



3. The ads have been asking the question for months: "Why are movie theaters fitting their seats with seatbelts for this summer?" The answer is supposed to have something to do with STAR TREK V, coming out this summer and directed by William Shatner. Hey, Nimoy got a

THE MT VOID

Page 2

chance to direct and he was supposedly only the second banana in the original series, why shouldn't Shatner? Shatner has been trying to dispel the common belief that it was Nimoy/Spock who was the brains of the operation all along, in character and in fact. Well, Shatner's film has been shown expectantly to test audiences and the result... "this thing has to go back to be re-edited." ST-5 may turn out to be a turkey that flies. So if you do find that there are restraints on the seats when you go in to see STAR TREK V, be sure that they are the kind that the occupant is supposed to be able to release.

4. The word has come down. The new leaner and meaner AT&T wants to cut out all in-hours club activities. All club activities are to take place out of hours. Right now we have no plans to move our Middletown meetings to after hours. We foresaw the current situation literally months ago when we moved our meetings to the cafeteria so they could be multiplexed with members' lunch hours. We are the only club I know who makes it so easy for members to eat lunch during the meeting and then rush back to their desks when the meeting is over having fed both the intellect and the stomach in the same hour. However, it seems we should do something in keeping with the new company policy so we will expect all attendees to take their lunches to the meeting. And at least once per meeting each attendee is expected to talk with his/her mouth full, just in case someone is listening. This, of course, will be no problem for Evelyn who wouldn't think of letting eating stop her incessant talking. Last time we were in California she ate and talked right through an earthquake without noticing it. I had to point it out and she still did not believe me, she needed someone else in the restaurant to verify that I was telling the truth. [The foregoing sounds absurd, I know, but in fact it is truth.]

5. I don't know. It looks like Nick Sauer and I have the makings of a terrific hair-splitting debate here. But I do consider hair-

splitting to be important when it comes to math and science both of which have to be precise.

So I don't quote Nick out of context I will reprint his item from the last notice, right after I have had my say. Nick says "This concept was the fact that by observing a system you changed it. More specifically, for sub-atomic particles the act of measuring the particle changed it from its natural state." That sounds like a general principle and an application to a specific state. I still don't think that by observing the light given off long ago by a now extinct star you were changing that "system."

But even if we talk only about sub-atomic particles, I still don't quite buy what Nick is saying. I accept that if one tries to observe sub-atomic particles, one cannot do that without affecting them, but I still divide this action into two distinct steps:

THE MT VOID

Page 3

Step 1: making the particles observable, and  
Step 2: doing the actual observing.

Step 1 involves spraying a particle stream on the particles you wish to observe and in some way converting the results into a pattern of photons that your eye can pick up, Step 2 involves letting your eye pick up the photons.

My claim is that it is the first step that really changes the particles. If you go through Step 1 and then are looking the other way, you have not observed the particles, but you have changed them. In fact, if you go through Step 1, observing or not observing, will probably not affect the particles at all. I seriously doubt that Heisenberg said that it would. The fact that Step 1 must be done if one is to proceed to Step 2 is irrelevant. It is still Step 1 that has all the effect on the particles.

Getting back to the star, it was already observable so observing it made no difference. All by itself it decided to send out a pattern of photons that human eyes could detect, so in detecting them, the star is not changed.

It is quite possible that taking a system not otherwise observable and forcing it to be observable you change it. In fact, I would say that is quite likely to be something Heisenberg might agree to. But the popular view that you always change a system by observing it is a load of duck tires.

In response to Mark's comments on my article I would first like to commend Mark on an excellent article. The points that Mark makes are all completely accurate and very scientifically correct. Unfortunately, they are not really applicable to the point I was originally trying to make. The paragraph in question seems to be:

"This concept was the fact that by observing a system you changed it. More specifically, for sub-atomic particles the act of measuring the particle changed it from its natural state. This is because a second particle must be made to collide with the first particle and then be collected to acquire the desired information gathered about the first particle. Unfortunately, this action throws the first particle out of its original state. Thus, we are in effect observing a particle different from what it was before we came along and measured it."

The above paragraph is true only for measurements made on sub-atomic particles. I had thought that the article clearly stated this but, apparently it did not (as Mark's article seems to indicate). So, I will re-explain what was meant in the above paragraph.

Sub-atomic (and atomic) particles are well beyond the range of our normal senses. In order to acquire any information about them we must use high magnetic

fields or force another particle to collide with them. Therefore, in order to measure a particle we must subject it to one of these two information gathering techniques. Once the particle is subjected to one of these forms of measurement we can begin to gather information about it. However, the information that we gather on the particle is collected AFTER the particle has either been exposed to the magnetic field or hit with another particle. Thus, the measurements we are acquiring on the particle are NOT for the particle in its regular state of existence. Instead, the information we have gathered is for a particle in a high magnetic field or after a collision with particle X. This was the point I was trying to make in the above paragraph and, was the point I found so frustrating.

Ironically enough, as I was writing the original version of the review I just knew that someone was going to misinterpret what was stated in it. So, I took great pains to word it as carefully as possible and had several people proofread it for content. Oh well, the best laid plans.... [-nks]

See how easy it is to fill a notice?

Actually there will be more on this subject next week. Avi Hauser, who also speaks with some authority on this subject, also sent me an explanation. I would publish it here, but this notice is already pretty long and heavy. I will publish his arguments next week.

6. Thanks to Pat Palmer for donating John Varley's TITAN/WIZARD/DEMON series to the Holmdel branch of the library. [-tps]

Mark Leeper  
MT 3D-441 957-5619  
...mtgzx!leeper

Life must be lived forward, but can only be understood backward.

--Kierkegaard

EARTH GIRLS ARE EASY  
A film review by Mark R. Leeper  
Copyright 1989 Mark R. Leeper

Capsule review: Helium-weight comedy has a typical Valley Girl (played by Geena Davis) meeting a bright blue furry alien (played by Jeff Goldblum looking like a flea-market bathmat). E\_a\_r\_t\_h\_G\_i\_r\_l\_s is based on the Julie Brown song of the same title. Director Julien Temple also directed A\_b\_s\_o\_l\_u\_t\_e\_B\_e\_g\_i\_n\_n\_e\_r\_s and it was much better. Rating: high 0.

It all started when witty and moderately attractive Julie Brown nearly made it to being chosen homecoming queen. As she tells it, rather than just being disappointed she struck back by writing songs making fun of all the institutions her friends enjoyed. Her songs--now a popular staple of the Dr. Demento show--include "Everybody Run, the Homecoming Queen's Got a Gun," "'Cause I'm a Blond," and "Earth Girls Are Easy." The last was done in a Valley Girl accent as an air-head describes a close encounter of a fourth kind with non-humanoid aliens. When the song was sold to be made as a film, Brown rephrased it to delete the non-humanoid references. She also co-wrote the script and plays a prominent role in the film.

E\_a\_r\_t\_h\_G\_i\_r\_l\_s\_A\_r\_e\_E\_a\_s\_y hides the fact that it is really a British production, directed by Julian Temple. Temple directed the kinetically stunning A\_b\_s\_o\_l\_u\_t\_e\_B\_e\_g\_i\_n\_n\_e\_r\_s, which unfortunately never found its market and which died at the boxoffice. E\_a\_r\_t\_h\_G\_i\_r\_l\_s is a much less ambitious film, but it probably is light and mindless enough to make the profit the other film missed.

E\_a\_r\_t\_h\_G\_i\_r\_l\_s\_A\_r\_e\_E\_a\_s\_y opens with a sort of pop-art spaceship in a pop-art space scene. Inside are three shaggy aliens, each one of the primary colors (red, yellow, and blue), and each looking for female companionship. Loneliest of all is Mac (played by Jeff Goldblum), who is not just merely blue, he's really most sincerely blue. But our three aliens strike it lucky: they pick up a television broadcast from Earth and discover that this planet has girls!

Meanwhile, one such girl is Valerie (played by Geena Davis--a mere decade too old for the role). Valerie, the Valley Girl air-head of the song, is engaged to Ted (played by--can you believe it?--Charles Rocket!), a doctor who cannot resist p\_l\_a\_y\_i\_n\_g doctor whenever he is given the opportunity. Julie catches Ted about to play "Dr. Love" with a nurse and she throws him out of his own house.

[Sorry--this next part has to be done in Valley Girl accent.]  
Well, like she's feeling all bummed out the next day, ya know, and like sitting next to Ted's pool soaking up sun when--like wow!--this totally

tubular spaceship falls out of the sky and like, ya know, splashes down right there in the pool. Awesome! She should know she can't make it with Mac because he's like blue, ya know, and all covered with hair. And, like they're from two different worlds. But then, hey, this is science fiction. [Okay, that's enough of that.]

Temple's view of Americans is not very perceptive. His production numbers look like they are borrowed from G\_r\_e\_a\_s\_e and from 1960s beach blanket movies. He does have one very nice dream sequence, an homage to the props of better-known science fiction films, but that is as close as E\_a\_r\_t\_h\_G\_i\_r\_l\_s\_A\_r\_e\_E\_a\_s\_y ever gets to art. If there is an idea to this sci-fi (in the worst sense) film Temple has made clear that it is an unwelcome guest and has sentenced it to solitary confinement. I rate this cotton candy film a 0 on the -4 to +4 scale. Like wow.

Covert Contraption  
A convention report by Evelyn C. Leeper  
Copyright 1989 Evelyn C. Leeper

Contraption (a.k.a. Covert Contraption) was held in Southfield, Michigan at the Michigan Inn May 5 through May 7, 1989. Each year Contraption changes their theme rather than incrementing a number, so I have no way to judge how many Contraptions have preceded this one. Professional Guests of Honor were Mike and Carol Resnick, Toastmaster was George "Lan" Laskowski, and Fan Guests of Honor were Mark R. Leeper and yours truly.

We flew out of Newark Thursday night. For the first time in this country in many years we had to walk out on the tarmac because there was no jetway. Then we discovered that the clerk at the door of the terminal had taken the boarding passes and returned our tickets to us. So Mark had to go back and get boarding passes. I'm just glad it wasn't raining. The plane was a DC-9 and we had seats way in back, right next to the engine. It was nice being on a completely non-smoking flight, but I don't recommend being next to the engine--it blocks the view and it's too noisy. The food was not too bad (stuffed shells and a chocolate pastry).

We arrived in Detroit ten minutes early. No one was at the gate area to meet us, so we proceeded to the luggage pickup (although we had only carry-on bags), figuring someone would be there. After a half-hour

we decided to have Rich Tucholka (the person meeting us) paged. After another ten minutes we asked to have the party meeting the Leepers paged, at which point they told us that \_ w \_ e had been paged. So Mark went to the gate from which we had been paged. Meanwhile, Rich arrived at the luggage area! After another ten minutes Mark returned and we could proceed to the car (parked at the other end of the lot). Then another hour to the Michigan Inn, but finally we arrived. Nothing looked familiar from eleven years ago on the way, but it was dark and raining, so we couldn't even see much.

After checking in, we went up to the Con Suite to join the other early arrivees. We met various committee members (Diana and David Stein, Lan, etc.) and sat around chatting. About 1 AM, just as we were ready to call it a day, Somtow Sucharitkul (a.k.a. S. P. Somtow) arrived with a videotape of his new movie, \_ T \_ h \_ e \_ L \_ a \_ u \_ g \_ h \_ i \_ n \_ g \_ D \_ e \_ a \_ d (described as a "teenage Mayan slasher flick") and asked if we wanted a preview. Of course we did, so we watched it until 2:30 AM, complete with verbal annotations by Somtow (who wrote the script and the music, directed, produced, and starred in it). It's a tongue-in-cheek film, made on a budget of about \$650,000, and should be released regionally in about six months. I asked about a possible showing at Noreascon III and Somtow said they were looking into it. He was very friendly--after five minutes he was talking to us as if he had known us for years.

Contraption

May 8, 1989

Page 2

After this we did turn in, ready to be up bright and early Friday.

Friday morning we had breakfast with Diana and hung around the Con Suite, since registration wasn't scheduled to open until 3 PM. About 11 AM a man showed up who had apparently seen some announcement of the convention in the media. He kept talking about a science fiction seminar he had attended at the Air Force Academy and all the authors there. He seemed to think their glossy, hard-stock program book was spartan; I wondered what he was going to make of a typical science fiction convention program book (at least few do mimeographing on "paper-towel" stock any more). He was also asking where to find a cheap hotel, and name-dropping science fiction authors' names like crazy. Very strange. Finally after about a half-hour he decided to head downtown to look for a hotel room. (I did see him later on in the convention, but decided not to go up and ask him what he thought of the

convention, since he seemed to type who could entrap one in a long conversation.)

Around noon we went with Rich and David to the Blue Sky BBQ for lunch--good food, huge portions. Then more hanging around and talking to people. There was a mixup with the registration materials and registration didn't open until 4:30 PM, resulting in some rescheduling of panels. Since we were right at the registration table, we got numbers 1 and 2. Our panel, "How to Start a Fanzine," started at 5 PM, but for most of it the panelists outnumbered the audience. We talked about how we started the \_ M \_ T \_ V \_ o \_ i \_ d (which is pronounced "em-tee void," not "Mount Void"). As I put it, first you go to work for a large telecommunications company.... Actually, the true story is as follows. When Mark and I got to AT&T eleven years ago, we found a lot of clubs (ski club, gardening club, etc.), but no science fiction club. This seemed extremely strange, and we moved to rectify the situation. We started with ten members (the minimum required for official recognition as a club at AT&T), and the "clubzine" at the time consisted of a hand-written announcement of the next meeting, copied on the copier machine and sent via inter-office mail to the members every three weeks. As the years went by, the club grew and the zine mutated. Currently, we have 160 members, two-thirds of whom get their copies via electronic mail. The other third are mostly support staff (e.g., people in the Medical Department) who don't have computer access. The name "MT Void" is a pun on "MT," the inter-location code for Middletown which is where we are based. The \_ M \_ T \_ V \_ o \_ i \_ d is now produced weekly (even when we're on vacation), and averages 9 pages per issue, meaning we produce about 450 pages a year!

While this is (I hope) of some interest, I have to admit that as advice to someone wanting to start a zine, it's not extremely helpful. However, since the audience consisted of only three people, I'm not too concerned. One of the three was the man I mentioned earlier. He was asking some more basic questions like, "Why do people do this sort of thing?" He seemed to think we must all be selling mailing lists or something, and it was hard to explain that we do it for fun, just like

some people ski or garden.

After the panel, we had a couple of hours for dinner, but having no

car we ended up in the hotel coffee shop. Luckily, just about the time we arrived so did Somtow, also looking for dinnertime companions, and we ate together. We spent most of the time talking about \_ T \_ h \_ e \_ L \_ a \_ u \_ g \_ h \_ i \_ n \_ g \_ D \_ e \_ a \_ d--some of the problems, some of the constraints, and so on. We learned a lot about into the making of a shoe-string budget film, and before we knew it, it was time for the opening ceremonies.

While some conventions make a big deal of their opening ceremonies (e.g., Nolacon with their jazz band), Contraption's consisted of introducing the guests, summarizing the weekend's events, and telling everyone to have a good time. In part, I think this reflects a different philosophy of conventions than that espoused by most conventions I attend. Boskone, for example, emphasizes panels; it's rare to find a Boskone panel that doesn't have at least fifty people in the audience. At Contraption (about one-third the size of Boskone), it was rare to find more than ten people at any panel. On the other hand, there was much more socializing at Contraption than at Boskone, both informally and in parties (there were four or five parties a night). I found this all very disconcerting at first, but when I finally figured out that it wasn't that the audience was avoiding just our panels, I felt better.

So after the opening ceremonies, we adjourned to the Con Suite to meet people--after all, that was one of our major tasks as fan guests of honor. One of the people I got to meet was Leo Frankowski (author of the "Cross-Time Engineer" series) and I talked to him for a while about the two books which had come out already. He promises that the other two will be out in the next few months, without the year-plus wait we had between books one and two. I also talked to him about the seemingly abrupt ending of the second book, which he agrees seems that way, but is accurate. (Much of the last part of the book leads up to the "big fight," which takes only a couple of pages. Those are apparently the proportions in reality as well.)

After a while I wandered down to registration to see if Richard Jervis (\_ H \_ a \_ r \_ d \_ w \_ i \_ r \_ e \_ d \_ H \_ i \_ n \_ t \_ e \_ r \_ l \_ a \_ n \_ d) had registered yet. To find out I ended up sorting the registration forms alphabetically. Yes, he had, and when I brought the forms back to the table, someone thanked me for sorting them and then introduced me to the person who was doing registration then: Richard Jervis! (Well, his badge said "Flash"! ) He had asked to interview us for \_ H \_ a \_ r \_ d \_ w \_ i \_ r \_ e \_ d \_ H \_ i \_ n \_ t \_ e \_ r \_ l \_ a \_ n \_ d and we decided to do that at 10 AM Saturday morning. After talking a while longer (waiting for Mark to finish his second viewing of \_ T \_ h \_ e \_ L \_ a \_ u \_ g \_ h \_ i \_ n \_ g \_ D \_ e \_ a \_ d--the "New Age crystal couple" in it are pretty funny), I finally went to sleep about 1 AM.

Saturday morning we went down to breakfast by ourselves, but Tom Sadler (\_ T \_ h \_ e \_ R \_ e \_ l \_ u \_ c \_ t \_ a \_ n \_ t \_ F \_ a \_ m \_ u \_ l \_ u \_ s) was there eating by himself and he invited us to join him. So we sat and talked about this and that, the

problems in publishing a fanzine, what conventions are like, etc. He had a button in Greek that Gene Wolfe had sent him which he didn't know what it said, and I offered to ask on the Net and see if I could get a translation (I got about twenty in less than two days!).

After breakfast we went to Richard's room and were interviewed for almost two hours. Well, it was more like just chatting for two hours, rather than being asked a fixed set of questions. We talked about science fiction, Japanese history, and all sorts of things, most of which I don't remember, but you can read about them in a future issue of

\_ T\_ h\_ e\_ H\_ a\_ r\_ d\_ w\_ i\_ r\_ e\_ d\_ H\_ i\_ n\_ t\_ e\_ r\_ l\_ a\_ n\_ d. One of the things I found out was that SCA

(the Society for Creative Anachronism) is much more formal than I had thought. You can't just pick a name; you have to document that this is a reasonable name for your \_ p\_ e\_ r\_ s\_ o\_ n\_ a (e.g., you can't be a 14th Century Italian merchant named "Fred of Rome"). Also, it's interesting that the SCA focus is almost entirely on Europe; because of the accuracy constraints, you can't be a samurai, or a Mayan warrior, or something from any culture that didn't have contact with Europe during that period. Sounds pretty ethnocentric to me.

At noon was our panel on "Travel and Science Fiction." To me the best explanation of why I like science fiction and why I travel is given by Lawrence Watt-Evans's "Why I Left Joe's All-Night Hamburgers." Mark talked about wanted to see "alien cultures" (on Earth this translates somewhat to "non-Western cultures"). Resnick thought that if a culture were truly alien no human would understand it, and that was why so many "alien cultures" in novels are patterned very much after human cultures. Somehow the discussion drifted into a discussion of colonialism in Africa (well, Africa is Resnick's field of expertise). On the one hand Resnick decried the tourists who spend thousands of dollars for tented safaris in order to recapture the (presumably colonial) spirit of the 1930s. On the other, he seemed to be saying that the Africans were incapable of running their countries without outside assistance. (This is how I interpreted what he said, but I could be wrong and would not want to be taken as speaking gospel). Of course, he also pointed out that the outside assistance is often of the wrong type and given with no regard for the local situation. One the whole, I got the impression that it was all pretty hopeless.

The next panel was "Should the Fan Hugos Be Awarded Separately?"

but as usual drifted onto the more general topic of the Hugos and conventions in general. Just as the masquerade has become larger and more complicated (it used to be a bunch of people wandering around at a dance in costume, and every once in a while the judges would pick out a costume to give an award to), so have the Hugos. When I started in fandom (and this was later than Resnick, who led the panel), the Hugos were awarded after the banquet, at which time the Guest of Honor speeches were also given. As conventions got larger, the banquet became untenable (even though they tried the approach of having the banquet and then providing additional seating afterwards for non-banqueteers who wanted to attend just the award ceremony). So they eliminated the

Contraption

May 8, 1989

Page 5

banquet (why eat rubber chicken if there is no payoff at the end?), although several attempts at reinstating it have occurred, the most successful being the clambake at ConStellation.

Actually, the breaking up of the various events may have been due in part to one memorable occasion when there was a long banquet, followed by an i\_n\_c\_r\_e\_d\_i\_b\_l\_y long Guest of Honor speech by Philip Jose Farmer, followed by an exceptionally long Hugo Awards ceremony, due in part to Ellison's lengthy comments following each award given to an item in D\_a\_n\_g\_e\_r\_o\_u\_s\_V\_i\_s\_i\_o\_n\_s. The whole thing ran from 6:30 PM to 3:30 AM and would certainly have motivated m\_e to change the schedule!

As for ballot-stuffing for the fan Hugos, this has been going on for a long time. Back in 1968 you didn't need to be a member of the Worldcon to nominate (or to vote, I think), so the editor or E\_R\_B\_d\_o\_m included a nominating ballot in each issue of his magazine, asking subscribers to nominate (and vote for) it as Best Fanzine. Not surprisingly, it won. The next year the rules were changed to provide for supporting memberships, and to restrict nominating and voting to members.

The whole panel was much in keeping with Resnick's reminiscences during the Hugo Awards ceremony at Nolacon. (By the way, Nolacon got the vote as worst crowd control for the ceremonies.) One reason to avoid splitting the Hugos is that given how long it takes to get into and out of the ceremonies these days, fans expect more than just one or two awards. Yes, the length needs to be kept reasonable, but as the

panelists pointed out, fans want at least an hour's worth of ceremony for the two hours plus it takes them to get in and out (and that's an optimistic estimate!).

After this panel, I had a chance to talk to Mary Southworth, who had recommended T\_o\_t\_h\_e\_R\_e\_s\_u\_r\_r\_e\_c\_t\_i\_o\_n S\_t\_a\_t\_i\_o\_n to me, and explain to her in slightly more detail what I didn't like about it. She recommended several other books; I settled on B\_r\_o\_t\_h\_e\_r\_E\_s\_a\_u by Douglas Orgill. We'll see.

The next panel was "Are Panels Ruining Fanzines?" This apparently meant, "Do people who have ideas now just do panels on their regional conventions rather than writing about them in fanzines?" Based on the attendance for this panel, we concluded that we could have the panel and s\_t\_i\_l I write about it without fear of overlap! But seriously, folks.... Again, since Mark and I are down here in the wilds of New Jersey doing a fanzine and not having the ability to schedule panels at will, we don't find panels crimp our style too much. (As I said on the panel, we're down here "rolling our own.") Having dispensed with the topic in about 2.73 minutes, we spent the rest of the time rambling about panels, conventions, and fanzines in general. I think the one major complaint I have about the panels here is their lack of structure. A named moderator would have helped, since presumably a moderator is charged with coming up with at least a few questions designed to elicit

discussion on the topic. But since due to committee changes it wasn't always clear even who was on the panels, the lack of a moderator wasn't surprising. I just found myself feeling very uncomfortable, feeling that I as a panelist was letting the audience down.

At 5 PM we went with several other fans to the Kaoribana for dinner, where we had some excellent sashimi. I concentrated on the maguro (tuna), tekka maki (tuna roll), octopus, and eel, rather than getting my usual assortment platter. Mark tried the assortment and was happy with that as well. All through dinner Mark folded origami for the origami fans (David Stein is thinking of putting together a book of fantasy origami patterns and is keeping several of Mark's figures to include).

When we returned we went into "Rick's" (actually the hotel bar renamed, although the renaming sign was just leaning against a side wall, and at least one person asked, "What's Rick's?") to participate in the evening's festivities. These achieved the best turnout of any event, with at least 100 people (out of the 500 registered members) attending the formal part. We missed the play, which was at 7 PM (the dinner break started at 6 PM--more on scheduling later), but did return in time to hand out the prizes for the Junior Masquerade. Some day I'll have to find out if stickers are really that popular with the younger set.

After the Junior Masquerade came the speeches. Resnick had an appointment at 10, so we all agreed to keep our speeches short (hey, no problem--in fact, I offered to skip mine entirely, but couldn't convince them I was serious).

Resnick talked about the African influence in his writing. (This is detailed very thoroughly in the latest issue of O t h e r R e a l m s [#24].) One of the problems with writing this part of the con report is that I was so nervous about my speech that I can't really accurately report on the preceding speeches. Luckily, Mark wrote his speech up and it is included elsewhere so I will not reproduce it here as well. But I apologize to Mike (if he's reading this) for not giving much of a report of his speech.

Of course, I can't relate my speech very well either. I can give you a summary, based on the notes I had written beforehand. I began by thanking the Contraption committee, then getting a shot it at Mark by pointing out that one of the infants in the audience had commented on his speech by throwing up during it. I then explained how I got started in fandom (Mark signed me up for the Science Fiction Club at the University of Massachusetts). Of course, I was always a reader, but science fiction fandom is the only organized fandom for readers--you don't find things like "travel writing fandom." So I joined UMASSSFS in 1968. In 1969 I heard there was this science fiction convention in Boston, so Mark and I hopped on the bus and went. As I said (to paraphrase the country and western song), "I was Boskone when Boskone

wasn't cool." At that time Boskone had only 250 members, making it half the size of Contraption.

I listed my current fannish activities--primarily the M T V o i d, a weekly fanzine for a corporate science fiction club (and asked if this would be called a "corpzine").

Also, my reviews have been reprinted in

NJSFS's I n t e r g a l a c t i c R e p o r t e r, SFABC's

S t a r s h i p E x p r e s s, L a n' s L a n t e r n

(of course), H a r d w i r e d H i n t e r l a n d,

O t h e r R e a l m s, and S F L o v e r s' D i g e s t.

Over the years I've seen a lot of changes in fandom. The one that everyone mentions is S t a r W a r s in 1977, which brought a large number of younger fans into fandom. Often their interest was in media only, which caused (and still causes) some problems. But another change I see is the yuppification of fandom--more fans with more money to spend. And this is especially true of the younger fans.

The result was that while MidAmericon in 1976 had 2600 people, Iguanacon in 1978 has 6000 (Resnick claimed the actual figure was lower, but this is what I have heard). And the result of all this is that fandom has lost its innocence. It's become too big for small conventions any more; look at Boskone, which is now slimming down to "only" 1400 or so. And there is too much money involved. Suddenly conventions need staffs of lawyers, insurance, extra security, and so on, and so on.

Now we have "Hugogate." The Hugos were always susceptible to ballot-stuffing, particularly in the fan categories (see Resnick's comments on page 5). But now we see it in the novel category, although the questionable nominee was withdrawn from the ballot (albeit after it was announced). And why? Well, perhaps in part because Hugos mean money these days. Being able to put the words "Hugo winner" or even "Hugo nominee" on the cover of your book means more sales, and almost certainly a higher advance on your next novel.

What does this all mean? Two other points are worth mentioning. As I was preparing this speech, the latest issue of S c i e n c e F i c t i o n C h r o n i c l e arrived and Andy Porter's editorial pointed out that if Salman Rushdie's book had been published as fantasy, none of this fuss would have erupted. And it's true that for years books that some groups would consider offensive have been published in the science fiction ghetto with little if any notice. But this is changing. As science fiction and fantasy hits the best-seller lists, this safety is going away. The second point is that all this change is not "the death of fandom" or even "the death of fandom as we know it." Certainly, fandom will change with the times. But it will survive these upheavals, just as it has survived those in the past. We are visible. We are changing. But we will survive in spite of the changes.

[The actual speech was much more rambling and much less coherent.]

After the speeches, the Con Committee presented us with gifts. First there were hats for all: a safari hat for Resnick, a "speak-easy" hat for Mark, and a "hard-boiled detective" hat for me--though since my hat was a large, I think Mark may inherit it as well. I tried stuffing padding in the sweatband and it helps a little, but it just looks better on him. Oh, well, I've swiped enough of his hats. Then there were convention T-shirts; again, I got a medium instead of a small (but was able to swap it). I'm not sure what it is, but I'd guess I must have such a loud voice (i.e., big mouth) that people naturally picture me as bigger than I really am. I describe myself as "small but wiry" or "small but feisty," depending on my mood. Resnick was given a piece of artwork that he had admired in the art show. Mark got a pair of bookends that look like giant hands (you can never have too many bookends). I got a videocassette of T h e W i z a r d o f O z, my favorite movie and one that I was considering buying now that the price had come down somewhat. Now I'm glad I didn't.

After the speeches there was a break while they cleared the chairs away and set up the dance floor. During this time I managed to talk to a couple more people, including Ken Josenhans, who seems to be collecting my convention reports on diskette. I promised to send him my Boskone 25 report when I got back (and I did).

Actually, someone told me about the time Maia Cowan (Lan's wife) had to give a speech at a convention. She got up and said, "Now I want you to imagine you're just heard the most wonderful, the most marvelous speech you've ever heard in your life. What would your response be?" The audience cheered and applauded wildly. Then Maia said, "Thank you. Now, are there any questions?" Of course, that only works once.

We had promised to help judge the masquerade which was scheduled to start at 10 PM in Rick's. Oddly enough, the dance was also scheduled to start at 10 PM in Rick's. Since the Master of Ceremonies was late getting back from dinner, the dance started and continued until about 10:45. One of the dancers was a woman (girl? I don't know her age) dressed something like Madonna who would dance to about six bars and then come up to the person running the sound equipment and ask him to turn it up. She did this about six times, each time explaining to her friend that it wasn't loud enough because you could still hear yourself speak. (Honest! I could only tell because I could read her lips.) Finally, I went upstairs for our earplugs, which helped somewhat.

About 10:45 the Masquerade began. This was not at all organized, with no registration, so we had no idea who was competing or even what they were competing as. The four of us who were judging asked that they at least give the contestants numbers, so the master of ceremonies asked the Madonna clone to number some index cards. Now that sounds like a simple enough task, doesn't it? But, no-o-o-, she managed either to skip some numbers or get the cards out of order (I couldn't tell which). Amazing!

Contraption

May 8, 1989

Page 9

Unfortunately, I have managed to lose the list of masquerade winners. I think there were three categories: Best Use of Makeup (won by a character representing ying and yang), Most Original (won by a baby Beauty and the Beast--we later found out this entry was really "a girl and her cat" and was supposed to be in the junior masquerade, but arrived late. We \_ s \_ t \_ i \_ l \_ I thought it was the most original), and Most Accurate Representation of a Fictional Character (I can't remember what won here), as well as a Judges' Choice Award (won by the "Spirits of the Volcanoes: Mount Saint Helens and Krakatoa"). We also created a Best Presentation award (for a Batman and Joker).

After the masquerade we abandoned the noise of the bar for the (relative) quiet of the Con Suite and had a long talk with Bernadette Bosky about the relative merits of \_ E \_ r \_ a \_ s \_ e \_ r \_ h \_ e \_ a \_ d and other peculiar movies. After wandering to a few more parties, we turned in for the night.

We skipped breakfast Sunday because we were going to be attending the "Gophers' Brunch" at 11 AM. The 10 AM panel was on spy films but neither of the panelists showed up (it wasn't clear whether anyone had told them they were supposed to be on the panel). So eventually the eight or so of us pulled our chairs in a circle and discussed the topic without benefit of panel--and a fairly good job we did, too.

At 11, the food for the Gophers' Brunch arrived: doughnuts and coffee. Now, I have no objection to doughnuts and coffee, but billing them as brunch constitutes deceptive advertising. Had I known that this was the extent of it, I certainly would have had breakfast when I awoke at 8 AM. We chatted with people some more (the main activity of the convention, obviously) and in general mellowed out.

We took a final pass through the art show. There wasn't anything that really struck me--too much fantasy and not enough science fiction perhaps, though I suspect I would like really original fantasy. It's just that the unicorn-type fantasy doesn't attract me. (In the Con Suite I talked to one artist who does skrimshaw about the inaccuracy of unicorns--that they usually have horses' tails instead of lions' tails--and she explained that she knew it was inaccurate, but that if she made her skrimshaw accurate, it wouldn't sell. Sad, but probably true.)

The Dealers' Room was very good for such a small convention, with ten or twelve book dealers. Interestingly, there were no dealers selling filksong tapes or books, because Contraption was opposite another (more filk-oriented) convention. We bought a fair amount of books, since we had lots of room in our suitcases. (For a weekend convention, even a carry-on bag is roomy.)

At 4 PM was the gripe session. People actually had a fair amount of good things to say. They were pleased with the Dealers' Room and the elevators, for example, and really appreciated the 5 PM check-out time the hotel had given the convention. There were some complaints, of course. One was that the program book did not have the panelists listed

Contraption

May 8, 1989

Page 10

for the various panels, and no supplementary sheet or board gave this information either. This was apparently due to some last-minute changes in the Program Committee, but was a major inconvenience for people who were interested in seeing the Guest of Honor.

A more basic complaint was in regard to the scheduling on Saturday night. There was a play, the Guest of Honor speeches, the art auction, the dance, and the masquerade, with the auction opposite the dance/masquerade (which were combined). This was combined with only a one-hour dinner break before the play--one hour isn't enough time to eat anywhere other than the hotel. The reasons given were that they were some people who came only on Saturdays so the auction had to be Saturday night rather than Sunday morning, and the masquerade had to be Saturday night (for pretty much the same reason).

The real problem as I see it is that Contraption is a three-day convention that thinks it's a one-day-con (or vice versa). One-day-cons have panels during the day and an event (maybe two consecutive events)

in the evening. A three-day convention has things like a masquerade, an art auction, a play, etc. But they have them over three days. You can't have it both ways; you can't put ten pounds of anything in a five-pound sack. If you want all the events of a three-day convention, you need to use all three days. Have the masquerade Friday night, the play and speeches Saturday night (after a two-hour dinner break), and the art auction Sunday morning. If you need to fit everything on Saturday, you have to drop the play and move the Guest of Honor speeches to the afternoon. Or something.

The other major topic of complaint was the bar mitzvah. It seems that when the hotel recently changed management there was some confusion and a bar mitzvah was booked for the Saturday night of the convention. The convention committee decided to allow the guests to enter the dealers' room, on the theory that the money they spent would help make up for the inconvenience the convention had in vacating the area they needed and also that they might decide to come back the next day and buy memberships. This was, in retrospect, a bad theory. Allowing them in the convention area at all made it doubly difficult to keep them out of the film and video rooms, and they were apparently a fairly ill-mannered bunch to begin with. (All this is hearsay--I was busy giving my speech at the time.) However, since they don't expect this to be a recurring problem, it doesn't seem like a lot of time need be spent in planning on how to cope with this in the future.

After the session finished, we checked out and David Stein took us to the airport, with a stop at Shield's for dinner (no dinner on this flight). The flight back was uneventful (though over-booked). We did have a problem at the security check when they looked at the x-ray of Mark's suitcase and asked him what the gloves were. Gloves? What gloves? So they ran it through again and let us take a look. It was the bookends!