

# ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΕΞΙΑΣ)

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Yesterday I heard the news of the attack on Salman Rushdie. It was shocking to think that such a longtime representative of freedom of speech is not safe in the United States. He should have been. Instead he was attacked in New York. The attacker was ferocious in his attack. It is likely that Mr. Rushdie will lose an eye. Only the intervention of onlookers saved his life. It took five people to pull the young monster off him. The government of Iran has issued a statement that Rushdie caused the attack by his own blasphemy. I am very sorry that my country failed to keep Mr. Rushdie safe. The United States is supposed to be a haven for free speech.

When my father was ordered to his ship in 1943 his chance of being the last one of her crew left was 1 in 336. Over the years his chances increased and today, 77 years after kamikazes sank the *Bush* my father is the last of her crew left.

— Lisa

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The 97th Running of the Hambletonian (2nd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) was <b>August 6, 2022</b> at Meadowlands Racetrack	

in East Rutherford, New Jersey. Cool Papa Bell, who went off at 50-1, won, while Jovianity S was a close second.

The 130th Running of the Kentucky Futurity (3rd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) will be **October 9, 2022**, at the Red Mile in Lexington, Kentucky.

The 68th Running of the Messenger Stakes (1st leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) was **July 1, 2022** at Yonkers Raceway in Yonkers, New York. Pleaseletmeknow won.

The 67th Running of the Cane Pace (2nd leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) was **August 6, 2022** at Meadowlands Racetrack in East Rutherford, New Jersey. Beach Glass won handily.

The 77th Running of the Little Brown Jug (3rd leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) will be **September 22, 2022** at the Delaware County Fair in Delaware, Ohio.

The Breeders Cup 2022 will be **November 4-5, 2022** at Keeneland Racetrack in Lexington, Kentucky.

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Deadline is **October 1, 2022**

## Reviewer's Notes

Since my unseemly removal from employment, my congoing has dwindled away. When we had a convention here in Louisville, ConGlomeration of fond memory, we went to that. But now it is gone for lack of people to work on it. They liked it, they really liked it, but work on it?

And so now we are seeing a shift to the Big Skiffy Event being a professional con. What I liked about the old cons was being able to talk to the guests. Even Harlan Ellison, who was for a change nice that day in Nashville. But Roger Zelazny, Ben Bova, Robert Bloch, Donald Wollheim . . . and that one year when First Fandom was not welcome at Worldcon, so they ended up at Rivercon, and I got to hear Sam Moskowitz's augmented voice.

Not all of the actors are unapproachable, and meeting J. G. Hertzler was certainly interesting. But he had had a life beyond acting.

The impression I get of Dragon\*Con is of masses of people being shuffled from one presentation to another, with no interaction. Is this what we have to look forward to?

— 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 from Advent Publishers, or from ReAnimus Press in electronic format.)

<https://www.AdventPub.com/1531>

Advent Publishers  
P.O. Box 16143  
Golden, CO 80402-6003

<https://reanimus.com/store>

— Advt.

I had a couple of thoughts about “— And He Built a Crooked House —” (*Astounding* February 1942, NHOL G.023). One is mentioned in James Gifford’s essential *Robert A. Heinlein: A Reader’s Companion*; Quintus Teal the protagonist architect lives at 8775 Lookout Mountain Avenue, across from “The Hermit of Hollywood”. At the time of the writing of the story Heinlein lived at 8777 Lookout Mountain Avenue. That’s writing yourself into your story.

Gifford says there is no house at 8775 Lookout Mountain Avenue. Checking on Google Maps reveals a boxy structure — like the house after it folded into itself the first time.

However, there is one small problem (aside from not being able to get out of the place); the rooms of the house are described in detail. **There is no bathroom.** Oops.

In keeping with Quintus Teal’s spirit, when the Dymaxion House was announced, Heinlein signed up to get one. No such luck. Nevertheless, the Dymaxion House (you can see one at the Henry Ford Museum) does have a bathroom. The only problem is that the shower is built so that anyone taller than 5' 1" (155 cm) would have to stoop to use it. Coincidentally, Buckminster Fuller, the designer of the Dymaxion House, was 5' 1".

Sometimes I wonder about writers’ grasp

of economics. In *Why Call Them Back from Heaven?* (by Clifford Simak, 1967) there is a permanent depression as everyone is working hard but buying only collectables. Once the frozen person is revived, in theory they will be able to sell their collection for enough to live on. I despair for the revived person who thought her hundred and fifty mint-condition Cabbage Patch Kids™ with the original birth certificates would make her a fortune. Along with her grandfather, who had passed knowing he would live well off the sale of his collection of never-played Cab Calloway 33 1/3 RPM shellac records. By way of contrast, Dan Davis had actual investments (then Belle got hold of him, but that worked out in the end).

Cracked.com has an interesting article on George R. R. Martin’s problems, or why he probably won’t ever finish the *Game of Thrones* series. Aside from having other things to do, and having established that no one else will finish it for him, there are some writing problems. He has too many plot threads and characters, you see.

(He dropped in on *Life of the Party* and said this, whereupon the Bard offered to do it for him. He must have been glad the Killer Bunny was not on hand.)

However, there must be dozens if not hundreds of stories on Archive Of Our Own that do that for him. The FANDOM sub-board on Alternatethistory.com is about half A Song of Ice and Fire stories, too.

And speaking of long-running, complex series, with the demise of Eric Flint, there has been a declaration that 1634, Inc. is having to go out of business. Without him, they can’t go on.

An interesting book came into my hands this year. It is *Unidentified Suburban Object* by Mike Jung. Its protagonist is a young girl who believes herself to be of Korean descent but discovers that her parents are actually from much further away than Korea. I found it a fun read if a bit of a guilty pleasure. It is more of a coming of age novel than SF. Recommended for times when you want fun reading.

— Lisa

## OBITS

We regret to report the death of **Alexei Panshin** on **August 21, 2022**. Born August 14, 1940, Alexei was a fan and a pro, having written *Rite of Passage* (1968) and the Anthony Villiers books among others. He also wrote about science fiction, beginning with *Heinlein In Dimension* (1968). [He also wrote an introduction to my book *Heinlein’s Children*.] His contributions to the field were great and he will be missed.

## MONARCHICAL NEWS

**Grand Duke Georgi Mikhailovich Romanov** and his consort, **Princess Victoria Romanovna Romanoff** have announced that the Princess is pregnant with a baby boy, who will be born in October 2022.

The coronation of **Misuzulu Sinqobile kaZwelithini** as King of the Zulu Nation was on **August 20, 2022**. He is the great-great-great-grandson of Ceteshwayo, the nephew of Shaka, founder of the kingdom.

## NOBODY EXPECTS THE BATF

Commentary by Joseph T Major on  
*UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES*  
by John Ross (1997)

There is a subculture that longs for Second Civil War works. Ross wrote a diverse array of works and one wouldn’t expect a work on this topic from looking at his other books.

It begins well enough, if at extreme length, describing a slow progression of society with what he would certainly characterize the erosion of gun rights. While most of this is intriguing and striking, it is tainted by the characters’ belief in conspiracy nonsense. For example, there is a scene set at the Knob Creek Gun Shoot here in Kentucky where they set up a reproduction of the Texas School Book Depository and invite people to try to shoot as fast as Lee Harvey Oswald was claimed to have done. No one can do so and so it is hinted that Something Strange Was Up. Unfortunately for Ross, the Warren Commission did that too, and they found it quite possible. [See *Reclaiming History* by Vincent Buglosi (2007) for the refutation of this and many other conspiracy claims.] This is an indication of the author’s predilections.

Which goes into action in the later part of the novel. Ross recounts the real-life stories of Ruby Ridge and Waco. Then he has the BATF attempt to take down his gun-dealer characters. This might be a little more readable if the BATF agents weren’t like, “No-body expects the BATF! Our chief weapon is surprise... surprise and fear... fear and surprise... Our two weapons are fear and surprise... and ruthless efficiency.... Our three weapons are fear, and surprise, and ruthless efficiency... and an almost fanatical devotion to the President... Our four... no... Amongst our weapons... Amongst our weaponry... are such elements as fear, surprise. . .” As when five BATF agents attempt to ambush a man shooting prairie dogs on a very large and very flat plain.

Practically unhindered by the Spanish Inquisition, or the U.S. law enforcement system, the heroes proceed to take down various anti-gun politicians without anyone ever getting caught. The book ends with implications that there will be more.

There is a strong strain of technothriller if not gun pornography, with long explicit descriptions of every weapon our valiant heroes

use. Of course, if Jack Ryan had been assigned this, John Clark and Diego Chavez would seamlessly infiltrate the bunch, get the leaders in the same place, and wham the Feds would pop in in force.

There are some valid concerns addressed here, whether it be federal law enforcement having to flex its muscles and show off its new toys, or one subplot about a woman kidnapped into becoming a prostitute who is striving to find a new purpose. Similarly, Ross is quite dismissive of the “patriotic militas”, which he characterizes as all talk.

The ominous repression described here has failed to come about. That makes this book more of a curiosity.

The first thing that will come to mind after considering this book is *The Turner Diaries*. Ross does not seem to be as extreme as William Pierce. He cites the sufferings of the Jews in Nazi occupied Poland — one of the protagonists is a survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto Rising. The group does not engage in grand-scale terrorism, nor is it the improbably well-organized and wide-spread Order of *The Turner Diaries*.

### AND A PARTRIDGE IN A PEAR TREE

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**BROADWAY REVIVAL**

(2022; Swallow's End Publishing;

ISBN 978-1732523920; \$12.99;

Swallow's End Publishing (Kindle); \$3.99)

by Laura Frankos and

**THREE MILES DOWN:**

*A Novel of First Contact in the Tumultuous 1970s*

(2022; Tor; ISBN 978-1250829726; \$24.29;

Tor (Kindle); \$13.99)

by Harry Turtledove

The composing brothers George and Ira Gershwin and Ira's wife Leonore were leaving a function when, abruptly, George fell to the ground and had a convulsion. Leonore said, contemptuously, “Ignore him, he's just trying to attract attention.”

The convulsion was a symptom of the brain tumor which would soon kill George. David Greenbaum has studied the history of Broadway productions and knows this. As an inhabitant of 2078, when advanced cancer treatments and time travel exist, he decides to do something about this.

He is luckier than Hodge Backmaker (of *Bring the Jubilee*), who in his effort to do on-site historical research undid his way to get back. Under pseudonyms of pseudonyms, David sets about rewriting the history of Broadway.

This brings about heartbreak, as when he saves Cole Porter from having the agonizing broken legs that made his last few years unpleasant, only to have him die in an accident.

In addition, David becomes a producer, using his rescued writers and others to create

plays that had not existed. It's an interesting look into the artistic world.

Going back to the future, we see David's family tracking him and wondering if they are going to be unmade. (Cue the Paratime Police, investigating the creation of a new timeline. If David meets one Richard Lee, he may not be around much longer.)

David seems intensely focused. Wartime events do draw his attention, but other artistic endeavors less so. For example, evidently he never met Alexander H. Woollcott, who was among other things a theatrical reviewer (who on an off day went to see a show called *I'll Say She Is* . . . but that's another story).

Not to mention his problem of being homosexual (as they would *politely* say then) in a very restrictive world. Not much chance for romance there, but things can be found.

The other half of the couple decided to double down on Operation AZORIAN. The cover story was that the *Hughes Glomar Explorer* was looking for manganese. As you know, Bob, they were looking to recover a sunken Soviet submarine. But what if this were a cover story of its own?

Jerry Stieglitz is a marine biology student who also writes some SF. He's looking forward to getting married when he gets an interesting job offer.

It seems that the K-129 had an interesting coincidence. Next to the hull of the submarine is an object which isn't apparently of earthly origin. So the project got repurposed.

The events on the *Hughes Glomar Explorer* will be familiar to those who have read any of the Our Time Line histories of that strange and diverse project. But the results are a little different — they raised an entire object, and it turned out to be an alien spaceship. With real aliens on board in cold sleep.

This is too much to hold in, but Jerry manages to do so. Until one of his colleagues dies in a strange and suspicious incident. At this news, he decides to tell all to someone else, having to get in line behind CWO Walker . . .

The problem, both in the murder and in the secrecy, can be summed up in two words: “Church Committee”. This takes place at the time when Congress was digging up some less than admirable things about the Kennedys, and putting their henchmen, like James Angleton and Bill “American James Bond” Harvey before the public. Not to mention the absurd CIA assassination methods. They wouldn't have done it with anything as prosaic as a gun; contact poison on scientific papers, maybe? And this too would get out to the committee.

It's an interesting and realistic presentation of a different sort of First Contact, with some guest appearances by SF personalities.

### NOW HEAR THIS!

Review by Joseph T Major of

**RESOLUTE:**

*The Lost Fleet: Outlands Book 2*

(2022; Ace;

ISBN 978-0593198995; \$28.00;

Ace (Kindle); \$14.99)

by “Jack Campbell” (John G. Hemry)

Are there times when Jack Geary thinks that he is still in cold sleep in his survival capsule, having horrendous nightmares non-stop? It's been that way, only in waking life, ever since he was recovered, then plunged into supreme command through being the senior (very senior) captain after the command staff was treacherously exterminated.

His ships are suffering from block obsolescence, having been built on the principle that the enemy will blow them up within two years anyway, and now that there is peace there's no budget for building ones that will last longer.

His subordinate commanders have their own problems, ranging from still holding on to the old death-or-glory attitude down to the loyal ones who think that he should take supreme power and sort those civilians out. Not to mention the assassination plots, some even by the enemy.

As yes, the enemy. The old enemy, the Alliance, has come apart at the seams. Part has even come to back Geary — except that they have their own internal strains. And then there are the aliens, who are scheming when they aren't incomprehensible.

Family ties make for other strains, some of them not even his. As with his grand-nephew, who having more service time than Admiral Geary, can retire, and has to sort out that relationship. While his sister stays in command of her own ship. They have the legacy of “Black Jack” Geary to deal with, almost as much as the original.

Nevertheless, he persists. And if he only had Satchelraft, Scuttlebutt, and Beer Bottle Bates as well, Geary would be able to really solve all those problems when this saga is . . .  
**To Be Continued.**

### The Joy of High Tech

by Rodford Edmiston



Being the occasionally interesting ramblings of a major-league technophile.

Please note that while I am an engineer (BSCE) and do my research, I am not a professional in this field. Do not take anything here

as gospel; check the facts I give. If you find a mistake, please let me know about it.

## Measuring Temperature

The thermometer was the last major instrument invented in the classical age of the development of objective methods of measurement. Long before this device was created we had well-established standards (a lot of 'em) for weight, length, volume, and so forth . . . but there was no real standard for temperature. Pressure is just force per unit of area, so though the barometer wasn't invented until 1643, the concept of how to measure air pressure was around long before that. Of course, even the invention of the barometer came a bit earlier than the first documented true thermometer. Accurately measuring temperature required developing new technologies and the clever application of them. As well as new ways of thinking.

Not that people hadn't tried. The effort to create a standard of temperature measurement goes back well over two thousand years. These early attempts usually involved the freezing or melting of specific materials (as just one example, high-carbon steel is hot enough to quench when salt sprinkled on it melts). Which was, to say the least, usually inconvenient. Long before that, of course, there were many attempts to create some way to describe the temperature of an object beyond warm/hot or cool/cold. However, even after the invention of the thermometer (the earliest known proper, sealed thermometer was constructed in 1654) there was the problem of setting a standardized scale of measurement. (Note that the old method of measuring heat in — as one example — pottery kilns still has some uses. This involves putting several samples of materials of known, and different, melting points in the hot zone.)

Determining how hot or cold something is — or even *whether* something is hotter or colder than some reference — may seem easy. However, as often happens, our senses can deceive us. For example, the difference between temperature and heat can be counterintuitive. There is also the problem that with a working medium of gas or liquid ambient pressure can cause different temperature readings, unless the thermometer being used is sealed and rigid enough to resist such pressure changes. Even after objective means of measuring temperature were developed, getting people to agree on what was hot and what was cold was difficult. Getting an agreement for *how* hot or cold something was, well...

Following a great deal of practical use and evaluation of competing systems, the standard came down to two contenders: Fahrenheit and Centigrade/Celsius. More recently, you have the Rankine and Kelvin scales. These use the degrees of the Fahrenheit and Centigrade scales, respectively, but both start at the calculated value for absolute zero. That is, no temperature at all; a true zero temperature.

Scholars had long speculated that there must be a lower temperature limit, but until the late Eighteenth Century most felt it was at least a thousand degrees Centigrade below the freezing point of water. They were eventually proven wrong by reality. The early hard number calculations for the lowest temperature possible turned out to be far higher than most scholars of time found acceptable. The first scientific estimate, made in 1702 using an open thermometer similar to a mercury barometer, was  $-240^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Which isn't far from the actual value of a bit below  $-273^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

The true value for absolute zero turns out to be easy to derive, once the idea that temperature is a measure of molecular motion is accepted. Achieving absolute zero is another matter. Besides the difficulty of arranging sufficient insulation to prevent leakage of heat into the target volume, there seems to be another phenomenon at work. Some theorists say that both zero temperature and zero pressure are actually impossible. According to this idea, perhaps due to the Casimir Effect, particles with at least some motion will be spontaneously created in volumes where there aren't any. In other words, nature might truly abhor a vacuum. At least, if it's hard enough. Similarly, molecules may always have some motion, no matter how much heat you pump out of them. One idea is that without molecular motion, there is no matter. So there will always be some heat, and therefore a temperature above absolute zero.

All that is still theory. However, it is a fact that neither absolute zero temperature nor pressure have actually been achieved. The situation in both cases is actually far more complicated than than described here. While calculation of absolute zero temperature is easy, predicting what will occur with no molecular motion has proven elusive even for quantum mechanics. Meanwhile, laboratories creep ever closer to both nothings. Strange things happen at these rarefied temperatures and pressures — things beyond the scope of this column.

The thermoscope came before the thermometer. This instrument is often attributed to Galileo, though it is likely that — as with the telescope — he read about the concept and built his own. Regardless of who invented it, probably late in the Sixteenth Century, it lacks something which keeps it from being a true thermometer: A scale. In other words, it could show changes in temperature, but not what the actual temperature was. Without an objective method of measuring just what the temperature of something is in reference to a standard, the thermoscope is only a minor improvement of someone saying "that feels cold" or "that looks *really* hot." The thermoscope was also not sealed, reducing accuracy and repeatability.

Galileo is also credited with inventing what is known as the Galileo Thermometer, though it probably came to us from Ferdinando II de' Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany. This involved sealed and labeled glass balls of different liquids in a closed glass jar. At different temperatures different balls float. Like the thermoscope, this

lacked accuracy and precision, but at least it measured the current ambient temperature, and not just temperature changes, largely due to being a sealed system. The "Florentine thermoscope" became popular, but there was still no standard of calibration. (Though there are modern reproductions available which *are* calibrated.)

The ancient Greeks knew that materials changed volume with temperature. That water expands slightly upon undergoing the phase change to ice (contracting as other materials do with reduction in temperature above and below that point) is a complication but one avoided for thermometers by using alcohol, mercury or some other fluid besides water (this also usually provides a lower practical range of use). Once the switch to other fluids was made, the instrument was sealed and a reproducible standard for a scale was established, we had a practical, consistent thermometer. Once we have such a thermometer, well, we have opened an entire new world.

William Herschel read a paper before the Royal Society in 1800, in which he referred to "radiant heat." Splitting light into a spectrum with a prism, Herschel measured the heat in each color with a thermometer. He discovered that there was energy deposited on the thermometer when it was placed on a non-illuminated portion of his test table, making the temperature it measured increase, by "invisible light" beyond the red. The term "infrared" was invented about eighty years later. Herschel's analysis of this phenomenon harkened back to speculation by Sir Isaac Newton, nearly a century before. Herschel's experiment — and subsequent ones which confirmed his results — is how the fact that light had components which were unseen was discovered. This led in turn to the revelation of the entire electromagnetic spectrum, which is far vaster than the visible light portion which we can directly sense. Unfortunately, Herschel was not a very good mathematician, and some of his determinations about his discovery were not only wrong, but turned out to be the opposite of what was eventually revealed to be true about light.

There are many other discoveries which were made possible by the thermometer. As just one example, precise temperature measurement meant precise chemistry. Also, it turns out that such things as gas pressure calculations are much easier with a temperature scale which starts at absolute zero. Or, as I like to put it, negative temperatures make negative sense. Especially in science and engineering. However, the two main scales of temperature measurement in current use were both created before the concept of absolute zero. Which means that both had other — and arbitrary but generally reproducible — reference points.

The Fahrenheit scale has zero set at the freezing point of a specific mixture of ice, water, and a salt ("ammonium chloride or even sea salt" in Fahrenheit's words). German physicist Daniel Gabriel Fahrenheit then de-

cided to make his second reference point the reading of the thermometer when it was placed in still, pure water, when ice was just forming on the surface. This was assigned as 30 °F. The third calibration point, taken as 100 °F (some sources say 90 °F or even 96 °F) was selected as the thermometer's reading when the instrument was placed under the arm or in the mouth. (Yes, body temperature was originally 100 °F. Or 90 °F. Or 96 °F. The documentation of Fahrenheit's original usage is unclear.) Fahrenheit's scale was soon modified by others and standardized to what it is today, with the freezing point of pure water at one atmosphere of pressure designated as occurring at 32 °F and "average" human body temperature at 98.6 °F. He also invented both the alcohol (in 1709) and the mercury (in 1714) thermometers.

The Centigrade/Celsius scale is based on the idea that the freezing point of pure water at sea level pressure was zero and the boiling point was 100. Anders Celsius was a Swede who used this scale, as did several others. Today it is usually known as Centigrade.

So, these two scales not only have different sized degrees, but different reference points for zero! Which is why converting between them is a bit complicated.

The kelvin scale is different from both of these, but actually quite simple to use. Just remember that on the kelvin scale zero is actually as cold as you can go, and 0 °C is about 273 kelvins. (You don't capitalize "kelvin" when writing about temperature, except in abbreviation, such as 273 K. Also, you don't refer to kelvins as degrees.)

Note that the first practical bimetallic thermometer was patented in 1886. These use two strips of different metals, which change dimensions slightly differently with changes in temperature. These strips are fused into one piece along their lengths and usually wound into a coil. Once calibrated, the different expansions of contractions of the metals of the coil move a pointer attached at one end along an arcing scale, with the position of the pointer indicating the temperature. The other end — typically at the center of the coil — is affixed to the body of the thermometer.

Naturally, as soon as there was a reproducible method to quantify temperature people began trying to establish records for hottest and coldest. That included locations on Earth (and at various altitudes above it) and extremes achieved in laboratories. Ice was salted, ether and other volatile fluids were forcibly evaporated by fans, and so on in an effort to create the lowest temperature. Various substances were combusted together to find the hottest flame. (Though measuring these high temperatures involved something other than sticking thermometers in the flames, since they would melt or even explode if that was done.)

Then came refrigeration, where a volatile material is compressed from gas to liquid, cooled, then allowed to expand back into a gas

in order to absorb heat. Many different working fluids were tried, and reaching records often involved multiple stages of refrigeration. Liquifying gasses became a matter of national pride. That is, the laboratory which first converted air or nitrogen or oxygen to liquid got the bragging rights. Until the next record was breached.

For a while some gasses were known as "permanent" gasses (originally including such things as nitrogen, oxygen, argon, neon, carbon monoxide, hydrogen and helium) because all attempts to liquify them failed. Then, one by one, they fell, usually by combining refrigeration with pressurization. (Today refrigeration alone is good enough to keep most cryogenics liquid, though many volatile substances are still kept liquid at least partially through pressurization.) The last was stubborn helium, which does not liquify until cooled below 4.2 kelvin. On July 10, 1908, Dutch physicist Heike Kamerlingh Onnes at the University of Leiden in the Netherlands succeeded at this difficult task.

Although helium was the most difficult substance to liquify, laboratories continue to seek lower and lower temperatures. The current record is just a fraction of a kelvin.

Science overrides politics. Unfortunately, sometimes politicians override scientists.

## InConJunction XLI

by Leigh Kimmel

InConJunction is the longest-running nerdy event in Indianapolis. It's an old-school science fiction convention, run by the local club, the Circle of Janus. In the good old fannish tradition, it features an open atmosphere of interaction between the ordinary members and the guests of honor, unlike the celebrities behind velvet ropes we find at the big commercial conventions.

This year's convention was held over the weekend of July 1-3, 2022 at the Marriott Indianapolis East. Due to a change in management, it will be the last year the convention will be held at that hotel, and the concom is currently looking for a new home for the convention.

Because it's a hometown convention, we didn't have a lengthy drive the day before. After lunch, we just headed over to the hotel in order to be in one of the parking spaces at the top of the loading dock ramp for ease of load-in. While we were waiting, I got my newsletters prepared for the weekend, so I'd just have to finalize them and send them out on the appropriate days.

Once we the doors opened, it was non-stop busy loading in and setting up until the end of the day. This year dealers were invited to a meal in the con suite, which meant that I didn't have to go home and get supper ready. We could just head home and I wound up stuff and got to bed.

On Friday we got up early and hurried over to the hotel to finish setting up. We actually were set up in time, but we ran out of space because we were carrying a lot more consign-

ment merchandise. As a result, I had to carry several boxes of low-priority t-shirts back out to the van to stash for the weekend.

Once the doors did open, we had some customers, but the foot traffic at a small convention like this will always be intermittent. I often have to consciously remind myself to downsize my expectations from what we'd be seeing at one of the big commercial shows that have become our bread-and-butter events.

Because sales were so slow, I ended up getting over my phone, intending to use the Notes app to do some work on a writing challenge. Instead I ended up surfing the Web too much and didn't get near as much done as I'd wanted. I might've been better off using the Dragon Touch, but I didn't have it with me, or the necessary documents on it.

In the evening we visited the con suite, then went over to the Royal Manticorean Navy table for a while, but we didn't really have that much traffic. I actually got some writing done, which helped. Then we went home and I did various prep activities for the next day's work.

On Saturday we headed back over to the hotel and waited for the con suite to open. Once we did, we had breakfast, then got into the dealers' room and opened for business.

Sales were slow, and I did a fair amount of work on an essay for an e-book I was getting ready to release for Independence Day. I also had a conversation that gave me a key insight on the early part of the Sharp Wars in the Grissom timeline, not only a character's motivations, but also the driving psychology of the anti-Sharp movement.

After the dealers' room closed, we sat table for the Royal Manticorean Navy again for a while and I did some more writing. Then we came home and I got my newsletters finalized so I could hit send on them. I also took care of some other internet stuff before turning in for the night.

On Sunday morning we went back to the hotel, feeling a little glum that this would be the last day of the con, and rather ambivalent that this would be the last time we'd do InConJunction at this hotel, at least for the foreseeable future. Because the dealers' room was opening an hour later, we just hung out in the con suite until we could get in. That gave us an opportunity to talk with some of the regular members.

Once the dealers' room did open, sales remained slow and we started packing right after lunch. By the last half hour, we weren't even trying to hide our efforts.

When the front doors closed and the rollout door opened, I grabbed a cart and started hauling in the empty boxes so we could pack the t-shirts and other things that we didn't have room to keep the boxes for. At first things seemed to be going rather slow, mostly because the van was parked in the back parking lot rather than at the top of the ramp to the rollout door. However, as other dealers finished loading out and cleared the area, I was able to move the van to a better position and shorten that



trip, greatly speeding up the load-out process. In the end, we got done quickly enough that we were able to get to the dead dog party and have some pizza.

Afterward I took the van up to the storage unit and unloaded the merchandise, since we needed to get some preventive maintenance done in preparation for our big trip of the year, and rain was in the forecast.

## O CITY OF BYZANTIUM, ANNALS OF NIKETAS CHONIATES

Translated by Harry J. Magoulas  
(1984; Wayne State University Press)  
Commentary by Darrell Schweitzer

This is a Byzantine historian, 12th-13th centuries. Like most Byzantine writers, he can be tough going. The translator has to give some sense of the original prose, which can be tortuously flowery, with long sentences where you lose track of who he is talking about, and lots and lots of obscure allusions. But he lived through a very important period, beginning his political career late in the reign of Manuel I Comnenus. He resigned during the usurpation of Andronicus I (despite which he occasionally shows grudging respect for Andronicus, as someone who had the talent to save the empire if only he could have moderated his cruelty), then resuming under Isaac II Angelus, whom he sees as corrupt and decadent, if occasionally successful on the battlefield. (At least Isaac managed to repel a Norman-Sicilian invasion of the Balkans.) Then Alexius III (brother of Isaac) blinded Isaac and usurped the throne, and succeeded at nothing.

The result was that Niketas witnessed some of the very lowest points of Byzantine history. He vividly describes the hideous end of Andronicus, who was tortured by the mob, then hung upside down in the Hippodrome and finally put out of his misery by two foreign soldiers who wanted to see how far they could insert their swords into his body (through the mouth or anus). Choniates was an eyewitness to the fall of Constantinople in the 4th Crusade, but is well aware that the catastrophe was brought on by all that non-stop treachery, incompetence, personal ambition, and surprisingly frequent cowardice. He is the source for the story about the gigantic Frankish knight who burst through a hole in the wall and sent the Byzantine defenders scurrying away like rabbits. He also tells us of the many outrages and sacrileges of the Crusaders, including the harlot cavorting on the holy altar in Hagia Sophia before the altar was chopped up to remove the golden bits. There is a long catalogue of the priceless works of ancient and Hellenistic art (most of which had been gathered from all over the Empire by Constantine the Great to adorn the city) which were melted down to make those ultra-common, crappy little coins of the Latin Empire that are well-known to modern collectors.

Choniates had a fine mansion in the city.

He lost it in one of the fires deliberately set by the Crusaders. Eventually he and his family managed to flee. On the way out he showed great courage by rescuing a young girl who had been abducted by a Crusader and surely would have been raped. (We conclude that Choniates may not have been as good a writer as his more famous predecessor, Michael Psellus, but he was a much more admirable person.)

Before long his party found the countryside even more dangerous than the city, because eastern Thrace was being ravaged by everybody, his brother, and several hordes. Cities were left utterly desolate. Populations were massacred or carried off into slavery. One particular villain is a chap named Ioannitsa, otherwise known to history as Kaloyan of Bulgaria, who later called himself "Roman-slayer," in revenge for the exploits of Basil II the Bulgar-slayer of two centuries earlier. One of Kaloyan's notable achievements was the capture of the first Latin emperor of Constantinople, Baldwin of Flanders in 1205. Accordingly to Choniates, the Bulgar king lost patience with his captive and had his arms and legs chopped off, then tossed him into a pit where he perished miserably three days later while being pecked by birds. Probably Kaloyan was no more brutal than any other warlord of the period, but he had a certain style. This after all is the part of the world that produced Vlad the Impaler a couple centuries later.

Meanwhile Choniates and his party eventually made their way to Asia Minor where refugees were begrudgingly received in the Empire of Nicaea. He makes a heartfelt comment that what the various surviving Greek rulers (of Nicaea, Trebizond, etc.) should have done is unite to restore the Empire. But instead they were fighting one another, out of personal ambition. The game of thrones continued, even when it wasn't clear that there was still a throne to fight over. This is the sort of thing that gives the word "Byzantine" its bad connotations, particularly as retold by Edward Gibbon, who described the history of the later Empire as one of monotonous despotism, intrigue, treachery, and weakness. Not fair, but it does describe the period Choniates covers pretty accurately.

This is not a book you get find easily. I found one on eBay for \$70, which was something of a bargain. Just try to find the history of Niketas's successor, George Akropolites. It is available in English Oxford University Press, 2007. There was a copy offered for \$237.00, "new." That may be the list price. There is no perception that Byzantine history could be a popular subject, so, other than the Penguin paperback of Psellus, such books are usually published by university presses, as textbooks for professional scholars, at let's-rip-off-the-university-library prices. This can be an expensive hobby.

## WORLDCON BIDS

2024  
Glasgow

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

2025  
Seattle  
Worldcon Seattle 2025  
August 13-17, 2025

2026  
Los Angeles

Cairo, Egypt  
PharaohCon  
September 1-5, 2026

2027  
Tel Aviv  
August 2027

2028  
Brisbane, Australia  
Mid-August 2028  
<https://australia2025.com/>

Kampala, Uganda  
Kampcon: The 86th World Science Fiction Convention  
August 23-27, 2028  
<https://kampcon.org/>

2029  
Dublin  
<http://dublin2029.ie>

2031  
Texas  
<https://alamo-sf.org/>

(Note: The Cairo bid is the former Jeddah bid. The bidcomm seemed to have realized that the facilities in Egypt are more habitable in September.)

## NASFiC BIDS

2023  
Winnipeg  
<https://main.winnipeg2023.ca/>

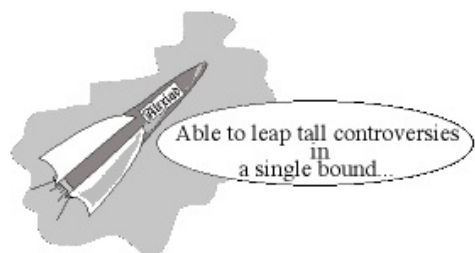
2024  
Buffalo, NY  
<https://buffalonasfic2024.org/>

## WORLDCON

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

2023  
Chengdu  
Year of the Water Rabbit  
August 16-20, 2023  
<http://www.worldconinchina.com/index-e.html>

## Letters, we get letters



From: **Darrell Schweitzer** July 6, 2022  
[darrells@comcast.net](mailto:darrells@comcast.net)

I am afraid our friend Taras Wolansky has correctly deduced why I was not at Balticon. I was not actually kicked out, but I was informed by the chair of programming that there were complaints about my "presentation style" and so it would be impossible to put me on any panels. As for what this means, your guess is as good as mine. There was no further explanation. If I was involved in some sort of unpleasant "incident," no one has deigned to inform me. No one voiced any complaint to me directly. If I had been involved in an incident, I surely would have apologized. I was promised (but not given) a reading that year. (2020, the first year of virtual Balticons). The woman in charge (who is also the one who did so much to damage the DC worldcon, and who is responsible for the fiasco with Stephanie Burke this year) then told my wife Mattie that she was still okay, even if I was not. Mattie replied in a colorful fashion. She refuses to attend future Balticons.

You will notice that I am talking about something that happened two years ago. I kept it quiet because I thought some reconciliation might be possible. I guess not.

This is heartbreaking because I had been attending Balticons without a single break since 1974, and have been on the program since about 1980, every year. Balticon was almost as much my "home" convention as Philcon, something I very much looked forward to every year. But it seems to have gone bad now, as a lot of conventions are going bad. What I experienced may have been part of a larger demographic purge, although it was also aimed at me personally. Then again, what they did to Stephanie Burke was aimed at her personally too, but some power-crazed fan bureaucrat who should never be allowed anywhere near a position of responsibility again. Given that Ms. Burke is Black and mostly writes erotica, I am not sure where the ideological angle is on this one. (See details in *FILE 770*.)

While, for example, Readercon is now too corrupted by demographic prejudice to be salvageable, I think Balticon could reform itself. First, they need to fire their chair of

programming and anyone who supports her. If means purging a whole faction, so be it. Then they should publically apologize to Ms Burke by making her a special guest next year and paying her way. I would settle for a private apology and reinstatement for myself.

**The demographic has shifted. There is a new generation of writers, with their own predispositions, and they are running things now.**

On other matters Taras brings up, if criticizing the Chinese government gets labelled racism in Wokeland, I will take my chances. There has always been much to admire in Chinese culture, literature, and history, but their government has not been one of them. It is not admirable today. For once, I think, Taras uses the term "fascist" correctly. China is a fascist country, where the capitalist billionaires have combined with the government to create a corporate state. It pretends to be Communist, not that Communism is admirable either, as we saw back in Mao's day when China actually was Communist. The Party has quietly abandoned Marxism and Maoism while still paying lip service to both. A real Maoist must have realized it was the beginning of the end when Deng Xiaoping said, "It is glorious to be rich." The political weakness of Communism is that it prevents the ruling class for being rich. Inevitably the ruling class will make adjustments. Dogmatism gives way to a cynical pragmatism. That is why China is rich today (or part of the population is.) It is why Chinese cities are filled with gleaming skyscrapers when there were none at the time of the Cultural Revolution. China has a very long history of professing one thing while practicing another. For the longest time they pretended to be Confucian while actually practicing Legalism, a doctrine that every emperor and mandarin pretended to abhor. (A teacher of Chinese history I had in college once summed up Legalism as "Hold the reigns tightly and use the whip a lot," no doubt quoting some ancient Chinese source.)

**I read Frank Dikötter's *Mao's Great Famine* (2010), about the Great Leap Forward. It was a remarkable accomplishment to cause a famine throughout the entire country. I think they don't want a rerun of that or of its thrilling sequel, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.**

By the way, a note on Chandler Davis. I think he is still alive, which probably makes him senior writer in the SF field at the moment. I met him once. I repeated to him a comment made about him by the late Milt Rothman: "Sure we knew he was a Communist, but we didn't care. We were interested in science fiction." He was amused. Wouldn't it be nice to get back to that level of tolerance again?

**According to Fancyclopedia 3, he is still with us:**

[https://fancyclopedia.org/Chan\\_Davis](https://fancyclopedia.org/Chan_Davis)

—JTM

From: **George W. Price** July 19, 2022  
 4418 N. Monitor Avenue, Chicago, IL  
 60630-3333 USA  
[price4418@comcast.net](mailto:price4418@comcast.net)

June Alexiad (#123)

I must correct my own letter in this issue.

Responding to Joe's note about replacing a Ford Taurus with 200,000 miles on it, I said I had parted with a 1997 Taurus that had only about 45,000 miles. In 2018 I had to give up driving because of worsening eyesight, so I gave my stepdaughter Nora the Taurus my late wife and I had used. It had so few miles because we never drove it on long trips – we always flew and then rented cars.

I said Nora rarely drove that car after I gave it to her, so it still had very low mileage when she sold it recently. Now that was wrong. Nora tells me that she had been lending the car to her daughter, who put on another 50,000 or so miles. Nora had not mentioned that before – she had no reason to – and I just jumped to a wrong conclusion. Anyway, that 1997 Taurus still has low mileage compared to Joe's old car, and it is still going strong for its new owner.

\*\*\*\*\*

Also in my letter I said I had never heard of the Marion Zimmer Bradley and Walter Breen scandal described in Moira Greyland's *The Last Closet*. Joe interjected a note: "You mean no one ever brought up the Boondoggle?" Yep, that's exactly what I meant. Or if anyone did bring it up, I never noticed. That's how far out of the social side of fandom I've been. Which was the point I was making.

In fact, the letter by Heath Row, preceding mine in this issue, gives the first information I have ever seen on this unpleasant subject other than what Joe gave in his review of *The Last Closet*. I wonder – if I had been aware of all this at the time, would I have been able to enjoy Bradley's novels? I can't be sure, but probably not.

**There hasn't been a Darkover novel published since 2013 (the later ones were by Adrienne Martine-Barnes), though there have been several anthologies.**

—JTM

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** July 17, 2022  
 The Terraces of Boise, 5301 East Warm Springs Ave., Apt. B306, Boise, ID 83716-6205  
[robertk@cipcug.org](mailto:robertk@cipcug.org)

Thank for Vol. 21 No.3 (June 2022, Whole Number 123).

Yes, I'm still here.

I am sorry to read that you still have “ups and downs” with your health. You having colonoscopies without being sedated has always impressed me. The pain for me would be incredible.

Actually the pain is not so bad. But my current problem is that the blood specialist wants one to find out why my hemoglobin is too low and the internist won't do one — because my hemoglobin is too low!

I've had another Wuhan Virus shot making it four. No more wearing of masks here or in most public places. Masks are worn in medical offices.

There have been local trips. A really nice one was to the Snake River. Since moving here from California I really miss the ocean. So anytime I can visit water it is a pleasure. However, I was just informed that there is a problem with the bus and all offsite drives have been put on hold until further notice. Bummer!

The weather isn't bad. It can get up to 100/102. But right now it's 90.

The grass is green as are the trees and the flowers look great. But the hills have now turned brown.

**Taras Wolansky:** Good comment that the real name of the committee was the House Committee on Un-American Activities. But of course one can't say HUAC if they use the real name. Good question that if anyone at a Chinese Worldcon criticizes China will they be allowed to leave?

**David M. Shea:** Your comment about 50-cent coins and \$2 bills reminded me that I had both. I took the 50cent pieces to the bank and received \$19.00. I still have the \$2 bills. Also, I have a lot of nickels, dimes, and quarters.

Well, that's about it.

I have read that the \$2 bill and the 50¢ coin both suffered from there being a lack of space in cash register drawers.

—JTM

From: **David M. Shea** July 15, 2022  
4716 Dorsey Hall Drive Unit 506,  
Ellicott City, MD 21042-5988

I am advised that due to redistricting after the 2020 Census, I am now in a different Congressional district. I am not certain who my new congressman is. However, I can be sure that this one will not give any more of a rat's ass about me than did the previous one. My polling place also changed; all of fifty meters, across the parking lot from the elementary school to the adjacent middle school. Why? Probably better not to ask. Inevitably, the answer will be: Because we say so.

Your congressman is Kweisi

**Mfume (D), Seventh District.**

While I'm on the topic of irrelevant items: Seen in the library, *Napkin Folding for all Occasions*. Also, *Gulls Simplified*. No, may lightning strike me down if I lie, these are real books, really what they say they're about; folding napkins, and identifying seagulls. Probably not better to ask why , , ,



At Wimbledon this year, H.R.H. the Duchess of Cambridge presented the trophies. She is now called the royal “patron” of the All England Club. Russian players were banned this year. Elena Rybakina who won the ladies' title is actually Russian, but she has for several years played officially for Kazakhstan. This was sufficient of a technicality (and she wisely refrained from saying anything about the invasion) that she was generally accepted by the fans.

**Jagshemash.** When the Soviet Union drew the boundaries between the R.F.S.S.R. and Kazakhstan, they included in Kazakhstan large numbers of ethnic Russians, apparently to keep control of the republic. During the collectivization, many Kazakhs died or fled, leaving Russians a majority in the republic. This lasted until 1990. Good-bye! Chenquiel!

Well, this is an agreeable surprise. *Alexiad* is the first fanzine I've received since April; and with the exception of one letter, very nearly the

first contact of any sort I've had with fandom since April. I'm sure that says something.

The wreck of *Endurance*: This seems to be a reasonable extension of maritime law. As a rule, civilian vessels belong to anyone who can salvage them. Wrecks of warships belong to the nation that sent them out. When the wreck of *Bismarck* was located, it was declared the property of the German government as lawful successor to the Nazi regime. Germany said it should be left alone, and it was left alone.

Such ships are designated as war graves, not to be disturbed. This does not prevent salvagers from dismantling them for radioactive-free steel.

**Nic Farey:** For obvious reasons, I discount the FAAN Awards as minor and not representative of anyone other than a minor cult within (?) fandom. Of course I don't speak for Joseph.

**Chuck Lipsig:** Where is your “openmike” night? I suggested this at the Barnes & Noble at Columbia Mall. They were absolutely horrified, and that's a correct adjective. “We would never do something like that!”

**Lloyd Penney** says, “Perhaps we have lived beyond fandom's usefulness . . .” As for competence to run a Worldcon after the 1983 event I wrote a detailed multi-page report on my department and sent it on to the 1984 Los Angeles/Anaheim group, offering to discuss aspects of it. Never heard a word. Generally, failure to seek out advice has left most Worldcons starting on from scratch. The difference between that and China is that we at least cared.

There was a carry-over of department heads between Worldcons, what was called “the Permanent Floating Worldcon Committee”. Which was why NoLaCon II was not an utter disaster.

—JTM

If Lloyd has not seen my article “Elutiation of a Failed Fiction Writer” published in *Fade-away* #67 I would be glad to run him off a copy.

If we're still talking about World War II SF/Fantasy, Katherine Kurtz, *Lammas Night* (1983). The occultists of England stage a magical working to discourage Hitler from invading. The author signed my copy, which I still have.

Quote of the Day:

“You know this would never have happened, Cecil, if you hadn't decided to do parlour tricks with the hobenstocks.”

— Cha-ung

Drew, Earth, Nepal, 3166

From: **John Hertz**

July 20, 2022

The Glorious 20th  
236 S. Coronado Street No. 409, Los  
Angeles, CA 90057 USA



Good as ever to see fanart by Schirm and by Gilliland.

What a Derby race by Rich Strike! Hurrah! I note that anyone may vote in the FAAn Awards. Also they seem reasonably administered.

Diversity of interests under one tent is what general-interest cons have to offer. We used to say "Indulge your special interest at our general-interest convention." But that can be done better at a special-interest convention. At a general-interest con you can meet people you didn't know you wanted to meet. Diversity is not only moral, it's nourishing.



In the early seventies, Worldcons had been flooded with Star Trek fans. But they only wanted to see Trek programming. MidAmeriCon I tried to solve this problem by not having any Trek programming and got hammered for wanting to ban Trek fans. But then the great media cons arose and drew them away.

I too miss Knarley Welch.

Another fan who says he hasn't been voting for Worldcon site-selection because he hasn't been attending Worldcons! If he means he hasn't voted because the result had nothing to do with him, I suggest being more system-

conscious.

I thought having the worldcon at Yokohama would have made that the year for Supporting Memberships. It wasn't, alas. I hope lots of us will get Supporting Memberships or whatever Chengdu is calling them. I can't expect it. Prove me wrong.

**They have that great bulge of 2000 last-minute Supporting Memberships. The results could be interesting.**

—JTM

From: **Taras Wolansky** August 1, 2022  
Post Office Box 698, Kerhonkson, NY  
12446-0698 USA  
[twolansky@yahoo.com](mailto:twolansky@yahoo.com)

Thanks for the June *Alexiad*.

**Joe:** Follow-up to my Barnes & Noble story. "New Science Fiction and Fantasy" has been further reduced from two bookcases to one, again transferring a bookcase to general fiction. This time I asked the clerk what was going on, but her explanation left me more puzzled than before: "not enough product". Hardcover SFF publishing in decline? Or did she simply mean that Barnes & Noble is stocking less and less of it (outside of YA). Because it's not selling?

N.B.: At another, smaller Barnes & Noble that I visit, there is simply no section for New SF&F at all.

**Could it be that current hardcover SF simply isn't selling at all?**

Great account of Those Magnificent Men in Their Sailing Machines! Not sure why they made a film about one of the most pathetic of the nine sailors.

I don't think *John Carter* was dumped by the studio. Rather, they were operating under the misapprehension that this was a well-known and beloved character, like Tarzan or Zorro. It was unable to earn back its mind-boggling cost, which I recall was something like a quarter of a billion dollars.

**There was a change in management there. When that happens, the previous manager's projects get dumped, the way the Fuzzy books got dumped when Avon got a new editor. John Carter and the Gods of Hollywood describes in painful detail how they utterly failed at promoting the picture.**

**2021 Nebula Awards:** I began reading *A Master of Djinn* by P. Djeli Clark (because he's written some good things in the past) but I found I couldn't believe in the protagonist, an Egyptian lesbian policewoman in an alternate early 20th century Cairo to which magic has returned. Which, for some mysterious reason, has made Islam tolerant of homosexuality?

Oddly, Clark did a better job depicting English aristocrats, probably because he has encountered such characters in his reading about one thousand times as often as Egyptian lesbians. (Of course, you don't win Nebula Awards today by writing about English aristocrats!)

"The next day, [Mercedes] Lackey was removed from the conference for using a derogatory racial term." I gather that the "derogatory" phrase she used was the "CP" in "NAACP". That is to say, it's absurd to claim that it is a derogatory term, if the NAACP used it itself. Call it old-fashioned or antiquated.

**Maybe they should have desensitization training: watch *Blazing Saddles* and write an essay about its insightful humor.**

**Worldcon Bids:** Given that China will dominate Worldcon site selection from now on, the list of bids from 2024 through 2031 reads like an obsolete future history chronology.

**Are you thinking that the con-com will pull an "Igor's Bid", and create a WSFS, Inc. governed by Chinese law that will award bids?**

**Joe:** That John Brunner should support the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan is not too remarkable; but Ayn Rand? With her passionate hatred of communism? Not that she was much of a fan of Islam, either, with its devaluation of women. What is your source? I was unable to find anything online to corroborate this.

**As I understood it, she thought the Soviet Union more civilized than Afghanistan.**

**Darrell Schweitzer:** Don't let the disappointing film adaptation, *The King's Daughter*, discourage you from reading Vonda Macintyre's *The Moon and the Sun*, which is a very good book.

The movie did have its moments. I enjoyed the scenes in which King Louis (Pierce Brosnan) spent part of every morning confessing his sins of the night before to obtain absolution. Except some mornings — he's not getting any younger — he can't remember what he did the night before, and his confessor (William Hurt) has to remind him. I found Hurt's performance a little interesting in that it shows the tightrope that an ethical courtier has to walk, to influence an absolute monarch — who is not all bad — without being kicked to the curb.

**Joe:** Raoul Duke in Narnia — I like it!

**KILL THE BODY AND THE HEAD WILL DIE**

—HST

From: **Lloyd Penney** August 2, 2022  
1706-24 Eva Road, Etobicoke, ON  
CANADA M9C 2B2  
[penneys@bell.net](mailto:penneys@bell.net)

Arrrrgh! A day late! I hope this will get in to *Alexiad* 124. So busy with editing books and short stories, plus getting ready for a big steampunk festival north of Toronto, I haven't written a loc in two weeks. Time to make up for things.

Memorial Day is usually busy for us because it is usually the weekend for Anime North, our huge anime convention, but the pandemic pushed forward to July 15-17. It was a great weekend...record attendance for the convention, record sales for us at our vendor's table. I think we will be back every year.

Healthwise, I must report in to an eye specialist near the end of September for laser treatments for my right eye. The lens in that eye was replaced some years ago, and now, the pocket the lens rests in is getting cloudy, and the laser should clear it up. I have my healthy doubts about lasers in the eye, but my right eye has had so much attention over the past 12 years... The laser treatment will also allow me to get new glasses. My vision right now is still good, but it can be frustrating at times.

**I had laser cataract surgery and it went just fine.**

Well, I haven't heard about a Winnipeg NASFiC bid...our friends in Buffalo are going for the 2024 NASFiC, and we are in touch with them to see what we can do to help them. The less I hear about the Chinese Worldcon and what they are doing to change things, the better.

The locol...I have now received four shots, two main shots and two boosters, and if there is any more shots in the fall, I will take them. My two boosters have both been Pfizers. My first shot was Astra-Zeneca, but I rarely hear about those shots. I am sure the Chinese Worldcon was purchased by 3000 sudden members from China with no home addresses. I said above the less I hear about them, the better, but still I want to see how this little exercise plays out.

**One wonders how PharaohCon (Cairo 2026 bid, the former JeddiCon) will do.**

My loc...I am now editing Book 15 of D.J. Holmes' Empire Rising series, and with luck and stiff breeze, I will have it done before the end of this month. I might have to deal with more short stories from Dreamforge Magazine. One book I did finish is by the current managers of *Amazing Stories*, Steve Davidson and Kermit Woodall, detailing the initial writing contests held by Hugo Gernsback in two of his early magazines, and the prize-winning stories will be faithfully reproduced. Those stories were published more than 90 years ago, so there is the charm and curiosity of such old stories being reprinted. The working title is *Cents of Wonder*. (I have let them know the added charm of someone named Penney editing a book with the title *Cents of Wonder*...)

Friday morning, we will be heading up the highway to the village of Coldwater, Ontario

for the annual Coldwater Steampunk Festival, where we are assisting the event manager, and vending to the assembled. Given other events, I am hopeful we will have great sales, and a great time with old friends. We thought that perhaps steampunk was all we had left fanwise, but we reunited with so many friends at the anime convention. Things are looking up, and I hope they will improve even more.

**Maybe you can have someones go as the crew of the flying submarine USS Coldwater (from ERB's *Beyond Thirty*). A realistic Princess Victory costume might just draw attention, though.**

—JTM

End of the page, end of the loc! Take care, be well, and stay safe.

From: **AL du Pisani** August 6, 2022  
945 Grand Prix Street, Weltevredenpark  
1709, REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA  
[du.pisani@kilos40.co.za](mailto:du.pisani@kilos40.co.za)

The final end of the mask mandate for South Africa came with a whimper. For most of the Wuhan Pneumonia restriction period our glorious President would hold a family meeting, where he would chide us for not listening to the regulations the Government had imposed as well as the Government thought we ought to, and then announced updated regulations.

A lot of people thought he could send a Whatsup message instead, as there was usually not a lot of content but a lot of blovination. (Ironically enough, some of the first people I heard talking like this was Black.)

Eventually, this is mostly what happened – the family meetings got canceled and the Government just sent out the updated regulations, each time less than previously, until all of them stopped.

This did not prevent my Medical Aid sending me a message how to be safe I should continue to wear a mask. I have not been impressed by my Medical Aid in a lot of regards, among other things about things they have been telling me during the past couple of years. But I have needed the Medical Aid for some serious medical issues I had, so have persisted in my membership.

**Retired Metro employees have the same medical insurance coverage as working ones do. This has been a great financial relief to me.**

This will come to an end in another three years, when I reach mandatory retirement age for my company. I'll need to find another Medical Aid once I retire. But in the mean time I am trying to scale down, so that leaving work does not come as a complete shock to my system.

I have been very lucky in being able to work from home. I had to be in at the office a couple of days this year – and I do not think I can ever

work full time in the office again. I am among other things not up for the daily grind in the traffic.

Part of the reasons I went to the office was because of electricity supply disruptions. This is over and above loadshedding – When a substation or mini substation burns down and have to be replaced – 10 hours without electricity, 48 hours etc.

In early May I met up with friends during a public holiday, and I jokingly predicted that since we had not had loadshedding for a while, we could expect some more soon. Two days later we had loadshedding for a couple of weeks.



I had a similar meet up during the public holiday in mid June – I did not say anything, but thought that it is about time for another round of loadshedding. I was correct – This time for a good six weeks. The causes this time around were some of the usual – Power stations breaking down, general incompetence, and sabotage by employees. It also had industrial action i.e. strikes, intimidation including throwing petrol bombs at people who wanted to work. [Eskom screwed up my prediction that we will have loadshedding after the next public holiday (9 August), by dropping loadshedding on us before the public holiday. How inconsiderate of them.]

For 14 years the Government have had to acknowledge that there are issues with South Africa's electricity supply. All of the bright ideas they had have not fixed the issues. The same people have more of the same "solutions" in mind – I wonder at what stage we will understand that something else can be tried.

I have been working on a talk on deploying



things with a Technology Readiness Level of Zero, especially with regard to Wind and Solar power generation. What surprised me is how expensive things are, how much of the desired technology not only does not exist, but it may not be scientifically possible at all, and how much propaganda there is to go all in on Wind and Solar.

Makes me expect more dark days ahead. Luckily South Africa cannot afford going all in on Wind and Solar power generation, and it looks as if the people who might have paid for it may soon run out of money themselves.

**So what else is new? The last time our government went in big for "green" power every company that got a grant went broke without producing anything.**

At least the local SF crowd started to meet in public again. Even had an opportunity to eat together. And could find out that some of the people who are living in fear due to the relentless public pronouncements by the "experts", have valid personal reasons to act the way they do.

**Are there many Black members? "Afrofuturism" is a hot thing in publishing here right now. But the Afrofuturist Hugo nominee Oghenechovwe Donald Ekpeki from Nigeria can't get a visa.**

Some years ago I started to get the impression that it is time for me to leave Johannesburg and move south. A lot of things have happened to delay me – Wuhan Pneumonia, health related issues and dental work, to name some of them. I have started to pack up, and placed my house in the market. I hope that by the time of my next letter I have some clarity, even if it is just that I have a temporary location to live.

I hope that Fandom remains open to all of you, pending personal circumstance.

**How do you feel about the two Worldcon bids in Africa (Cairo (2026) and Kampala (2028))?**

—JTM

#### WAHF:

**Martin Morse Wooster**, with various items of interest.

**Lloyd G. Daub**, the same.

**Trinlay Khadro, Rod Smith, Lacy Thomas** with thanks.

#### Breaking News

After two voyages to replenish Australian Antarctic research stations, the new Australian icebreaker RSV *Nuyina* has suffered damage to her propeller shafts and, will be laid up for repairs for an indefinite period.

#### A WARNING TO PUTIN

(Contains vulgar language)

Ukrainians have faced a powerful and arrogant enemy before, and resisted, much to his surprise. As this legendary correspondence indicates:

Sultan Mehmed IV to the Zaporozhian Cossacks:

As the Sultan; son of Muhammad; brother of the sun and moon; grandson and viceroy of God; ruler of the kingdoms of Macedonia, Babylon, Jerusalem, Upper and Lower Egypt; emperor of emperors; sovereign of sovereigns; extraordinary knight, never defeated; steadfast guardian of the tomb of Jesus Christ; trustee chosen by God Himself; the hope and comfort of Muslims; confounder and great defender of Christians — I command you, the Zaporogian Cossacks, to submit to me voluntarily and without any resistance, and to desist from troubling me with your attacks.

—Turkish Sultan Mehmed IV

Zaporozhian Cossacks to the Turkish Sultan!

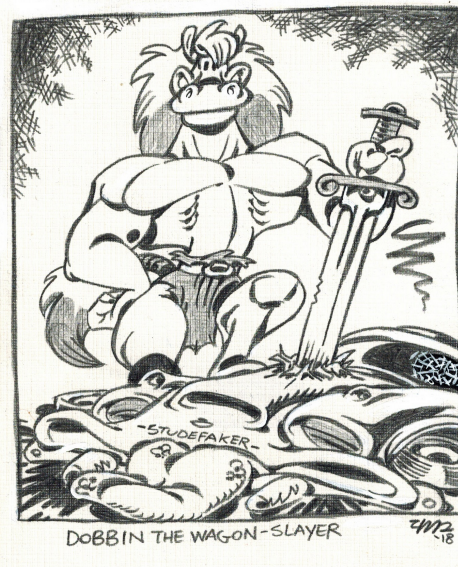
O sultan, Turkish devil and damned devil's kith and kin, secretary to Lucifer himself. What the devil kind of knight are you, that can't slay a hedgehog with your naked arse? The devil excretes, and your army eats. You will not, you son of a bitch, make subjects of Christian sons; we've no fear of your army, by land and by sea we will battle with thee, fuck your mother.

You Babylonian scullion, Macedonian wheelwright, brewer of Jerusalem, goat-fucker of Alexandria, swineherd of Greater and Lesser Egypt, pig of Armenia, Podolian thief, catamite of Tartary, hangman of Kamyanets, and fool of all the world and underworld, an idiot before God, grandson of the Serpent, and the crick in our dick. Pig's snout, mare's arse, slaughterhouse cur, unchristened brow, fuck your mother!

So the Zaporozhians declare, you lowlife. You won't even be herding pigs for the Christians. Now we'll conclude, for we don't know the date and don't own a calendar; the moon's in the sky, the year with the Lord, the day's the same over here as it is over there; for this kiss our arse!

Koshovyi Otaman Ivan Sirko, with the

whole Zaporozhian Host.



#### FAAN AWARDS

**Best Genzine:** *Portable Storage*, William Breiding, ed.

**Best Perzine:** *This Here*, Nic Farey, ed.

**Best Fan Writer:** Mark Plummer

**Best Fan Artist:** Ulrila O' Brien

**Best Letterhack:** Jerry Kaufman

**Best Cover Art:** *Littlebrook #11*, done by Ulrika O'Brien

**Best Special Publication:** *Daangerous Visions*, edited by Sandra Bond, Rob Jackson, and Pat Virzi

**Number One Fan Face:** Nic Farey

Awarded on March 20, 2022 at the Corflu 39 virtual awards ceremony. The physical meeting, **Corflu Pangloss**, in the best of all possible faanish worlds, will be in Vancouver on **October 21-23, 2022**.

<https://corflu.org/index.html>

## FIRST PENGUIN

Virgil Samms and Roderick Kinnison sat in the main room of the bar. It was a low dive in one of the worst spots in town, and they were dressed anonymously. There had been a change in the campaign for the Presidency of the North American Union, which they had to take into account.

"So Witherspoon dies, 'accidentally', and then Morgan is gunned down by some of his own hoods. Small loss, either of them," Kinnison said.

"It's this new boss who bothers me," Samms said. "He comes from nothing, raised by a single mother. He becomes a gang leader, a rising man in the organization. She is killed, he finds his real father, van Dahl. But he's been hypno-conditioned against violence, and van Dahl takes him up as a son."

"Then van Dahl dies, and he becomes a domestic servant for the new Mrs. van Dahl. One night, she dies, slashed to death, and her two children disappear. The hint was that they killed their mother in a quarrel and fled. This leaves Cobblepot as the heir."

"He came from nowhere in the gangs, too. His chief died, and he took control. Now he dominates the gangs and is gaining strength. But he's running for the Presidency — as a reform candidate!"

Kinnison nodded. "He's coming alone. I took precautions."

The door opened and Cobblepot hobbled in. He was a short man with dark hair and a beaky nose, and he was well-dressed. He saw the two Lensmen at their table and waddled towards them, bird-like, supported by his cane. When he came up to the table he smiled, sat down, and said, "A public place. Smart."

Samms scowled. "Knowing your flair for the dramatic, I thought it necessary."

"How flattering. But why exert myself needlessly? The public sees me as a man of action, of change." He paused. "You — *you* — are suspected. Too military, too domineering. The people are concerned about the nature of this Lens you so proudly wear. When Earth was attacked where were you? In The Hill, your fortress of the Patrol, huddling in safety."

Kinnison spoke forcefully. "You're an unstable lunatic, Cobblepot, and people are going to see right through you. I have the law and the Patrol behind me. What have you got?"

He leaned forward, utterly confident, and said, "I have **me**."

"You're psychotic!" Kinnison snapped. Cobblepot bounced to his feet. But Conway Costigan, Mason Northrup, and Jack Kinnison burst out of the back room and levelled their DeLameters at Cobblepot. The barroom seemed to tense up and a woman shouted in terror.

He surveyed the three Lensmen with a strange air of confidence. Then he looked at Kinnison and Samms and smiled. "Oh you," he said cheerfully, and pointed at Samms. "So smart. Always one step ahead!" He raised his hand and snapped his fingers.

Abruptly, everyone else in the bar stood up, drew blasters, and pointed them at the three armed Lensmen. They were too many to control. And Cobblepot, completely at his ease, said, "Never three."

After a nervous moment he said, still smiling, "Relax. I do not want you dead. Besides, what kind of fun would an election be if I were the only candidate?" He reached into his jacket and pulled out — a campaign button, that said "COBBLEPOT FOR PRESIDENT". This he proceeded to pin on Kinnison's jacket. "You're right about one thing. I do need a little help. And I have just the right person in mind."

This was something that had not been in their visualization of the Cosmic All.

— Not by E. E. "Doc" Smith

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Writers, Staff: Major, Joseph, Major, Lisa

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**Art:** What we are mainly looking for is small fillos. Your fillo will probably be scanned in and may be reused, unless you object to its reuse.

**Contributions:** This is not a fictionzine. It is intended to be our fanzine, so be interesting.

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