



YOU'VE GOT

MARS

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My priorities are completely screwed up.

I have spent far too much of the past three months writing the kind of software I get paid for. This means that I haven't written the political piece I promised Guy for *Challenger*. It means that we didn't make it to DSC, missing Ned's guest-of-honorship, and a chance to meet Richard Dengrove and Sheila Strickland. It means that I haven't made the changes to the Hugo software package I promised Saul Jaffe, and that I have not started reading this year's Hugo nominees. Worst of all, I am still two mailings behind in commenting on SPPA, which means that when this mailing is finished, I'll be three mailings behind. That I've been able to do this zine at all is thanks to Allie, who typed up comments for me from my notes, as well as doing some touch-up on the cover art. (It's great having a kid who understands PhotoShop better than you do).

It was fabulous. Huge, built of limestone no doubt dug out of these very mountains, with turrets and gables and all sorts of solemn Victorian doodads. Rocky Point was a house built to be haunted. Looking at the place, I could understand for the first time in my life why people who had, say, tens of millions of dollars felt it necessary to press on until they had hundreds of millions and then billions of dollars. They did it so that when there was chance to buy something like Rocky Point, they could write a check and have it.

— *Killed on the Rocks* by William L DeAndrea

Very rarely do I wish that I was fabulously wealthy, but on the Wednesday following the deadline, I will. It would be worth a million dollars to have one of these artifacts.

***Granddaughter of Lewis Carroll's
Muse Puts Collection Up for Sale***

by Sarah Lyall
New York Times, April 19

LONDON, April 18 — Mary Jean St. Clair has only vague memories of her grandmother Alice Pleasance Hargreaves, who died in 1934, at 82. And as a child she was only dimly aware of Mrs. Hargreaves's singular place in children's literature, as the inspiration for Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*.

"I knew about it, and who she was, but it was never considered something special, to be Alice Liddell's granddaughter," Mrs. St. Clair, 69, said recently. "There was a bookcase in the living room with all the Alice volumes in it, and my father never really talked about it much. I was in my early 20's when he died. If he had lived longer, he might have gotten around to it."

It was only after Lewis Carroll scholars and aficionados began to call after the death of her father, Caryl, Alice's only surviving son, that Mrs. St. Clair — herself an only child and thus the heir to the archive — began to realize how important the "Alice volumes" resting unobtrusively in the living room really were.

The archive includes hundreds of letters, photographs, manuscripts, journals and other pieces of family memorabilia, among the most prominent of which are a group of photographs by Lewis Carroll; two highly personal letters from him, to Alice and to her mother, Lorina; and Alice's own, specially bound facsimile of Carroll's handwritten, hand-illustrated manuscript of *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*, the basis for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. The book is inscribed by Carroll to "her whose namesake one happy summer day inspired his story."

On June 6 the collection, which has been housed for some years in Christ Church college, Oxford, is to be sold in one fell swoop by Sotheby's in London. The auction house has high hopes for the sale, estimating that it will bring in at least £2 million, or close to \$3 million.

.....

One of the most extraordinary things about the collection is that it remained for so long in the family. Alice herself sold several important artifacts, most memorably Carroll's original manuscript of *Alice's Adventures Underground*, which brought in a record £15,400 — then the equivalent of about \$75,000 — in 1928 and is now in the British Museum. But the rest have remained unsold, and Mrs. St. Clair has added to the collection over the years, purchasing new items from time to time.



Alice Liddell, age 19

She seems at times to have been ambivalent about her role as keeper of the Alice archive, and perhaps feels some relief that her stewardship of the material is nearing its end. "I do feel sad," she said. "I don't think I shall probably go to the sale, but there it is."

Her grandmother would undoubtedly understand, having gone through her own periods of ambivalence as Carroll's reputation grew and she became increasingly celebrated, into her old age, as his muse and inspiration. She was not angry or bitter, the way Christopher Robin, A. A. Milne's son, was. But she sometimes found her celebrity a burden.

"But oh my dear I am tired of being Alice in Wonderland," she wrote to her son after a particularly arduous trip to the United States. "Does it sound ungrateful? It is. Only I do get tired."



So Bob Dylan is 60 years old. I'm put in mind of the line from *Almost Famous*: "If you think that Mick Jagger will still be doing the whole rock star thing at age fifty, well, then, you are sorely, sorely mistaken."

I love deadlines. I love the whooshing noise they make as they go by.

— Douglas Adams, quoted by Richard Dawkins in "Lament", *The Guardian*, 14 May 2001

We'd be remiss if we didn't note with sadness Douglas Adams' untimely death on May 11th. A man of amazing passion, of unbreakable writers block, he'll be missed with every breathing *homo sapien* in possession of a sense of humor.

Reviews

As I mentioned in *The Southerner* last time, Toni was kind enough to deliver a dozen *Krispy Kreme* donuts via FedEx to our doorstep. I will agree that they are certainly different than donuts with which I have been previously acquainted. However, difference alone is insufficient reason to praise them — we will remember that the artificial scarcity of Coors beer through the '70s merely masked the fact that its "difference" was a lack of taste or body.

What is true is that the Krispy Kreme are sweeter than their cakey competitors. The creme in the chocolate-covered one I sampled was almost icing-like in its flavor and consistency. The plain donut was also sweeter, and fluffier of batter. The jelly donut was tasty, with good filling. They were very nice. Fresh, rather than 24-hours old, they'd certainly even be nicer.

Better? No. I have a sweet tooth, but not that big a one. A noble competitor? Yes. And a worthy alternative.

That said: there's soon to be a Krispy Kreme in Issaquah, the next town to our east, and there's always a Tim Horton's immediately across the border in White

Rock, British Columbia. (Dunkin' Donuts are not even in the running here — might as well drink Coors.) Thus, it should be possible to do a head-to-head comparison with donuts only a couple of hours old. That may be a necessary expedition the next time SFPAn's grace us with their presence here in the Pacific Northwest.

✿ *Spy Kids* is a kid's movie from writer/director Robert Rodriguez, who invented Antonio Banderas to the western world. Rodriguez is normally known for his over-the-top violence and brutality, but this lacks all that. In this, kids who didn't know their parents were retired spies are forced to rescue them from a TV kid's show host, Floop, and his evil minion, Minion. The kids triumph, of course, discovering that they were smarter and braver and more resourceful than they appreciated, and, in the end, get to go into the family business. A good story, and fun acting. Take your favorite child, even your inner one.

✿ *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* is simply beautiful. It is beautifully photographed, the sets are beautifully designed, the costumes are wonderful, and the choreography is amazing. This movie reaches new heights of wire fu, with a sword fight sequence in a bamboo grove that is spectacular to behold. It deserved all the awards it got, and many that it didn't. Lazy lound-eyed impelialist leviewer: learn to lead subtitle.



✿ *Out of Their Minds* is a volume of short biographies of seminal computer scientists by Dennis Shasha and Cathy Lazere. For something aimed at the high-end nerd market, it reads like a series of *Vanity Fair* articles: all gloss and no substance.

✿ *The Art of Innovation* is Tom Kelley's book about Silicon Valley design firm Ideo. It's one of this year's hot business books, on the mistaken belief that it will teach your average Pointy Haired Boss how to be innovative in 15 chapters. Here's a clue: if Tom Peters and Bob Waterman couldn't teach Dilbert's PHB to be

excellent in 15 case studies, this ain't gonna work either.

✿ The *Agenda VR3* is advertised as the first hand-held Linux platform. It looked like it might be an interesting alternative to the Palm when I was out looking at hardware a couple of months ago, except that it was then just vapor-ware. Now they've announced they'll ship product on April 23. But am I the only one who finds it hilarious that you can only synchronize your Linux handheld computer to a Windows desktop?

Being a fine book is a very dignified thing for a tree: we shouldn't mourn all the trees.

— Victor Nell

✿ *Remember the Titans* is a feel-good movie that brushes over the issues of race in the US at the turn of the '60s. It continues the Disney-mandated belief that all will be well by the last reel if we just heed the honorable football coach. I'm not sure it's ever that simple.

✿ On the other hand, the 2000 remake of *Shaft* has some fun stuff in it. Samuel L Jackson turns in a nice performance as the title character. Jeffrey Wright turns in a spectacular performance as the bad-ass neighborhood drug dealer. There are some wonderful Dirty Harry moments. And then there's the sequence that caused us all to sit up and cheer "here's the car chase!" It isn't high art, but it's fun to watch.

✿ *Almost Famous* pays, with interest, the reparations that Cameron Crowe owed us all for *Jerry Maguire*. It is a light-hearted coming-of-age story, with a plot, multi-dimensional characters, and some nice music. It's got a point of view and an interesting story. With help from Peter Frampton and Nancy Wilson, Crowe's invented a mid-70s rock band out of whole cloth, who are all interesting characters in their own right. But his autobiographical hero is simply fascinating, never losing his innocent, wide-eyed amazement at the world, even as he's literally losing his innocence, and always trying to be an objective observer, even as he's being drawn into the lives of his subjects. There's a scene in a limo that's just brilliant, where the guitarist for the band apologizes the hero for not getting him laid, and then realizes that it's already been taken care of. And let's not forget to give Crowe credit for inventing Kate Hudson to the western world, who (if possible) is even cuter than her mother was at twenty-two.

Part of Crowe's genius, which he displayed in his writing in *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* and then in his directorial debut in *Say Anything*, is that he presents

us with characters in whom we can see aspects of ourselves, characters we wish we could be or might want to know. His failure in *Jerry Maguire* was that I cared not at all for any of the characters he showed us, none of whom – save Renné Zellweger – had any motivation more interesting than sex or money.

✿ The latest Spenser novel from Robert Parker, *Potshot*, is much the same as the previous Spenser novel from Robert Parker: witty dialog between Susan and Spenser, interaction with bad guys, things not as they seem at first blush, though in this installment Hawk returns. If it wasn't for the bright and sprightly dialog, we wouldn't bother.

[[Quiz of the week: Spenser at one point in this book quotes "Luck is the residue of design." Who's he quoting? I can't find it in any of the usual sources.]]

✿ And speaking of things much like their predecessors, *The Mummy Returns* has Brendan Frasier and Rachel Weisz once again bouncing around the desert chasing Imhotep, this time with their son, who bears a more-than-passing resemblance to Elizabeth Peter's heroine Amelia Peabody's boy Ramses. Fun. Amusing. Completely over-the-top supply of scorpions, and enough tarantulas to completely squick my daughter.

✿ The Three-Hour-Tour finally ended in the last episode of *Star Trek: Voyager*. It was an episode that had so many plot holes that I can't imagine how it was ever written. A fitting end to a series without a guiding thought, which respected its viewers so little that the only thing keeping it afloat for the last year were Jeri Ryan's pneumatic breasts.

✿ On the other hand, now that we know that *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is changing networks, it's hard to understand the way in which its season was ended. If the intention was to find closure just for the season, Joss Whedon's made a complete mess of things, since he in effect wrapped up the series. If the intention was to lose a major character, to be replaced in the next season, then he's confused things completely, considering which character he needs to replace. I wait with bated breath to see how he resolves things in the fall.

"Does looking at guns make you want to have sex?"

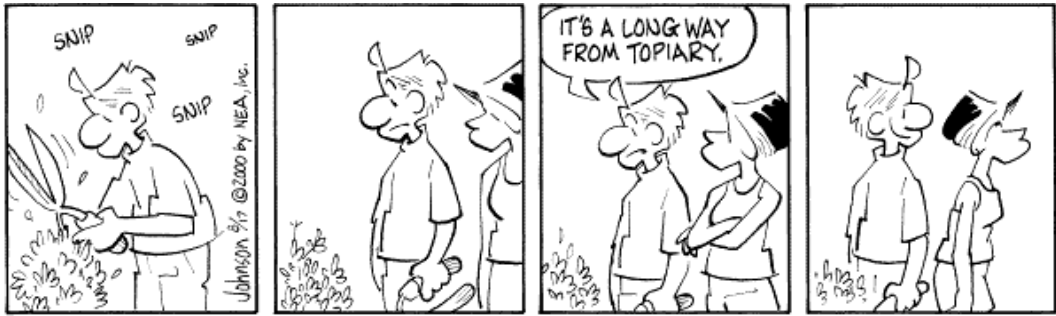
"I'm seventeen: looking at *linoleum* makes me want to have sex."

— Cordelia & Xander in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*

"So do you guys steal guns from the army a lot?"

"Well, we don't have cable so we have to make our own entertainment."

— Oz and Willow in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*



Mailing Comments on SFPA 218

Richard Dengrove ✉ *Twydrasil and Treehouse Gazette* ✉

"I am diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis" Ouch. I'm sorry to hear this. You and Heidi are having your share of health problems.

✉ *"The late Carl Perkins of Kentucky. His symbol was loose dentures. ... On the other hand, he knew every nook and cranny of our school feeding programs, like the lunch program."* There actually are people in the Senate who become experts in particular areas — Sam Nunn, for example, became quite a defense expert (any why Clinton couldn't get him to become Secretary of Defense, I don't understand), Daniel Patrick Moynahan knew more about social security than the guys at the social security administration, and while I disagree with nearly every conclusion he's drawn from the knowledge, I must admit that Jesse Helms does know the inner workings of our foreign policy.

✉ *"Perhaps, perhaps not. But a lot of positions people in Washington take are merely for negotiating purposes. Even though people assume that they represent heartfelt beliefs."* Y'know, we'd have a whole lot less cynicism about government if people would sit down and negotiate in good faith rather than striking postures for the sake of sound bites. "Look," I say, "it's important to fund more teachers, so that we can get class size down." "OK," you say, "but I'd like to find some way to fund charter schools, too." "That's fine," I reply, "but I can't support this if the charter school money is used as an end-run to fund religious schools, because I don't want to violate the separation of church and state." That's a whole lot better than the way ~~sausage~~ legislation is currently made.

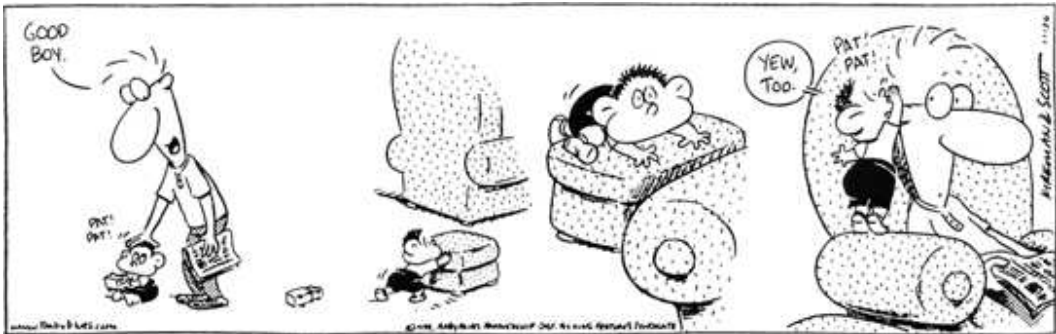
ct Feller: "You talk about membership in the local Packer club gives me an excuse to trot out my ancient Green Bay Packers joke. I first read it when it was introduced into the congressional record by Jesse Helms, unknowingly, in 1984. Drunk: The only people in Green Bay are football players and whores. [Six foot five man stands by]. Six Foot Five Man: my wife is from Green Bay, sir. Drunk:

(thinking fast) *What end does she play?*" That it was read into the congressional record, I can believe. That Helms did it, I find a little odd. That he did it unknowingly, I find bizarre. What exactly happened?

ct Lillian: "Even though I will vote for Gore, I myself am ambiguous about having him win. A look at the stock market shows that the high tech boom has ended — at least for the time being." Remember that the stock market crash (such as it is) was induced by the Fed jacking up interest rates very quickly in the spring of 2000. But I find the "hey we have lots of surplus, so we should have a tax cut" as self-serving as the "hey, the economy's in the tank so we need a tax cut." Even though the economy isn't in the tank (yet). My real concern would be that rising energy prices (which are as artificial as the stock market crash) may force the economy to really crash.

☞ "No, no, no, Allie was not the 6'2" elf. She was talking about a 6'2" elf. And I figured it would have a lot of neuroses." No she was talking to a 6'2" elf. From Long Island.

☞ "Also, Guy, you can't use the phrase 'sexual harassment'. That's politically incorrect too. It has the word 'her' in it and 'men'. No, you have to use the phrase 'sexual Harrisburg'." No, no, no. It's not "sexual harassment". It's "sexual harassperson," or "sexual Harrietburg."



Dengrove continued...

ct Brown: "Right now, I think Gore has another problem. People suspect he is too passionate in his beliefs." It had nothing to do with his passion: If Al Gore could have removed the stick from his ass for more than two speeches, or had allowed Bill Clinton to campaign for him, he'd be president. If he'd kept up the passion in his acceptance and concession speeches, all would have been well. The result is that we have a guy who is only giving speeches, leaving the government to be run by his advisors.

☞ "Too bad about Shelly. It is less true that absence makes the heart grow fonder." I am reminded of the horrible joke about the man who made a noise that sounded like the name of a Japanese car when passing gas. One day his dentist relieved a painful tooth problem and the odd affliction went away. Because, of course, as everyone

knows, abscess makes the fart go “Honda.”

☞ *“Ned had a great idea for doing [mimeo stencils], resurrect the dot matrix printer. Of course, I wonder how you can print graphics with one. Certainly you could not with the one I had.”* The wonderful Xerox/Diablo daisywheel printer could also be used to cut stencils. Of course, you had to adjust it a bit, and use a steel-clad daisywheel (which they actually made).

ct Robe: “None of the Schedule Cs or other appointees will remain.” I notice that Linda Tripp was planning to sue because she was asked for her resignation at the change of administration. It’s really hard to claim this was retribution when she got to keep her job, even though she never showed up for it, and was merely asked for her resignation like seventeen thousand other appointees. I wonder what job she’s been rewarded with in the Bush White House? (Actually, probably none: I gather she was considered a loon by the first Bush administration.)

☞ *“In my case, the State chosen for the Southern virus hoax was Arkansas. Who couldn’t write a Virus. I have a variation. How about a Northern posh virus, the Connecticut virus. ‘We would write a virus but we can’t be bothered with you peons.’ So, of course, you are going to have deleted your files yourself.”* No, Richard: a Connecticut virus involves sending their maid out to delete your files.

ct Weisskopf: “Why are teenagers so bent on outraging their parents. What survival benefit does it give?” Separation. The bird has to leave the nest sometime, and the trauma of being a teenager gives us the basis to operate independently of our parents. My dear, talented, all knowledgeable wife has been planning for this since day one, giving each kid the responsibility they can handle, and helping them to operate independently of us as best they can. I imagine that there may be some tears when Allie moves out but no blowups and recriminations.

ct Hughes: “In any case, I have to say the owner of the copyright is the boss in this case.” I agree that the owner of the copyright gets to choose what I do with his work – within some limits. But I’ve got some real problems with a copyright term of life plus 75 years, which as I keep pointing out has more to do with allowing Mickey Mouse to remain under copyright until Michael Eisner retires than any sense of fairness.

ct Wells: “I did not think Boba Fett first appeared in the third Star Wars, where he was killed. I thought that he was in the first when he bickered with Hans Solo. And, in the second, when he collected Hans Solo for Jabba the Hut.” Nope, Boba Fett didn’t appear at all until the second movie.

☞ *“On the other hand, changing New York State’s name to Excelsior would be like retaining Uranus’ original name, i.e., George.”* I’ve always found it odd that both Stan Lee’s battle cry and the New York State motto are *“shredded paper!”*

Irv Koch ☒ *Offline Reader* ✪

ct me: “Re your comments to me on not doing T-bills: *Bingoissimo*. And obviously I went for stuff that was ‘too’ risky, and . . . the ‘day of reckoning’ is about this time this year but more like \$22k per year to make up the difference.” I find your long tracking lists kind of interesting. Neither our active portfolio nor our watch list is that complicated or extensive. Our watch list consists of: Red Hat (because I have friends there), the S&P average (because we are intending to flip some other stuff into an index fund), and the Dow Jones average (on general principles). It should probably also include Amazon, which we’re considering buying for reasons I cover in my comment to Gary Robe. Our active portfolio consists of: four Janus funds (Balanced, Growth and Income, Mercury, and Venture), Microsoft, and Public Service Enterprise Group of NJ. Period.

Our overall monetary strategy has always been: (1) don’t borrow money — it annoys me that the bank owns 40% of our house; (2) sock at least 5% of our after tax income into conservative investments. This strategy of “throw money at it and treat it with benign neglect” seems to work rather successfully for us.

The “don’t borrow money” rule, by the way, was brought home to me in the crash of Microsoft stock. I’ve been working for the company through the longest period between splits in its history. There are people who had come to rely on the stock price doubling every 18 months. Some of them did things like borrow against un-exercised options to buy multi-million dollar houses. And are now having to try to sell the houses to cover the loans.

Worse, one of our accountant’s other clients decided to retire last year, and cashed in every option he had. This would have been when Microsoft stock was above \$100. He decided to wait until the end of the year to pay all the taxes due. On April 15th he owed more in taxes than he had in stock.

It may be the warriors who get the glory, but it’s the engineers who build societies.
— B’Elanna Torres, *Star Trek: Voyager* episode
“Flesh and Blood”

Janet Larson ☒ *Passages* ✪

“Okay, how many excuses have we heard for not doing a real zine with mailing comments and real substance?! Well, I guess giving birth to twins is a new one. . . .” Yeah, but it’s a lot better than mine. The dog ate my. . . No: I had to work late. . .

Beautiful pictures of the kids, by the way. And, jeeze, Cassie’s huge! I remember her being a wiggle-worm the last time I saw her.

Randy Cleary ☒ *Avatar Press* »

That's a nice cover illo. It looks like a pixellated blowup of one of the pictures of Julie Wall inside. Speaking of which: that's a hell of a dress Julie's wearing in those photos.

ct me: "Thanks for the info on Matthew Carter. You are a regular font of knowledge." Ouch.

ct me: "You find BC heavy handed? When it occasionally makes a religious reference, I find it a refreshing change of pace (even when I don't necessarily agree with it) from most mainstream entertainment. I cannot imagine what you think of 'Touched By An Angel' on TV? (Hooks in yet?)" Part of the problem is that I'm primarily a humanist, which Hart ain't. (Actually, maybe I'm a dada-ist – I tend to appreciate the essential absurdity of life.) But I think Liz found the right explanation: Hart's approach in BC is sneering – "I'm saved and you're not." Which, as I've said before, is why I read John Leo, who I rarely agree with: he's able to explain his position calmly without saying "and you're an idiot if you disagree with me." This is a trick that Newt Gingrich never mastered.

But almost worse than Hart's antipathy towards anyone not just like him is his overbearing cynicism. The complete text of the May 30th strip: "A bi-partisan retreat: When two political parties get together, hide from their constituents and plot ways to stay in office." His constant and obvious hatred of anything to do with the government makes me think he should perhaps try and live in a country without one for a while, like Kenya or Russia.

ct Lillian: "Good luck with your blood test." Yes, he should be fine as long as he remembers to study beforehand.

ct me: "Was Scooby hand colored?" Yes, he was. Didn't it say so in the colophon?

☞ "On Elian, I think he should have been returned to his father, so get off my case. I just object on principal to the tactics of an early morning home invasion by paramilitary style forces for any reason short of known violent offenders in a crisis situation. An innocent man in Tennessee was recently gunned down in his home in the wee hours as the invading police had the wrong address and shot him as he went for his gun because he thought they were criminals." But that's the problem: Elian's Miami relatives were known flakes. The uncle had, on more than one occasion, threatened violence. He'd mouthed off that he had guns in the house and was going to use them to keep the kid. On the other hand, the cops in Tennessee are guilty of manslaughter. Or, if they faked the "anonymous tip," they're guilty of murder.

☞ "Your work place gives you psychological tests? Are the mandatory? Shudder." No. You misunderstand, I think. Back when I was at Interactive, they used to have an outside group of organizational psychologists that would come in and do team-building exercises and give us little personality tests – like the Keirseay thing. It was

generally a waste of time, since it told us stuff we knew already. If that was tried at Microsoft, there would be psychologists hanging from the flagpoles.

☞ “On talking in code, I had to recently explain to our new hire from Columbia that ‘FYI’ meant ‘For your information’.” Yeah, but there’s also a stage of “too young to know to come in out of the rain.” I think new graduates fall into that class.

☞ “Contrary to popular belief, Avatar press actually appeared in SFPA 217. Recount! Recount! Gee, last year I was left off the Egoboo poll and this year, ignored in the list of the issue with the Egoboo poll. I smell a vast left wing conspiracy. Or should I just take the hints and drop out for real?” Damn, we liberals have been caught hijacking the mailings. It was really hard to get Ned to sneak into the back of the Post Office at the same time Toni was walking in the front, then grab the mailings and pass them to Guy in a waiting van, so that they could remove your zine before the bundles got dropped back in the box out front.

That’s a nice back cover illustration — your giraffe with the space helmet for Constellation.



Eve Ackerman ☒ Pirates Set Sail — Guilty Pleasures ☛

“Pirate’s Price by Darlene Marshall, aka Eve Ackerman, will be published in February 2001 by Dreams Unlimited...” Unfortunately, they only distribute in PDF. Which means that after I bought a copy, I immediately violated the Millenium Digital Copyright Act by converting the text into Palm format. Where it sits to read on our various summer travels.

Doesn’t “By Darlene Marshall, ©Eve Ackerman” defeat the purpose of the pseudonym?

“However [Dreams Unlimited] is true e-books, not POD” What’s POD? Oh! Print-on-demand. It’ll be interesting to see if that ever takes off. People keep dabbling in that, and the latest incarnation seems to have you ordering a book on Amazon to be printed at a nearby Kinko’s. It’s the binding I’d worry about in that case.

Liz Copeland ☒ *Home With the Armadillo* 🍷

Nice cover. I very much like the woodcut snowflake. But I still make grumbly noises about the fixed-pitch interior typeface.

George Wells ☒ *C4* 🍷

ct me: “Yes, I tried reaching you before we went to Vancouver, British Columbia as, when I phoned the hotel (weekend before the trip) and the Vancouver weather bureau. Etc. etc. etc. all I could get was the weather forecast in CELSIUS!!! A fellow at the hotel roughly figured it had been in the nineties (Fahrenheit) and had been ‘sweltering’ — I would need shorts. But it had never been in the 90’s — the people in B.C. don’t think in Fahrenheit for beans, at all, have no conception of it. So, I know Seattle — oh you live in Bellevue — damn that’s practically where the fictional city Cascade, Washington is (from The Sentinel).” Repeat after me: $F = \frac{9}{5}C + 32$. But more importantly, for your purposes, the weather here operates in a much narrower band than it does on Long Island. In other words, in late summer, it will probably be cooler in British Columbia than you’re expecting in New York.

Gary Brown ☒ *Oblivion* 🍷

☞ “Although both were fairly big stories, neither were the subject of around-the-clock cable news coverage. The stakes are higher and more personal these days.” But here’s the critical question: did the massive around the clock coverage on the election story Heisenberg it? Did the coverage make the story? My sense was that people were calm and pleasantly waiting, but that the constant barrage of CNN and Fox folks running around screaming “this has to be resolved; the people have to know, now” caused all the panic.

☞ “Just today [local columnist Frank Cerabino] noted that he’s about had it with stories about how teachers in a class of 10-year-olds have let them vote on the butterfly ballot and they had no trouble. ‘We know that 10-year-olds are smarter than a lot of us already and admit it, so let’s move on to something else,’ he said.” First off, bullshit. The 10-year-olds weren’t voting on anything like the ballot that was actually used. Cerabino devotes a whole installment of his thirteen part *Post* series on the election (as you well know, Gary) to the exact mechanical problems with that ballot, from the fact that you couldn’t read it if you were shorter than five feet, to the confusing placement of candidates. The 10-year-olds in question only had the names and arrows to contend with, not anything else. The arrows, names, and checkboxes were not in proportion to the actual ballot.

That said, the whole administration of the election was a cock-up, in effect handing the state to the Republicans. That some of this was self-inflicted by the democrats (the ballot design), and some of it imposed by republicans (Katherine Harris scrubbing the rolls of legitimate black voters, and Lakes county not bothering

to count write-ins, including those for Gore and Bush) is mere detail. While the bugged vote counting and the Supreme Court's interference played a part, the election was Gore's to lose, and he lost it in a thousand ways. (And no, banner headlines in *The Miami Herald** declaring Shrub the winner notwithstanding, an actual reading of their results indicates that no one will ever know with certainty who won the election.)

☞ *"Who knows? I believe that either way, the winner is going to have a very tough time getting things through Congress. And there isn't going to be any radical changes, because the other side will stand up and stop it."* Well, you were wrong on that one. With the republicans holding both houses of congress and the White House, it looked like they were going to steam roller everything from school vouchers to Ken Starr on the Supreme Court. But thanks to Shrub's boys being over-confident and fucking Vermont senator Jim Jeffords for wanting to lower the tax cut, they have lost their majority in the senate.

ct Brooks: "I like the image of Jack Chalker (or anyone, for that matter) cursing Promisekeepers knocking on his door in the middle of the night." Jeez, I don't always find Chalker a reasonable man when he's wide awake, let alone being woken up at 3 am. The last time we went to a Westercon, though, the hotel had three groups in it: the Westercon, a weekend retreat of Parents Without Partners, and an evangelical revival meeting. First off, it was obvious at a glance which group any guest at the hotel was with. Oddly enough, the couple of times we called for room service, it appeared immediately. It wasn't until Sunday as we were checking out that I realized the revival minister was Kenneth Copeland, and that his suite was three doors down the hall from us.

ct Lynch: "If the Cell is the movie I'm thinking about, it's damn good and you shouldn't miss it. Is it the one where a group of people wake up in a varying rooms and some of the rooms have lasers and other deadly devices? So, the group keeps moving from room to room (cell to cell)?" Allie tells me that the movie you're thinking about is actually *The Cube*. I reviewed *The Cell* the last time, and it's one of the few times I've seen Jennifer Lopez, but not her nipples.

ct Dengrove: "It's sad, I agree. There are few things better than a wonderfully descriptive sentence that takes your mind away. (Well, sex, chocolate, and a few other things, but you understand my point.)" I read this almost immediately after I read Gardner Dozois' "A Knight of Ghosts and Shadows," which is just masterful in its use of language. And then there's the Wallace Stegner quote that I used in *Holy Ghost* last year.

☞ *"I think we have a little French in us..."* Here's the test: do you have an overwhelming desire to surrender every time you see a German?

* Motto: "Official newspaper of the American-Cuban Mafia in Exile."

☞ “Outside of the Generation X label for the current generation, I’ve never seen any word that describes them in relation to the Baby Boomers. However, the other day I read that they are called Baby Echoes — children of Baby Boomers. Both labels suck.” It was Douglas Coupland who invented the name “Generation X” derived from the title of his first novel — which wasn’t very good as I recall. Strauss and Howe (who wrote *Generations*) call them “Thirteeners”, since by their calculations, the GenX-ers are the thirteenth distinct generation since the Puritan immigration. Strauss and Howe call GenY – Allie and JJ’s cohorts – “the Millenials,” which I think has a nicer sound to it.

ct Schlosser: “In fact, the *Flintstones* were intended to be just that — an adult cartoon. It came on at 8pm and had adult sitcom storylines (we can all agree or disagree on that one). It was meant to be more sophisticated than *Huckleberry Hound* and *Yogi Bear*. It eventually became a Saturday morning cartoon.” Think of the *Flintstones* as the *Honeymooners* in cartoon form, and all makes sense.

See, according to Cocteau’s plan, I’m the enemy. Because I like to think, I like to read, I’m into freedom of speech, and freedom of choice. I’m the kinda guy who likes to sit in a greasy spoon and wonder “gee, should I have the T-bone steak, or the jumbo rack of barbecue ribs with a side order of gravy fries?” I want high cholesterol! I wanna eat bacon, and butter, and buckets of cheese, okay? I wanna smoke a Cuban cigar the size of Cincinnati in a non-smoking section. I wanna run through the streets naked with green jello all over my body, reading *Playboy* magazine! Why? Because I suddenly might feel the need to! Okay, pal?

— Edgar Friendly (Denis Leary) in *Demolition Man*

Gary Robe ☒ Tennessee Trash ☛

In your description of the typical hectic week at *Chez Robe*, you say, “7:45pm all arrive back home for Buffy the Vampire Slayer.” Since you’ve written this, the *Buffy* season took as decidedly dark turn as Glory appeared and started hurting people. We revoked JJ’s *Buffy*-watching privileges about the time we found out that Glory’s actually a god. About then it got a little intense for the *adults* in the house.

☞ “We were still under weight so on the day of the race we drilled a hole in the bottom and added several grams of fine metal shot to bring us up to weight. At weigh-in we were five grams under weight!” I remember drilling a hole in the bottom of one of my Pine Box Derby cars and having Dad drip melted lead into it until we were spot on the right weight.

☞ “They also had a case full of Giant Madagascar Cockroaches that were just plain creepy. I think that no matter how bug tolerant you are those things just gross you out.” Oh, joy! I can just imagine having to scrape my daughter off the ceiling if she saw these.

☞ “The beauty of this system is that it is impossible to cast an invalid ballot. The machine won’t

let you. Polling the machines is as easy as connecting them to a portable computer and downloading the results. OK, we're trusting that the machines are accurately recording and downloading that votes, and that nobody is feeding in extra votes." Yes, having the machines count the ballots is nice and fast, but it's absolutely required to have a paper backup for each and every vote cast so that there can be a manual count. I will demonstrate why.

Assume that I have written the software to count the ballots in an election, and that someday I suspect there will be a candidate named (say) Gail H Lawrence who I want to *never* be elected. I merely need to scan for the various forms of that name and set a variable in my code, `GHL`, pointing to that name in the list of candidates. When all the votes have been cast into the machine, if the candidate attached to `GHL` is actually the winner, I flip the votes cast for `GHL` with the votes for the second-place candidate. Alternately, if this is a preferential ballot, I can make things a little more subtle by bumping the ranking for `GHL` by two places down on every ballot before counting the ballot.†

When he was given the Turing Award in 1984, Ken Thompson of Bell Labs gave a talk entitled "Reflections on Trusting Trust,"‡ which has become a classic. In it, he describes a Trojan horse built into the Unix system that would allow anyone with knowledge of the Trojan horse to log into a privileged account on any system with a fixed password. My memory is that they actually implemented the Trojan horse, but he was careful to emphasize that they never included it in any code that was released outside the Labs. (In the reprint of the paper I've just found, mention of actual implementation is excised, however.)

In the same vein, let me emphasize that the hack I've described above does not exist in any election software I've ever written. And there's a simple way to guard against it: All I need to do is flip the names of the candidates. For example, I can change the candidate list from "Gore, Bush, Nader, Buchanan" to "Kirk, Picard, Cisco, Janeway". If the totals are the same — if Buchanan and Janeway each get 7345 votes — I am reasonably sure that there's no jiggering of the results. Without the original ballot data — or worse, if the ballots have been nicely predigested for you by the voting machine — you can't launch the counter-attack, and I can decide the results of your election any way I please.

ct Metcalf: "The school librarian has told [Nick] that reading advanced books does not necessarily make him a good advanced reader!" What nonsense. What's a "good reader?"

† I actually had three pages of example here, laying out the actual hack that could be introduced into the actual code of my column from last July, but realized that it's simpler to describe it rather than show you the entrails.

‡ *Communications of the ACM*, 27:8 (Aug 1984), pp 761-764.

Somebody who doesn't eat peanut butter sandwiches in the library? Whoever's been blessed by the librarian? What a load of hooey. What a disservice to Nick.

ct Brooks: "When one of the first times that the Amtrak budget got cut by congress, one of wonderful Kentucky State representatives volunteered to have rail service through Kentucky cut off." When Greyhound bought Continental Trailways, it took them a while to figure out that discontinuing service to every little town was a very bad idea. Those little routes to the little towns were feeder routes. Without the feeder routes, passengers on the trunk routes dropped off pretty quickly. Amtrak would be wise to keep this in mind.

☞ "Most teachers these days are under pressure to produce kids that do well on standardized tests (as in Texas for example) and to produce uniformity." Well, there are pros and cons here. On the one hand, it's really a good idea to have a way to ensure that kids are learning something. If we're going to hold schools accountable for teaching, we've got to have some measure that they're doing so. Testing kids when they graduate from high school has a long track record: as Arthur and George will no doubt tell you, since they had to endure it, a high school diploma in New York meant that you'd passed the Regents Exam, a comprehensive test of your first twelve years of school. But, because we've got a patch work of testing kids to various depths at multiple times during their school careers now, lots of poorer (and I mean that in the ontological sense, not the economic one), schools are simply teaching to the test. And that's a waste of everyone's time and effort, it seems to me.



Robe continued...

ct me: "You have inspired me to change to Verdana 9 point typeface to make thus comment. What do you think? Is it easier to read than Bookman Old Style 10 point?" Very nice. Though I like the Bookman, too. I need to get the reader software on my Palm to display Verdana, which would be a fair bit easier on my eyes than the Palm system font.

☞ "So far in five years the stock price has gone from 45 dollars per share on the day when we were spun off from Kodak to 44.5 dollars at today's close." It could be worse. The Microsoft stock

There is a theory which states that if ever anybody discovers exactly what the Universe is for and why it is here, it will instantly disappear and be replaced by something even more bizarre and inexplicable. There is another theory which states that this has already happened.

— Douglas Adams

price on the day Softway was purchased was $92\frac{1}{4}$. The following Monday, when I actually started, it was $98\frac{9}{16}$. Thus were various of my option prices set. It's only within May that the price is back above \$65. OK, I've gotten options since then at various prices in the 50s and 60s, but still, I don't expect that I'll be counting myself as a millionaire in two years, like many of my Microsoft colleagues with greater longevity.

☞ *"Who would pay a premium to get their cat chow delivered via UPS? Everyone keeps saying what a genius Jeff Bezos is, but I remain unconvinced."* Yeah, some of the things Amazon has done were mistakes. I'm still dubious about their acquisition binge, and think that their passing strategy of becoming the signature brand for *all* web shopping was a little over-reaching and (as you point out) in some cases completely foolish. However, I think their basic idea is sound: we'll give you better service than your local big-chain bookstore and, in essence, stock everything, too. Since the big chains are now fairly hostile to special orders, and stock books as a seeming afterthought — as the caption of a recent *New Yorker* cartoon put it, "I'm sorry, the guy who knows about books isn't here now, but I can sell you a bookmark." — I'm just as happy to deal with Amazon unless it's something I *know* Barnes and Noble's going to have. I've been hearing doom and gloom scenarios from analysts about Amazon for more than a year. My sense is that the big guys are pissed off that the stock price is down, and are trying to get Bezos to resign. As I say, I still think it's a good model, and it might be worth a thousand bucks to take a flyer on it.

In a similar vein: As you may know, if you're following the business press, Home Grocer started as a little local company in Seattle for the purpose of allowing you to shop on the web and have your groceries delivered. They had a conservative business plan, which involved starting up and getting profitable in a city before moving on to the next one. Unfortunately, their venture capitalists insisted on massive expansion right now, which put off profitability. In the end, they were gobbled up by California-based Webvan, in a deal involving lots of Webvan stock. Now Webvan is having problems because they're too spread out and are making profits in none of their markets.

(Home Grocer is the spiritual successor of Phone In Drive Through Market,

which started in West Los Angeles when Liz and I lived there before Allie was born. You called them up, and told them what you wanted. The phone lady typed your groceries into the computer. Later in the day, you drove through the warehouse lot, and told them who you were. They loaded the groceries in the trunk while you wrote the check. It made life very simple. Unfortunately, they raised too little money before launch, and collapsed after about nine months.)

☞ *"I do, however, plan to see Unbreakable as soon as it comes out."* How did you like it? We still haven't seen it, though it sounds intriguing.

ct Dengrove: *"One problem they had in adapting the last few Sherlock Holmes stories with Jeremy Brett as Holmes was that Brett was in the process of dying while they were filming them. In some of the last ones the Holmes character was almost written out of them, and when he appeared he had almost no movement in his part."* Ah, this would be the completely coked up Holmes – "it's a seven percent solution of cocaine, Watson."

☞ *"One of the things we study in hapikdo is method of falling without getting hurt. Mostly overcoming the instinct to try and break a fall with your hands."* Like a professional pianist, I'm getting downright protective of my hands in my old age. I'll take a hit on my bum, even though I know it's going to throw out my back rather than hurting my hands.

ct Lynch: *"On giving blood, I was a pretty regular donor until I started traveling to South America."* My kid brother went in to donate blood once a couple of years ago. They asked where he'd been traveling recently, and he started reeling off country names. The lady stopped him and said, "no, no, I mean in just the last two years." "Um, I'm talking about the last *six months*," he replied. Something about being in Pakistan, the Phillipines *and* northern Africa within the past month twigged the blood people completely.

ct Strickland: *"I've since been involved in running conventions since 1988, and I like to think that I have learned a bit about the business by now. Recently a group tried to start up a new convention in Bowling Green. . . They were pleased to have my blessing, but wanted nothing to do with my advice."* We refer to Janice's experience with the grandiosely-named "Team Hugo" at the last Chicon for a similar horror story.

ct Schlosser: *"On the other hand, I have heard that the whole concept of colored belts in martial arts is an American invention. Apparently in Asia you are a white belt until your master awards you a black one."* A book on the history of Japanese culture and arts that we used on our first tour of the country in 1969 speaks about the color of the belts. Karate was not quite as widely popular in the west at the time.

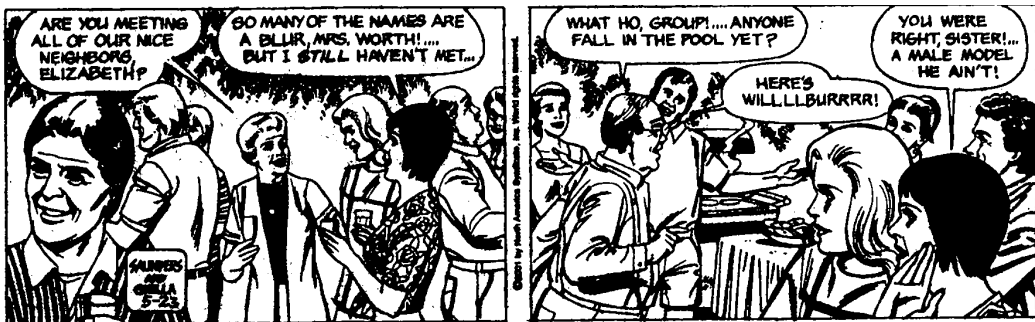
ct me: *"We got Monty Python and the Holy Grail on DVD and Nick and Isaac have already memorized various bits."* We were discussing this in the office with our Indian visitors the other day. They had gotten completely confused when one of us referred to

“the Holy Hand Grenade of Antioch.” We explained that this was required cultural indoctrination for being a programmer in the US. ☞ “We have also been collecting the DVDs of the original series.” We’ve been collecting all the James Bond movies as budget permits, and are planning to do *The Avengers* next. We’ll likely be getting *Babylon 5* when those are available. ☞ “Recently when one of the cats left us a gift on the front steps, Nick brought it to our attention by pointing and intoning, ‘This is a dead chipmunk!’ I feel that my parenting skills have been vindicated.” Yes! I do the Dilbert Victory Dance for you! As I may have mentioned a while ago, Allie got into a political argument at school last winter. When she told me about it, she explained that three-quarters of the way into it she realized she was channeling me. I was so proud.

☞ “I have taken to exclaiming ‘Gravity Check’ which usually gets a laugh. That is a Robe family idiom that we started when Nick discovered that he could drop a spoon from his highchair and make a parent retrieve it.” When a certain little girl used to ride in the grocery cart, I used to give her my keys to play with. Every so often, I’d hear a “rattle, clunk” followed by “oops!” This went on until the day I happened to be looking in the right direction at the right moment to see her throw the keys overboard before yelling “oops!” Of course, since this is also the kid who would answer truthfully when asked on her third excursion out of bed “is this a delaying tactic?” I was able to explain that deliberately dropping them was not cool, and she stopped.

That’s it, folks. Out of time. Again, *mea culpa, mea maxima culpa*. I’ll do better next time. To paraphrase Hassidic master Levi Yitzak, “I made this promise last mailing? Yes, but this mailing I really mean it.”

We’ll finish with a recent Mary Worth cartoon, in which a certain SFPAn makes a guest appearance, no doubt to honor his impending nuptials.



Art Credits

The front cover features a poster I found, which seemed so appropriately scientificfictional that it begged to be a SFPA zine cover.

Photo of Alice Liddell on page 2, *New York Times*, 19 May. Page 3: *Shoe* from 22 May. Page 4: *Non sequitur* from 1 May 2000. Page 7: *Arlo&Janis* from 17 Aug 2000 — bad puns abound even in the comics. Page 8: *Baby Blues* from 30 Nov 99. Page 12: *Cathy* from 6 May 2000 — horror comes in many forms. . . Page 17: *Dilbert* from 16 Aug 2000 — sometimes, life in the office is dangerous. Page 20: *Mary Worth* from 22 May — featuring Guy Lillian playing Wilbur.

In honor of the launch of Microsoft Office XP on the date of the deadline, the back cover features a fake ad from web site www.dubentia.com, which only slightly exaggerates the fear, uncertainty, and doubt in many product announcements.

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Announcing Microsoft Windows/TID

(Total Industry Domination)

At Microsoft, our strategy is to retain control of the computer industry, pure and simple. Because of this, you have been subjected to a number of product introductions and strategy sessions over the years, to let you know how we are going to do it.

Unfortunately, the information we gave you only had only a passing relationship to reality. That is to say, none at all.

We are now happy to correct this situation with the announcement of Windows/TID (Total Industry Domination). This exciting new product is compatible with every piece of hardware in existence, and will run any known software.

We even have a copy running on a Commodore VIC-20 in the lab. It takes about 72 hours to load the operating system from tape, but it does run. Of

course, we also have Windows 3.1 running on a 286 back there (wink wink).

Windows/TID can be a client, a server, a peer, and a digital watch all at the same time. If you have the right kind of hardware, it will even mow your lawn and do your dishes.

Right now, software houses are pledging to write applications for this revolutionary new operating system, which won't be available for several years anyway. We just wanted to tell you about it in order to confound the competition with our sheer marketing prowess.

Windows/TID will be available six to eighteen months after its promised ship date. The version with all of the bug fixes will be out a year later.

Microsoft
Making it confusing