against that bar, I'm a low-grade moron.) And it's been

a genuine pleasure, later on, to meet guys like Ed Tufte and Don Knuth, both of whom have that same wide-open gaze at the world, and who bring broad and deep educations and wide-ranging interests to whatever they do. They're fascinating to watch at work or at play. (If you haven't read Tufte's *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information*, it's well worth the time.)



Guy Lillian ♦ *Spiritus Mundi* ☉ It sounds like getting the delayed check from the Social Security Administration has improved your spirits. To put it bluntly, you sounded downright pissy in this issue of *Spiritus*, and looked down-in-the-mouth all through DSC. You certainly sounded like your old self when I talked to you on the phone the other evening, for which I'm glad. (And the White quote on the next page is for you: Remember to wind your clock.)

ct SHughes: "I don't think I could work at home. Too many distractions." Sometimes, too many interruptions. But, on the other hand, getting up and being productive at 2am is sometimes worthwhile.

ct me: "Titanic did indeed win the Oscar, . . . but if the 'old farts' in the Academy were moved by anything, it was the awesome amount of money the movie made." Of course, that was exactly the argument for *not* giving Steven Spielberg an Oscar until *Schindler*: he was making movies that were too (sniff!) commercial. I absolutely agree with you, though, that it couldn't have been the best movie of the year: it didn't have anyone in it who was acting as nearly as I can tell. Now that it's at the \$2 theater, we'll probably go see it this weekend after we put SFFA in its envelopes.

☉ "Actually *El Paso* is at the far western edge of the Texas desert, not its middle." Bad phrasing on my part: when I said "except for the fact that El Paso is in the middle of the fucking Texas desert," what I meant was "except for the fact that El Paso is in the fucking middle of the desert in Texas." There are days when I consider El Paso and Galveston to be the western and eastern boundaries of civilization — this is actually an improvement from the days when I thought civilization ended at West

End Avenue.

As long as there is one upright man, as long as there is one compassionate woman, the contagion may spread, and the scene is not desolate. Hope is the thing that is left to us, in a bad time. I shall get up Sunday morning and wind the clock, as a contribution to order and steadfastness.

— E.B. White

Gary Brown ♦ Oblio ☉ ct Lichtman: *“It’s funny how Howard the Duck went from comics super star to almost a lost character. I recall the desperate searches for Howard the Duck #1 and how everyone was willing to pay big bucks for it. Now it sells for \$20.”* I won’t worry too much, then, that among the things packed in Austin, but still missing-in-action in Boulder — even after Liz and Allie’s heroic garage unpacking — is the first 25 issues of *Howard*. (We did find both the Vaughn Bode and Michael Bedard lithos, which had been missing, and are in aggregate probably more valuable.)

ct me: Thanks for the pointer to the *Post*’s web page. Now I can see Wright – even at relatively low resolution – without having to wait for the *Camera* to remember they’re publishing a newspaper, not a mutual-admiration journal for the corrupt and self-righteous.

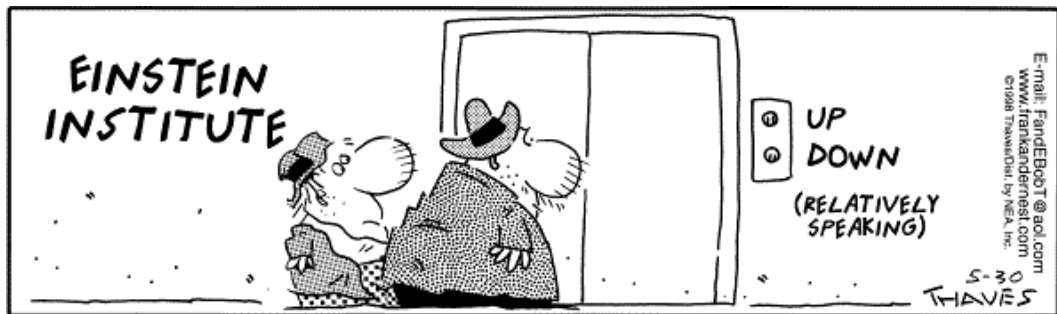
It occurred to me I had been mentioning that such-and-such a book was sitting by the bed waiting to be read, or reread — “by” in this case actually means “on the shelf over”. And then, I looked up at the pile of books above my head one morning and realized that in case of earthquake I was going to be a candidate for Sudden Book Death. As a matter of interest, here’s what I’ve been sleeping under:

- All seven volumes of *The Chronicles of Narnia*;
- A single-volume edition of CS Lewis’ *Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra* and *That Hideous Strength*;
- Bruce Schneier’s *Applied Cryptography*, which is a really great encyclopedic treatment;
- Neal Stephenson’s *The Diamond Age*;
- Bruce Sterling: *Islands in the Net*, which I’m bogged down in at about the half-way point;
- Robert Ludlum: *The Matarese Circle*;
- Jeffrey Wiles Deaver: *The Lesson of Her Death*, which Liz recommended;
- Rick Riordan: *Big Red Tequila*, ditto;
- Caroline B Cooney: *The Face on the Milk Carton*, a kids’ book which has been banned in a number of school districts, though I can’t figure out why;
- Laurie King: *With Child*, her third Kate Martinelli detective novel;

- the 1998 Filofax catalog;
- the winter issue of *Whole Earth Review*;
- Kim Stanley Robinson: *Green Mars*, waiting for me to get copies of *Red* and *Blue*;
- Arthur C Clarke: *Of Time and Stars*, a Penguin collection of some old, short stuff, now finished, needs to be reshelved;
- Sparkle Hayter: *What's a Girl Gotta Do?*, a "Cootie Girls" mystery Liz tossed at me;
- Gregory McDonald: *Skylar*, so we can see if his non-Fletch fiction doesn't suffer from the mental retirement that is evident in *Son of Fletch* and *Fletch Reflected*; †
- *Tales from the Spaceport Bar*, a collection edited by Scithers;
- *Exit to Eden*, one of Anne Rice's erotica books, which I seem to recall Bernadette Bosky originally recommending;
- John Mortimer: *The Trials of Rumpole*;
- Gibson: *Virtual Light*, the 1993 version of his novel;
- John Katz: *The Fathers' Club*, one of his "Suburban Detective" mysteries;
- *Starship Troopers*, by some old guy, which never got reshelved;
- Donald Westlake: *Humans*;
- Abigail Padgett: *Strawgirl*, which I think is yet another Liz recommendation;
- Ernest Callenbach: *Ecotopia Emerging*, the sequel/prequel to his *Ecotopia*, which named a region of the country;
- Brunner: *Shockwave Rider* and *The Stone That Never Came Down*, also didn't get reshelved;
- *Alternate Presidents*, short alternate history fiction collected by Mike Resnick, which has some stories in common with:
 - *The Way the Future Wasn't*, edited by Martin Greenberg;
 - *What Do You Care What Other People Think?*, the second volume of Dick Feynman's reminiscences;
 - *Feynman Lectures on Computation*, Dick's posthumously-published lecture series which takes an interesting physicist's view of the theoretical underpinnings of computer science;
- *The Ecstatic Moment*, a collection of short erotica from *Libido* magazine, which by an odd coincidence is sitting on top of:
 - *Make It Last*, which isn't about what you think, but about household maintenance;

† Though we point out that in *Son of Fletch* he correctly warned of the rise of the militia movement.

- *The Dilbert Future*, Scott Adams' second attempt to write like Dave Barry;
- *Level 4: Virus Hunters of the CDC*, recommended by both Liz and my brother-in-law the MD, but I haven't had the intestinal fortitude to start it;
- Bjarne Stroustrup: *The Design and Evolution of the C++ Programming Language*, a nerd book;
- Mary Logue: *Still Explosion*, another Liz recommendation;
- *Love in Vein* two volumes of vampire fiction collected by Poppy Brite;
- *Eyewitness to America*, a collection of first person accounts of American history, edited by David Colbert, and which I've already reviewed here;
- *Within the Context of No Context*, a whiny book-length essay by George WS Trow;
- James Burke: *The Pinball Effect*, continuing his interesting interleaving of the history of scientific development and the occasionally-correct history of society;
- Peter James and Nick Thorpe: *Ancient Inventions*, about Ming Dynasty seismographs, Babylonian postage stamp vending machines, and the like; ‡
- Jan Gullberg: *Mathematics: From the Birth of Numbers*, which is an encyclopedic treatment of not only the history of mathematics, but much of math itself, and which I bought as a companion volume to James Newman's wonderful four-volume *The World of Mathematics*;
- and lastly, a book of pictures that JJ made me on the computer while he watched me fold and staple my last SFFA zine.



That's it, folks. No trip to Canada, but a mess of planning work to get done by phone and e-mail in the next week, and then a vacation. I'm planning to spend part of it reading Coupland's *Microserfs* or *The Diamond Age* or maybe I'll tackle Michener's *Kent State*.

Until next time. . .

‡ I hasten to add, all of these actually existed.

Art Credits

The masthead in the Southerner features a photo of the graffiti on the inside of the Berlin Wall, before it was dismantled.

The cover has Salvador Dali's melting clocks in his 1931 painting 'The Persistence of Memory'.

Scott Adams original turned Asok the intern into a mink coat on 1 December 1997; he did it again on page 3.

The Rose is Rose comic on page 9 brings to mind Liz's wonderful limerick: 'There once was a girl named Doris / who had a small kitten named Morris / Vital to masturbation / Cause she loved the sensation / Of sandpaper tongue on clitoris.'

Gary Trudeau's comments on Internet pornography from 18 June 1998 appear on page 12.

Jeff MacNelly displays an alternate right-wing conspiracy on page 14, as he originally did on 2 April 1998.

Jerry Scott and Jim Borgman on page 17 explain why I try to not talk about art with Allie's friends. (28 May 1998)

Frank and Ernest visited the Einstein Institute on page 20, and on 30 May 1998.

Inspired by Steve Hughes' use of Chesley Bonestall's artwork a few months ago, the back cover has Bonestall's painting "Exploring the Moon" from the late '40s.

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