

ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΕΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

The recent grid failure in Texas made me wonder how I would fare in similar circumstances. It occurred to me that if the grid can go down in Texas it can go down in Kentucky. And so I began collecting nonperishable foods and jugs of distilled water. I never expected that I would find myself behaving like this. I hope and pray I never have need of my new collection. I do not like thinking about grid failure. I experienced it once after Ike came through here in 2008. It was not pleasant.

— Lisa

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Comments are by **JTM** or **LTM**

The 67th Running of the Yonkers Trot (1st leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) was **July 2, 2021** at Yonkers Raceway in Yonkers, New York. Johan Palema won handily.

The 96th Running of the Hambletonian (2nd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) was **August 7, 2021** at Meadowlands Racetrack in East Rutherford, New Jersey. Captain Corey won.

The 128th Running of the Kentucky Futurity (3rd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) will be held at a date to be announced later, at the Red Mile in Lexington, Kentucky.

The 67th Running of the Messenger Stakes (1st leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) was **July 2, 2021** at Yonkers Raceway in Yonkers, New York. American Courage won in the rain.

The 66th Running of the Cane Pace (2nd leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) was **August 7, 2021** at Meadowlands Racetrack in East Rutherford, New Jersey. Rockyroad Hanover won.

The 76th Running of the Little Brown Jug (3rd leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) will be **September 23, 2021** at the Delaware

County Fair in Delaware, Ohio.

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Deadline is **October 1, 2021**

Reviewer's Notes

"How did people live before air conditioning?" A lot of them didn't.

I have been thinking about this lately. We are having temperatures in the nineties and high humidity. Lisa calls it "God's Sauna". The house heats up during the day and cools off slowly. I wish it would do that in winter.

Remember, though, that in the seventies it was established that this was a temporary warming in the Little Ice Age and the glaciers would come back unless extraordinary measures were undertaken. The science was settled.

Just as masks were ineffective against COVID, then they were effective if two were worn, then one . . . the science was settled.

Science is a discovery. Analysis and observation leads to change. Saying "the science is settled" is the antithesis of this factor. In the thirties, sterilizing mental defectives, moral defectives, inferior people, and the like was scientific, following the universally accepted principles of eugenics (see *War Against the Weak* (2012) by Edwin Black). The science was settled.

I wear masks when required. I got my COVID immunizations as quickly as they became available, and will get a booster when it is available. The virus has resurged and is striking harder; more energetic and thorough measures may be required. Members of my family are suffering with it (at least one has died). Elizabeth Garrott had it; Grant suspects Tim Lane may have died of it.

New scientific findings may indicate the need for different measures. Even if the science is settled.

Otherwise my life grinds on. Or down; when I went to get my B12 shot they did bloodwork, and discovered that my hemoglobin level was about three-quarters of the minimum (if you like figures the standard level is 13.5 to 17.5 g/dL and mine was 10.3). This may mean transfusions or if it gets even more so bone marrow transplants. I have a brother.

In these isolated days, now more than ever the legacy of the fanziners of old, who patiently typed up their stencils, ran off the issue, and dispatched the ish into the void, waiting for responses to break the loneliness of that proud and lonely thing of being a fan, is more poignant than ever.

— Joe

RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



Buy my books. (All available on Amazon.com for quite reasonable prices, except the Hugo-nominated *Heinlein's Children*, which can be bought directly from George Price for a reasonable sum, or from ReAnimus Press in electronic format.)

https://www.amazon.com/-/e/B01BMIC4MU?ref=pe_1724030_132998070

<https://reanimus.com/store>

— Advt.

The Falklands Maritime Heritage Trust has announced that in 2022, the *SY Agulhas II* will return to the Weddell Sea in a second attempt to find the sunken wreck of the *Endurance*. The previous expedition failed because of time limitations and inadequate equipment (their probes were made for Arctic ice). Lessened ice conditions will facilitate this search. There will be more details as they are announced.

Hugh Lupus has brought out *An Extra Knot Part VII* (2021; APS Press; \$3.99). The war grinds on with developments in Italy and the Asturian Republic, not to mention the formation of the British Pacific Fleet. With a guest appearance from the destroyer U.S.S. *Caine*. Yes, that ship.

Alas, that great site:

<http://www.welovetheiraqiinformationminister.com/>

is no longer with us, save on the Wayback Machine. However, the perceptive words of Muhammad Saeed al-Sahhaf yet resonate:

“The American press is all about lies! All they tell is lies, lies and more lies!”

There is a Japanese bulk carrier ship, built in 2019, 34552 GRT, owned by Dilemin Shipment Ltd., flagged out of the Marshall Islands. Her name is *Kobayashi Maru*. **This is not a joke.**

Thanks to John G. Hemry and F. Paul Wilson for their literary gifts.

OBITS

We regret to report the death of faned and scholar **Ed Meškys**. Born **March 11, 1936**, Ed entered fandom in 1955, soon becoming an apahack (in N'APA) and then a faned. He was President of the Tolkien Society from 1967 to 1972. He participated in two Boston Worldcon bids and the abortive Silvercon (NYC in 1964) bid, helping to found *Locus* as part of one of the bids.

He was best known for editing the fanzine *Niekas* (Lithuanian for “nothing”), which was noted for its slick format, its artistic layout, and its diverse articles and locs (indeed, it had two letter columns, both with descriptive Lithuanian names). Many noted pros contributed to it. It flourished in the sixties, with a Tolkien bent, then became dormant until the late seventies, being published frequently after that until a disastrous conflict among the staff (the person responsible for getting the issue printed kept the page proofs and failed or refused to have them printed, it was said).

Meškys went blind in his thirties from complications of diabetes, but continued active for many years thereafter, as faned and apahack. He was friendly, welcoming, and kind. We are the lesser for his passing.

THE EVENTS OF THE UNHAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Reminiscences by Joseph T Major

There's a curious withdrawal — apparently P. J. Beese and Todd Cameron Hamilton's novel *The Guardian* [sic], which I have never read nor previously heard of, had enough votes for a nomination, but the administrators concluded that the votes were bloc votes and disqualified them. *Locus* says, “A group of enthusiastic New York area fans was later discovered to be responsible for the votes, exonerating Beese and Hamilton.” Whatever was going on, it's not in print and not in the library, and I'd say it has sunk pretty much without a trace.

— Jo Walton, *An Informal History of the Hugos* (2018)

Noreascon Three, the Worldcon of 1989, was going to be the Fiftieth Anniversary Worldcon (for all that it was the 47th Worldcon; there had been some cancellations on account of All Mundania Being At War). The Fan Guests of Honor were the surviving members of the Stranger Club, the first Boston science fiction club. Isaac Asimov would conduct the 50th Anniversary Brunch (hopefully, socially distanced from any female attendees who did not

take to being pinched). The bidzine, *The Mad 3 Party*, had been so striking that it went on to win the Best Fanzine Hugo in 1990.

That year, the Best Novel Hugo went to C. J. Cherryh's *Cyteen*. The Best Professional Artist was Michael Whelan. And what then was still the Campbell Award was given to Michaela Rossner. These categories had had . . . issues.

When the Hugo Nominees ballot was sent out, there was a bit of an explanation. There were six nominees, instead of five, in those particular categories. And there was a note of explanation. It seemed that there had been some unusual patterns in the nominations. Specifically, that a number of ballots, many from new members paid for with consecutively-numbered money orders, had made some very specific nominations.

These particular ballots were about half of the set of ballots that had made those nominations. There had been a number of items nominated; of these, only three got on the final ballot. They were the novel *The Guardsman*, by Todd Cameron Hamilton and P. J. Beese, Hamilton for Best Professional Artist, and Hamilton & Beese for the Campbell Award.

Now Hamilton was a rising new artist. He had done the art for *The Illustrated Guide to Castle Amber* (1988) by Neil Randall and Roger Zelazny, a tie-in book to Zelazny's *Amber* series. The art was quite striking and the book was certainly interesting, with bits of wit to attract the reader. But the novel was more obscure. It had been issued by a short-lived book line from a publisher, and had been pulled at the end of its sales cycle. It would be difficult if not impossible to get a copy in order to read it before voting. (This was before the era of the Hugo Voter's Packet.)

This was before Twitter, but the same cycle of behavior existed. Discussions ensued, many seeming to see a plot to buy the award. A few days after the ballot was released, Hamilton, having consulted with Beese and her husband, asked to have the nominations withdrawn.

Not that this apparently did much good. The controversy continued, and naturally became bitterer. The Noreascon committee consulted with Hamilton, and issued a second notice exonerating them from this scheme. Hamilton may not have been overly pleased with the result.

Towards the end of May, Hamilton and Beese, apparently feeling they had not been properly exonerated, wrote to the convention committee again. They decried the questioning of the validity of ballots, and demanded that they not only should be fully exonerated, but new ballots should be issued with the withdrawal invalidated.

Some thought it exceedingly convenient that the Noreascon committee had *also* received a letter purporting to be on the behalf of the voters who had voted with the money orders, explaining their situation. The letter was itself unusual.

Supposedly, the letter said, there was this

group of Midwestern fans who had met at college, found themselves liking the same things, and disliking fan politics. They stuck together after college, and expressed their greater fanish interest by going en masse to one convention a year.

They were Zelazny fans, and perforce found and liked *The Illustrated Guide to Castle Amber*. They liked the art in particular. When one of them discovered that Todd Cameron Hamilton, the artist, was also an author, they bought copies of *The Guardsman*. The description of the book given reads like an effusive cover blurb.

That year's convention would be Lunacon, in New York, where Zelazny was Guest of Honor and the original art for *The Illustrated Guide to Castle Amber* would be displayed. When they got there, however, it seemed that the convention was not up to its promise, though they did go to the art show and see the art, which looked even better in the original. Since Zelazny would not be there much, they left without joining.

But, they decided, they could still give Hamilton his due, and proceeded to buy supporting memberships and nominate his works for the Hugo. Concerned that checks might not clear, they bought money orders.

Now, it seemed, the convention committee was questioning their veracity. This did not seem right, this was the sort of bickering that they had wanted nothing whatsoever to do with. And this was their final word on the matter. The issue was so urgent that the people involved had had to sign on a separate sheet but they all agreed with the statements in the letter.

Hamilton supported the letter and wrote a response to the Noreascon people. They couldn't fulfill his requirements except at an extraordinary expense and effort.

Since then, Hamilton has had a number of artistic productions. He is very talented, but he may be bitter about something.

(I managed to find a copy of *The Guardsman* in a used-book store. The title character is an alien who has adopted the mores and ways of the Heian-era samurai. He is guard to a princess of the imperial house. When a coup results in every other member of the family being killed, he sets out infiltrating the new government to destroy those responsible. The princess restored to the throne, he finds he has violated his honor, and much to her dismay, commits seppuku. Not bad for an initial effort, but not to my mind Hugo-worthy.)

The strangest part of this affair is the peculiar letter purporting to be from the group of midwestern fans. The behavior described there is very strange. To begin with, it seems very odd that no one would have joined the convention in advance. Doing that would provide the prospective member with information (such as knowing what the Guest of Honor was scheduled to do), and save that member money.

The behavior described at the convention is also anomalous. No convention would permit a large number of non-members into its art show. One person [Taras Wolansky] who actually went to that convention said that the room was not that large (and did not hear of such an event at the time).

Finally, if the Noreascon committee was honest about the dating of the ballots, it does not fit with the described events. Instead of being bought on one or two adjacent days, the money orders, it was claimed, had been bought over a period of a month.

The events described in the letter have other anomalies. The post office where the money orders was bought was not near the convention hotel. They might well have stayed at a cheaper hotel, this is often done, but the post office was some distance away and it seems improbable that there wasn't a cheaper hotel closer to the con.

Finally, it would seem that someone who went to the trouble to decide a particular convention to go to and make it the personal fanish event of the year would remember the name of the convention properly. The letter refers to Lunacon as "Luna-Con".

This was not the first time there had been bloc votes, nor would it be the last. In 1983 Charles Platt, in an effort to discredit the Hugo, and the associates of the author, in an effort to reward their leader, had urged the nomination of *Battlefield Earth*. This failed, but in 1987 his *Black Genesis* actually did get on the ballot, finishing behind "No Award". The events of 2015 with the Puppy vote followed.

Now in his deliberately controversial fanzine *The Patchin Review* Platt had published an article ("Sam Slams Fan Sham" by "Gabby Snitch", in Issue 3 (January 1982)) purporting to be a report from Swedish fan Sam Lundwall claiming that publishers bought blocks of memberships in order to win their books the Hugo. This was disavowed by both Lundwall and the other person supposedly involved, Forrest J Ackerman.

Hamilton and Beese would seem to have lacked the means to carry this off. Who did? The editors of the book line have been considered as suspects. Their agent has been named. Other sources claim "a group of New York fans" or even a single one. None of them quite seem to fit.

At least Theodore "Vox Day" Beale made his involvement known, and he has brought himself into contempt by his actions.

AT LAST, DANGEROUS VISIONS

by Joe

The publication of *The Last Dangerous Visions*, the third installment in Harlan Ellison's trend-shaking original SF anthologies, has become something of a running gag, ever since Ellison announced it in 1972 . . . and again and again.

The Patchin Review #3 had an article titled

"L.D.V./R.I.P." which listed the deaths of authors who had submitted stories. This led to Christopher Priest's *The Last Deadloss Visions* (1987), redone as *The Book on the Edge of Forever* (1994), which extended the list and described, with some wrath and perhaps exaggeration, the travails of the work in its never-ending progress to publication.

And now, J. Michael Straczynski has announced that he is submitting a *The Last Dangerous Visions* to publishers. This has some interesting ramifications.

Priest gave the length of the book, based on the known submissions. This was over half a million words. He assumed that the fiction would be augmented in the same fashion as the earlier works had been, by introductions by Ellison and afterwords by the authors. This, he argued, would produce a book which would be too expensive for any reasonable sales.

In addition, there were stories that were withdrawn. There were more and more authors not living to see the publication. There were comments that some of the authors might not want their submissions published, they having gone beyond what they had written then. And Ellison seemed to have continued soliciting new stories.

Priest's work was disputed, mostly by Ellison. What seems to have happened was that it was easier to promise publication than it was to actually bring the work to publishable form. Thus it became a fata morgana, more in promise than in realization.

Straczynski gives the length of the book as 122,000 words. There are some considerations. The rights to the original submissions had lapsed. Straczynski had solicited new stories. Ellison had obtained illustrations for some of the stories and the use or non-use of these seem problematic.

It seems unlikely that many of the stories originally submitted will be in this publication, given the reasons for non-publication. In short, it would seem that this isn't the *Last Dangerous Visions* you were looking for.

ENVOY EXTRAORDINARY

Review by Joseph T Major of

BOUNDLESS:

The Lost Fleet: Outlands Book 1

(2021; Ace; ISBN 978-0563198964;

\$28.00; Ace (Kindle); \$14.99)

By Jack Campbell [John G. Hemry]

Admiral Geary should have started wondering when there were two assassination attempts before he could even speak to the delegation from the Senate. But to be fair, they have their qualms too. In their experience, such a successful commander would use his fleet and his reputation to assume supreme power. They can't seem to imagine that Geary doesn't want to. But he can't dismount from the tiger's back, either.

In this latest work in Hemry's story of human expansion and conflict amid the stars, we see no end of fighting and scheming — and

that's just *among* the people of the Alliance, never mind the Syndicate, the anti-Syndicate rebels of the *Lost Stars* series, and the problems of First Contact with cute little Care Bears and horrific monsters.

And this goes on to link back to the *Genesis Fleet* works as well. This is a universe with a depth and expanse that rivals earlier works, and would no doubt have been deeply desired by the Astounding Unperson, except that he would have to let other authors get in a serial occasionally.

Geary has to deal with obsessives in his own ranks. In a clever move, while he is concerned about one obsession, another attempts a deadly blow.

Not to mention mundane problems, such as incompetent commanders, uncomprehending experts, and unauthorized vacuum stills. The voice of experience speaks.

As if all this intrigue wasn't enough, Geary is human, and has a loving spouse (who in her other role is captain of his flagship). The chapters where Geary visits his old family home on Glenlyon, a century after he left, and deals with old memories and new realities, are particularly noteworthy. This is a complete character, with qualms, internal concerns, and a lack of victories won with the almost total destruction of their own fleet.

Not that the Geary family is otherwise extinct. They have a reputation to live up to, and sometimes they show up when least expected.

The mere voyage to establish relations with the alien Dancers, to solve the curious plans of the mysterious Enigmas, and to boldly go where no one has — well, whatever, has just begun, and the potential for more problems and perils is all too real and will be seen when this is . . . **[To Be Continued]**

¡VIVA LA MUERTE!

Review by Joseph T Major of

AXIS OF ANDES:

World War Two in South America
(2021; Fossil Cove Publishing; \$2.99) and

NEW WORLD WAR:

Part Two of AXIS OF ANDES
(2021; Fossil Cove Publishing; \$2.99)

By D. G. Valdron

In July of 1941, while the great powers of Europe were in a long and grim struggle, and Japan was preparing to control Asia, Ecuador and Peru fought a brief war over control of the Amazonian basin. Nobody got anywhere and they quickly made peace.

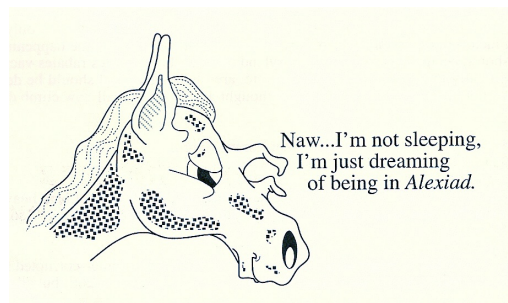
The nineteenth century in South America was an era of border struggles as countries sought to establish their identities. These efforts continued into the twentieth century, with such affairs as the Gran Chaco War between Bolivia and Paraguay (as if Paraguay hadn't had enough in the *last* war).

It could have been worse. The political structures of the countries were legacies of the colonial era, with a tiny Spanish-descended

elite ruling over a vast native population. The countries were endowed with democratic constitutions, ignored by the gorgeously-uniformed generals who took power. Some of them might have been even more aggressive.

Valdron tells of a general war which has Peru at war with Ecuador and Chile at the same time, and then other nations join in. There are striking bizarre commanders, a romantic soldier of fortune in the upper Amazon, a rambling colonel in the mold of Orde Wingate, and some strange sidebars (such as the *Admiral Graf Spee* escaping Commodore Harwood, making it around the Horn, and becoming a ship in the Chilean Navy).

With the discrediting of the post-colonial elite, the native population reasserts its identity, leading to a surprising historical revival. There are few enough alternate histories dealing with South America, and Valdron has provided one based well in the culture of the land and told with striking and realistic descriptions of a grim struggle.



THE KREPLATCH SPY

Review by Joseph T Major of

SLEEPER AGENT:

The Atomic Spy In America Who Got Away

(2021; Simon & Schuster:

ISBN 978-1501173943; \$28.00

2021; Simon & Schuster (Kindle); \$14.99)

By Ann Hagedorn

In his memoirs, *The Champagne Spy* (1972), Wolfgang Lotz, also sometimes Ze'ev Gur-Arieh, proclaimed that he was the only illegal agent who had traveled using his own passport. In fact, there were two more. In the thirties, William August Fisher, born in Newcastle, returned to Blighty to talk to Pyotr Kapitsa, using his British passport. (When he entered the U.S. a few years later, he posed as Andrew Kayotis, set up in New York as Emil Goldfus, and when caught by the FBI claimed he was Rudolf Abel [the name of a fellow chekist in Spain].)

The other was George Koval, born in Sioux City, Iowa on December 25, 1913, son of immigrants who had been settled away from New York to avoid having too many Jews in one city and none anywhere else. His father Abram Koval was a carpenter and he and Ethel, George's mother, instilled in their three children

a love of learning.

Unfortunately, they also instilled in them a love of Communism. George was an active member of the Young Communist League, for example.

In 1931 the Kovals returned to the Socialist Motherland to help build the future that worked. Fortunately for George's future careers, they went on a family passport that only mentioned his father's name.

In 1939, amid the purges, George was recruited by the Razvedupr, the Fourth (Intelligence) Directorate of the General Staff of the Red Army of Workers and Peasants (later known as the GRU), and dispatched to the Main Enemy to conduct espionage. Since he had never left, officially, he had no trouble finishing his American education (at Columbia, no less) and subsequently was drafted into the United States Army.

By a horrific and unnatural aberration of the Army's bureaucracy, Koval was assigned to a project that employed his scientific knowledge, instead of being sent to dig ditches in Panama or something. He was assigned to *the* project, the Manhattan Engineering District (ENORMOZ, in his other employer's term). His particular task was to work on the initiator of the implosion bomb. This meant he had to toil in the miserable setting of Dayton, Ohio, instead of the sunny climes of Los Alamos or the friendly hills of Oak Ridge.

And from there, the GRU secret agent DELMAR went to work, informing the Aquarium of his efforts, sparing the Soviet atom-bomb project a small but significant amount of research effort.

Hard-working, efficient, Koval did his part, learned of the strikes against Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and waited for his demobilization number to come up. When he was released, he went to New York and looked for civilian work, as well as a girlfriend. (And yet he had left a wife in the Soviet Union.)

Then in 1948, while Whittaker Chambers was identifying *another* GRU agent, Koval did the logical thing; he bugged out. Now Koval did not have links to any other agents at ENORMOZ; nothing to Fuchs, Greenglass, Hall, or the like. But things were closing in. His control officer had worked with Jacob Golos. Golos was dead but his assistant and mistress Elizabeth Bentley wouldn't shut up. And there was that Gouzenko matter.

Koval went to the Soviet Union and found that the Socialist Motherland was not the most friendly of places to rootless cosmopolitans. He was discharged from the Soviet Army — as a private, never promoted, never recognized.

Back in the U.S., the FBI began a search for this man Koval. Not only couldn't they get him, they couldn't find any connections to him. Eventually the case was put in inactive files.

Then, a man remembered something he had heard. The man was Alexander Solzhenitsyn, and what he had heard, while in a prison camp laboratory, was a recorded telephone conversation about one "George Koval". He put a

mention of it in *В крѣзе невѣдомѣ* (*The First Circle*; 1968).

The wheels of bureaucracy grind slow. A friend sent Koval a copy of a work about a fellow worker at ENORMOZ; *Bombshell* (1997). And then Koval managed to show proper chutzpah; he went to the U.S. embassy to apply for Social Security. His ex-Soviet pension was worth approximately nothing, understand. (He didn't get it.)

George Koval died in 2006. In 2007, he was made a Hero of the Russian Federation by President Putin.

Here is someone who on the MICE scale of spying definitely comes in the "I" category for ideology. He fit Guy Burgess's characterization of a Communist as someone who can perfectly live a great lie.

THE LAND OF WHITE DEATH

Review by Joseph T Major of

ICEBOUND:

Shipwrecked at the Edge of the World

(2021; Scribner:

ISBN 978-1982113346; \$29.00

2021; Scribner (Kindle); \$14.99)

By Andrea Pitzer

The Muscovy Company was pursuing its mercantile deals with the successors of Ivan Grozny. Philip of Spain and the Indies was marching men across Europe to suppress the Dutch Revolt, while writing thousands of memoranda, which after his death were carefully gathered together, tied up in bundles with ribbon, and thrown away. Archduke Ernst of Austria was toiling wearily to suppress the rebellious Netherlanders. The Wanli Emperor was sending troops and ships against the Nipponese bandits in Joseon, and on the other side Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the Kampaku to Go-Yōzei the Tennō, was fighting to enhance the glory of the land in Choson.

Meanwhile, William Barents (technically Willem Barentsz for "*Barentssoon*", "Barent's son") was trying to explore the Northeast Passage, in order to get to the riches of Cathay. This is his story.

Barents was out for trade. That was normal. It looked like sailing past Norway and eastwards was an easier way to get to the mysterious East, without any interfering Spaniards to get in your way. He was sent with the backing of Dutch commercial interests to reach Cathay, beginning in 1594.

That time, he stopped off at Kildin Island, off of Russia, then struck north and east, reaching Nova Zembla. He sailed around it, noting the resources, mostly animal, then as the ice accumulated, went back to Amsterdam.

Next year, he went with a larger fleet. They sailed to the southern end of Nova Zembla and tried to enter the Kara Sea, but it was iced over. Having more sense than Georgy Brusilov of the *St. Anna* (see Valerian Albanov's *In the Land of White Death* (1917, 2001)) Barents turned back.

The States-General, having a war to fi-

nance, quit subsidizing Arctic journeys, but offered a reward to anyone who traversed the Northeast Passage. Barents was sent out again in 1596, with only two ships this time.

They discovered Bear Island and Spitsbergen (see *Four Against the Arctic: Shipwrecked for Six Years on the Top of the World* by David Roberts (2003) for what can happen there) before striking out alone for Nova Zembla. There, he rounded the northern point, only to have his ship frozen in.

They wintered in, building a hut on the land, but the spring of 1597 was still too cold. Barents and his men set out in open boats for Russia. Luckier than DeLong but less so than Shackleton, the boats stayed together, but Barents died at sea on June 20, 1597. The survivors reached Russia and managed to get back to the Netherlands.

It seems somewhat surprising that the Dutch could put together such an effort while being invaded. The Eighty Years War had its own rules (see *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road* by Geoffrey Parker (1972, 2004) for more on how that worked).

Barents and his men suffered the fate of those who push the boundaries of the envelope. He was one of the few who died, but many suffered, and the Dutch found that the Kara Sea was closed to transit.

INCONJUNCTION XL

Con Report by Leigh Kimmel

InConJunction is our original hometown convention here in Indianapolis. Founded in 1981, it had been held continuously for thirty-nine years until last year's convention had to be canceled as a result of the COVID19 restrictions. As a result, InConJunction XL was held in 2021 rather than 2020. However, it was still held over the traditional Independence Day weekend, July 2-4, 2021, at the Indianapolis Marriott East.

Dealer load-in is on Thursday afternoon, so we headed to the hotel right after lunch in order to get the van parked in one of the parking spots right at the top of the loading dock ramp. Then we went into the hotel and enjoyed the air conditioning while we waited for load-in to actually begin. I did a little writing on a novel project that I'm hoping to push to completion during the slow season.

This year I was in much better shape physically than I had been in 2019, thanks to having treatment for my hypothyroidism, as well as having spent a good bit of the spring digging up several new garden beds and regularly tending my garden. We also had two additional people helping us with the lifting and carrying, which really sped up the process of carrying everything in. As a result, we had everything into the exhibition hall and the hotel cart returned to the dealer control table in less than two hours. I think that's a record for any convention where we aren't allowed to drive right up to our booth and load directly into it.

Then we had to build our structures and get

everything loaded into them. At least we were further ahead by the time the expo hall closed for the night and we were chased out (and they actually gave us an extra hour), but there was still a lot of stuff that needed doing. As a result, when we did get home, I spent a good bit of the evening preparing for the next morning, in hopes of being able to get back as soon as the doors opened to continue setup.

Needless to say, the next morning came far too early, as far as I was concerned. We took breakfast bars with us so that we could get there that much faster.

My first order of business was to take another load of empty boxes out to the van, since we had a very limited backspace. Then I built an additional structure for t-shirts, since I'd pulled several boxes of them out of the very back of our warehouse space to help fill out our setup. Then we had a few smaller things to set out to fill out some of the barren places in our displays. However, I didn't take out most of the figurines, since they are so time-consuming to pack at the end of a show and really don't sell all that well. I did set out a few of the larger ones, and if they got some interest I could always get more out later.

We actually were ready early, and as a result I was able to walk around and take a look at some of the other vendors' setups before the doors opened. Because of COVID-19, everything was more spread-out than usual, and Fiberglass Freaks hadn't brought their Batmobile, so it had a very different feel. However, we can hope that by next year things will be getting back to normal again.

When the doors opened, there were only a few people waiting to come in. Of course this is a much smaller convention than the giant anime and comic cons that are our bread and butter, so we had to adjust our expectations accordingly. Even so, the trickle of people was not exactly reassuring.

In the middle of the afternoon the con suite finally opened. Because of the COVID-19 restrictions, they had to put the food in a separate room from the area where people would hang out and eat. Everything was pre-bagged so people weren't handling food from common dishes, and there wasn't quite the variety they used to provide, but at least there was something.

By the time we closed, we had managed to accumulate a few sales. We covered our tables for the night, then went over to the Royal Manticorean Navy (Honorverse fan club) table in the atrium and spent a very quiet hour sitting there just in case someone would come by. Afterward we covered the table and headed home for the evening. I spent some time getting ready, particularly preparing our lunches, and then searched through my files for some notes I knew I'd written two decades earlier. However, I was disappointed to discover that I hadn't actually written down some details I thought I'd established at that time. I jotted down a few notes here and there, but there's still a lot of that 'verse I can't see clearly yet.

On Saturday we headed back to the hotel and got our tables opened for business. We had some sales, but they seemed to come in spurts. As a result, I had a fair amount of time to write on my novel project while waiting for the next customer. Even so, we had enough sales that we were able to get on the second page of the ledger. Considering that we had some conventions in 2019 that had more people but didn't give us enough sales to get off the first page, we were doing fairly well.

After the expo hall closed for the night, we did another round of table-sitting for the Royal Manticorean Navy, but yet again it was so quiet that it seemed like a token effort. Then I ran up to the storage unit to grab some books that someone was interested in. When I got back, I sorted through a few more papers.

At least on Sunday the Expo Hall didn't open until 11AM, so we got an additional hour of sleep. When we did get there, I decided not to spend the setup time looking around. Instead I did a quick inventory of the t-shirt designs that are still in production so I could send orders in to some of our wholesalers.

When the doors opened, we actually got a fair amount of traffic. We had a couple of really huge sales, and a number of medium-sized ones. I got the feeling that, now that people had checked out of the hotel and settled up with the art show, they knew how much money they had left and were actually ready to start spending.

However, we couldn't wait too long to start packing. We wanted to be able to start loading out as soon as humanly possible after the Expo Hall closed, which meant we needed to start tucking away the stuff that wasn't getting much attention fairly early. As the afternoon progressed, we advanced to the things that had received more attention, but were time-consuming to deal with.

As soon as the Expo Hall closed and the big roll-up door at the loading dock was opened, I headed out to the van and started retrieving the boxes I'd stored. Then we started packing the t-shirts, which made our displays look visibly empty. After that it was a matter of taking down all the displays while I carted the books out and got them into the van.

With a decent amount of help, I was actually able to get the van loaded fairly quickly. We put the consignment merchandise in the car so I could take it back to our consignor on Monday. Once we had everything loaded, we said a few final good-byes, and the rest of the family went home in the car while I headed up to the storage unit to unload the merchandise before nightfall. With Tampa Bay Comic Con in three weeks, I wanted to get the van in to the shop as soon as possible for a thorough mechanical checkup.

I have never been a fan of self published novels. The ones I have bought and attempted to read were in serious need of an editor, with two exceptions. One is Geoffrey Mandragora who has written a series of Steapunk novels and the beginning novel of a Vampire series. Sable Jak is the other one.

Sable has been a professional audio dramatist. (Yes, audio dramas are still being produced and aired.) She has won prizes for script writing at Moondance. Sundance is video, Moondance is audio. This is a person who knows how to create characters and a story you want to read.

Bright Morn of Issareth is Sable Jak's attempt to branch out past script writing. She enjoys Asian dramas so it makes sense she would write a Wuxian/Medieval Chinese fantasy.

When we first meet Morn he is suspicious of everything. A necessary trait to stay alive for any wandering warrior looking for his next job. I tend to describe Morn as Bruce Lee with swords. Not invincible, but one of the best. He has a broken arm and is in search of a doctor when he runs into 10 thieves with assorted weapons.

An old man out for an evening carriage ride with two of his mistresses finds him among 10 dead thieves and take him home. The novel trailer Sable created states that Old God has plans for him. Other than two things, I have not figured out what they might be.

Calaryn are always male, no females. Morn is 29 and in about 8 months he turns 30 when his Calaryn half will take over and leave him in a catatonic state reliving his past two lives for a month. The rest will show up over the next 20 years. The problem is the memories are not waiting for the 30th birthday. He has no idea who he was in the past. His wife/mother died in childbirth or shortly after, and he was raised by an aunt. The aunt died when he was 19 and did not know enough to teach him what to expect when puberty hit and the Calaryn genes woke up.

I read the first two novels on the original serialized site. I later became a beta reader for book 3. Will I reveal what happens? No. There are plots within plots. Some that begin in book 1, and are still not revealed in Book 3. Did I say Sable wrote mysteries?

This past year has been a burden to survive between the virus and politics. *Bright Morn of Issareth* was able to distract my mind from reality. There are delightful bits of comic relief scattered through out. One of my top favorites comes in Book 2 when Morn meets Chief Loran the first time. "Still not trained?" Sable gives a lot of character information on the website and this comment is explained on the web page brightmorn.com.

WORLDCON BIDS

2023
Chengdu
Year of the Water Rabbit
August, 2023

<http://www.worldconinchina.com/index-e.html>

Memphis, Tennessee
August 23-27, 2023
<https://www.memphis23.org/>

Winnipeg, Manitoba
August 24-28, 2023
<https://winnipeg2023.ca/>

With the delay in Worldcon this year, the con bid deadline has also been pushed back, and CanFandom has leapt into the breach.

2024
Glasgow
August 8-12, 2024
<http://glasgow2024.org/>

2025
Seattle
Mid-August 2025

Brisbane, Australia
Mid-August 2025
<https://australia2025.com/>

2026
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
<https://jeddicon.com/>

Los Angeles
Nice, France
August 12-16, 2026
<http://nice2023.com/en/home/>

Orlando
Early to Mid-August 2026

2027
Tel Aviv
August 2027

WORLDCON

2021
DisCon III
Washington, D.C.
December 15-19, 2021
<http://discon3.org/>

2022
Chicon 8
Chicago
September 1-5, 2022
<http://www.chicon.org>



BRIGHT MORN OF ISSARETH

by Sable Jak
Review by Martha Berry

Letters, we get letters

From: **Leigh Kimmel** June 25, 2021
leighkimmel@yahoo.com

Please give Lisa my condolences on the loss of her aunt.

Thank you.

— LTM

Our first convention after eighteen months without will be InConJunction next weekend. I'll try to have a con report shortly afterward. And thanks for the mention of my stories.

They were so blasphemously
 squamous and rugose. Iä! Iä!
 Yog-Sothoth Nebfod Zin! Cthulhu
 fhfagn!

— JTM

From: **Taral Wayne** June 25, 2021
taral@bell.net

A second copy, and nothing to say?

It was a thin issue this time, I noticed. You'd think people would be reading more during the pandemic, writing more reviews, writing articles, producing volumes of locs... but it seems to me to be the opposite? As fandom as we know it slowed down to let life go by at a more leisurely pace?

There's so little SF these days
 that I like.

—JTM

From: **Cathy Palmer-Lister** June 26, 2021
cathypl@sympatico.ca

About conventions moving from participatory to consumer-oriented, I saw that happening some years ago when fans started saying: "but I'm on panels, why should I be paying for a membership?" totally missing the point about a membership rather than an admission fee.

I've always thought that cons were a way for us to share our interests and talents. But that philosophy went out the window with the arrival of the commercial conventions, run by people whose main preoccupation was making a profit. I don't understand fans volunteering to help them cut their costs in order to bolster their profits.

The STAR TREK cons in the seventies were run much like fan-run SF cons, by people from fan-run SF cons. But they had to have the stars, who were paid, only came for a day, and didn't mix. From there it went to the CreationCon (and others, such as the late Slanted Fedora) type, which still paid the stars but were more "admission fee" oriented. The fans

paid \$\$\$ for the ticket and \$\$ for the official memorabilia and \$\$ for the autographs. And now you have Dragon*Con, which is very much vast masses of fans being shuffled from one panel to another, and no contact with the pros.

—JTM

From: **Tom Feller** June 28, 2021
tomfeller@aol.com

Thanks for e-mailing the zine.

Anita and I are hoping to go to Khan-Cave, the summer relaxacon for the Con-Cave regulars. It supposed to be in July. I will let you know if we make it.

AL du Pisani's fear that alcohol sales will be not banned in South Africa this summer reminded me that during Nashville's lockdown last year the liquor stores were considered "essential" businesses and allowed to stay open. This morning I checked and found that 45% of Nashville's population is fully vaccinated.

There wasn't much to do in
 lockdown, so I suppose some people
 would drink.

— JTM



SHAKE WELL BEFORE TAKING

From: **R-Laurraine Tutihasi** July 19, 2021
laurraine@mac.com

With regard to *Alexiad* from October 2017: At least one person was inspired by the movie *Dunkirk* to read about. I bought an e-book of *The Miracle of Dunkirk* and have

been reading it in waiting rooms.

Julian Thompson (of the Falklands War) has written a book on it: *Dunkirk: Retreat to Victory* (2015). I decided to get it.

—JTM

With regard to the story about the murdered geese, I'd like to know what the police did to provoke the geese.

From: **David Shea** July 16, 2021
 4716 Dorsey Hall Drive Unit 506,
 Ellicott City, MD 21042

If you don't follow tennis, you may or may not know that H.R.H. the Duke of Kent has long been the "president" of the All England Lawn Tennis Club, site of the sport's most important tournament. I always supposed the position to be ceremonial. There's a "chairman" who does the administrative work of running the place year round, and a "tournament referee" in charge of the event every July. Still, year after year, the Duke has shown up, shaking hands, giving out trophies, chatting politely with people.

This was his last year, he is now retired from being the club's "president". He has been such a fixture that I never gave much thought to his now being in his 80's. H.R.H. the Duchess of Cambridge participated in this year's award presentations and was announced as a "patron" of the AELTC. Apparently she will be taking over the ceremonial duties at least for the near future.

Prince Edward George Nicholas Paul Patrick, Duke of Kent, KG, GCMG, GCV, CD, ADC, born October 9, 1935 to Princess Marina of Greece and Denmark, Duchess of Kent, and Prince George, Duke of Kent. Fortieth in the line of succession to the throne.

There is a "Pema Spirits Company" in Bardstown, Kentucky. One thinks of the state and liquor, one naturally thinks of bourbon. The actual product: pomegranate liquor! I bought it as an experiment. Over ice, with equal parts club soda, it's an agreeable hot weather drink.

There are three dawn redwoods (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*) in Wilde Lake Park in my area. For many years this species was known to western science only from fossils and was thought to be extinct. Living specimens were found in China in the 1940's. A few have been grown in the U.S. They are smaller than California redwoods (*Sequoia sempervirens*).

Either I didn't mail his last *Alexiad* or it got lost in the mail. I have sent a copy. There are few enough fanzine fans that we can afford to lose one.

July 26, 2021

Rodney Leighton died? I'm sorry to hear that. I corresponded extensively with him. His views were often politically/socially questionable, but he was not hesitant about expressing what he felt.

Presumably Napoleon has been dead so long that no one cares any longer about the mess he made of Europe, or that any "royal" status he had was self-appointed.

I wrote off the Hugo Awards as a lost cause years ago. It seems pointless to pretend that I care now. I feel less critical, but no more interested, concerning Worldcon.

If you, or any other paper fanzine, are interested in articles, you know where to find me.

I had to drive 16 miles each way, into another county, twice, to get the Moderna vaccine. If anyone in Howard County was giving those vaccinations at the time, they concealed it well. (One drugstore offered to get me an appointment — in Virginia!)

The libraries here are reopened, even without masks. While they were closed for nearly a year and a half, the county government, not entirely without justification, cut the library budget to bare maintenance levels. This included canceling all periodical subscriptions. Slow but steady progress toward recovering full function.

From a mention in Taras Wolansky's LoC, I judge that I must have said something about "James Bond" movies. As I don't recall my exact words, let me say "foolish and derivative" and leave it at that.

The cicadas en masse were annoyingly loud, but other than that, didn't trouble me much. I did notice that every time there was a good hard rain, they shut up for about 24 hours.

Rodford Edmiston: Racing cars were originally street cars somewhat stripped down; bodies were usually steel. Eventually pure race cars were made with aluminum bodies, much lighter. Formula One cars, and other race cars, now have bodies of carbon fiber. The disadvantage is: When you bang aluminum, it dents. When you bang carbon fiber, it shatters, scattering jagged pieces all over the race course, cutting the tires of other racers and causing further crashes. Ah, progress.

That's the problem with competitions; they start out using the same implements used in the outside field, then become hyped to compete better, becoming absolutely useless outside of the competition.

— JTM

If Darrell Schweitzer didn't see my article about *Dhalgren* in William Breiding's *Portable Storage* 5, I would be glad to run him off a copy.

If you like wine, I can heartily recommend MacMurray Estate Vineyards Sonoma County

pinot gris. I served it with lemon pasta and my guest and I agreed it was very good.

From: **Lloyd Penney** July 23, 2021
1706-24 Eva Road, Etobicoke, ON
M9C 2B2 CANADA
penneys@bell.net
<http://lloydpenney.livejournal.com/>

Thank you for *Alexiad* 117, and here it is in this era which sometimes seems so long after the fannish era that started it all. Have we become anachronistic? Well, that hasn't bothered me before; I'm not all that modern to begin with.

Life is starting to open up, indeed, but I still think it's too early. There's too many opportunistic politicians around, especially here in Ontario, who are hearing people complain like children about this pandemic. I don't wanna! I don't hafta! You can't make me! Those politicians then ignore the science, and appeal to their childish electorate, in hope of getting a few votes the next election. Canada will be opening to Americans in early August, but the US will not be opening to Canadians until late August. It's mostly because we have a higher percentage of people fully vaccinated.

Some faneds have gafiated, to be sure, but that term may be outdated. There must be a term for those of us who have stuck with it all this time. I agree with you that fandom has never really gotten along with each other, and more and more, when we see the end of all of this coming, we lash out in our anxieties. Death is the ultimate gafiation; I did not know about Marty Helgesen's passing.

Suicides seem to be at an all-time high, and it's too easy to simply blame the pandemic directly. Indirectly, the loneliness had been unbearable for some, and we are concerned for a few friends. We are in a situation we've never been before, and while some are handling it well, others are not.

Yvonne and I have enjoyed and benefitted from each of us having a 30-year career in volunteering to help with various conventions, conferences and other events. We actually retired from it about 10 years ago now, but we have no regrets at all. Two of the largest literary SF conventions in Canada, Ad Astra here in Toronto, and VCON in Vancouver, are having a tough time getting restarted...volunteerism isn't what it used to be, and even though a convention hasn't been held the last two years, there are still legal expenses to be paid, and both conventions are struggling financially.

Schirm's cartoons are always great. What-cha gonna do about those mammals, hm? And as far as Sherwin-Williams paint, it's just another example of what we like to call a costume that covers, but does not conceal.

I recently read an essay by Allen Steele about space opera, and how stuff like it has been published since the 1930s, in magazines like *Amazing* and *Astounding* and *Planet Stories*, and in novel format. Looks like Andy Weir is writing it all over again, and the appeal

is there, not just because his writing is good, but mostly because it is impossible to keep track of an entire genre of fiction over a 90-year (so far) lifetime.

The Martian had a more fundamental thesis:

There are certain men who, when faced with the choice of dying or doing the impossible, elect to live. This story is written in honor of their kind.

— *The Flight of the Phoenix*

We are supposed to have a ton of cicadas up here, too, but I have yet to hear the buzzing anywhere. Maybe the border is closed to them, too. We are hopeful for Winnipeg in 2023, but we suspect that we simply won't be able to go because of finances.

Both Yvonne and I are fully vaccinated, too. Our first was Astra Zeneca in late March for me, and early April for Yvonne. We got our second shots on July 1, Canada Day, and both were Modernas, which put us to bed for a couple of days. I am now working on the latest in the series of *Amazing Selects*, Allen Steele's fourth *Captain Future* novel, with art director Kermit Woodall.

As they say, "Captain Future, block that kick!"

—JTM



...WELL... HOW DO YOU LIKE THAT?

I will send this off, with the hopes that you are both well, and able to enjoy this summer. We're trying our best, and trying to think of new things to do this summer while the lockdown finally ends, and we start to rev up again. See you with the next one.

From: **Richard A. Dengrove** July 24, 2021
2651 Arlington Drive, #302, Alexan-

dria, VA 22306-3626 USA
RichD22426@aol.com

Here are my comments for *Alexiad* June 2021.

The first one is for Lisa. I had an Aunt Mildred. She was tough but intelligent. Also, incredible with math. I gather she helped my Uncle Charlie with his business – if she wasn't responsible for the entire business. Women like her seem to run in her family. For instance, my Cousin Candy whom Aunt Mildred's son Jeff married.



L'I MISS 'ZILLA
VISITS DUBUQUE

Now for a comment you made at the beginning. We've been inside so long we no longer know what out looks like. At least, I was that way for a time. However, I broke the cycle: I went to a con this month, ConGregarate in Winston Salem, NC, July 8th-12th. They made up for Worldcon by having Toni Weisskopf on at least ten panels. My only regret was not knowing until the last day that there were decent restaurants two blocks from the hotel.

I have an additional comment about this con. ConGregarate was a peaceable convention. However, we have been having a lot of clashes in fandom. Booting Toni Weisskopf from Worldcon is just one of them. They seem the doings of fanatics who smell ideological impurity everywhere. I yearn for the days when the biggest arguments in fandom were mostly over the details of writing zines.

Remember the Exclusion Act of 1939?

Now let's get to the article. In "Suicide is not Painless," I have to say it is a good idea not to have kids that are too young fly planes. Especially not if their parents are as incompetent as the kids. In "da Vinci's Demons," why not have Leonardo da Vinci as both a hero and an inventor? The rulers of Renaissance Italy were always fighting, and we can pretend that some of Leonardo's prototypes worked. I have an additional comment about Leonardo da Vinci. I heard he was ahead of his time in another way: he believed the Moon stayed up not because it was a light weight a la Aristotle but because of centrifugal force. I will admit that he got the idea from an Albert of Saxony, who wrote more than a hundred years before.

In "First Contact," you review Andy Weir's latest novel *Project Hail Mary*. I remember *The Martian*. He put a lot of technology into that novel but not much knowledge of human beings. On the other hand, there is an incentive for me to read *Project Hail Mary*. I would like to find out how he imagines extraterrestrials who are as smart as us humans but different.

In "Cicadas," I have to say Lisa is less squeamish than I am. She let one crawl over her. I found I was too squeamish for that. One landed on my shoulder and I automatically shook it off.

I found the cicadas interesting creatures. They looked so utterly alien and had such bizarre lives.

—LTM

In "The Joy of High Tech," Rodford Edmiston points out that some items, like natural jewels, don't decline in price. However, aluminum does. I bet the reason is natural jewels have been used as money. Gold had the same status, but has it less and less. It has been recently used more and more in electronics. Will that mean a decline in its price? So far its price has gone up.

Now for the letters. I always start with my letter – of course. My first comment concerns your iron ailment. Sorry, if I didn't realize, what you have is beyond iron deficiency anemia. There's no comparison between your ailment and 'tired' blood. In fact, did medicine ever recognize iron deficiency anemia? Good luck. I hope that excruciating cure works.

The doctor was talking about the possibility of a bone marrow transplant. My older brother, a true brother indeed, volunteered.

—JTM

I have another comment as well: what you said about my my letter is right on the mark. Conspiracy theorists make amphibolies all over the place. They start out with the assumption there is a worldwide conspiracy and, thus later, any evidence proves it.

A third comment concerns Ed Wood. I said I couldn't make a movie as bad as Ed Wood's "Plan Nine from Outer Space." Of course, the reason is I would be just mediocre while Wood had a genius for badness.

Having finished what you say about my letter, I will go on to Tom's, Lloyd's and Darrell's letters. They are all boycotting Discon III. However, since I still want to go to the con and socialize with friends, I am taking the advice of some Eastern fans: stay home and travel the short distance to the con. That way the DC power elite doesn't get money from hotel rooms. The big bucks, I gather.

Of course, I am not totally pure because I will have still paid the registration fee.

Next, I will comment on George W. Price's letter. About *The Shadow*, I think you were on the right track. The radio show's writers decided making him invisible would be easier than describing his disguises. Anyway, that is what a woman I know claims.

Another comment on George's letter is about economics. I once did a Google search to see how economists were explaining all the mega-deficits without increased inflation. As far as I could tell, they couldn't make heads or tails of it.

I think I'm going to end this letter here.

From: **AL du Pisani** August 1, 2021
 945 Grand Prix Street, Weltevredenpark
 1709, REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
du.pisani@kilos40.co.za

Greetings from a somewhat cold sunny South Africa.

Since my last letter South Africa hit the front pages of newspapers for all the wrong reasons. Riots, looting, shopping complexes burned down etc. What surprised me was how quickly it flared up – giving reason to those who say it was planned. And how quickly it died down, quite often despite all that the Police and later Army did – There are stories of civilian security companies supplying the Police with ammunition, as they did not have enough of their own. Of the neighbourhood watch that had to go and support the six guys in a Casspir sent to keep the peace in a suburb. And of the people blocking off access to their areas and dealing roughly with looters and trouble makers.

There is one story that worries me, especially since I only heard of it in one place, and only once – That a consignment of 1 million rounds of 9mm ammunition destined for the Police disappeared from Durban Harbour during this fracas.

Before all of this the Government was pushing very hard for changes to the firearms legislation, making it more onerous for civilians to legally own firearms. As part of this revamp, they intended to scrap the section allowing for firearms possession for self defence. Most commentators believe these changes to be dead as a result of the fracas.

I recently attended a talk about a South African SF novel – Everything the speaker was enthusiastic about and thought would generate interest instead repulsed me. But he mentioned that there are a cluster of authors that came through the University of Cape Town's writing program, that are quietly making waves.

Darrell Schweitzer — Editors who select books that lose money tend to lose their jobs: We are not seeing this play out in real life at anything like the speed that we expect. We are seeing people being promoted after killing off magazines. We are seeing some of these editors retain their senior jobs, and be rewarded with award after award. While the readership craters.

Leading to the suspicion that they are doing what their employers wants. Given that most publishing houses are parts of large multinational corporations, the feeling is that publishing houses are there to provide prestige, to furnish tax write-offs, and to legally channel money to politicians. (Among other things, by paying them huge advances for books.)

Rodford Edmiston — Zinc: In 2003 at the Worldcon, I attended a very interesting talk about zinc – the speaker's main proposal was that the Philosopher's Stone that alchemists was seeking was pure metallic zinc. And that the Incorruptible they were trying to get to was brass. (He delicately hinted that all of Alchemy started when a guy in Cairo received instructions from India on how to make brass, but that he was not aware of zinc, and he misunderstood the instructions as something more mystical.)

"Harry Potter and the Zinc Stone"?

An interesting part of of the talk was regarding brass – that a lot of the early Industrial Revolution had brass all over the show, including the scientific instruments. He suggests that one of the reasons the Industrial Revolution took the shape it did, was because of access to brass. And that was dependant on somebody going to India and learning how to distil metallic zinc.

Guano: Years ago there was a TV documentary series regarding the guano islands off the coast of what is today Namibia – The Isles of Dead Ned. One of which is Black Sophie's Rock. Sophie was the proprietor of a tavern in Cape Town. Some men that got drunk there awoke to find themselves on a ship bound to the isles, on a one year labour contract. But Sophie took care of the people she sent – she made sure that each of them had warm clothes to wear.

I am still pondering a statement I read elsewhere that Science Fiction and Fantasy are not real publishing categories – since about 82 years after the official start of SF there are still no universally accepted definition of SF, or for that matter Fantasy.

I'd say "95 years", since Gernsback started *Amazing Stories* in April 1926, though there were SF

stories before that.

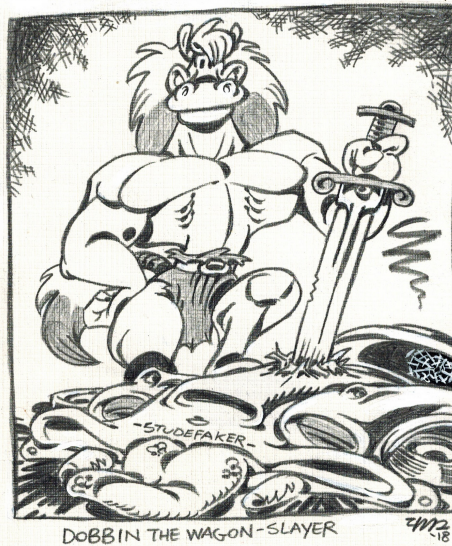
— JTM

(The argument is that SF and Fantasy are whatever the publishers are currently pushing as SF and Fantasy, and that there is no independent existence outside of the publishers' categorization.)

I get the idea that the SF I grew up on and like to read has gone out of fashion. And I do not like a lot of what is currently published as SF. (And wins awards, for that matter.)

We have gone through another hard lockdown, with prohibition on alcohol sales. It has been lifted a bit, so you can now buy alcohol on weekdays during working hours. And you can travel outside of Gauteng once again. Which will allow me to go and visit the rest of my family. This is the third vacation the Government had ruined for me – not totally, I managed to get this one moved a month later.

I hope that the rough times ahead will be short, unlike the three weeks to break the curve for Wuhan Pneumonia.



From: **Taras Wolansky** August 1, 2021
Post Office Box 698, Kerhonkson, NY
12446-0698 USA
twolansky@yahoo.com

Thank you for the June, 2021 *Alexiad*!

"Shifting Sands": Saudi Arabia is not an acceptable worldcon venue, but Communist China is? I brought this up with the Dublin con chair at an information session. He seemed to be keeping his fingers crossed, hoping that China will be voted down, rather than actually do anything.

"Suicide is not Painless": Have the real doctors that Richard Hooker's *M.A.S.H.* was based upon ever been identified? Assuming that the characters in the book are based on real

people?

Not sure too much can be refined upon the story of kid aviator Vicky Van Meter. Childhood success leading to unrealistic expectations in adulthood, leading to feelings of failure, and eventually suicide is a typical story.

"In Horse Blood": "In a brilliant stroke of genius, the Houston police released him on bail — and he fled ..." Wouldn't that have been the DA's office?

Review of three "Medici" novels by Martin Woodhouse and Robert Ross: "H. Beam Piper was a student of Renaissance Italy, and if he had only been told that these books would be forthcoming he might not have killed himself." Say again?

Something about adventure and technology in his favorite era? Lord Kalvan might have been developing gunsights by the hypothetical third Lord Kalvan book (instead of what John F. Carr and Dietmar Wehr did).

"Countless Bianca Maria Visconti ... takes to him [Leonardo], perhaps too well for Lorenzo's state of mind." Um, why do the authors think this is a problem? Was Leonardo's homosexuality not as well-known in the 70s, when these books were written?

The authors address the problem. Leonardo can't stand boring people.

"Mephitic Seven": When I read your brief review of those two Lovecraftian stories by Leigh Kimmel, the fact that the publisher was "Starship Cat Press" made me assume at first that these were more stories about cats in space!

Rodford Edmiston ("The Joy of High Tech"): What do you call a steampunk robot dog? A: Rin-Tin-Tin. (Metallurgy humor.)

After the American Revolution, the main reason the north-to-south wave of emancipation stalled at about the halfway mark was that the number of slaves to be emancipated was so large in the southern states. The numbers seemed too large to assimilate.

"Fighting to keep coal mines open when economic demand is falling requires large subsidies, and in the end is futile." One of Margaret Thatcher's greatest battles was to close down coal mines whose products were worth less than the costs of production — but the politically powerful coal miners union wanted to continue operating them at a loss, indefinitely.

"2020 Nebula Awards": I am reading the Best Novel winner, *Network Effect* by Martha Wells. So far, it's a light adventure story, reminding me of the kind of potboilers that were often one-half of an Ace Double. (For the Hugo I will probably stick with *Relentless Moon*, a highly entertaining entry in the "Lady Astronaut" series.)

Worldcon bids: Chengdu is “the year of the water rabbit”? Are the inscrutable ones still twitting us about the rabbit that attacked Pres. Jimmy Carter?

No, that's the Chinese calendar year.

— JTM

AUDIOPHILE 2.



RENA DIGS ENYA **LOUD!**

("Sail away, sail away, sail away")

Darrell Schweitzer: I found the new, Hugo-nominated *Beowulf* translation entertaining. I'm not really sure about the award status of new translations of old works. Instead of best related work, could it have been nominated for best novel or novella?

My guess is that the American invasion of Canada could easily have succeeded. Except that, the year before the American Revolution broke out, the British Crown had made a deal with the Catholic Church, recognizing its special privileges in Canada. As a result, Canadian Catholics decided they trusted English Protestants more than they trusted American Protestants.

AL du Pisani: Here's a comment I wrote in 2015: "Your accounts of South Africa remind me of Bishop Sidonius writing optimistically about the Visigoths, as darkness falls too slowly to notice." In other words, don't imitate the proverbial boiled frog.

Admittedly, the barbarians are inside the gates all over Western Civilization, but it's mostly just small raiding parties so far!

John Hertz: "As I've long moaned, we aren't tolerant, we just march behind a banner that says 'Tolerance'." My companions on the left are much better at teaching tolerance than at practicing it." I have nothing to add.

From: **John Purcell** August 16, 2021
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Gee, I am not doing very well on my goal of writing one letter of comment to a fanzine each day of the week. For the first week or two I did pretty good — skipped a day here and there — but then I slacked off as I started getting ready for the fall semester, which starts in two weeks. The good news is that I'm pretty well set up for my classes. The bad news is that now I am even further behind on writing locs. *sigh* To do one thing another must be sacrificed.

Anyway, a few comments are in order on the 117th iteration of *Alexiad*, which would be A Good Thing since the 118th issue shall soon be upon us.

Your first page musings about gafitating faneds due to the pandemic and being even more isolated from each other got me to thinking. Well, from my perspective I have stayed relatively active: my loc-writing has produced (in the last month) over a dozen of those mis-sives, pubbed two fanzines (*Askance* #51 and *Askew* #34) and the 35th issue of *Askew* is nearly completed, too. Plus I have been writing a lot of songs and playing guitar a bunch. These things keep me busy, which is definitely what I prefer. I have even been reading a lot more books this summer, finished off a short article for Guy Lillian's upcoming Theodore Sturgeon-themed *Challenger* issue, and also working on one for Justin Busch's fanzine. Like I said, it's good to be busy. The brain doesn't atrophy as fast if it is actually employed on a task.

I have an article planned for that, but I have to make myself write it.

Sometimes I feel like I have Dafiated, but it doesn't take much to get myself back on track. The internet does help to stay in touch with other sf fans — yes, social media is a major part of this mode of contact — and as things slooowly reopen around the world, conventions will start happening again. It remains to be seen if ArmadilloCon 43, currently set to be held in-person over the weekend of October 15-17, 2021 in Austin, Texas, will transpire in that mode, but at the moment it's in that "good to go" mentality. We shall see. Zoom conventions just cannot compare to physically being with longtime fannish friends. I appreciate the efforts of folks to host these "webinars," but definitely look forward to actually being with real people. It is so much more fun and engaging.

I remember Marty Helgesen very well from APAs that we were both in (notably Minneapa) and meeting him at some conventions. A nice fellow. Sad to hear of his passing.

Hmm. Worldcon topics are troublesome these days. I believe I shall steer clear of making comments about them for now, but I will say that Valerie and I are planning on Chicon 8 next year, then Memphis in 2023 (most likely winner, I doth believe), and Glasgow in 2024 would be totally awesome to attend. We shall

see.

Memphis is close by and I even have a close relative there, but I lack the income to really go. After going to San Antonio in 1997 with a guy who had \$200 for the entire con, I have come to appreciate having resources.

—JTM

Not much else to natter about today, so off it goes to you. At least I have knocked out another letter of comment. Works for me.

WAHF:

Martin Morse Wooster, with various items of interest.

Lloyd G. Daub, the same.

Lee Muncy, with thanks.

Trinlay Khadro, with a pootsarc of good wishes.

There is much fuss about "Robin Coming Out as Bi!" I thought an explanation is in order. You see, there are five Robins in the BatFamily.

Robin #1 — Richard John "Dick" Grayson. The original. Boy member of The Flying Graysons trapeze act, made ward of Bruce Wayne after the death of his parents. Grew up, went away for a while to become an auxiliary policeman in Bludhaven (the sort of place you leave for a restful vacation in Gotham), became **Nightwing**.

Robin #2 — Jason Peter Todd. Street thief, recruited after trying to steal tires off the Batmobile. Killed by the Joker, revived by Ra's al-Ghul in the Lazarus Pit, after which he became **Red Hood**.

Robin #3 — Timothy Jackson Drake. Recruited after figuring out the secret identities of Batman and Nightwing. He's the bi one. To differentiate himself became **Red Robin**.

Robin #4 — Stephanie Brown. Daughter of a petty villain, became **Spoiler** because her methodology was to foil crimes beforehand. She likes purple. Recruited as Robin, then became **Batgirl #2** after the Joker shot Barbara Gordon, **Batgirl #1**, and left her paraplegic.

Robin #5 — Damian Wayne. Ra's al-Ghul wanted Bruce Wayne to succeed him as chief of the League of Assassins, so he asked his daughter Talia al-Ghul to seduce Bruce (he didn't have to ask very hard) and the result was Damian. Also partners with Jon Kent, son of Lois and Clark. Until the next reboot he's the current **Robin**.

THE TRAGEDIE OF LENIN OF RUS by Wm. Shakspur

[Somebody on the Alternatetheory.com site imagined Shakespeare getting a dream and writing a play "Napoleon Bonaparte" Then somebody else suggested Lenin. So. .]

Act I Scene 1

Enter *LENIN* and *KRUPSKAYA*

Kru. Your brother was hang'd, and we are
exil'd, for being rebels against the
Crown. Whatever shall we do?

Len. We must organize, resist, spread the
Revolution! Else Russia will remain
under the boot of the tyrant!

Kru. But how? Your followers are devoted,
but few, and there are no monies for
them to do their work,

Enter *STALIN*

Sta. Comrade Lenin! Glorious news!

Len. Tell me of it, quickly!

Sta. I have found a rich exploiter. By force
and arms, I have relieved him of his
wealth, stol'n from the workers.

Proffers a bag

Sta. Here! Take it, and spread the Revo-
lution to the four corners of the world.

Len. You have done good work.

Exit *STALIN*

Len. He is too coarse. Were he not doing
good labour, I would have him re-
moved.

Kru. Come, let us go to Siberia.

Len. I shall return!

Exeunt omnes

Act III Scene 1

Enter *LENIN* with his *POLITBURO*,
TROTSKY, *DZHERHINSKY*, *STALIN* and
others

Len. Now, Comrades, we have been victor-
ious. The Tsar has fall'n, and a peo-
ple's government has power.

Sta. Long live Lenin!

All Long live Lenin!

Enter to them *SVERDLOV*, with *NICHOLAS*,
sometime Tsar of Russia, prisoner.

Len. Vile tyrant, enemy of the people!

Nic. I have striven to do my best for the
people.

Len. In the name of the Union of Soviet
Socialist Republics, sentenced to pay
the supreme penalty!

Stabs *NICHOLAS*

Nic. O I am slain!

Dies

Len. Comrade Sverdlov! Remove this cor-
pus, place it in some privy place where
none will know. Slay his wife and
children, place them there also.

Sve. It will be done, Comrade Lenin!

Takes body, *EXITS*

Len. Now might I do it pat. My bold armies
will drive the bourgeoisie from Russia.
Comrade Trotsky!

Tro. Comrade Lenin!

Len. Gather the workers, give them arms,
send them against the enemies of the
people. Today Russia, tomorrow the
World!

Tro. Such a mighty task you give me, Com-
rade Lenin. Oy.

Len. Comrade Dzherzhinsky, do you take
your loyal Chekists, and purge the en-
emies of the people. Send spies abroad,
that all may be known, and make men
secretly ours, that the rich shall be dis-
rupted.

Dzh. It shall be done, upon the instant!

Len. Comrade Stalin!

Sta. I am at your command, Comrade Lenin.

Len. Do you make a list of those of our party,
naming their skills and their will, that I
may comprehend all.

Sta. As you wish, Comrade Lenin.

Len. To your work, Comrades!

Exeunt omnes manent STALIN

Sta. Indeed, I shall gather their names, and
when the time comes I shall put them to
death as enemies of the people, and rule
o'er an adoring nation. This will last
out a night in Russia, when nights are
longest there.

Exit *STALIN*

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Writers, Staff: Major, Joseph, Major, Lisa

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dred and Eighteen (118)**.

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