

## Transitional Phases 41

A fanzine for KAPA 98, based in the plane of reality known as late January, February and March of 1999, by Naomi Fisher, P.O. Box 5751, Huntsville AL 35814. The telephone number is (256) 830-4471, and is sometimes even answered.

News from other KAPAns hasn't been good the last two months. Tony's father died in early March, which came as a shock. I was able to make it up there for the funeral, but while flowers were relatively easy to arrange, I still can't find words. I'm very sorry, Tony, and hope that you and your mom are holding up O.K.

Then in late March, we got a call from Joel Zakem, letting us know that Andy Offutt had had a heart attack and a quadruple bypass, and was now at home recovering. Jodie asked for no phone calls/mass e-mailings, as she has her hands full keeping up with family and the hospital. Very understandable, and I hope, Jodie, that you know that our thoughts and prayers are with you and Andy. Make him be good, or at least take care of himself!

On to far more frivolous stuff, which is what my life is mostly made of...

I fully expect a couple of you read the title and thought, "Um... Naomi, if this is **Transitional Phases 41**, what happened to **TP 38, 39 and 40?**". The rest of you, who seek the simple, Zenlike explanations for weirdness, probably figure I just can't count. All of you, at this moment in time, are probably right. I have a fistful of **Transitional Phases**, mostly finished, and a dilemma. Do I send them out, even though they're mostly outdated, just so I'll be caught up? And if so, as a separate postmailing or with KAPA? Considering how thin the last mailing was, page padding wouldn't hurt, but I don't want to be an APAhog. .

Having proofed Pat's 'zine, I am almost unbearably tempted to say nothing at all of our engagement, and to instead blithely natter on, talking of nothing much at all. Then, in KAPA 99... "WHAT?!? Pat, you told me it was a party! A WEDDING?!? What are you TALKING about?!?" Except, well, it would be cruel. I think our esteemed OE is already afraid I might change my mind at any moment, and my outbreaks of matrimoniphobia have been frequent and severe anyway. I don't need to add the fear of schizophrenia to Pat's already overflowing stack of Party-related worries. But, oh, it would be funny! If you're reading this, you'll know that kindness did in fact triumph over my love of practical jokes, and the engagement is (probably) still on. At least until Pat sees this...

In all seriousness, this has been a really strange experience. One moment I'll be happy and cheerful about the entire prospect, thinking "This is great! Why didn't I agree to this years ago?" The next, I'll be absolutely petrified, literally shaking and nauseous, heart racing, cold sweat breaking out, and certain I'm making the worst mistake of my

life. I'm pretty sure the latter condition is completely irrational, but it's hard to fight any bone-deep fear with logic.

We've set the date for the Saturday immediately after Thanksgiving, which, in theory, gives me time to get used to the idea. I think I need it.

On a lighter note, several of my friends have volunteered to be on the "Tackle Squad", in case I try to make a break for it at the last minute, and my parents have been practically radiating approval at me, which is a very weird (but nice) feeling. Dad, in particular, has been noisily in favor of my "finally coming to my senses" - I think they were afraid that even St. Patrick the Long-suffering (as they've referred to Pat for years) might be reaching the limits of his patience with me. This led to a horrible, farcical episode after I took Pat to the airport for a TDY trip that involved me joking to my brother about "finally driving Pat out of town - he's left the state", Jonathan panicking, and my father, without his hearing aid, being called to the phone to straighten things out. Dad doesn't listen too well at the best of times, and when he's on the telephone without his hearing aid, the other party might just as well not be there. "I don't know what you did, but fix it!" is the phrase that sticks with me. Um. I thought doting fathers were supposed to believe their daughters could do no wrong!

I honestly haven't got a clue as to what's expected of me, and one look at a **Bride's** magazine nearly caused me to (literally) pass out, so this is not going to be a traditional wedding. Plus, I know the historical background of most of the western wedding traditions well enough to be deeply uncomfortable with their symbology. No diamond solitaires (I've been offered too many), no rehearsal (no way am I doing this twice!), no bridesmaids, no marches down any aisles, no white dress (the traditional color of death in Japan, plus it makes me look like I have hepatitis), no giving away of ANYONE. A party, though, I can handle. I like parties!

On to other stuff, like the last two months. Ah, Tax Season! I finished the H&R Block course and did very well. Being insanely competitive, twisty-minded and literate helps in some fields. Block then offered me employment, which I accepted, and since then I've been trying to make the world safer for the taxpaying public. Or at least our clients.

It's taken some strange turns, as when they found I could turn a computer on without hurting myself, I was immediately recruited into working 70+ hour weeks as District Tech Support over the holidays and the first week in January. This meant doing from-the-ground-up setups for the 10 offices in the Huntsville area, reformatting, cleaning, wiring, arguing with South Central Bell, installing, testing and generally building a district network between the formerly very unwired offices. Fortunately, there was someone, Katherine Levine, who knew what she was doing and who was positively gleeful about having me (strong back, weak mind, never wears out) to serve as general dog robber. I had a great time, and may have even learned something! Like, watch out when the budget starts getting tight - if the people in charge of economizing don't know anything about computer systems, they think surge protectors are unnecessary

expenses. As for a UPS... "To dreream the impossible dream!..." Working during thunderstorms, building network cable, and listening to wall sockets sparking lends a whole new dimension to the concept of Pointy Haired Bosses.

It worked out beautifully, though. I had been assigned to the North Parkway office, where I would have had to work nights, every weekend, and maybe had 20 hours a week if I was lucky. As it was, I just happened to be in the main office (crawling under desks trying to link the hub to the printer) when a senior preparer decided she wasn't coming back this year, and her spot came open. Normally, they would have needed at least a third year tax preparer for her job, but this particular office had no one who could even turn on the computer system, so Katherine recommended me. Whee! I'm now one of three preparers at Madison Street, the smallest office in the district, with as many clients as I can handle, a struggle to stay under 40 hrs a week, three days a week completely off, and co-workers who think I'm a genius, even after two months of working with me. I love my tiny little office (460 sq. ft., counting the bathroom), my job, my co-workers and everything about my work, except the Tax Code. Ah well. Being a tax preparer gives me a fine, if unexpected, outlet for my Quixotic tendencies - in the absence of windmills to futilely joust with, our draconian tax laws will do.

I've also figured out how to eliminate 90%+ of all Earned Income Credit tax fraud (a multibillion dollar business) in a way that is far too direct and simple to ever be put into law, and have decided a flat tax, excluding a basic living exemption, would be an excellent idea. Sometimes right, sometimes wrong, rarely in doubt...

In between doing taxes, it's been pretty busy. We've made trips to Nashville for TPAC performances, gone to ConCave and run another Art show, seen a few movies, gotten engaged, and watched an absolutely gorgeous spring roll in. Guess I'll tackle things in roughly that order.

TPAC's New Directions series continued its eclectic mix of shows with **Momix**, a modern dance troupe, and **The Boys' Choir of Harlem**. Both have performed in Nashville before, but they have changing repertoires, so there wasn't any real danger of "been there, seen that". **Momix**, especially, had built an entirely new show, "Baseball", that started as a very loose takeoff from one dance number we had seen previously. My brother, Jonathan, likes modern dance, so we arranged to meet him at the theater - it's nice having family close enough to do things like this together.

It was a really interesting evening of dance, both in the inventive choreography, and in the unusually tight interplay of dancers and the stage lighting that has become one of the troupe's trademarks. Some pieces worked wonderfully, others were strange but entertaining, and only one (the very, very weird "Fields of Green") fell flat. Hard to describe, but it was an extremely slow number, with the dancers completely covered and obscured with a stagewide piece of green parachute silk. Jonathan said he couldn't shake the image of slime mold on the move. Having heard that, neither can I. The rest of the show, though, was worth driving a couple hours to see if you like dance.

Just be prepared for more, um, explicit bats and balls symbolism than you've likely ever seen before.

**The Boys' Choir of Harlem** is justly renowned, as much for its providing its members with a first class education and excellent college prospects, as for its music. Not much to say about it, though - a very well done performance, pretty much as expected, and a nice way to spend Valentine's Day.

ConCave started a little early for us this year, as we did manage to arrive Thursday evening. I'd started late on food preparation for the party, having poisoned myself mildly through willful, wistful thinking, also known as being really stupid. If the label on the smoked salmon says consume by August 8, assume it means August 8 of the year purchased. I would never do that to any guest (and in fact, refused to put out the salmon for the raccoons, on the grounds it might make them sick), but I tend to rely on my own cast-iron stomach and constitution. Combining that idiocy with a mild dose of the hideous flu that went around this spring was enough to put me out the week before, when I should have been cooking. It was a blow to my pride to have to *buy* an extra cake so as to have enough desserts. And I almost ran out of food! Except for the extra two gallons of chili (no exaggeration), which went to the consuite. Incidentally, dry ice is one of the most wonderful things of modern civilization, in my opinion, but it does cause logistical problems in thawing food quickly enough. I think we could have served more chili if we hadn't had to chisel off blocks of it for microwaving.

The party went pretty well. Note - fans can consume near limitless amounts of bacon-wrapped shrimp. I need to keep this in mind if I ever do those again. Also, Alex Boster (founding OE Jane Dennis' son) is an excellent person to bring along if you don't drink beer or know much about it, but need to buy some. He's knowledgeable and enthusiastic, both about the commercially available brands and the processes of brewing, he's good and entertaining company for driving to Bowling Green and back, and he doesn't make snide comments when a stop at Wal-Mart for "a few things" turns into an overflowing cartload and two more stops looking for plastic forks. Judging by the speed with which his top recommendations disappeared, fans also agree with his good taste.

A fun convention, as always, and the Art Show went very well. We broke \$3500 in sales this year for the first time, extraordinary considering our size and generally low per piece prices, and had every single panel spoken for before opening. ConCave's Art Show has gained a small regional fame for very disproportionate sales, which led to a funny exchange I overheard. Two Art Show staffers from another regional convention (to remain unnamed) were wandering through our self-billed "Densest Art Show in the South", and one remarked, rather disparagingly, that it wasn't a very big show. The other, a little better informed, told her, "Don't criticize - they did five times our sales last year!"

"Really?"

"Yes!"

Long silence, then a heartfelt, drawnout "Shiiiiiiiit!"

Knowing what I did about our respective total sales, I had to restrain myself from piping up with a "Six!", which would have been more correct.

A few changes from last year, mostly for the better. The Park Mammoth is no longer a Best Western, but this seems to have been a positive move. Some of the money that had apparently been spent on keeping the franchise rights was instead used for such things as new carpet, paint, general repairs, and capital improvements. The riding stables were open, carriage and trail rides were available, and the miniature railway's track had been regraded at crossings. No change to the light bulb policy, though - we still had to switchout Thursday from the weird low wattage bulbs provided to something we could see the art by. Pretty minor quibble, though. If they keep menu service throughout the weekend, we might even voluntarily eat at the restaurant!

Also worth mentioning - there was no annual "Park Mammoth Special", where something notable is done to the members. In past years, there have been conspicuous absences of such things as carpet, bedspreads, and, briefly, lights. However, there *was* an event of spectacular excitement, which the convention couldn't be blamed for. One of the Resort's handymen, while filling the tank of the shiny-brand-new John Deere tractor, at night, in a pouring rainstorm, decided to take a look to see how full the tank was. Not having a flashlight, he apparently lit a cigarette lighter. The result didn't harm him, though it did cost him his job, but it totaled the tractor. Con goers were treated to the unusual sight of a merrily burning piece of major machinery. I'm told it cast a very warm and cheerful, if somewhat smoky, light.

Not much else to say about the convention - several of you helped with the Art Show, party, and auction, and to you, many, many thanks! We always depend on the kindness of ~~strangers~~ our wonderful friends and assorted masochistic volunteers, and we'd be completely lost without your willing and very able help. To Guy - hie thee hence next year! At the very least, you ought to try to make it to MidWestCon and/or Rivercon. The latter, especially, since this is the next to last one, and we'll be doing a KAPA 100 party there this year. Make it a 50th birthday present to yourself! It's certainly not Rivercon's fault the idjits running CrescentCityCon/DSC scheduled one week away from Rivercon's long-announced weekend, but it does mean Pat and I will only put in a bare minimum appearance at DSC this year, if that.

Movies - **Analyze This**, **Message in a Bottle**, **Waking Ned Devine** (second time!), and **October Sky**. I liked **Analyze This** - Robert De Niro doing a very broad and occasionally brilliant spoof of his frequently played gangster roles, with his character "feeling very conflicted" about being a Mob boss. Billy Crystal, as the unwilling psychiatrist who tries to help him, is funnier than he's been in ages. Sharp writing, good acting, a worthwhile and amusing film. **Message in a Bottle** - maybe it's just me, but it felt more like emotions in a bottle. I'm not much of one for hard-sell deathless romances,

which was how this was marketed, and neither Robin Penn Wright's (**The Princess Bride, Forrest Gump**) nor Kevin Costner's character ever really had a chance to cut loose. I wanted to whack them both and tell them to quit stalling - life's too short to be afraid, especially of feeling. Paul Newman (playing Costner's father) was the only one who had ever learned this basic, and he tended to steal all the scenes he was in. The story was good - sad, single mother (Wright ) finds message written by bereft Costner to his lost Catherine, wants to meet this person who can feel that strongly about love, finds him, and they both immediately complicate their lives. The romance was well handled. The acting was decent. Newman was terrific. But this movie never got to me on an emotional level.

**Waking Ned Devine**, though - this one was worth seeing a second time! Pat and I celebrated St. Patrick's day a bit late, on March 21st, and decided to pack a bit more Irish culture into our day trip to Nashville (the same one that included the memorable engagement meal with my family, and going to see **Riverdance**). I was also having serious jitters and second thoughts, and a funny movie seemed like a good idea. And this one is awfully funny, and sweet - my sister, Kim, described it as the most cheerful movie about fraud that she's ever seen. I can't possibly describe it without giving too much away, but go to see it if you have a chance.

**October Sky** is based on the true story of one of Pat's former co-workers at NASA, Homer Hickam, who came from the mining town of Coalwood, West Virginia. By any reasonable way of looking at it, he was destined to be a miner, like everyone else in his hometown. His life changed when he saw Sputnik crossing the October sky of the title, and he was suddenly aiming for the stars instead of the seams. This didn't go over well with his family, especially his father, whose entire existence revolved around the mine, and the filmmakers were smart enough to understand that the relationship between the father and the son is the heart of the movie. It doesn't really fit into any genre, and films that can be described as inspirational haven't done well of late at the box office, but it's a good movie, probably the best new one I've seen in the last two months. I recommend it highly.

As mentioned above, and as Pat describes in his 'zine, we made full use of our Sunday in Nashville - saw a movie, formalized the engagement, had dinner, took everyone to see **Riverdance**. The main events aren't of much interest, I suspect, to most of you, though some of the little stuff was funny. Like spotting a large flock of wild turkeys next to I-65 as we headed north from Huntsville, just about the time I was feeling morbidly superstitious and was quoting my favorite flaky line from **Sleepless in Seattle** at every chance. "It's a SIGN!" I'm not sure of what, mind you, except possible mental instability. Turkeys as omens? And my Mom interrupting Pat before he could finish asking for their blessing with "YES! You can have anything you want!" I'm not used to seeing my parents so happy, and it's a little disconcerting to see Dad grinning ear to ear when he's not telling rude jokes.

Oh well. I think I'll just concentrate on enjoying the wonderful spring we're finally having, before it goes over to Southern Summer Sauna weather. And I'll let Pat and my family hash out whatever they're going to do this fall. Think calming thoughts...

On that note, on to...

## MAILING COMMENTS

OO - I hope you're right, and it was just the midwinter blues, or that everyone else was as overrun at the holidays as we were. I'll try to make all the other mailings this year.

NICKI - Sorry that Disclave will be a nonevent again this year. Is there a shortage of suitable hotels, or of suitable hotels that want anything to do with an SF con? Or has Disclave itself gained a bad reputation with hotel managers? Would changing the name help any at this point? \*\*\* The Glogg Buffet at the Finnish Embassy sounds wonderful. Is Glogg sweetened at all? Or just by what it picks up from the raisins? It sounds like one of those things I wouldn't be able to drink enough of to analyze! \*\*\* "Chocolate mouse cake"? Ummm. Bryan told me how to make chocolate mice (which are adorable), but I suspect an "s" has gone astray. That does, however, give me a really neat idea for a cake for a fannish party... \*\*\* I've been turning off the radio when news about Washington comes on. Very little of it is going to matter, in the long run, and it's old, stale news anyway. I'm trying to identify the things I can change or affect, and keep my blood pressure down so as to live long enough to do so. Pat may not make it to the voting booth in 2000 if he doesn't find that off button soon. \*\*\* ct

OO - I liked the cover too, but the credit goes to Pat and his clip art library. \*\*\* I'm hoping Joel will be able to rejoin when his life gets a little more settled. Till then, any suggestions for recruiting? \*\*\* ct Guy - anime takes at least two years to make it over to the U.S., on average. I don't see it as likely to get a Dramatic Presentation Hugo, no matter how deserving, till that changes. \*\*\* I really, really hated **Babe, Pig in the City**. The original film, **Babe**, is one of my all-time favorites, and one I watch over and over. This had all the relationship to the charming original that necrophilia has to true love. Uggg, that's revolting and distasteful, but so was this film. I think reviewers were the only ones who liked it, which really makes me wonder if there's another version out there. I'll never know, though, as I will never sit through that movie again. \*\*\*

Dunno about people remembering Florida in late August - a huge number of Baltimore attendees were first-time WorldCon goers, judging from the conversations I had. But you're absolutely right about Orlando weather that time of year. I don't know if it would have been as big a factor this time, as they weren't bidding the same hotels or the convention center. Ah well - I'll make reservations for **Le Bec-Fin** early, and it's not like I can't find plenty to do and enjoy in Philadelphia. \*\*\* ct Bryan - cell phone users have to pay for airtime when they receive an incoming call, and there are the same sort of laws regulating unsolicited calls to them as there are for junk faxes. It was ruled that consumers can't be required to pay for receiving unsolicited materials, including through equipment usage. That's also why you don't see government offices or most businesses getting sales calls. There are slipups, and you'll get an occasional sales call on a cell phone, but until unlimited airtime is common, the

floodgates won't open. \*\*\* The cost to the public of treating injuries, especially head injuries, to unseatbelted drivers is enormous. From a purely economic basis, seatbelts are an excellent idea. But putting weak and unenforced laws in place to ensure their use doesn't do any good either. People are still free to be idiots, and kill off their kids through stupidity. I don't know if there's a solution, except for really draconian ones like non-payment of insurance claims if everyone wasn't belted in, or letting people die if they can't afford to pay for their own willful idiocy. \*\*\* You hit the nail on the head with your "silly rules" theory. \*\*\* Don't get me started on Iran-Contra. I had, till then, really believed the U.S. didn't fund terrorists or torture. \*\*\* ct me - the more I learn of our tax code, the more I want to immigrate. The pork loopholes are unbelievable. Ask me about racehorses sometime. \*\*\* Enjoyed the TV reviews, though haven't even had time to watch taped stuff recently. Only thing I've seen on television in the last four months was our tape of the Oscars. We replayed the Roberto Begnini segments twice! And still had no idea what he had said, until **Entertainment Weekly** did transcripts. The look on Sophia Loren's face, as her friend babbled on and the camera cut to her midway through his Best Foreign Film acceptance speech, was so eloquent - joy, dismay and bewilderment, roughly equal. "Roberto, *what* is coming out of your *mouth?!?*" \*\*\* Speaking of Sophia Loren, I just give up. She's 60+?! \*\*\* You're the third good source to recommend **Sports Night** to me - I'll have to give it a try. Bummer about it being opposite **Will and Grace**, which I'd been wanting to see.

**BRYAN** - Good luck learning Japanese! That's another thing on my "To Do" list, to the point of my having tapes but no time to listen to them. \*\*\* The Rape of Nanking sounds like another one of those books I'm going to pass on. Enough horror in the current world without the added burden of historic atrocities. I need reading material that educates, restores and entertains me, because it's so hard to keep hope, or my will to actively fight evil in the daily world, alive anyway. I can't take on anything more, let alone anything that leaves my soul feeling stained, for curiosity's sake. \*\*\* ct Guy - I think we're all sick and tired of The Scandal. Nuff said. \*\*\* I'm glad you've got Beth watching **Maison Ikkoku**. The lady who created that and **Ranma 1/2** is very much at her best when doing romantic/sex comedies, and staying away from that weird mermaid series. Boy, that was disturbing, whereas **Ranma** makes me laugh till I have to put the book down. Good stories translate well to any language. \*\*\* ct you - I heard, secondhand, mind you, that it wasn't so much a matter of the guy with the castle "never attending any of the planning meetings" to object as his attending some of the earliest ones, objecting, being ignored, realizing the decision was already made, and trying to make the best of it. There was a real danger of his home being condemned and torn down if he made too much of a fuss; he has a day job, like most of us, and he couldn't take any more time off to fight a lost cause. There was just too much money and political pressure being brought to bear. It's not worth debating unless one of us talks to him directly, and I'm not going to stop feeling sorry for him based on a logical progression of "he didn't fight back till he had his teeth kicked in, so he doesn't deserve my sympathy." I hope, despite what you said, that you haven't either. \*\*\* ct Pat - your "it's a truck, but it's a minivan" theory make perfect sense. Dang, I wish I'd come up with it! \*\*\* That statue is far too ugly to be offensive, except to anyone with taste or descendants and admirers of Nathan Bedford Forrest. I'm surprised it hasn't

been torn down by the Pulaski Klan crowd as an insult to their hero. It's so bad, it causes jeers instead of outrage, which probably wasn't what the sponsor had in mind. I refer to it as "the ugliest statue in the South", and none of my friends have found anything to top it. The best thing about it is, he had to pay to have it made, put in place, and, now, maintained! \*\*\* Liked the illo.

**GUY** - Glad you made it through the snow safely. \*\*\* ct Nicki - "Old lady"? "Ill-designed cup"? "Skin boiled off through another's negligence"? Geesh, Guy, the courtroom histrionics don't play well in print, and they're gross exaggerations at best. The coffee was hot. She squeezed a styrofoam cup between her thighs while driving. She got burned. She got lots of money. And now every bozo wants to get rich by suing, and there are a million lawyers in this country ready to help them. \*\*\* That crack about Vietnam vets was nasty. What do you know about being a vet? Not much, obviously, or you wouldn't be trying to make them out to be some sort of macho, brainless killing machines that don't feel pain. I assume you were trying to be funny instead of deeply insulting to a lot of good people. But that's the same sort of rhetoric that had people calling them "baby killers" when they came back, and I expect better of you. \*\*\* ct Bryan - "A Methodist minister/hypnotist"? Is this a secondary profession for the same person? Lyrical description of looking down on the Chesapeake. \*\*\* ct Pat - what?! That happy song about a dessert specialty that Chef was singing was in poor taste? Oh dear... \*\*\* They didn't have koalas at the N.O. Zoo when we were there last, but that was years ago. We'll be sure to check it out when we come back. \*\*\* Yes, we're doing something special for KAPA 100, and if you make it to Rivercon, you can be part of it! We'll even let you come to the party, and you can pretend it's ALL for your 50th birthday! I'll even back up this story if you find a lovely, sympathetic lady who wants to console you in your incipient dotage... You might get even more sympathy if you claim to be turning 60, especially if no one disbelieves you!

**PAT** - Glad you enjoyed the arrangements I'd made for our 10th anniversary! I was sure you'd guessed what I was up to - you really were surprised? \*\*\* Thanksgiving dinner at the Opryland was lovely. It's the first year my Mom hasn't knocked herself out, cooking for days, that I or any of my sibs can remember. Thank you. \*\*\* You're right - it was nice being able to host Rocky and Sue! Mostly due to their graciousness about stuff we hadn't had time for, and Rocky reminding me that they were coming to visit with us, not watch me go crazy trying to get things done. That put things in perspective, and made it possible for me to enjoy having them here instead of fretting. And there are lots of things about Huntsville that I really like showing people - the Botanical Garden, Big Spring Pond and the koi carp, the Space and Rocket center, Monte Sano State Park - it's a neat city. \*\*\* That is, when it's not encased in ice. That storm couldn't have come on a worse day for travel. We actually got off pretty easily - most places in town had a lot more damage to their trees than we did. Other than that one big limb, I don't think we had any real problems. \*\*\* Are you starting to get used to the Fisher Calendar, i.e., celebrating holidays when it's convenient for us, regardless as to what the date actually is? It certainly worked out well this year. \*\*\* Annette's New Year's party was considerably lessened by the Robes' absence. Can't blame them for heading back to Kingsport early, though, with bad weather coming in. Getting

stranded by a storm with young children is the stuff parents' nightmares are made of. \*\*\* Pretty much agree with your movie reviews this time. Appreciate your being willing to drive to Nashville to see things that aren't likely to make it to Huntsville. \*\*\* ct Guy - I think Philadelphia's WorldCon victory was entirely due to its proximity to Baltimore. This year really pointed up the main weakness in the Zones system - two or more excellent bids may be concentrated in one zone, leaving an utterly unworthy candidate as the default choice for another year. Does anyone but me remember all the wretched things about ConFiasco? I don't want to go back to those Golden Gates, but it doesn't look like we'll have any options. Maybe it really is time to scrap the zones. \*\*\* ct Nicki - I'm in favor of keeping KAPA bimonthly. Four out of six mailings a year isn't an unreasonable minac. And it's not like we have a minimum page count - my megazines are just compulsive, and other people ought to do what they feel comfortable producing. \*\*\* You were a lot more restrained and reasonable in your response to Nicki's attack on so-called "abortion clinics" than I could have been. Having been harassed, physically attacked, threatened, condemned, cursed in the name of God and judged by the fanatical nutcases pushing that garbage, for the simple act of walking into a family planning clinic for my annual checkup, I'm not inclined to be nice about it. I'm already having to drive 12 hours round trip to be able to get an affordable exam in a place that I feel safe, thanks to people blindly accepting this crap. I suspect a good part of why more lower-income families don't use contraception regularly is because the indiscriminate terrorism practiced on ALL family planning clinics has made it unaffordable, and unsafe. The reality of what's happened here in Alabama, thanks to these women-hating, judgmental terrorists who've sold that line of thinking, is that it now costs over 2.5% of a person's monthly income, working full time at a minimum wage job, just to pay for a birth control prescription here. That's over half a day's wages, or several days food, each month, to probably NOT have babies. And to get that prescription at that reduced price (not much of a reduction, because insurance costs have gone through the roof, thanks to the bombings, gassings and shootings at clinics), you may well have to go to someplace like your local Planned Parenthood, where cold-eyed fanatics are waiting to take down your license number and description, or cross violent picket lines to get to the Women's Health Center (which does abortions one weekend a month, as well as providing the only free gynecological care in town, for those who can't afford annual exams, cancer screenings, Pap smears and all the rest). Thanks to good, decent, moderate people like Nicki accepting this line without checking the hard, cold reality of what it's been used to accomplish, this has been allowed to happen. And women, myself included, pay the price for this blind naiveté in being assaulted, intimidated and terrorized. I speak ONLY from my personal experience. I am not relying on something someone else, with or without an agenda, told me about something they heard about. But when you've had someone try to bash your head in with a picket sign, for the crime of showing up for your annual checkup, you don't think much of their "respect for human life".

Didn't intend to snarl, but there's a lot of evil being done by people who won't be happy until women have NO choices reproductively, and they're not selective in their targets or their slanders. I haven't yet had anyone I know die of an illegal abortion, or

be murdered by the anti-choice terrorists, but I can see the very real possibility in the near future. Incidentally, next time someone starts prattling on about how there are plenty of homes for all these kids, ask them how many mixed-race, or Black, or handicapped kids THEY'VE adopted. The ones whose lives and pocketbooks are in the same place as their morality are few and far between.

Nicki, please understand that I'm not angry at you, and I desperately hope you won't see this as an attack on either you personally or your beliefs. I think you give this APA badly needed balance, and you set a real example to the rest of us in living by what you believe. But I am furious at the people who have deliberately demonized the role of family planning clinics as abortion factories to gain public support and tolerance for their hate-filled actions against women. They have borne false witness in the original and biblical sense of the sin.

I'm not pro-abortion - I think it's a terribly sad choice to have to make, and that each woman has to be allowed to make it, either way, for herself. I say "each woman" because the biological and societal reality is that we are the ones who end up shouldering the responsibility for raising a child, like it or not, in almost every case. I'm very pro-child, in that I believe that being a parent requires an absolute and total commitment to raising that child, and that no one who isn't mature enough and willing to sacrifice EVERYTHING for that child's welfare has any business raising one. I would strongly support mandatory fertility control for every male and female of reproductive age, with licensing and extensive competency testing required to be allowed to have children, if there were any way to make it work.

I'm not stupid, though. I know that would infuriate people across the board, and that I'm as likely to be sainted as live to see that happen. In our current society, it would probably cost me my life if I started publicly advocating this, and anyone listened. It doesn't change the core of my belief that children should be an earned privilege and a blessing - not a right of any sort or the accidental byproduct of a few minutes of sweaty effort. If a person doesn't live up to that sacred trust, they should have their children taken from them, with no talk of "a parent's rights" - parents are the ones who love and care for their children, not those who abuse or neglect them. And if I'm not to be allowed to control my own fertility, including making the agonizing choice of what to do if contraception fails, then why should I be trusted with the raising of a child?

Cool down, get a drink of water, give myself 24 hours to think this over... Even with time to reconsider, and the fear of offending some/most of you (and I value the good opinion of every one of you, highly), I think this needed to be said. I really try not to rant, but someone has to bear witness. I speak for myself, what I've seen, done, had others do to me, and come to believe as a result of those experiences. Nothing more.

Well, that sure wasn't the note I expected to end this on, but it works out that way sometimes. Hope the spring is going well for you - I'll see some of you at MidWestCon, and the rest of you in KAPA 99. Take care!

  
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