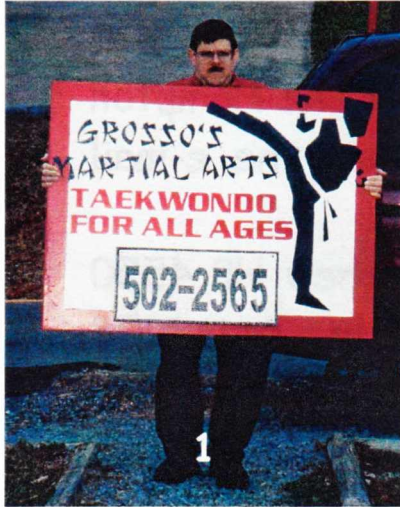


TENNESSEE TRASH # 45

Scenes From 2001



TENNESSEE TRASH # 45 was produced way before the deadline by Gary R. Robe. P.O. Box 3221 Kingsport, TN 37664 is overflowing with Concave mail and the phone rings constantly at (423) 239-3106 with people begging for a room at the Hampton Inn. I don't even want to think about the e-mail accumulating at grrobe@chartertn.net.

The front page is a demo of the new HP 4550 color laser printer that arrived recently. It is hard to believe that printer technology has advanced to the point that this thing costs less than \$2,500!

Photo captions: 1) The new sign for Grosso's Martial Arts is now proudly attracting new students to the school. 2) The high point of our August vacation in the Southwest: Rainbow Point in Bryce Canyon National Park. 3) Nick is almost lost on the stairs in the confusion of presents on Christmas Eve. 4) Nick tries on a horn at the Knoxville Zoo. 5) The extended Robe Experience at my parent's 50th Anniversary party. Seated Isaac Robe, Jake Sprowl, Stephanie Sprowl. First row: Gerald Robe, Corlis Robe, Nick Robe, Diane Sprowl. Back row: Gary Robe, Phyllis Robe, Harry Robe, and Jerry Sprowl 6) The Christmas cookie frosting marathon.

TENNESSEE TRASH #45

A ZINE BY GARY R. ROBE FOR MAILING NUMBER 225 OF THE
SOUTHERN FANDOM PRESS ALLIANCE

December 2001 - January 2002

THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT, NEW YEAR'S JACUZZI, THE JANUARY GRIND AND OTHER OBSERVANCES...

This will not be a huge effort this time, and I will risk cardiac failure of the OE by mailing this more than a week before the deadline. This is not due to any great burst of energy or creativity on my part. On Tuesday, January 22, I will take once more to the sky to visit exotic foreign lands in the noble task of trying to convince people in Latin America to buy more chemicals. I will be visiting Lima, Peru to teach a seminar being sponsored by one of our local distributors, and then I will go to Brazil for a week to do more of the same. I normally try not to travel in January and February due to concave planning. I could not, however, say no to this trip.

This has forced me to get the fannish stuff done early this year and to hand off all the hotel negotiations to Naomi Fisher. In all this has been one of those cases where we are not working harder, we are just working better. I had to pull one all-nighter to get the letters assembled for room assignments, but once that was done, I could back off and let Naomi take over. The only other little job to do was to cobble together a SFPA mailing in order to keep my string intact. With that out of the way, we begin our look over the last two months on the day after Thanksgiving.

There is nothing my family loves more at Christmas than to play practical jokes on each other. This ranges from hiding a highly anticipated present in the garage to giving my brother a load of rubber chickens the year he went to work in a chicken processing plant. This year, we outdid ourselves.

One family tradition is to exchange wish lists for Christmas during Thanksgiving Dinner. Last year my sister Diane and her crew moved into a new house. One of the first things on her list was a kitchen canister set that coordinated with her new décor. As we were recovering from Thanksgiving gluttony my brother Gerald mused that it would be funny if we got Diane a nice canister set and then showered her with a bunch of cheap butt-ugly sets too. That got all our gears turning. Since we had a month to prepare, we found some doozies! The piece of resistance was the one mom found at a Goodwill Store in Atlanta. It was an old metal set that still had some residual flour in one can and an old photo in another. In all we found four joke sets plus two that actually went with Diane's kitchen.

The second prank came at Isaac's expense. One of the things he really wanted was a radio-controlled car. The one he lusted after was a model PT Cruiser. This thing was huge, and the only place we could find to hide it was in the back compartment of the van. It hid under a blanket for two weeks without Isaac seeing it. We even loaded lumber into the hatch once and he didn't notice the big box under the blanket! We thought we were home free until the day before we left for vacation. The boys were in waiting in the car for some reason without us and Isaac slipped a peak under the blanket. He positively crowed that he saw his PT Cruiser.

Corlis and I could not let this go unanswered. Corlis hit on the idea of taking out the car and replacing it with white clothes. There is

little that Isaac likes less than wearing white. We would take the remote and wrap it in a separate box and then hide the car somewhere in the house. The remote featured a horn button for the car so once he got the remote, he would be able to track down the car.

The last prank was played on my niece Stephanie. It is a family tradition to make Christmas cookies at my mother's house on Christmas Eve. This year all four grandchildren participated in icing the cookies with multi-colored frosting. After frosting over 200 cookies, then children then sorted out all the presents. Last year when they did this the adults went back at night and scrambled the presents back under the tree. For some reason this year Stephanie was determined that her stack would be waiting for her on Christmas morning and bragged that she had hidden her presents so well we would never find them. Sounds like a challenge to me.

She had hidden them well and it did take a while to find them. We just took them all into the utility room and left her a train of notes that led her to the doghouse, the garage, the hot tub, and finally back to the tree. The stage was now set for Christmas Day.

We put the wrapped PT Cruiser box under Isaac's stocking so that it would be about the first thing he saw in the morning. Sure enough, after the boys had sorted through the contents of their stockings Isaac asked if he could open a present. Of course, we said indulgently. He was pissed to say the least when the box was stuffed full of sox, underwear, towels, and white dress shirts, but no car. He calmed down a bit when we made him think through what had been done to him. It was even better when the remote control was the last box that he opened. He was mightily relieved when he honked the horn and found his car in the bedroom Corlis and I were using.

In the midst of this confusion my sister and her family arrived, and Stephanie ran up to where she had hidden her horde. She shrieked when she found that all the packages were gone. We all had a good laugh as she went on the merry chase and finally

ended up back at the tree. By that time, she was exuding all the charm one could expect from a thwarted thirteen-year-old.

Finally, my sister began to open presents and the hideous used tin canisters were the first ones she opened. She took the first two fairly well but by the third one she became quite resistant to opening any more large packages. We had managed to keep the serious sets from her until the end, so joke made its maximum effect.

My mother is an expert seamstress and had made each of her grandchildren a magnificent gift. She bought entire bolts of Harry Potter pattern fabric and made each of the kids a "quillow." This is a twin-bed sized quilt with a pocket along one side. When folded the quilt can be turned inside-out into the pocket and the whole thing becomes a throw pillow. They are great for travel because they can use them either as a blanket or a pillow. All four of the kids latched on to their quillows and all the adult children asked, "Where's mine?"

I got mostly practical stuff like clothes and tools, but Corlis did get me some fun stuff. She had seen my eyes light up when I spotted *Crouching Tiger-Hidden Dragon* action figures in a store. She got me the two that were available. They are particularly neat, complete with interchangeable hands so that they can do different poses and hold a variety of weapons. I am torn between leaving them in their packages to keep collector value and unpacking them to play with. I am leaning toward play since a toy not played with is a sad thing indeed.

THE SIGN

It is difficult to decide what to get our Taekwando instructors for Christmas. Two years ago, Corlis and I were dedicated couch potatoes. Now, our lives revolve more around workouts at the Taekwando school than SF conventions. This change in our lives had been fun, interesting, and beneficial. Although neither of us will ever be great martial artists, we have both learned a lot about the world of sport and the thrills of training and competition. I doubt that many other instructors would be so patient with

students that were in so poor condition to start with and so slow to improve. Thus, we felt we needed to do something for The Grossos for Christmas.

These are not the kind of people that you give a box of chocolates. Their kids might eat them, but they probably wouldn't. I had an epiphany one night. We would give them a sign.

Of all the things the Grosso's Martial Arts is pretentious is not one of them. The only indication that the school is there that can be seen from the road in front is a weather beaten and faded sign. Furthermore, last year The Grossos had a squabble with the phone company and ended up disconnecting their land-line and changing to cell phones. The old sign didn't even show the right phone number. We decided to make them a new sign.

I took the boys with me to Lowes to buy plywood and paint for the project. I then designed a sign using PowerPoint and downloaded clip-art. Entering "martial arts" in the Microsoft Clip Art Gallery gets some nice stuff. I found a silhouette of a fighter kicking at head-level that worked nicely. The problem was then to translate the 8 ½ x 11 layouts to a 3 x 4 ft. plywood board! I can't quite fit that through my printer. I ended up printing out the letters two at a time at full size using the computer. I could then place the large letters on the sign and cut them out with an Exacta knife. I could then trace the cuts with a pencil and then carefully paint in the letters. The silhouette was a different matter. I just made as large a copy as I could on paper and then free-handed the drawing onto the board. Since the figure was all made with straight lines, I was able to use masking tape to outline the area to be painted.

The boys helped me prime and white-coat the whole surface and then to mask off and paint the border red. I then did the lettering and the figure over a couple of nights. I put the phone number on a detachable section so that if the number changes again the whole sign will not have to be re-painted. We presented them with the finished sign on the Wednesday before Christmas just as we were preparing to leave town for the holiday. Joe

and Sheila were speechless. The sign is now planted proudly near the road in front of their house. It has already brought in one new student to the school!

SCHMOOZE, BOOZE AND JACUZZE IN THE NEW YEAR

Last year we gave the Hampton Inn at Horse Cave a test run by inviting a few friends there for a New Year's party. We enjoyed it so much that we decided to do it again this year. This time the invitations went out earlier and to more people, so the party was even bigger this year. It was really a mini-convention by the time we were through. We had over 50 people there and could have had more if we had wanted them.

The Robe Experience was the first to arrive on Sunday afternoon, but over a dozen people from Bowling Green, Louisville and Nashville soon joined us. It was no big surprise when Naomi called at 1 p.m. to say that they were delayed in leaving Huntsville and would be late. We got the keys to the suite and started the party without them. Corlis started a Naomi Arrival Pool with \$1 tickets for a 15-minute time slot. Anita Feller won the pot when Naomi crossed the threshold at 8:07. I wish someone had taken a picture of Naomi's face when it dawned on her that we were betting on her tardiness.

I brought an RF converter and Pat brought his DVD player, so we had a video room. We combined the DVDs we had gotten for Christmas with some old favorites. The most popular features were *O Brother Where Art Thou*, *Shreck*, *South Park: Bigger, Longer and Uncut*, and *George Lucas in Love*. You may not be familiar with the last one. It is a short student film that simultaneously spoofs *Star Wars* and *Shakespeare in Love*. It is a hoot.

On Monday morning, New Year's Eve, the boys and I played in the pool until we were in danger of dissolving like Senator Kelly in *X-Men*. We have a game in which the boys try to beep my nose. If they succeed, then I have to dunk under the water. I can use whatever techniques I choose to fend them off. I call this brand of aquatic martial art *Splash-Fu*. We played for at least three hours.

One of the main plans for the party was a dinner at The Bookstore Café in beautiful Downtown Horse Cave. Naomi had talked to Tom Chaney, the owner, at Thanksgiving and he said that if we could bring at least 12 people in they would keep the restaurant open for dinner on New Year's Eve. Well, eight was no problem. Then it turned to 18, then 25, and finally to 32 by the time everyone was seated.

Once back at the hotel we began counting away the hours to midnight and chilling the champagne. I had brought along several bottles of cachaça from Brazil and some *really* nice tequila I was given in Guadalajara. I made caipirinhas for several who were curious about a Brazilian-style New Year. The boys were very happy that their old friend Kyra Williams was there. They played and plotted to stay up after midnight.

At the stroke of midnight, we tossed back glasses of champagne and then tore our clothes off. Our bathing suits were underneath, and we headed en masse to the Jacuzzi. The boys and Kyra played in the pool while the adults experimented with finding out how many could load into the hot tub before it overflowed (15 give-or-take.) About 1 a.m. Nick came to us and said that he was not tired, but he needed to go somewhere to sit down.

The next morning the kids thankfully slept to 9:30. We were able to drag ourselves down to breakfast and begin to recover. I had stayed up until about 3:30. I knew we would have to drive home the next morning, so I had paced the celebration. By the time we packed up the van and headed out at noon I was actually feeling pretty good. The boys crashed out as soon as we got underway, and Corlis and I took turns driving while the other napped. We were in pretty good shape when we arrived home.

THE JANUARY ROUTINE

For the first time Corlis could not avoid teaching a late afternoon class, so I had to shift my work hours to meet the boys on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. Luckily all I have to do is go in to work a half-hour earlier so that I can arrive at home by 3:40 in

the afternoon. Corlis has a recurring nightmare that she misses the first session of a class she is supposed to teach. That happened this semester when they added another class to her load and then neglected to tell her about it.

On January 1, Eastman Chemical Company was supposed to split in two. Management had announced this brilliant plan to the consternation of mortal employees and Wall Street stock analysts alike. We had been preparing for the spin all year. On December 7 they announced that the spin was cancelled. This was two days before the stockholder meeting was scheduled to vote on the plan. The consensus is among us cubicle rats is that either the buyers they had for the parts of the company backed out or they and calculated that there was no way that the stockholders were going to ratify their plan. They have now "delayed" the spin-off for six months. In July they will re-examine the situation and decide what to do.

The result of this Chinese fire drill has been to spend away any fourth quarter profits we might have made on preparing for the spin. Even as dismal as the economy is in general and the chemical industry in specific, we would have made a profit in the fourth quarter if they hadn't spent it all on this pointy-haired boss project. I don't care much what they do—my job is pretty secure and stable no matter what happens. I just hate seeing the management of the company spending away the profits on a silly scheme.

We have been extremely lucky this winter so far in that all of the snowstorms have died before reaching East Tennessee. Just a few miles north they have had a couple feet of snow in the last week, but none of that has touched us here. That will probably change within the next two weeks since I will be traveling, and the inconvenience would be maximized if school were dismissed. We do have friends that will take the kids if school is out, but we can't play that card too often.

That's about all the time I've got for this. By the time I write next I will have run a convention and visited Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Peru, and Venezuela. Wish me luck!

MAILING COMMENTS

THE SOUTHERNER #224: JEFF COPELAND—Thanks for the advice for Priority Mail shipping. Since I am not under any time pressure for this mailing, I'll use it. It will be an interesting experiment. I find it par for the course that the P.O. would not guarantee one-day delivery for Express Mail to Toni in Georgia, but it will for you in Washington! I suspect that the reason is that to get it to Washington that actually have to put the package into the Express Mail system and put it on a plane. For Georgia, they just truck it down with no difference between first class and Express Mail.

THE NEW PORT NEWS # 200: NED BROOKS—You may be able to get the methanol for duplicating fluid at Home Depot. It sounds weird that a chemical company has to do this, but we get a lot of our common lab solvents there. Last year one of the idiots in upper management decided that for safety reasons we could no longer keep drum quantities of solvents in the storage rack in back of our building. We can get a gallon jug of the stuff that Eastman makes with no problem. The bright idea was that we would just use reagent grade solvents like the folks in R&D do. First of all, there's NO SUCH THING as reagent grade VM&P Naptha! Second, to get that stuff from a lab supply company costs over \$50 a gallon for stuff that sells for \$4 a gallon in drum quantities. Thirdly, we do work for that strange beast known as The Customer. Not only would they laugh at us if we present them with work done in reagent grade solvent, it could be meaningless because the impurities in industrial grade solvents are something that has to be lived with.

I get a lot of use from my Dremel tool. The main thing I use it for is making Cub Scout projects like Pinewood Derby cars. It is invaluable for those projects! I do wish that it had a variable speed, but it is great for rough shaping of wood.

PETER PAN AND MERRY #40: DAVID SCHLOSSER—REYRCMT: Guy—I'd like to comment on the controversy (if you can call it that) over *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* winning the Hugo. Would you have wanted to be on a committee that ruled that the book was ineligible for the Hugo after so many people voted to place it on the ballot? The Hugo is for the best Science Fiction novel of the year as defined by the members of the Worldcon. Since there has never been an all-encompassing definition of Science Fiction it would be hard to disqualify anything if the members voted for it. Indeed, if the voters nominated the latest John Grisham novel, I doubt that there is much the Worldcon Committee could do to disqualify the nomination.

SPIRITUS MUNDI # 186: GUY H. LILLIAN III—Ugh! Someone who admits to liking The Bros. Hildebrandt. I guess someone must have bought that stuff. Now we know who. I too just dug out my dusty and yellowed copies of *Lord of the Rings*. Alas, my copy of *The Two Towers* fell apart when I opened it and I had to buy a replacement Movie Edition. I still prefer the simplistic Tolkien covers.

Now that I'm on the subject, how about that *Fellowship of the Rings* movie? We arrived in Bowling Green on the Friday before Christmas with very little shopping done. Corlis and I hit the malls with lists in hand, and by Sunday afternoon we were ready to celebrate being ready for Christmas by seeing *FOTR*. They have built a new movie house in Bowling Green that has a screen as big as some IMAX theaters I've been in. We got there at the last minute so the only place where four seats in a row were available were in the third row.

I never thought that such a good job could have been done in bringing *LOTR* to the screen. Oh, I could have done with a little less introduction. Part of the charm of the book is that Frodo really doesn't know the

whole story of The Ring until The Council of Elrond. OK, they switched a character and gave a much bigger part to Arwin. But we're talking *Liv Tyler* here and speaking Elvish to boot. I used to think that Portuguese was the sexiest language possible.

I do wish that they had put in an intermission right about at the point that Frodo agrees to attempt the destruction of The Ring. I would have enjoyed the rest of the movie more if I had the chance to stretch a bit. I actually enjoyed the film more on second viewing when I knew the spots I could duck out for a break if I needed it!

I think that Prof. Tolkein would have been proud to be so well treated on the big screen. Perhaps *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* would have been better if J. K. Rowling had backed off and let a film maker do the job. Of course, they would have had to hire a filmmaker to direct instead of a studio hack like Chris Columbus. My favorite bit of the film was when Frodo comes to visit Bilbo in Rivendell and Bilbo sees The Ring and flashes for a second into something Gollum-like. Isaac has to cover his eyes at that point.

REVENANT #9: SHEILA STRICKLAND—The subtitle for the war in Afghanistan so far seems to be The One We Couldn't Screw Up. In October we watched as US forces covertly entered the region as the media kept reminding us of how many invaders have been broken there over the years. Then, a miracle happened. The Taliban crumbled. The people rose up and kicked them out as much as our daisy-cutters did. The warlords decided to cooperate. We heard the voice of Harmid Karzai talking to Noah Adams on *All Things Considered* via cell phone and he was an articulate, reasonable, and friendly guy. There has been exactly one US casualty from hostile fire and eleven from friendly fire and accidents. It looks like Osama bin Laden is most likely mush in the bottom of a cave somewhere. This is a US military campaign?

I really don't know what to think about all the stories in recent days about US treatment of the *detainees* in Guantanamo. On one hand I don't like the government's insistence that these guys are not POWs, only material witnesses in a crime. That is sinking to the

level of the enemy. On the other hand, these guys are as dangerous as it gets, and they have done nothing to deserve better treatment. The administration seems to be determined to try these men under military tribunals instead of an open court. That is a slippery slope, and it seems sad that we might abandon the high road we were on and play into the hands of the terrorists by acting too harshly. It's a tough call and I really don't like having to trust leaders I don't completely trust to make them.

TRIVIAL PURSUITS #98: JANICE GELB—The college football season just kept getting stranger didn't it. Believe it or not, but people were a bit excited around here after the Florida game. One of my colleagues is such a Vol fan that she went to all the road games this year. The only one she missed was the one they lost, and, of course, the SEC Championship. Has there ever been and will there ever be another year that has such a curse on being #1 or #2? What do you think of Steve Spurrier jumping ship?

The guy in the cubicle across from me is from Michigan. Can you imagine what he has heard since the Tennessee-Michigan game? I know it is no small consolation to you, but at least Miami did their appointed job in The Rose Bowl and averted a complete meltdown of the BCS!

HANDCUFFS AND PEANUT BUTTER # 54: JEFFREY COPELAND—If we have to prevent any possible weapon from being taken on a plane, then that certainly excludes passengers. I don't claim to be good, or even practiced at it, but I already know several killing blows or moves that I could do after my relatively short martial arts training. That is with only bare hands. Give me a ballpoint pen and then things get bloody. Just think what a trained hijacker could do with a laptop computer or a briefcase? This is not so say that it is not prudent to search luggage for bombs, firearms, or edged weapons, but when you come to it airline security is a non-sequitur. The only comfort we have is that when nutcase Richard Reid tried to light the fuse to his shoe bomb the passengers and flight attendants took him down. Vive la resistance!