

# ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

January 28 marked 27 years since the loss of Challenger took the lives of Francis Scobee, Michael Smith, Ellison Onizuka, Judith Resnik, Ronald McNair, Christa McAuliffe and Gregory Jarvis.

February 1 marked ten years since the loss of Columbia. Crew lost then: Rick Husband, William McCool, Michael Anderson, David Brown, Kalpana Chawla, Laurel Clark and Ilan Ramon.

— Lisa

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## Reviewer's Notes

One of the things I've been noting on the James Randi Educational Foundation forum is how people get their own narratives. Before the Internet, a conspiracist had to build his own world, publish it in a mimeo'd or even hekto'd publication with a circulation in the high two digits. Nowadays the conspiracist can assemble a theory with bits and pieces from all over.

And they stick to it in the face of all evidence to the contrary. To some extent this is because conspiracy theories are "compleat"; a massive coverup, generated by an absolutely rigid hierarchy, ruthlessly suppresses evidence to build a narrative. The conspiracist is able to penetrate this veil, to note the tiny slips and scraps of evidence pointing to THE TRUTH, and put forward a narrative.

So the organism (we can call it that) that was intended to dispel misinformation and promote education has instead done the absolute opposite. It isn't the first time that intentions went so wrong.

Meanwhile I'm getting barraged with emails offering me cheap auto insurance, ready payday loans, and notices that my credit limit has changed. Whatever happened to the good old days of Nigerian Princes needing foreign bank accounts?

I haplessly volunteered to do the presentation for NOTA, the SF club here, on what to nominate for the Hugos. Nominations end March 10, so get them out. I was surprised to learn I had actually read some of the novels that the Locus Magazine website suggested. Admittedly one of them was *Captain Vorpatril's Alliance*, and I would love to see Ivan give the back of his hand to the others but . . .

Con schedule is something, anyway, with ConCave at the end of February, ConGlomeration here in Louisville in April, SH/ACD we hope in May (my niece isn't getting married again, we hope), and LoneStarCon in September. I'd like to get to more cons, meet the people, but everything seems to be getting squeezed into a shorter and shorter period. And don't let's talk about hotel rates!

Aging has its problems (but is definitely to be preferred to the alternative). I find it easier to read Kindle books on my iPad. Which does the covers in color, too. But then, everything has a price, and it's the battery charge life with this.

Another problem is feeling the cold. Not as badly as Grant, but then he has health issues beyond that. Still, that means a heating bill of \$\$\$ and that's no fun, particularly at payment time.

Let's try to arrange things in San Antonio *beforehand*.

— Joe

## RANDOM JOTTINGS by Joe



"A Scotsman," Dr Johnson thereupon declared, "could never have the perception of a great city that its inhabitants possess. Not even a Turk could be so benighted in his observations."

— Not from Boswell's *Life of Johnson*

*Johnson's Life of London; The People Who Made the City that Made the World* (Riverhead; 2011, 2012; ISBN 978-1-59448-747-7; \$27.95) is a professional observation of the lives of the noteworthy people who have made the city where the Grand Cham of Literature delivered such apothegms what it is. (Who is covered, along with his friend (strangely enough) John Wilkes.) The author has observed London from the ground up, as it were, being notorious for bicycling about it, and his discussion of the history from Boudica to Churchill is illuminating. He takes time to be historically honest, as when he discusses his not-quite predecessor Sir Richard Whittington and the mythologizing about the cat and other matters.

This Johnson is Boris, the Mayor of London.

I got an email:

Hello,

I'm writing this with great grievance. My family and I came down here to Manila, Philippines on a short vacation, Unfortunately we were mugged at the park of the hotel where we stayed. All money, credit card and cell phones were stolen away from us, luckily for us we still have our passports . . .

And so on. That is, a phishing fraud to get money sent to "an unfortunate friend". (The <undisclosed recipients> field in the address was a hint.) Only this friend was:

Kindest Regards,  
Ethel Aardvark

What did the fen at *Ethel the Aardvark* say when they started getting the bounced emails?

I was reading *Stalin's Secret Agents: The Subversion of Roosevelt's Government* by M. Stanton Evans and Herbert Romerstein (2012; Threshold Editions; \$26) and noted that Romerstein still has this bee in his bonnet about Harry Hopkins.

The proliferation of new and vaguely-demarcated federal agencies under the New Deal certainly created an opportunity for people sliding along the way from interest through sympathy to agency to get into the government, but one must realize that the New Deal was not a commie plot. If you think this is bad stay away from John Koster's *Operation Snow: How a Soviet Mole in FDR's White House Triggered Pearl Harbor* (2012; Regnery; \$27.95) which claims that Harry Dexter White was responsible for the hardening of U.S. policy towards Japan.

Mark Whittington's *Children of Apollo* (2001; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 3 #1) is now available on Kindle for \$5.99. The ebook edition has been cleaned up, eliminating many of the embarrassing misspellings of Russian names, though not all of them.

Not since the publication of "Something for Nothing", the most tragicall comedie of Shakspar's pen, hath the literary world been so excited as by the recent release of the most excellent comedie and tragical romance *Two Gentlemen of Lebowsky* (Adam Bertocci, Simon & Schuster; 2010; ISBN 978-1-4516-0581-5; \$12.99). Prithee, Dude, get thee to ye Greate Rivere of America the South, therein to acquire this quarto.

I've read a memoir of a would-be suicide bomber: *Soldier in the Downfall: A Wehrmacht Cavalryman in Russia, Normandy, and the Plot to Kill Hitler* by Rudolf-Christoph Freiherr von Gersdorff (2012; Aberjona Press; ISBN 978-0-9777563-4-6; \$22.95). He had reason enough; he had come upon the extermination of thousands of Jews in Borissov, Belarus. And his comforting letters from home explained how their co-religionists in Berlin were only slightly better off; Freifrau v. Gersdorff kept her eyes open. Small wonder that her husband put a bomb under his coat and started escorting the Führer around the museum of captured Soviet militaria — only, he ducked the bomb, again, and Gersdorff had the extracted fuze go off only centimeters from his hand.

Before and after, Gersdorff tells of life in the German Army, of fighting on both fronts including a daring and desperate escape from the Falaise pocket. The portrayal of the *Generalität*, the German commanders, is one that should be (but won't, it's too pleasant to hold on to one's fixed beliefs) read by historians and writers of the era.

## MONARCHIST NEWS

DNA tests have indicated that the blood said to have been a memorial of Louis XVI, collected from a handkerchief dipped in his blood after his execution, genetically matches

shows the DNA markers from the head assumed to be that of Henri IV. Why they had to do that instead of asking Juan Carlos, Grand Duke Henri of Luxembourg, or Henri Comte de Paris, is another matter.

**De Fakkelt Wordt Doorgegeven**  
**Department: Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands** has announced that she intends to abdicate on April 30, 2013, in favor of her son, **Willem-Alexander, Prince of Orange**. The queen has suffered some personal losses in the past few years, including the death of her husband **Prince Klaus** (né Claus von Amsberg) and her younger son **Prince Friso** having been caught in an avalanche, leaving him in a coma.

"Really, Baldrick?

Under a car park?

That was your cunning plan?"

The news has just come in that the bones found in the Leicester parking lot are indeed those of Richard III. This is a great archeological discovery. It has been at least twenty years since Sharon Penman's *Sunne in Splendour* gave me an interest in the last Plantagenet king. His is a fascinating story. Riches to rags, rags to riches, riches to rags, a crown and then a death of shame. The controversy over the death of his nephews has lasted more than five hundred years during which both defenders and attackers have passionately defended their opinions. I'm inclined to give Richard the benefit of the doubt because most other rival heirs survived him but not Henry VII. Without a time machine, though, the fate of the princes will no doubt continue to cause controversy.

— Lisa

And as year follows year,  
More old men disappear,  
Someday no one will march there  
at all.

Report by Joseph T Major

Remaining is:

**Poland**

Józef Kowalski\* (112) 22 Pulk Ułanów

\* "WWI-era" veteran, enlisted between the Armistice and the Treaty of Versailles

Here's Grant and his telescope. Now if he can ever get to *use* it . . .



## SING YOU SINNERS

Commentary by Joseph T Major on  
 “**SWING YOU SINNERS!**” (1930)

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0141869/>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8b8isnhYMjg>

Sound came into movies in 1927. Animated cartoons date as far back as 1892; the first noteworthy one was “Gertie the Dinosaur” (1914) drawn and produced by Winsor McCay of *Little Nemo in Slumberland* fame, for an interactive multimedia vaudeville performance.

Sound movies had existed prior to 1927, just as animated cartoons were shown before 1914. The methods used then were akin to those in the movies in Robert Charles Wilson’s *Julian Comstock* (2009; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 9 #3), where a silent film is shown with live voice actors.

So, in 1930 these technologies were new, and the rules were not quite hard-and-fast. Max and Dave Fleischer were among those who were adventuring in this domain with no map, rules, or guides save what they drew themselves.

They had begun with a series of silent animated cartoons, the “Out of the Inkwell” series, beginning in 1918. These were not entirely hand-drawn animation, combining a mix of live-action, stop-motion animation, and rotoscoping with the hand-drawn animation. The Fleischers were pioneers in the rotoscope process, which has drawings done over frames of a live-action film. (There was some annoyance when publicity for Ralph Bakshi’s *J. R. R. Tolkien’s The Lord of the Rings* (1978) presented the process as an innovation by Bakshi.) Their best-known use of the process, to jump ahead a little, was in their Technicolor feature *Gulliver’s Travels* (1939).

Several other series followed. The Fleischer Studios was bought by Paramount, and when sound came in they began producing the “Talkatoon” series. The first continuing character in the Talkatoons was Bimbo a humaniform dog, albeit Betty Boop, the best-known character, was introduced later in 1930.

This was the fifth cartoon with Bimbo; it was released on September 24, 1930. The title is a take-off on a popular song of the time, “Sing, You Sinners”, which is used (with appropriately changed lyrics) in the cartoon.

It all starts innocently enough. Bimbo is loitering when he sees a chicken, which he resolves to steal. The chicken is a little more resolute, and always manages to stay just out of his reach. At one point its legs suddenly stretch to flamingo length. Reality is very flexible here.

During this chase the two of them move in keeping with the musical background. I’m indebted to Rod Smith for pointing out the Fleischers’ background in the jazz scene. The third Fleischer brother, Lou, had joined the company then, and he had a background as a composer.

Bimbo pursues the chicken until they

reach a chicken house. They proceed to have a fight, during which they switch clothes and at one point heads. Reality is very flexible here.

Tired of fighting, the chicken dives into the house again, Bimbo reaches in to get it, grabs, pulls, and finds he has pulled out — a policeman. Law enforcement must be very strict in this part of Toontown, as Bimbo imagines himself at hard labor, followed by the electric chair. With an air of casual calmness not quite overcoming his blatant nerves, he puts the chicken’s neck in the policeman’s hand and strolls away.

The policeman pursues — again, they all move in keeping with the music. Indeed, at one point during a brass section, the policeman pulls off his helmet (old-fashioned cops), and merges it with his baton to make a bugle. I said reality is very flexible here.

The chicken knows it has him. It pounces on Bimbo’s head and pulls his nose off, which hangs on a spring until he pulls his tongue. One could get some very confused ideas of anatomy from this. The chicken then jumps into the back of his shorts, flips over, and walks back towards the cop, Bimbo somewhat helpless on its back.

But he finally manages to get away, and runs through a convenient gate. The gate closes behind him, the lock turns into a mouth which swallows the key, and the gate morphs into a part of the wall. Perhaps it wasn’t so convenient. Bimbo is in a cemetery, you see.

A mouth gapes in the ground. Tombstones close in on him. He escapes, only to face a barrage of accusations from other tombstones, and even one grave, which shoots up a block of soil which gains a face and joins the chorus of accusations. Bimbo begins sweating profusely, when not having his feet spontaneously freeze in a block of ice, or a (presumably yellow) stripe run down his back.

Bimbo tries burying himself, which in that particular company may not have been the best idea. A skeleton emerges from one grave and puts a “For Rent” sign on an adjacent tombstone over an open grave.

In an attempt to escape, or at least put some distance between him and the vengeful gravestones, Bimbo climbs a flagpole. No such luck, now ghosts appear and join in accusing him, and the flagpole drops him on a tombstone.

The ghosts berate him for various failings and sins, and his frightened, pathetic answers that he isn’t going to do it any longer are susceptible of different interpretations. One of the accusations is, perhaps not surprisingly, of stealing chickens, but others include playing dice. He flees and the trees in the graveyard join in attacking him.

After running from place to place, except for the time he got stuck, Bimbo finds there’s no place left to run to. This is mostly because the walls start closing in. When he is trapped in what now is on the proportions of a short chimney, he squeezes out and flees to a barn.

It shouldn’t surprise you that the barn door also vanishes once he enters the building. At first, things seem normal inside the barn. Then

the implements turn on him; a pile of hay with a pitchfork in it takes up the fork and attacks, a scythe grows legs and eyes and makes threatening passes, and a grain sack gains a face and legs, repeating more accusations. While this is going on the steps open up and ghosts pop out. Two more ghosts start slapping their behinds as they dance, to a drum passage.

Bimbo flees into a room. The doorknob shifts to the other side (reality is *extremely* flexible here) and he marches out, being pursued by a ghost that is playing something between a bugle and a trombone. Which sucks out his underpants; the underpants promptly turn into another ghost which joins the choir. And then there is the chicken-flamingo dancing around, not to mention some even more grotesque creatures. One ghost chases him with a razor, threatening to cut off his head; another twists itself into a barber pole, whereupon the barber ghost steps out from behind the pole and resumes the throat-slitting theme.

In a panic, he breaks out of the barn. It promptly grows legs and begins chasing after him, with ghosts popping out of it to utter threats and dire predictions. They are joined by a number of outré and strange entities, all out to get him.

Pursued by an entire column of ghosts, Bimbo heads for a cave. And you thought the previous refuges were a mistake. In the depths of this cavern there are floating heads, a nerd licking its thumbs, a giant frog slapping its belly and sweating profusely as it dances, another ghost with a razor that cuts Bimbo’s head off (but it joins back on), and some more bizarre and terrifying things. Imagine a D&D™ dungeon adventure that had *that!* A giant skull appears and takes Bimbo into its mouth. Fadeout and

THE END

A

U.M.&M. TV CORP.

Presentation

The commentary on Cracked.com (where I first saw this) was to the effect that the artists must have been on LSD, though that hadn’t even been synthesized until 1935. Maybe the rye bread in the ham on rye the studo cafeteria was serving had ergot.

I’m indebted to Marc Schirmeister for pointing out that the Fleischers had suffered a substantial defection to Disney just before this, and that several of the scenes were the work of one of their leading animators.

Some of the Fleischers’ earlier, silent cartoons had been blurring distinctions. Their “Out of the Inkwell” cartoons, for example, had Max Fleischer as the animator setting up obstacles for KoKo the Clown, their first recurring character. This can be taken as a

prelude to "Duck Amuck" (1953), where Daffy Duck has to face a somewhat more malicious animator.

Some of the descriptions and characterizations in this cartoon might not be found acceptable by later standards. Bimbo is accused of "shooting craps", which was then taken to be a "negro thing". (This may be part of the reason that the character was dropped once the Hays Code went into effect, that and being a companion of Betty Boop, which would transgress other limits.) One of the ghosts has a rather Levantine appearance and acts rather like a Yiddish peddler. Oy.

The Fleischer cartoons could be called in modern parlance "edgy". Betty Boop was notoriously sexy, for example, and what could be made of her name, with two B's. They also contained ethnic stereotypes. One of their Superman cartoons, "Jungle Drums" (1943), has some less than positive portrayals of indigenous African peoples.

Was this intended for children? Probably not. The standard movie program was two main features, a newsreel, a live short feature, and a cartoon. Cartoons, of course, need not be child-oriented, or solely child oriented. One reason the Warner stable is still viable is that the cartoons operate on several levels. Children will see "Rabbit of Seville" (1950) as another romp with Bugs humiliating Elmer again; more educated types will pick up (or be led into) Rossini. "Let me trim your mop . . . let me shave your crop . . . Dain-ti-ly! Dain-ti-ly!"

This is an adult cartoon. It would go well on a horror program; one imagines Elvira, Mistress of the Darkness introducing it, or Forrest J Ackerman giving it a front page item in *Famous Monsters of Filmland*. It strikes at fears of death and mutilation, of power and subordination, in images shifting from merely morbid to hallucinatory; in short, a nightmare realized in celluloid.

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#### I HAVE A LITTLE DREIDEL

Review by Joseph T Major of

#### **POLTERHEIST**

by Laura Resnick

(DAW: 2012;

ISBN 978-0-7564-0733-9; \$7.99)

Oy, Esther, the goyische horrors don't let up. You should with Leviathan, Behemoth, and Ziz, go around, or date a good Jewish dybbuk, not those treife vampires (oops, that was the last book, *Vamparazzi*).

Instead, between jobs again, Esther Diamond is Dreidel the Hanukkah Elf in the Solsticeland at Fenster & Co. The Dickens! It's multicultural now, but if they're going to have Solstice where are Xena and Gabrielle?

Maybe she should have had Xena. The Fenster family is coming apart, and they don't even care that they're quarreling in front of an employee. There are inexplicable thefts. And then the building and fixtures are possessed.

All these things are connected. And Maximilian Zadok A.B. (Oxon, MDCLXVIII) realizes how and why, and even who, the

poltergeist is behind all the events.

Then the only problem is to find out about how to get rid of it . . . without getting killed first. What with organized crime, city police (no, they are not the same thing), family feuds, and the hazards of an undercapitalized enterprise, Esther has enough *natural* hazards to survive. Oh, and there's also other family problems, or why does a good Jewish girl fall so hard for such a handsome shaygetz?

Well, we'll find out in the next book, *The Misfortune Cookie*, and hope that Esther does not find herself listening to a voice alternately guttural and siblant, falling into long magnetic eyes of the true cat-green . . .

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#### THE WIND AND THE MOUNTAIN LION

Review by Joseph T Major of

#### **THE DOCTOR AND THE ROUGH RIDER**

by Mike Resnick

(Pyr: 2012;

ISBN 978-1-61614-690-0; \$17.95;

HarperCollins; \$11.99 [Kindle])

"A Weird West Tale"

However did Bwana keep from writing this one first?

In the days of old, when the Native Medicine Men kept the white-eyes across the Mississippi, a few valiant and strange ones were suffered to venture thence. Such fabulous figures as Bat Masterson, Wyatt Earp, William "Billy the Kid" Bonney, Santiago (oops, wrong place of striking and exotic men), and above all William Henry "Doc" Holliday gravitated to this exotic arena. A frontier engenders and attracts extraordinary people.

But there were those there already, among them a rather weary man, He Who Yawns, or in his own tongue Goylathay, or as the incomers styled him, Jerome — er Geronimo. He has been responsible for the prevention, and now he has come to realize that there is no future in it. One of the white-eyes who has been let pass will be the one to make the difference.

His colleagues are not so enthusiastic about the idea. Accordingly, they have created a warrior spirit to kill Goylathay and his enablee. It can't hurt anyone else, as Doc Holliday finds out when he goes out to look for it.

Now all he has to do is survive being with his new associate, this four-eyed easterner called Teedee. Like I said, it took an immense effort of will for him to not write this first, go to conventions pressing copies into fans' hands, buy time on cable to read the book out loud . . .

Even so, Theodore Roosevelt can be killed, believe it or not. So he needs special weapons to take on this demon. This is where the inventors Tom Edison and Ned Buntline come in, and their weapons are hardly "steampunk", but the sort of thing you would see in this mundane world. (I recall the Tom Clancy [and whatever uncredited additional writers were brought in to do the actual work] novel about a war with Japan where Mr. Clark the operative brought down a Japanese cargo plane with a

searchlight.)

And in the confrontation? This is **Theodore Roosevelt!** As he said in his memoirs, *Alone in Cuba*, "It would be impossible for to carry the war to a successful conclusion unless I was free, so I sent the army home and attacked San Juan Hill." Enjoy this, and wait for more as this saga of the weird west is . . . **To Be Continued**

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#### JELLYSTONE BURNT OUT

Review by Joseph T Major of

#### **SUPERVOLCANO: ALL FALL DOWN**

by Harry Turtledove

(RoC: 2012;

ISBN 978-0-451-46481-1; \$26.95;

Penguin (Kindle); \$12.99)

Sequel to *Supervolcano: Eruption*

(2012; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 11 #2)

This is a gray world. Mostly because of the vast quantities of volcanic ash emitted from the Yellowstone Caldera, as described in the first volume. The world is hanging on, coming back in some ways, falling back in others.

This volume continues the various lives of the Ferguson family, which unlike some peoples', continue in various fashions. The *paterfamilias* is a Los Angeles policeman, trying to make do in an oil-short world with a mysterious serial killer out there. His new wife is a volcanologist investigating the new caldera. One child is a musician, stranded in snowbound and ungoverned Maine; another is doing all sorts of things to get by in a refugee camp in Arkansas.

Turtledove has eschewed the spectacular; no Lizards from outer space (oops, that's the other series), Japanese superbusinessmen buying up the country, Commie revolutionaries taking over, bits of the country hiving off one way or another . . . they would all be hit hard too, and just trying to get by. There are no dramatic famines, just food shortages, no new plagues or wars, just the same old thing.

John W. Campbell spoke of the "ordinary novel of the future world". This is just that; the future world is blighted and damaged, people hold on and do what they can.

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#### FOR WANT OF A BERG

Review by Joseph T Major of

#### **THE AMERICAN WORLD WAR:**

##### ***The Coming Storm Book I***

(2013: ISBN 9781452884387; \$ )

##### **THE AMERICAN WORLD WAR:**

##### ***Conflagration Book II***

(2013: ISBN 978-1453768259; \$ )

##### **THE AMERICAN WORLD WAR:**

##### ***A World Gone Mad Book III***

(2013: ISBN 9781453862513; \$ )

by Mike Hall

This is an odd work. The books are available from Amazon but there is no publisher or copyright page. The only indication is a line on the back page that says they were produced in Lexington, Kentucky.

This isn't quite a novel, but a "For Want of a Nail" style book. Instead of Sobel's history,

what Hall has done is to present a selection of newspaper articles, official reports, transcripts of meetings, and the like. This takes a lot more effort than the usual AH novel, and allows a diversity of perspectives.

Yes, Hall does remember that the world is diverse and widespread. Some of his portrayals are outré. Some readers may find his meticulous listings of orders of battle to be a little boring.

Unlike the typical dystopian result (most AH writers would seem to subscribe to the Panglossian theory that “this is the best of all possible worlds” by making their alternate time-lines horrific) Hall’s world has its good and bad points. Reading a statement made by a white Army officer defending his black soldiers against racist accusations, for example.

The Point of Departure is that the *Titanic* did not sink, but was badly damaged when she hit the iceberg. This lead to different results, and there are some butterfly effects, too (i.e., Frances Gumm dies very young in an automobile accident, and so *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) stars Shirley Temple, who was closer to Dorothy’s age in the original book anyway). Others would be more pleased to read of the killing of Douglas MacArthur during the Bonus March.

On a broader perspective, Hall has other effects causing the United States to get into the world wars earlier, but having a larger army because of the need to occupy Mexico. Uh, you see, there was more than one war with Mexico, for a variety of reasons.

The book is not without jokes. Hall is publishing subsequent chapters (this is not all that there is) on the Naval Fiction board, and one of the major “new” characters is a Tuckerization of another contributor.

This won’t be to everyone’s tastes, and it is not so much a novel as a work of its timeline, like the annotated edition of Adolf Hitler’s Hugo-winning work *Lord of the Swastika* (1953, 1959, 1972).

#### LASSITUDE OF MARS

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**JOHN CARTER AND THE GODS OF HOLLYWOOD**

by Michael D. Sellars  
(2012; Universal Media;  
ISBN 978-0-615-68231-0; \$15.95;  
Amazon Digital Services; \$3.99)

“Give a Thark but one hand and his head, and he will conquer,” they say, and the deft medical skill of the women of Thark can restore a conquering warrior. So it was that Sola, my first such aid when I arrived on the red planet, had come to my service again. Now she was patching up my latest wound. “How did this come to pass, John Carter?” she said as she applied their medicaments. “The wound is small, yet burned.”

“The warrior who struck me down bewilders me. She was clad as a

Jasoomian, yet to the eye she appeared as a Bowman of Lothar, with their white skin and auburn hair. Her arrow, though, was not ordinary. She had set it afire, and it was the combination of the blow and the fire that left me disadvantaged . . .”

— Not from *The Games of Mars* by Edgar Rice Burroughs

Why did the movie *John Carter* fail so badly? An observer who did all he could to prevent that tells the story of this dismal failure in this work, and the portrayal does not reflect well on the efforts of the supposed professionals.

Like every other Burroughs fan, Michael Sellars was energized by the prospect of a Barsoom movie. The first chapter of this book tells about the origin of the original book and the history of the various efforts to bring it to the screen. Perhaps the most promising one was Bob Clampett’s concept of an animated movie. The test footage he drew for it still exists and unsurprisingly is on YouTube.

So when the work emerged from development into actual pre-production, it was quite good news. Only . . . only the people at Disney seemed quite laggard about publicizing it. Sellars makes several comparisons of the publicity efforts on Twitter and Facebook to the parallel ones done for *The Hunger Games*. Katniss far outshot the Warlord, it seems.

Sellars did his own part, setting up a fan website that seems to have done better than the official efforts. (This can be said because the official efforts were pathetically small.) He watched as turnovers in Disney management meant the movie languished. Other controlling factors were the pace of acquisitions; Disney had bought Marvel Comics and was negotiating to buy the Star Wars franchise; both of these seemed more worthy efforts to them.

In addition, bad luck hit; the *John Carter* ad for the Super Bowl fell into a thirty-second slot. The short version didn’t say much.

Sellars touches on some of the strange decisions the management made. For example, the movie was to be titled *John Carter of Mars*, in keeping with the book titles. (Granted, the book *John Carter of Mars* (1964) is a collection of two stories, one by John Coleman Burroughs.) Then the “Mars” was dropped. They considered “Mars” to be a negative factor, since *Mars Needs Moms* (2011) had bombed so badly. Now these are professionals so don’t try this at home.

And then the movie was released. It lagged. Two blows took it down not long thereafter; ten days after the release, Disney announced they would be writing off a loss on the film, and *The Hunger Games* was released two weeks later.

There might be some problems to consider. One can imagine that Hollywood professionals might look with disdain on fanboys, amateurs with no judgement. Other films and franchises which were more successful did embrace this;

one has but to look at the relationship between Gene Roddenberry and his fans. Or that the BBC, needing a series bible for *Dr. Who*, turned to Whovians to compile it.

On the Burroughs front, the book is endorsed by Richard A. Lupoff, author of *Master of Adventure: The Worlds of Edgar Rice Burroughs* (2005; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 5 #4).

One commentator said that Sarbanes-Oxley rules required that the writedown be announced when it was. Perhaps. If so, this is another consequence of an ill-judged decision to move the release from June to March.

Publishers at least took the movie into consideration. There were reissues of the John Carter books. And of course a reimagining to modern values, *Jane Carver of Waar* (2012),

Sellars might be considered to have a distorted perspective. His references and notes make it all too clear that the professionals dropped the ball; they failed in the critical task of publicity. A great and growly voice did not even say Poop-Poop-Poopy and the days of John Carter were not long in the land, and here’s why.

. . . I stepped forward, keen steel blade in hand, viewing the obstacle that blocked my path. It was not any of the creatures of Barsoom. More like a human, it was four-limbed, its body was sable black, and it was clad in short knickerbockers of a crimson hue. Its feet and hands were clad in white, and the most noticeable of its features that I could see were the great rounded ears that stuck up above its head. It was facing away from me, and if it would not move I would be stranded underground, unnoticed for eternity; yet I could not attack from behind even such a great helpless creature . . .

— Not from *Silence of Mars* by Edgar Rice Burroughs

#### CROWDED WASTE

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**1912:**

**The Year the World Discovered Antarctica**  
by Chris Turney  
(2012; Counterpoint;  
ISBN 978-1-58243-789-7; \$27.00;  
Amazon Digital Services; \$14.85)  
<http://www.counterpointpress.com>  
<http://www.christurney.com>

Amundsen was afraid of the competition. Not the British Antarctic Expedition, for he thought he had a head start on them, but someone else who casually dropped by the Bay of Whales.

Kaiser Wilhelm II wondered if it were worth it. In three years or so, he said, airship technology would have developed to the point where such efforts would be unnecessary.

Robert E. Peary, who said (and many believed him) that he had reached the other pole first, had been warned by the opposing claimant, in days when their relationship was

less hostile, to take certain steps regarding his health. Having imbedded the skills and knowledge of the Inuit, he thought that this physician's advice was far from being helpful; they knew better than to do that.

As the centennial year drags to its end, most people know that Roald Engebret Gravning Amundsen beat out his competitor Robert Falcon Scott, C.V.O., Captain R.N. by such a margin that Amundsen had got to Tasmania by the time Scott died. Yet in that year there were other explorers travelling the polar wastes, and Professor Turney has done a worthwhile thing in setting them and their notable competitors in context.

The book begins with an introduction showing what was known about the southern continent before then, which wasn't a whole lot. And it took a lot of effort just to get there to find it out; fundraising was a very important part of expeditions, which is why so many mountains have the names of very rich people.

Such as those bestowed by Sir Ernest Shackleton. Nowadays, every book about these explorations mentions him, which certainly wasn't the case until the nineties. (For example, the first published edition of Scott's journal had cut out of it all the references to Shackleton, most of which were very bitter.)

Scott wanted to white out his former subordinate in other ways, and his expedition was a very top-down, hierarchical affair. Turney points out that the British Antarctic Expedition had a large, ambitious, and mostly successful scientific program — as a geologist with Antarctic experience, he would.

Amundsen he characterizes as efficient but not particularly good at human relations. Thus, after his first effort, when the party had to return because it was too cold, he ignored two men who had fallen behind on the last day of the trip. But they had left early enough that they could try again — and they succeeded, most efficiently, and made sound geological discoveries along the way. But once he got back, Amundsen had to hide to write up his story, and was assailed by the press. You thought that was new?

But he had been bothered by another expedition that had visited his base Framheim at the Bay of Whales. Not the *Terra Nova* of Scott's expedition, but the *Kainan Maru* of Nobu Shirase's (Shirase Nobu) Japanese expedition. Shirase had a number of problems before he even set out, including that there was not much Japanese expertise on exploring, he was an army officer trying to use a naval vessel (you thought that was new?), and that he was so broke that he had to raise money in Australia after the *Kainan Maru* had to turn back. The second try was a little more successful, including the first landing on King Edward VII Land east of the Ross Ice Shelf, and a brief incursion over the shelf itself. Shirase had to raise more money to pay back the debts; there was little interest in Japan, but he managed to get the debts cleared up before his death in 1946. He has since been

recognized for his efforts.

The German efforts in polar exploration were often less than fruitful. The most successful expedition was Alfred Wegener's (the guy who postulated continental drift) exploration of Greenland — on which he died! Wilhelm Filchner was a little more venturesome, and might have wished he had died. When he approached the All Highest Supreme Warlord of Germany for help, the Kaiser initially replied with that technological prediction. But Germany was a *federal* country, and he got help from the ruler of his own birthplace, Prince-Regent Luitpold of Bavaria. Unfortunately, the help didn't extend to picking a sane ship captain. Richard Vahsel, the commander of the expedition ship *Deutschland*, was of the opinion that he was master and commander — and that he could throw the leader of the expedition into the brig, if he felt like it. The *Deutschland* sailed into the Weddell Sea, built a base on the ice shelf, only to have a berg calve with the expedition hut. They rescued the supplies, but the *Deutschland* ended up frozen in for the winter. Vahsel died during this period, Filchner suspected of syphilis. The expedition returned safely all the same, but Antarctic exploration was out of the question in Germany for that and other reasons for another twenty-five years.

Meanwhile, another ambitious expedition was surveying Wilkes Land, named by the man who set off the *Trent* Affair. Douglas Mawson had been on Shackleton's 1909 expedition. This expedition (as well as that one) also included the chronic Antarctic explorer Frank Wild. Mawson took the first airplane and the first wireless (radio); the former didn't work and the latter had an operator who was insane. It was Mawson who was one of the sufferers of hypervitaminosis A, from eating dog liver. For more on this and other matters Lennard Bickel's *Mawson's Will* (1977, 2000) is the source. (In his *Alone on the Ice: The Greatest Survival Story in the History of Exploration* (2013) David Roberts claims that there were other factors.) Mawson was at that more successful than most of the other explorers. (Dr. Cook had diagnosed Peary with pernicious anemia, inability to absorb vitamin B12 with resulting blood disorders, and prescribed eating liver. The Inuit did not eat dog liver, their experience being that those who did suffered some really horrid symptoms, and Peary, having absorbed that wisdom, said, "I would rather die." — and did.)

One charge that Turney cites is a claim, allegedly made to Lord Curzon by Oriana Wilson (Dr. Wilson's widow) that the Last Supporting Party had taken too much food and the Polar Party had been malnourished because of this. The problem is that there is no substantiation. The references in Scott's diary to shortages are of *paraffin* (kerosene), and that was because of poor design of the fuel cans. The possible source seems to be notes by Wilson that his widow destroyed. Since Scott was quite open about the failings real or

perceived of those he distrusted, this is problematic but not entirely proven.

In other matters Turney argues:

It was this philosophy — this ability to see science, adventure and communication as one — that drew people to Shackleton's projects.

I fear we've since taken a wrong turn. The scientific work continues to be done, but we don't tell the same story in the same way anymore . . . I don't believe the public has lost interest, but as a scientist I do wonder whether we could do better. . .

— Page 300

The public may have lost interest. But then, the public is more interested in video games ("Your mobile phone has more computing power than all of NASA in 1969. NASA launched a man to the Moon. We launch a bird into pigs."), in celebrity catastrophes, and such, and they want it now, and with all opinions represented and all precautions taken. And when you discuss the moon landings, you have to give equal time to the hoax believers.

For more detail on Amundsen's life, *The Last Viking: The Life of Roald Amundsen* by Stephen R. Bown (Da Capo Press; 2012; ISBN 978-0-306-82067-0; \$27.50; Kindle \$9.62) is worth reading. You'll understand the scene in James Blish's *Frozen Year/Fallen Star* (1957) where the process server chases the expedition's plane as it's taking off.

#### CONFUSION AFFAIRS

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**THE PSEUDO-SCIENCE WARS:  
 Immanuel Velikovsky and the Birth of the  
 Modern Fringe**  
 by Michael D. Gordin  
 (University of Chicago Press; 2012;  
 ISBN 978-0-226-30442-7; \$29.00;  
 University of Chicago Press/Amazon Digital  
 Services; \$9.90)

John W. Campbell gave Immanuel Velikovsky no credence.

Why is this important? As you know, Bob, Campbell fell for too many pseudo-scientific beliefs; first the science of modern mental health derived by one of his writers, then the wonderful psionics machines . . . but never, never, the theories of cosmic collisions.

The story of how psychiatrist Immanuel Velikovsky came to America and presented a new general theory of science, prehistory, and memory, and was cruelly persecuted for it, yet persevered until his demise, is well known. Gordin recounts the two waves of support, and the constant tide of opposition.

What is bothersome about Gordin's approach is that he never quite seems to want to inquire into *why* all the experts dismissed Velikovsky. He doesn't seem to want to go into there being objective reality and things that are wrong — and it seemed, no matter what field Velikovsky dipped into in his far-



flung synthesis, those acquainted with that field were not impressed. (The usual response was “I’m amazed by his erudition in everything else, but he got my field of expertise totally wrong.”)

In addition, he knew how to be vague. The small but fanatically devoted cadre of believers still proudly point to his description of Venus as “candescent” as proof of his brilliant prediction of later discovery of its high temperature. As near as I can determine, “candescent” would mean “giving off light”.

It is at least better than Alfred de Grazia’s *The Velikovsky Affair* (1966), which follows the thesis of “great original thinker being persecuted by the Establishment”.

Gordin ought to be able to make that distinction. He has written about the Soviet nuclear weapons program; *Red Cloud at Dawn: Truman, Stalin, and the End of the Atomic Monopoly* (2009; reviewed in *Alexiad* V.9 #1).

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IT’S NOT WHAT YOU KNOW,  
IT’S WHO YOU KNOW  
Review by Joseph T Major of  
**FATAL FRIENDS, DEADLY  
NEIGHBORS:**

**Ann Rule’s Crime Files Volume 16**  
by Ann Rule

(2012; Pocket Books;

ISBN 978-1-4516-4828-7; \$7.99;

Simon & Schuster Digital Sales; \$6.99)

“Friends & Family” is a Verizon Wireless feature that allows people with limited minutes to designate a number of people who can be called off-limits. (I had this until I got the unlimited minutes plan.)

But “friends & family” are also the first suspects in murder cases, and not without cause. They have means and opportunity, often have motive, and their DNA and fingerprints are all over the crime scene anyway.

As might be noted in the case of **Fire and Ice: The Powell Family Tragedy**. Josh Powell was not the most ideal of fathers. He could never keep a job, being always certain that he knew more than the boss, and never at a loss to say so. He was a controlling type, berating his wife, Susan, for spending too much for food. She had the job that brought in most of the family budget at the time, understand.

One day Josh decided to take their two sons out camping. Which sounds perfectly reasonable and very kind, were it not that he made the decision and took action close to midnight on the cold evening of December 6, 2009. And when he came home, what to his amazement did he find but that Susan had left home without money or other possessions, and had not come back.

The investigation went very carefully. There was nothing overtly to accuse him for, but he did have motive and opportunity. That spur-of-the-moment camping trip, for example. But they didn’t have a body. It is

possible to convict murderers without a body, but it takes other overt signs of murder, which were not forthcoming.

(Rule evokes the expertise of Dr. Michael Baden, as she had in a previous case evoked that of Herbert Leon MacDonell. That Baden testified to the most arrant nonsense in the Simpson trial, and MacDonell did likewise for Mumia, should indicate why expert witnesses have earned their reputation.)

The family got . . . difficult. (Josh’s father Steven’s legal troubles with child pornography play a sinister undercurrent to the events of this case.) Finally, on February 6, 2012, during a supervised visit for the two boys, Josh slammed the door in the social worker’s face, and a moment later his new house was in flames. He had wounded the boys with an axe, then sat on a can of gas and started a fire. (It didn’t help the response that the 911 operator asked for all sorts of trivia.) Yes, the boys were dead, too.

The problems of the legal system can prove too much for human needs. Any case against Josh Powell had to be most carefully and thoroughly made. If he were to be tried and acquitted, through some lapse in the prosecution’s efforts, for all the inconvenience he would have been cleared. The spouse is always the first suspect in such a murder.

Maybe not in the next one, where **Two Strange Deaths in Coronado** were the latest argument that the house where these took place was cursed. On the morning of July 13, 2011, millionaire entrepreneur Jonah Shacknai was not enjoying his new residence, the Spreckles Mansion; his son Max had been fallen from a landing, pulling a chandelier with him, and was in a coma; Jonah was staying at the Ronald MacDonald House next to the hospital.

His brother Adam was staying in the mansion’s guesthouse. He was the one who found Jonah’s girlfriend Becky Zahau — hanging naked and bound from a balcony.

And, unfortunately, that’s it. There is no evidence to incriminate Adam or anyone else. The way that Becky died is contrary to a verdict of suicide, yet there is no sign of any break-in.

On top of that, Max Shacknai died not long after Becky. The events of his fatal injury make no sense as described.

The house could be considered to be cursed, it having been originally built by the father of the man who shot the surviving founder of the *San Francisco Chronicle*. (The other founder had been shot and killed by the mayor of San Francisco (see *War of Words* (2009) by Simon Read for this; journalism has taken a turn for the worse in the past few years.)

Ann Rule doesn’t like telling stories that don’t have a clear resolution. The choice of this one, as exotic, strange, and titillating as it might be, does indeed seem out of place.

This is followed by a collection of older stories, from the days when “Andy Stack” wrote for true-crime magazines, before a woman could be anything more than the tied-up model being menaced on the cover.

Burle and Olive Bramhall of Seattle were almost professional doers of good deeds. On the night of August 2, 1978, a sick mind led to a **Double Death for the Kind Philanthropists**. They were found in their house, bludgeoned to death. It wasn’t long before one of the neighbors turned out to have the insane belief that they were evil. As Rule observes, they would likely have felt for him, wished to get help for his mental problems. Forgive him? That’s something we can’t know.

The University Towers Hotel in Seattle rang in 1975 with an unusual chorus: **“Fire!”** Indeed, the building was hit with several fires during that year, carefully and cunningly set, only prevented from being worse by the quick and effective notice of a security guard. It didn’t take a John Douglas to determine that said guard was always Johnny-on-the-spot because he had *set* the fires. And he made his own fate by going on the stand and showing what an expert he was on the topic, too; the mentality who would know he could outwit all the dumb firemen and cops, and become a hero who saved the day.

Also in 1975, there was a rapist out there in Seattle, a rapist who had **An Obsession with Blondes**. He stalked them, cornered them, and used them; he had a need to be dominant, it seemed. His victims had the courage to identify him and he was soon unmasked. But Rule ends the story with a terrifying note; he did his time, got out, and now has a gun permit.

February 14 of 1975 was **The Last Valentine’s Day** for a young teenage woman. More shattering, her father found the body, and her boyfriend was the principal suspect. But there was no evidence for him, and yet he lived under the shadow of the crime for thirty-two years, until he was dying from liver cancer, when the murderer was finally found; a neighbor boy (then) who had been stalking the victim, and finally decided if he couldn’t have her nobody could. Justice delayed is justice denied.

All Saints’ in 1977 had a murder, a woman separated from her husband, but trying to reconcile. This was not much of a case, save for the psychology of **The Man Who Loved Too Much** and couldn’t stand to have his wife leave him.

The first signs were in June of 1978 when two hikers found **Terror on a Mountain Trail**. They were raped. And when the suspect was released on bond, more women in a less rural environment were stalked or worse. He was convicted, did his time, and was released — when, twenty years later, he committed a murder. An Army Ranger, gone wrong, leading the way into pain and death.

**No One Knows Where Wendy Is**, but there was a friend who was quite happy to comfort and reassure the family of the little girl who disappeared from home of the sergeant posted to Joint Base Lewis-McChord near Tacoma. And then her body was found . . . the comforter, who had been so helpful to the family and police, was also the killer, and when he came to trial, pleaded temporary insanity. That trick hardly ever works, and all the steps

he had taken to cover up indicated it. So he got life in prison.

The most dangerous potential killer is the one the victim knows. Such a killer has means and opportunity; and somewhere in the deep and intricate crevices of the human will, the killer may also have motive, or presume motive. And then, the target is uniquely helpless, trust betrayed, friends and family turned the most dangerous of foes.

## ONE DAY IN THE LIFE OF MR. SMITH

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**THE WAY BACK**

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1023114/>

The basis of this, *The Long Walk* by Slavomir Rawicz and Ronald Downing (1956) has been criticized (i.e. *Looking for Mr. Smith* by Linda Willis (2010; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 10 #3)). Put that aside for the moment.

This is a brutal portrayal of the horrors of Stalinist repression. It begins with Janusz (Jim Sturgess), a Polish officer, being interrogated for anti-Soviet offenses. He is confronted with his wife, who has denounced him, but he refuses to confess.

At least he fetched up in Siberia, instead of Katyn. His introduction to the Chief Administration of Corrective Labor Camps (GULag) indicates that it is not the kindly moral rehabilitation facility that Henry A. Wallace described, that cheery combination of the TVA and the Hudson's Bay Company. The camp is in a snowy wilderness, where the inmates are doing various labor projects, including woodcutting and mining.

One of the other prisoners seems a little recalcitrant. During a sudden storm, he turns and walks towards the woods, where (he says) they can find shelter from the wind. At first the guards try to shoot him, but evidently their rifles are frozen up, so everyone follows. This Mr. Smith (Ed Harris) has had what one might call a disillusioning experience, after having come to the new Socialist experiment to see and help build the future that works, and now that he's working for it, wonders if he has a future.

There are a few honest thieves in the barracks. Here is another portrayal of life among the criminal class, the boys from the 'hood having their fun. They are tattooed the way lags are (Theodore Dalrymple would understand) and get their relief as they can. As when, for example, they take crude pictures of naked women and clasp them to their chests, laughing coarsely. On the other hand, Tomasz (Alexandru Potocean) the artist does well by his *Hustler* anticipation.

Janusz crosses up an administrator and gets dispatched to the mines. As Yakov Smirnoff said, they don't sentence you to life in prison because they don't like to make promises they can't keep. He knows he's doomed.

Khabarov (Mark Strong), an actor, has had dreams. The prison camp is north of Lake Baikal. If they escape, follow the lake south,

and then strike south across the Trans-Siberian Railway, they will be out of Russia! It's the getting out that's the problem.

Getting out is one of Janusz's dreams. When he keeps on having visualizations of coming to his country home, finding the key under the rock, and unlocking the door, he begins wondering if this is the end.

Then there is a blackout. The searchlights are dark, the electric fence is cold, the dogs won't want to go out . . . there'll never come another chance. Janusz, Mr. Smith, Tomasz, Latvian priest Voss (Gustaf Skarsgård), daffy Yugoslav accountant Zoran (Dragos Bucur), thief Valka (Colin Farrell), and Kazik (Sebastian Urzendowsky), another Pole, break out. For Khabarov, they were only dreams.

Ironically, among all the diverse elements of the Soviet peoples making this escape, the only common language they have is *English*. (Convenient for the audience.) For example, Valka hopes to go to America, and has prepared himself appropriately. Meanwhile, he and his wolf (a wolf's head engraved on the blade of his knife) will protect them.

They set out for the lake. On the second night, Kazik gets lost. He's night-blind. He has a vision of a friend of his in the GULag, a professor of Egyptology, telling him about the land, and in his last moment he sees a procession coming to greet him. Which is actually the fire the other escapees built.

In spite of their perilous state, they bury Kazik, and Voss says the funeral service over his grave.

Still heading south, they notice they are being followed. Not by a guard, by a woman. There is some concern about this. In the end they approach her. Irena (Saoirse Ronan — only sixteen when the movie was filmed!) explains that she was taken by the Red Army from her home near Warsaw and sent to a collective farm, and ran away from that. They are suspicious, but let her stay.

This is all the more significant since the escapees can't really risk any contact with locals. The NKVD put up a reward for anyone who broke out of prison. Or their heads, anyway.

Valka seems to have taken on the task of being their protector, him and his wolf. He has protectors, too, tattoos of Lenin and Stalin on his chest. (Theodore Dalrymple would understand.) The others wonder why he does that and he says that Lenin and Stalin are strong men. Stalin takes from the rich and gives to the poor. The response is that having done so, he puts both of them in the GULag. (In Cuba, Antonio Prohias, later of *Mad's* "Spy vs. Spy", did a cartoon on the same theme.) When they have to go around a small town, Valka goes in and steals food.

Eating becomes one of their obsessions. Zoran and Tomasz argue about a dinner Zoran promises to cook for Tomasz. Zoran wants to put in more spice than Tomasz thinks is right. (In a similar situation, Shackleton's men on Elephant Island composed a grand banquet for after their rescue.) So no one has the energy to make a move on Irena.

Except, perhaps, in analysis. Mr. Smith points out to her the holes in her story, and she admits that she embellished it a little.

With one thing and another, they reach the southern tip of Lake Baikal and strike out south for the railroad and the border. And there they are, the posts that say CCCP ("USSR") on one side and something else in Mongolian script on the other. They are out of Russia.

Valka stops. He's not going. The others ask him if he doesn't want his freedom. In the saddest and most wistful line in the movie, he says, "I wouldn't know what to do with it."

Valka turns and heads back into the Soviet Union, his job done, and the others press on. Only to find a great ornate Mongol arch with a picture and Mongolian seal on one side and on the other — a red star and Stalin! They were so focused on getting out of the Soviet Union that they didn't wonder, or know, about Mongolia. (Which had been Communist since 1924, due in part to the efforts of the Mad Baron, Roman von Ungern-Sternberg; see James Palmer's *The Bloody White Baron* (2008, 2009; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 8 #2) and Peter Hopkirk's *Setting the East Ablaze* (1986) for more on this.) For what it's worth the other guy is Choibolsan, at that time Prime Minister, Minister for Internal Affairs, Minister for War, and Commander-in-Chief of the Mongolian Armed Forces, and known as the "Mongolian Stalin" and yes he had a Cult of Personality and had conducted a Great Purge.

They find one of the results of Choibolsan's efforts, a plundered Buddhist monastery. Voss has seen that too, his church in Latvia after the Latvian people had joyously celebrated their accession to the Soviet nation.

But then they have to cross the Gobi Desert. This is bad enough, though not as bad as Red Mongolia.

Siberia had been bitterly cold and snowy; this is bitter desert. (The "Siberian" scenes were filmed in Bulgaria, while these were filmed in Morocco; after all, the "Moroccan" scenes in *The Wind and the Lion* were filmed in Spain, so what else is new.) They struggle and straggle, looking desperately for water, arguing about whether to divert to what may be an oasis to the east and what may be a mirage.

Straggling gets worse. Irena collapses and dies. A few days later, Tomasz collapses, and they praise his artistic skill (he doesn't do all *Hustler* anticipations) before he dies. In the morning, after the burial service, they go on, leaving his pen clattering in the wind, tied to the cross on his grave.

Mr. Smith collapses next. This is too much and he is persuaded to go on. And finally they get into China, going through the Great Wall (yes, it did reach that far). Then they head on to Tibet.

In Lhasa Mr. Smith announces that he is going to go to the OSS station and get out that way. The others go on south.

Then, in the fields near Darjeeling, the local authorities see three strange men coming out of the north. "Where did you come from?" one of the Hindus asks. "Siberia," Janusz says. "How did you get here?" And Janusz says, "We



walked.”

The movie then recounts in silence the history of the war and the suffering, the rise of Communism and its disintegration. It is fifty years later, and we see the images of walking to the country house again, taking the key, and unlocking the door. An old woman is sitting at a table. She looks up at the sound.

A young man, a gallant, charming young officer, enters, takes off his czapka, and smiles. Now she is young, full of life, happy. She sees him coming. We see them now, aged, embracing, the long walk done, the way back taken to its end.

We can say this now. At the time, the reception would have been different. Janusz and Tomasz, Voss and Zoran, Irena and Kazik, they would have been antisocial elements, people who didn't understand the New Russia, who needed to be re-educated and set right. Saying how this was would have been the acts of those who had been powerful exploiters in the old days, the rich from whom Stalin took their stolen wealth to give to the poor.

Now Mr. Smith would have been easy to explain, a spy for the powerful of America, sent to learn the secrets of the New Russia, to weaken it from within. Valka — just another thief who needed to be set straight.

Influential people in the West believed back then that scenes such as were shown here were lies spread by the old rich, the exploiters wishing to discredit the strength that the Soviet peoples were finding. Meanwhile, in America there were chain gangs and lynchings. Now, of course, everyone had always known that and objected to it. The new ways, now, would not need such cruelties.

Some things never change. As one moonshiner said to another about the federal judge who had just sentenced them both to fifteen years, “That feller shore is generous with other folks' time, ain't he?” The new elite can be generous with the lives of others, it's a price they imagine they won't have to pay. So also said the Old Bolsheviks, before they were unmasked as having always been agents of Tsarism, Capitalism, and foreign powers. They had got their wish.

It's the little people, Janusz, Tomasz, Voss, Zoran, Irena, Kazik, Mr. Smith, and even Valka, who have to pay for their wishes.

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#### TECH NEWS

by Lisa

Today the bookstore lady called to say she had the e reader from Barnes and Noble which we had been discussing. Joe and I packed up and headed there before our Sunday trip to the library. There is a surprise when we get there. The device in question is not the Nook I anticipated. It is a Pandigital tablet. It is not the brand name machine I expected but neither is it the basic one I expected. I paid over the twenty dollars and have played with the device somewhat. For my twenty dollars I get the device, a power cord with which to charge

it, an instruction manual and the box the device came in originally. And so another device comes into our household.

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#### TORNADO ALERT

by Lisa

Before bedtime last night we knew there was a possibility of rough weather. At 4:20 a.m. something yanks me out of sleep. I know something has woken me because of the sharp way I have woken but I have no idea what has woken me. I know only that it cannot be good. A few seconds later I discover I have woken between blares of the tornado siren. Great. Absolutely bleeping great. There's nothing like waking to unearthly wailing screaming that doom is upon you. I roll over and nudge Joe awake. We head downstairs. Grant is already awake. We occupy the middle room until the all clear sounds. This night we are lucky. Adairville, Georgia is not so lucky. For them the wailings of doom are not a false alarm.

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#### NAME GAME

by Rodford Edmiston

Let's start with Frankfort, the capital of Kentucky. It is *not* named after Frankfurt, Germany. Or any other town or city. In 1786 James Wilkinson (who owned most of the land in the area) had the city registered by the Virginia General Assembly, under the name Frankfort. Kentucky became a state in 1792. In 1793 the Kentucky state legislature convened there for the first time.

If “Frankfort” isn't taken from another town or city, where did it come from? The story is interesting, complicated, and will likely never be completely known. “Frankfort” is a conflation of Frank's Ford, dropping the possessive and changing the last letter. Exactly why Wilkinson changed it doesn't seem to be known, at least by the sources I checked.

The name came from Stephen Frank. In 1780 he was a member of a party going to Mann's Lick in Jefferson County to bring back some salt. They camped overnight on the west side of the River, roughly opposite Devil's Hollow, and were attacked by Indians. The crossing — or ford — was thereafter named after him. So far, all very straightforward and clear.

Or were they camped where the lock and dam are now located? The exact location of the ford is lost. It may even have moved, as currents shifted the riverbed and the sediments on it. Or were they camped at the foot of Devil's Hollow on the other side of the river, planning to cross in the morning?

One thing which is known: Devil's Hollow already had that name at that time. Being the naturally curious sort — especially in regard to the stories behind things — I long wondered about the origin of such an interesting name. Eventually, a couple of years after the Thomas D. Clark Center for Kentucky History opened, I made an actual inquiry. The man I spoke with in their research section was likewise curious, and told me he would check into the matter and

let me know. A few days later he called and told me there was no record of how Devil's Hollow got its name. The best guess of the researchers is that it simply looks like a place where you could expect to meet the Devil.

This remains true today, even with the paved road, guard rails, and spots which have been widened for the road. It is a narrow gully heavily overgrown, and with tall trees along the top on both sides.

Of course, I couldn't just leave it at that. Being a writer of fiction as well as fact, I decided that if I couldn't find the origin of the name, I would invent one. The story appeared originally in the Canadian fanzine *Fang, Claw and Steel*. Today it resides at:

<http://www.dcr.net/~stickmak/Transformation/Catamount/devilhollow.htm/>

I hope you enjoy my little presumption.

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#### BOOK REVIEWS

A Mixed Bag by Carol Clarke

I thought I would give you a review of what I have been reading over the last 3 or 4 months, not ever book just the ones I thought should be highlighted. I wanted to see the movie *Abraham Lincoln Vampire Hunter* but at the time I just could not get any free time to go see it. So I did the better thing and read the book: *Abraham Lincoln Vampire Hunter* by Seth Grahame-Smith. The book was enjoyable but I haven't got a clue how they made it into a movie. It does follow some of the known history of Abraham Lincoln's life, especial his early years but it takes huge liberties with the few facts of his life. It starts off with Lincoln's mother dying. Of course she was the victim of a Vampire because his step-father owed money to a Vampire. He didn't pay back a loan so the Vampire took his wife's life blood in return and to teach him a lesson. It turns out vampires came to this country to be humanities overlords after they were ran out of Europe or something like that. They kept the slave trade going so they can have lots of fresh blood. Lincoln then starts off as a Vampire Hunter in his youth with some success but no real plan and he was only really killing a few of them. That's when he meets Henry the good vampire who takes young Abe under his wing and teaches how to make his hunting really count in the war against the evil southern vampire who want slavery and well are just evil. The story from there is the history of Abe's career as a vampire hunter, his election and rise to the presidency. And his growing hatred of slavery and how he wanted it stopped both because he believed humans should never be treated that way and to stop the evil vampires.

If I sound like I am making light of the plot, I am, but I don't want to turn you off of the book. While its plot makes a very complexed period of our history a little black and white. To paint the south as bad and full of evil vampire and the north as they savior of mankind against such evils does not really do that story Justice. But other than that flew I

honestly enjoyed the book and how the author made little details of Lincoln's life the turning point of the story. It a fair alternative history story and it's a fun read and for history buffs it is even a laughable ride. I am not saying the facts are wrong it just the way the author spins them.

Which leads me to my second book which I really enjoyed and also took shots at that period of history but was not a sci fi fantasy novel? It was *High Hearts* by Rita Mae Brown. High Hearts tells about the first two years of the civil war told through a young female bride who could not stand by and let her man go off without her so she dresses up like a man and joins the Calvary to be with her newlywed husband. It's interesting because it one of the few story told from the South's POV and it includes that POV from all classes of people, you learn how some of the slaves, women and young soldier feel about the war and why they went to war against the north. It turns out it's not as simple as Abraham Lincoln Vampire Hunter would have you believe. And it was fun and different to hear the war told from the point of view of the losing side. And Ms. Brown really did her research. The battles and places are all well thought through and I highly recommend the book. I know Ms. Brown is mostly know for Sneaky Pie Mystery series these days, but there was a time when she wrote such good fiction like her crowning novel *Six of One*. In *High Hearts* she is unbelievably great. And I really can't say enough about this about how great this novel was.

Just a side note, please don't think I am one of those crazy southern rebels who believes the south should rise again and all that BS. I would have been for the North and an abolitionist I just like hearing other POV's about a complexed issue and Ms. Brown really brings this to life and I believe if we had both lived back then we both would have been with the North, that isn't what her book is about, it's really just giving the civil a more and personal view and she had been doing research into woman who dressed up and went off to war during that period and she made it into a wonderful very good piece of fiction about one family's struggle during the war and the family considers their slaves to be part of the family. Just read it and it comes in Kindle form.

The next book I read I had high hopes for; *Kiss the Dead* by Laurel K. Hamilton and the first half of the novel was AWESOME. Anita Blake facing off with a very nasty Vampire and if she had made the story a novella I think she would have been much better off because the story should of ended when Marshall Blake kills the really bad evil Vampire. There was enough sex and back story going on or hinted about in the first half to keep any fan happy that their favorite character was talked about. This number 22 or 23 in the series. And I love Anita Blake so much I will buy number 25 through 100 of all the Anita Blake books, Mrs. Hamilton has no worries about losing fans. Still the second half of the book is all

about Anita's love life and who she loves vs. just likes but still has sex with; it took drawn out of a deep soul searching fest for Anita when the answer is staring her in the face for her and the reader. I am not sure what she was trying to say or accomplish with stuff. I just what the action with a mild touch of her sex scene writing that Mrs. Hamilton is great at. If I were you I would only read this book if I were a fan and if I had never read her books I would go back and start with *Guilty Pleasures* and work my way up. And you will want to read all 22 or 23 books. But if I was not a fan or familiar with her work skip it and go to the first book or the Graphic Novels which Mrs. Hamilton also had a hand in the writing of. The graphic novels are all very good and well-drawn and put out by Marvel.

The next book I read and forgive me before I start because I know some people will kind of freak out about this choice; the next book was *Keeper of the Cave* by Gerri Hill. This was her first Urban Fantasy book. She normally writes lesbian romance/mystery novels and she is one of the best at it. This book too was primarily written by and for lesbians. But it was also a great book. If you can get over it being about a woman falling for another woman and well just change it to a him and her you will be fine. The story starts off with two FBI agents who are sent to a school to watch a town nearby that may or may not have something to do with a string of missing persons. Anyway they must pretend to be a couple as well as work at the school. The town is extremely strange and acts like it's controlled by a cult type leader that is known by the entire town as Mother. And beside this there are the strange sounds in the woods between the school and the town there is this weird sound at night. The two agents follow the clues and also fall in love but what they find out about the town and the sounds. The ending will blow your mind with how eerie and cool it is. Hill gets better with each book and her output is huge two to three books a year.

Next I read *Yours, Mine and Ours* by Mary Janice Davison who is best known for her Queen Betsy novels about a vampire Queen like no other that anyone else is writing about. And funny as hell. Anyway *Yours, Mine and Ours* is her follow up book to *Me, Myself and Why*. Which is about a FBI agent with Multiple Personality Disorder? Candace has three personalities, Candace, Shiro and well the third is just too odd to name here. The first book *Me, Myself and Why* told the story about her hunt for a serial killer and told mostly from Candace POV. *Yours, Mine and Ours* is told mostly by Shiro on another chase for a new serial murder which is hard to do when you keep switching personalities. It's a funny story and light mystery that is fun to read and if you missed the first one you can still read this one and then you will want to read the first once you stop laughing.

Next I read *Deadlocked* by Charlene Harris, yet another Sookie Stackhouse novel. Killing off the Vampire's king regent over Louisiana last novel now has consequences in

this new novel. And what is worse Sookie who finds out that Eric may be leaving her to marry another vampire Queen to gain political power is not the best timing, Sookie must get over her personal feelings and get with Eric and Bill and Pam and together outsmart the bad guys (King of Nevada) and win the day. Sookie has to us more of her wits than her telepathy since her telepathy doesn't work on Vampires and on top of that she finds out that her cousin Claude has been up to something with the ferries and she has to trust that her great Uncle Dermot didn't know about it and was part of it. If you are a fan of Sookie's you will enjoy this book a lot but if you have not read any of these novel please start with *Dead until Dark* which was the bases for the True Blood series though the series does not follow the books religiously making it fun to read the one and watch the other and enjoy both.

Next I read *The Campaign* by Tracy Richardson. I read it at the end of October before the election was over. It's the story about the first Woman/Lesbian VP in American who is just starting to work for reelection for another four years when a scandal rocks the Presidency and thrust Jane into the front light to run not as VP and but as President. It's a great wishful story about what politics and America could be like and a sweet romance story for Jane's sister and her lover's ex who is a reporter and was set up to break the scandal about the current president. Honestly this story gave me some hope for the coming election and that our two party system might be able to accomplish. It helped me live through the TV blitz before the real life election.

Next I read *Death's Rival* by Faith Hunter. It is the last in the *Skinwalker* series and one of the best. After last book where she has to kill her best friends sister and by doing so loses her best friend this book starts off with her still in Ashville, N.C. instead of New Orleans still working for Leo and now she must stand up against a Vampire who has declared war on Leo because she broke some kind of Vampire Protocol in last novel by killing a guy who had come down to kill her and would have if she had not reacted in self-defense. She has to fight the war, find out why there is a war to fight and make peace with her inter beast while at the same time keep learning about herself and her Cherokee roots and if that is not enough for one novel and a long run on sentence I don't know what else is!

I will not bore you with the list of other books I read but I will give you a short list, most of these are lesbian fiction and if you haven't figured out that I am gay by now well I will leave you with no doubts, the answer is yes, on to the list, first the straight fiction: *The Hunger Games*; *Catching Fire*; *Mocking Jay* all by Suzanne Collins. *Soulless* by Gail Carriger; *Midnight Riot* by Ben Aaronovitch. *Fair Games* by Patricia Briggs; *Kitty's Big Trouble* by Carrie Vaughn. Now for the Lesbian Fiction; *Nevermore* by Neil Stark and Trinity Tarn; *3rd Degree* by Kate Galloway; *The Wombat Strategy* by Clair McNab; *Night Hunt* by LL Rand (Radcyffe); *Sheltering*

*Dunes* and *Oath of Honor* by Radcyffe; *Black Rage* by Selina Rosen; *Devil's Rock* and *Hell's Highway* by Gerri Hill, *Indigo Moon* by Gil McNight; *Darkness Embraced* by Winter Pennington; *Wild* by Megan O'Brien. I can recommend the entire above list.

#### BUILD THE PERFECT BUG OUT BAG:

##### Your 72-Hour Disaster Survival Kit

by Creek Stewart

(Betterway Home; 2012;

ISBN 978-1-4403-1874-0; \$16.99)

Reviewed by Rodford Edmiston

Maybe it comes from reading *Robinson Crusoe* and *Swiss Family Robinson* at an impressionable age. Maybe it comes from both family and church friends enjoying camping and hiking. Maybe it's a holdover from the Great Depression, passed down from both sides of my family. Whatever the reason, I've always felt more comfortable with a supply of emergency equipment and storage food close at hand. I've also felt more comfortable having things available to help with problems both common and unlikely. That includes having a tool kit and medical kit in my car and keeping a Leatherman multi-tool on my belt whenever I leave the house.

A bug out bag (aka bugout bag or BOB) is a kit of supplies you keep around the house in an easily person-transportable form, to use if — for whatever reason — you have to leave quickly. It can be anything from a suitcase kept loaded with a few essentials which you can finish packing in a hurry, to an entire vehicle loaded and ready to go. This book takes a middle road, explaining how to prepare a backpack with food, clothing, camping gear and so forth.

A note, here, on another common emergency kit, the Get Home Bag. This is something you keep in your car or otherwise have with you when traveling. While there is overlap of purpose and content, a GHB is intended to help you walk out of a place where you're stranded, or survive in that place until help can arrive. A BOB assumes you need to leave home, and is meant to keep you alive until you can return, or reach a new home.

In an emergency which requires leaving your home quickly — whether it's an oncoming flood, a gas main explosion or a death in the family — it's good to have a checklist. That way you won't suddenly realize, too late, that you forgot your prescription medicines or clean underwear. This book can help you decide what should be on that list. It also helps with figuring out what to acquire, how to store it and how to transport it. As well as when to replace it. (There are two reasons to check your kit twice a year and update is as needed: Seasonal changes and expiration dates.)

You can find most of the information in *Build the Perfect Bug Out Bag* in various

forms in many places, including online. This book presents the material in compact, paperback form. The advice it gives sensible, and the material is presented in a convenient format and written in an easy to understand style. While I have a few minor quibbles — and found a few minor typos — it is a very good reference for someone contemplating constructing a BOB. It is also useful for someone who has actually done some preparation in this area, but feels a need for a good review or a second opinion. As noted above, I've been at this for a while, but I still found several tips, references and pieces of equipment new to me.

I particularly like the last chapter. This groups topics together and for each group provides both lists of references — books and URLs — and sources for equipment and further information. It also — and this is something many “prepper” and “survivalist” books and blogs omit — gives appropriate practice exercises for each topic. Far too often, people (myself included) get so caught up in the allure of the equipment they forget it is useless if it can't be used.

This is no “doomsday survivalist prepper” book. It provides realistic scenarios and recommends realistic preparations to make for them. As a rule, where the author describes something which is a personal preference, he says so, and frequently offers alternatives, though not in as much detail.

This book is highly recommended.

#### STORMY WEATHER

Vacation Report for Christmas 2012

by Joseph T Major

**Saturday, December 8, 2012**

**Southern Lights, Kentucky Horse Park  
Louisville — Frankfort, KY — Lexington,  
KY — Louisville**

I was being a bit of a nagger here, but I've found that if no one organizes, nothing gets done. We got up on a weekday schedule, so to speak, so Lisa and I could clean up by the time Grant got up. Strangely enough, that worked.

We had breakfast at Hometown Buffet. The soft-serve ice cream machine was filled and working, and one of the selections was sugar-free vanilla ice cream. Merry Christmas to you too.

The drive to Frankfort was unexceptional but when we got there, downtown was sealed off, police and barriers everywhere. After driving around for a while, I ended up driving behind the Old Capitol Building, parking, and going over to Poor Richard's to find Rod Smith and apologize to him. (Tom Sadler couldn't make it, he had the flu.)

It turned out that the Frankfort Christmas Parade was going on. By the time Rod and I got back to my car so he could say hello to Grant, the parade was partly over, they were pulling the barriers on Ann Street, and we drove around to Broadway, parking across from the bookstore.

It was an interesting time as we caught up

on the past year or so. But we had to be on our way soon.

Grant was looking for some paperbacks he could read on the bus, and if he accidentally left them there, he wouldn't be out a lot. We ended up going to Unique and Merry Bookworm. By then it was getting towards sundown, so we went to Columbia Steak House and had a far too large meal — we all had take-home.

I like to get to the Southern Lights around opening time, near sunset. This proved to be a good idea, since we arrived about an hour after that and had to wait about an hour in line — and a truck cut in front of us just before we got to the entrance!

Some of the choices seemed a little odd. What exactly do dinosaurs have to do with Christmas? But they did have pretty lights, and more than last year.

Grant was feeling a bit tired, so we waited until Lisa had done a little shopping in the store, and drove home. We would have gone to see my cousin Martha and her husband Pete, but they had had an office dinner, and as I said it was late. While waiting I called my cousin Kathy's husband Paul to see how she was doing, and he said she was on the road to a complete recovery. She had had a brain aneurysm. (Then on Monday she had another one that killed her.)

Miles driven:	187.4
Sunrise:	7:47 AM
Sunset:	5:18 PM
Weather:	Rain, intervals of clearing
Time out:	8:45 AM
Time back:	11:24 PM

**Sunday, December 9, 2012**

**St. Matthews Baptist Church  
Louisville**

We came back early from the library to get ready. Grant and Lisa both had to do some shopping, and that was when I found out that last night, one of the instrument panel lights had burned out. Did you know you have to disassemble the instrument panel, just about, to change a light?

We got to St. Matthews Baptist Church in time. Elizabeth was in the choir, but Tim was sitting in a pew near the back with enough spare seating for us and for Johnny Carruthers.

The program was interesting, with dancers and a humorous finale. Then off to dinner.

Elizabeth's sister Alice and brother-in-law Loren joined us, and we talked family, events, and other things. Grant managed to handle himself well enough getting through the buffet line. Things finally broke up when they turned on the lights, so we packed up, threw away the disposables, and went home.

Thanks to Elizabeth Garrott and the congregation of St. Matthews Baptist Church.

Sunrise:	7:48 AM
Sunset:	5:23 PM
Weather:	Rain, intervals of clearing.

**Friday, December 21, 2012**  
**Mayan April Fool's Day**  
**Louisville — Henderson KY**

We got packed Thursday night. That was my last day before vacation. I had done laundry Wednesday, so it was a matter of sorting things out and getting batteries charged, files set up, and so on.

The weather was bad enough that I took Lisa to work. Then the number pad at the ATM was frozen, so I couldn't get any money. Instead I got some gas because the tank was close to empty, then I went home and took a nap before loading the car.

Grant was leaving for work and I ran out to the bus to say goodbye. Then I finished packing and drove down. This time the ATM worked. When I got to the library, it was about an hour before Lisa's shift ended and I started worrying that I had left the heater in the bedroom on. So since I had the time I went back, found it was off, unplugged it to make sure, and went back.

The drive was interesting, as it was still windy and cold. We had a late lunch in Corydon at Culver's. The wind may have blown off drivers as we got to Henderson without incident.

We had bought dinner for ourselves and something for Lisa's father and his wife. They were out when we got there, so we unloaded the car, and they arrived in the middle of it. They had got takeout and offered to get us something. Lisa's father had had a CAT scan and there was no recurrence of his cancer, which was good news.

They were watching a Western: *Another Pair of Aces* (2007) with Kris Kristofferson as a Texas Ranger and Willie Nelson as his assistant, a somewhat raffish conman. They were ferreting out a murder plot in the local government.

The FBI agent who helped them was played by Joan Severance, who I didn't recognize with her hair cut short and black. (And not dressed in the 110% kink Black Scorpion outfit.) They were trying to protect another Ranger who knew about the deal but I admit I felt a little odd hearing them talk about "Jack Parsons".

And so to bed.

Miles driven: 140.1  
 Sunrise: 7:56 AM (EST)  
 Sunset: 4:35 PM (CST)  
 Weather: Cold, cloudy and snow, clearing

**Saturday, December 22, 2012**  
**Henderson**

Still here. I went out on the porch and shouted to the world. "THE DOCTOR DID IT! THE DOCTOR SAVED US!!!" Then I went right back in because I was in a t-shirt and barefoot, and the temperature was 19° F.

When things had warmed up a little we went over to Rural King, the farm-supply place. I got a birthday card for my cousin

Mary Alice, whose birthday is the day after mine, and some Breyer horse figures for Lisa (they were on sale). Then I topped off the gas tank and went back for a nap.

We had a nice little early birthday/Christmas party, got tired eventually and ended it. And have a revolutionary birthday, Comrade Iosif Vissarionovich.

Lisa's father and his wife began watching *The Sound of Music* on TV. Lisa was wondering about the aftermath of some of the minor characters. I was thinking about some of the elisions and revisions between the play and the history.

And so to bed.

Miles driven: 1.3  
 Sunrise: 7:03 AM  
 Sunset: 4:35 PM  
 Weather: Cold and clear

**Sunday, December 23, 2012**  
**Henderson — Clarksville, TN —**  
**Hopkinsville, KY**

We couldn't sleep very well and got up early — to find Lisa's father making breakfast! He does too much, but he can't stop.

And we got started too early, so spent some time waiting outside the sanctuary of the Lutheran church before the Orthodox service started in the chapel. This year it was quite full.

After getting a little confused about where to go next we ended up going to Hopkinsville to see my cousin Brooks and his wife, Martha. Brooks has post-polio syndrome (probably), as he is in a wheelchair. Martha is getting frail. But they both were up and around, and welcomed us quite cheerfully.

Everybody else was busy, so we went to the motel, checked in, and had dinner at O'Charley's before doing some shopping. The store was crowded, but not desperate last-minute rush buying crowded.

And so to bed.

Miles driven: 149.5  
 Sunrise: 7:03 AM  
 Sunset: 4:38 PM  
 Weather: Cloudy then clearing, mild

**Monday, December 24, 2012**  
**Fifty-Eight Years and Thirty-One Years**  
**Hopkinsville**

Got up reasonably early and had breakfast at a Shoney's. My cousin Mae had her two children and their spouses, her stepdaughter, three of her grandchildren and their spouses, and a horde of great-grandchildren — all in her not that large assisted-living condo. And her son's mother-in-law. And us. Did I mention that Mae is 93?

Some of the things I discussed with her son Ed were quite normal — for an SF con. Things like the heritability of red hair (another relative had once said "the Majors are redheads" and my niece and nephew are), the nature of Alzheimer's, and his male-line descent. Ed

lives on top of a mountain in West Virginia, but it's hard to find anyplace else to live there.

After stopping off by Lisa's aunt Daphne's and my cousin Howard's place, we went to see Mae's grand-nephew Jack, who has just moved to Hopkinsville and built a somewhat large house. I'm not expecting him to pass away in a bedroom, dropping a snow globe, the word "Rosebud" on his lips, but you get the idea. They made us very welcome, but I was utterly exhausted and we had dinner elsewhere. At O'Charley's again, under a huge picture of my notorious relative.

Lisa watched the Pope's Midnight Christmas Mass. After that, the Catholic cable channel showed a movie about the birth of Jesus, which had one very good line in the opening scenes. The Three Magi are doing some navigating trying to find the place under the Star, and one of the camel drivers complains. Another replies that when he has a palace in Babylon, he too can go at random over the desert.

And so to bed.

Miles driven: 18.4  
 Sunrise: 7:00 AM  
 Sunset: 4:37 PM  
 Weather: Foggy then clearing, mild

**Tuesday, December 25, 2012**  
**Hopkinsville — Clarksville — Hopkinsville**

On Christmas I made my usual presentation. "Happy Birthday, Mary Alice. Merry Christmas, Graham." But when we were let in Mary Alice was reading the Nativity story from Mark out loud, and we chimed in on the final verses. Her son Rives, in Colorado Springs (check the con report in *Alexiad* V. 7 #5 for Rives) was already snowed in.

After a stop-off to see my cousin Sue Fan, whose son Tommy used to be tasked with being my playmate (he was born six months before I was), we went off to lunch. Sue Fan is one of the two surviving first cousins of my father's. Both Tommy and his sister Karen were there or came by.

Cousin Dan, on the other hand, also had his own family at home, his wife Janice, their two children and their spouses (one of whom is also a cousin), four grandchildren, and a couple of in-laws. His son Chris has also had problems with leakage at houses, though he did admit that we were worse off. And Dan is still the best fishing guide in the Land Between the Lakes.

From there we went to see my cousin Jim, whose father had got both my father and me started in genealogy. He is also getting a little short in the first-cousin line, but his sons, grandson, and great-grandchildren made up for it. (In fact his oldest great-grandchild was a year old when Jim's father died; that's right, five generations, father to son.)

By the time we had finished reminiscing, it was getting close to sunset and Winter Storm Euclid was closing in. So we went back to Hopkinsville, got warmed up in the hotel, and crossed the street to the East and West Buffet.

And so to bed.

Miles driven: 68.1  
 Sunrise: 7:01 AM  
 Sunset: 4:39 PM  
 Weather: Cloudy, cold, evening rain.

### Wednesday, December 26, 2012

**Hopkinsville — Madisonville, KY — Louisville**

It was foggy in the morning, but we did not get the worst of the storm. Going north in the wake of the weather, we had no problem with snow or rain, but it was windy.

My brothers and their wives got in to the Cracker Barrel after we did, and we managed. We had a very nice lunch, but with the prospect of bad weather, we left after it, drove back to Louisville in an unexceptional (except, again, for the wind) climate, got the car unloaded, went out and got dinner, and turned in.

And so to bed.

Miles driven: 190.3  
 Sunrise: 7:01 AM (CST)  
 Sunset: 5:29 PM (EST)  
 Weather: Cloudy, cold, windy, snow showers

Total mileage: 566.6  
 Gas bought: \$97.57  
 Time out: 12:40 PM  
 Time back: 4:58 PM

### HIGH ANXIETY

A Report on

Grant C. McCormick's Health Problems  
 by his landlord Joseph T Major

Grant's foot problems are continuing. In January he was diagnosed with cellulitis; the skin of his damaged foot was chronically red, infected.

The first step involved a pressure bandage, followed by antibiotics. When this proved less than totally effective, he got HBO.

That is, HyperBaric Oxygen treatment. This involves two hours a weekday at two atmospheres of pure oxygen, in a clear plastic tube. Thus there are no electric heaters to create the potential of a rerun of cosmonaut Valentin Bondarenko's hideous death in training (which was why Soviet spacecraft used a mixed-gas atmosphere).

What this means is that Grant has to get up early, take sponge baths, eschew deodorant (he can't wear *anything* in the tube) and take three TARC3 special bus trips a workday.

The septal defect surgery is on. It will be an outpatient procedure. Heart surgery, an outpatient procedure. How things have changed. (The surgery involves introducing a patch through a catheter run up through a vein.)

### FANZINES

#### Argentus #12

Steven H Silver  
[s.hsilver@comcast.net](mailto:s.hsilver@comcast.net)  
<http://www.efanzines.com>  
<http://www.sfsite.com/~silverag/argentus.html>

*Beyond Bree* December 2012, January 2013  
 Nancy Martsch, Post Office Box 55372,  
 Sherman Oaks, CA 91413-5372 USA  
[beyondbree@yahoo.com](mailto:beyondbree@yahoo.com)  
<http://www.cep.unt.edu/bree.html>  
 Not available for The Usual; \$15/year, \$20 foreign, \$10/year electronic.

#### Broken Toys #12

Taral Wayne

#### The Drink Tank #332, #333, #334, #335

Christopher J. Garcia  
[garcia@computerhistory.org](mailto:garcia@computerhistory.org)  
<http://www.efanzines.com>

#### Fadeaway #32 December-January 2012-3

Robert Jennings, 29 Whiting Road, Oxford,  
 MA 01540-2035 USA  
[fabficbks@aol.com](mailto:fabficbks@aol.com)  
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 Malverne, New York 11565-1406 USA

#### The Life of Rodney Year 64 #2

Rodney Leighton, 11 Branch Road, R. R.  
 #3, Tatmagouche, Nova Scotia, B0K 1V0  
 CANADA

#### MT Void V.31 #23 December 7, 2012 — V. 31

#30 January 25, 2013  
 Mark and Evelyn Leeper, 80 Lakeridge  
 Drive, Matawan, NJ 07747-3839 USA  
[eleeper@optonline.net](mailto:eleeper@optonline.net)  
[mleeper@optonline.net](mailto:mleeper@optonline.net)  
<http://leepers.us/mtvoid>

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Rich Lynch, Post Office Box 3120,  
 Gaithersburg, MD 20885-3120 USA  
[rw\\_lynch@yahoo.com](mailto:rw_lynch@yahoo.com)  
<http://www.efanzines.com>

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Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta  
 T2P 2E7 CANADA

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Robert Lichtman, 11037 Broadway  
 Terrace, Oakland, CA 94611-1948 USA  
[locs2trapdoor@yahoo.com](mailto:locs2trapdoor@yahoo.com)  
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### WORLDCON BIDS

2014  
 NASFiC:

#### Detroit

<http://detroitin2014.org/>

Proposed Dates: July 17-20.

#### Phoenix

<http://phoenixin2014.org/>

Proposed Dates: July 31-August 3.

#### 2015

Helsinki, Finland  
<http://www.helsinkiin2015.org/>

Proposed Dates: August 6-10.

#### Spokane

<http://spokanein2015.org/>

Proposed Dates: August 19-23.

#### Orlando

<http://orlandoin2015.org/>

Proposed Dates: September 3-7.

#### NASFiC:

Houston

#### 2016

Kansas City  
<http://kansascityin2016.org/>

Proposed Dates: August 18-22.

#### 2017

Japan  
<http://nippon2017.org/>

#### Montréal

New York

#### 2018

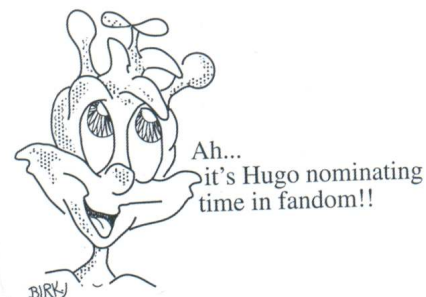
New Orleans  
<http://neworleansin2018.org>

#### 2019

New York

#### 2020

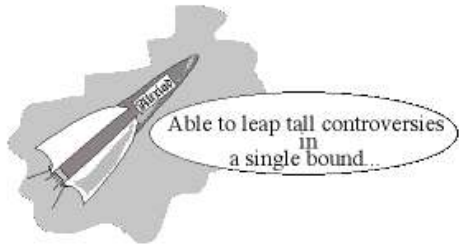
New Zealand  
<http://nzin2020.org/>



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 Letters, we get letters
 

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From: **Christopher J. Garcia** Dec. 7, 2012  
[chris@computerhistory.org](mailto:chris@computerhistory.org)

Thanks for sending *Alexiad*! Good issue as always, and there are a couple of very interesting pieces that I have to comment on.

Lisa's piece is an interesting one, and both contradicts and completely agrees with many of my same thoughts on the relationship between the US and the Muslim World. I truly believe that Sam Bacile was properly arrested, but only because he made a crappy film. Watch *The Real Life of Muhammad* and tell me that's appropriate filmmaking! I mean, the cinematography looks like it was done by an arthritic baboon!

Sorry, Chris, but the last I heard making a crappy film wasn't a crime. If it were the producers of *Ishtar* and *Songwriter* would have had to do time in jail. I'll pass on watching *Real Life of Muhammad*. It sounds like it is worse than *Innocence of Muslims*.

I'm glad you thought my piece was an interesting one.

— Lisa

Oh dear god, there's another Vorkosigan novel. I am saddened . . .

Have to read *Why Were They Cancelled*. It's the kind of novel I love, and like to see on the Hugo ballots. I love television history and theory.

So, the term Napoleon's Buttons is a term that is used as a justification for the collection of actual objects. The argument goes like this: a researcher thinks that Napoleon lost at Waterloo because he was addicted to snuff. OK, so you've got to figure a way to prove this. Now, a museum can collect a lot of things. It could collect a detailed description of Napoleon's waistcoat. You could collect a series of images of Napoleon's waistcoat. You could collect an amazingly accurate reconstruction of Napoleon's waistcoat, but the only way for that researcher to be able to prove their thesis is by having the actual Napoleon waistcoat to test the buttons to see if there's any trace of snuff on them. This is the reason why we've got to hold on to the actual artifacts, even though the other kinds of holdings have a place in museum collections as well.

Love that illo on page 16! It's just so awesome!

From: **Milt Stevens** December 9, 2012  
 6325 Keystone Street, Simi Valley, CA  
 93063-3834 USA  
[miltstevens@earthlink.net](mailto:miltstevens@earthlink.net)

In *Alexiad* V. 11 #6, Joseph talks about the deaths of family members and other people we know. When I was a child I feared my parents might die. If they did, I didn't know what would happen to me. As it happens, my parents didn't die until I was fairly old myself. My father died when I was 54 and my mother died when I was 62.

You were most fortunate. My father died three days before I turned 17. My mother died when I was 40.

As to deaths in fandom, I was really shocked when Bruce Pelz died. I had spoken to him two days earlier, and he seemed to feel alright at the time. I had thought he would outlive me. Heck, I thought he would outlive everybody and write the final history of fandom. I seem to have reached an age where people I know are dying all the time. If I had only died when I was 25, I wouldn't have this problem now. In fact, I wouldn't have any problems at all.

I'm not sure what I will do at San Antonio. Depending on what slithers onto the ballot, I might yet submit motions to get rid of the fan Hugos. Success wouldn't be likely, but some really lousy nominees could create some support.

It doesn't seem like any sort of compromise is possible on the fan Hugos. Some people believe fanzines are paper and only paper. Other people believe fanzines are absolutely anything, and the category shouldn't be restricted in any way. Without compromise, we are stuck with the muddle we have. If we could only compromise, we might be able to come up with a different muddle.

Joseph wonders what Jim C. Hines and others like him think about all this. As I understand it, he is a minor pro, and he may very well sell a few extra books because of his award. He has also had his 15 minutes of fame. I used to think being noticed was only a good thing if you were noticed for doing something good. It appears that some people will settle for being noticed for anything at all.

Increasingly, it seems, "fan" equates to "minor pro". For example, the "Racefail '09" discussion, supposedly the most recent defining moment of fandom, was begun by Elizabeth Bear and was mainly among minor pros, on their blogs and LiveJournals.

— JTM

Mark Plummer indicates I misspoke

regarding the use of "Friends of Bill W" throughout the English speaking world. I knew Alcoholics Anonymous existed in other countries, and I thought that would mean their practices would be the same. I stand corrected.

From: **Bill Patterson** October 2012

Lisa — "the geese have begun to fly south." I grew up in the Great Southwest Desert (and then in San Francisco and then in Los Angeles), and so did not experience the migration of birds until I was an adult and visiting over a winter in Iowa. They call that area of the country "flyover country" for a good reason, and so that wave after wave of bird migrations as winter progresses as different species leave at different times/temperatures is tied up in my mind with the sensation I experienced once when getting out of a car and looking up at the vapor trails criss-crossing the sky (a major route from St. Louis to Chicago), of everyone going *somewhere else*. And then I turned around and in the sky was a perfect pentagram of vapor trails. An eerie feeling.

Joe — "Lisa read the original edition [of *Take Back Your Government!*] after volunteering for work with her local elections and observed that much of the information in it was still useful." It has always struck me that it *ought* to be useful; I am assured by many different people that it's not, but I wonder if that's not just a matter of mindset. Political campaigns have shifted so strongly to top-down mass marketing that the individual-by-individual approach Heinlein advocates is simply far outside the framework, even though so far as I can tell, all (almost all) the mechanisms he talks about are still in place. In particular, anyone who presents himself at the local precinct level organization (I don't think they call them "clubs" any more) and is both active and intelligent, can advance *very* rapidly as a force in the organization, just as Heinlein described doing in the 1930's. The lowest levels of organization are dominated and sometimes overwhelmed by the perennial problems of all volunteer organizations — unevenness of effort, lack of dedication, and low grade of experience and, not to put too fine a point on it, common sense.

People nowadays don't have any patience. They don't work their way up. And on a wider than local scale, money becomes more important than volunteers.

Being outside the framework of the expected can be a killer. In 1975 when I was first becoming acquainted with computer programming concepts, I designed the procedures for a spell checker that would have caught homonym and homogram usage errors as well as many punctuation errors, but when I showed the design around to people who had experience with programming, they told me that was not the way programming was done — and so it was (not) . . . for second- and third-



generation programming languages. Later on I figured out that I was using fourth generation programming concepts long before I was exposed to C and FORTH, and when I went back to the basic design fifteen years later, I found it perfectly sound . . . but by that time the crippled and frustratingly inadequate spell-checkers that we use today were already embedded in the market.

Also taught me not to place too much trust in the opinions of experts. Clarke's laws rule.

Joe's commentary on Albee's *The Top* kept reminding me of Dorothy Sayers' *Murder Must Advertise* — one of the sillier Peter Wimsey mysteries, but a darned fine realistic-comic novel about life inside an advertising agency in the 1920's. Since Dorothy Sayers originated one of the most successful promotional campaigns in advertising history (the Mustard Club), it all came from experience and is still delightful to read, more than 80 years later.

The Piels to Pabst remark about the limitations of the potential of even the best advertising (on p. 4) reminded me of a legal client a firm once had, Paul Kalmanovitz, who had bought up a number of minor brands, culminating with Pabst. He had the idea, absolutely hated in the industry, that beer is fungible so that marketing on the basis of distinctions in the beers was pointless. I don't know why he got this idea, as it's clear even to me that there are considerable differences in the tastes of different beers — even different Pilsners. Ultimately, though, it didn't much matter, as I realized I really didn't care all that much for beer in the first place, of any kind.

I have in my e-mail queue at this moment Comic-Con's re-certification for *The Heinlein Journal*, so Joe's review of *Comic-Con and the Business of Pop Culture* comes at an appropriate moment for me. Joe has caught an important aspect of the phenomenon: it's really not a convention as we understand SF conventions; it's a trade show that encourages members of the public to participate in the exhibitions. Media conventions tend to be more like trade shows than the old sf convention format, for the simple reason that media events tend to draw from a mass audience of people who have little other commonality. Unfortunately, what the existence of these media conventions has done is to push the larger sf conventions in the direction of trade shows (after all, the presence of a large number of people is ipso facto a marketing opportunity). But the psychological function that the sf convention serves is not going to go away — it is simply the concern of a much smaller percentage of the attendance. The community is now nested inside the attendance; the attendance is essentially fingefandom writ large.

I noticed that when I invited a coworker who is interested in gaming to come to ConGlomeration, the local con with some fannish nature and gaming as well. He asked me

what a ticket for one day cost. That was what he was familiar with; consuming instead of participating.

Your review of *Sherlock* also comes at an appropriate time, as I just last week finished with the conclusion of the series so far on DVD (Netflix). My, but that's a clever series! Quite the best version in decades, though I wasn't sure initially about the updating to London in the naughty-oughties and terrible teens. The playful diachronic interaction of this series with the original Doyle stories was fascinating and delightful, and I really came to enjoy both Cumberbatch and Freeman as they create the roles anew. Curiously, I didn't much care for the new Moriarty — and I note that the final episode (which I cannot talk about because you haven't gotten to that point in the episode descriptions) has a gigantic loose thread. Can't wait for the continuation.

Also glad you noted the connection to Michael Kurland's Moriarty. Kurland is a greatly under-rated writer who mysteriously submerged after *The Butterfly Kid* ran its course. He should get more attention.

I wish he would do another Moriarty novel or two. I'd love to see the Professor's side of The Valley of Fear.

Which brings me to *Elementary*. I was really prepared to like this show — for Lucy Liu as Watson if for no other reason — despite the early negative comments that began appearing in the summer. But so far (only 2 episodes have aired as I write this), it's just a bundle of jittering elements that haven't really started to cohere. And the stories have not been nearly so deeply or cleverly wrought as the story lines of *Sherlock*. They just don't have the satisfying depth they need to sustain the show. On the other hand, sometimes all it takes is a single likeable character to wait out a necessary evolution. The first season of *Castle* had very inadequate writing (let me stress that, very inadequate — in fact, it shtunk), but Nathan Fillion was so very watchable, so very likeable as Rick Castle that I stayed with the series as they finally brought the writing staff up to speed.

Your comment to Milt Stevens. Hmm. Tex-Mex on the Riverwalk. The PCA/ACA has met in San Antonio and at the Riverwalk Marriott three times in the last decade, and I have to say that I have found the various Tex-Mex restaurants the least enticing thing to be found on the Riverwalk. The most memorable Riverwalk meal from my first experience was a crayfish etouffe at a Cajun restaurant — though as it turns out they also have a Pappadeaux near the airport, which is even better (not something you often hear me say about chain restaurants, but I adore Pappadeaux). This last time, though, the entire group of us (LA, Annapolis, Kansas) were blown away by a Riverwalk bistro named Boudros (or as we denominate it amongst

ourselves, three years later, Boudros of Blessed Memory). We discovered it on the second day and we tried to eat there at least once a day for the entire remainder of the conference (and found no disappointments in any dish anyone ordered). The hit of their menu was something I found quite unlikely — a chicken fried ribeye steak: light, crispy, thin and utterly delicious. My initial reaction on seeing it on the menu was "why on earth would anyone chicken-fry a ribeye?" But the justification is in the incredible eating of it, and I didn't get all of mine for the sampling everyone else at the table was doing! They only served it for lunches, though and not on the evening menu, so we had a hard time making it back during the conference sessions.

A THEOCRATIC  
PLUTOCRACY



Alexis Gilliland discusses George Price on economics with a comment I find very frustrating: "one can read the papers to learn that government regulations can't even keep government on the straight and narrow. However, that doesn't mean that we shouldn't aspire to honesty, transparency, and their associated virtues." The kind of routine and systematic corruption that inspires this remark is the natural and inevitable consequence of applying political power to economic functions — in fact, you could make a good argument (which Price seems to be doing) that the application of political institutions to the economy IS the corruption. Regulation always

and necessarily involves one in an unending cycle of band-aids applied to a gushing wound, then band-aids to the band-aids, so the fantasy of a regulated market is just that — a fantasy that is inherently incapable of being matched up to any reality. You cannot improve the functioning of a negative-feedback mechanism with positive-feedback intervention.

This is not to say that nothing can be done at all — but what can effectively be done is to remake the social institutions that underlie the market, and that is a task much more difficult than the crude, destructive and ultimately futile expedient of legislating a prohibition. That is, you have to think about society and the economy as complex interacting systems and if you're going to tinker with something, adjust the operating parameters of the system. This is inherently not a process that can be done with short-term, quarter-profit statement thinking, whether it is being done in the corporations or in the government. But the refusal to do something that has a chance of being effective and instead grasping a straw that can only be destructive is the characteristic of the current political climate.

George Price — as bad as you think the movie of *E.T.* was, the book (Kotzwinkle) was atrocious. You do not want to get me started. As to *Prometheus*, I ran across several hours worth of discussion — some of it New Agey and positive but most by viewers that were so offended by the movie that they had to go home and loose a 10 or 20 minute YouTube blast about it. Very odd.

Looking forward to the next.

December 11, 2012

Thanks for *Alexiad* XI:6 — and preemptive happy birthday to the Christmas Eve boy.

Lisa's piece "The Innocence of Muslims" was, as it was no doubt intended to be, appalling, but on reluctant reflection I have to say that the display of ignorance and superstition was not all that much worse than the bottom rung of internet commentary you can find on virtually any subject, I'm very sad to be able to say. And considering how much attention transparent flubdubbbery like the "War on Christmas" gets in the national press, it's really more a matter of rhetoric and presentation than of any substantial difference in the thought processes involved. Appalling ignorance, yes, surely — but is it really all that different from the hate speech we're getting from the religious right, who often seem to have migrated out of post-Enlightenment-era thinking altogether?

I think both the assassination of Ambassador Stevens and *The Innocence of Muslims* are symptomatic of insanity (or perhaps I should say "unsanity").

Neal Stephenson's remarks in "Innovation Starvation" (Joe's review of *Some Remarks*, p. 6) about information overload being a problem for innovation could well be extended to many fields. It seems to me that

creativity of all sorts happens in interaction with the boundaries or limits; otherwise, since all information is connected, you can follow the links indefinitely without being prompted to a conclusion (a serious problem in trying to do actual research on the internet); the unbounded does not promote the kind of intellectual activity that leads to creativity; you have to stop, which is what a boundary forces you to do — in fact, it might be argued that the "change of direction" a boundary or limit forces on you is an indispensable element of creative activity of all sorts. The analogy is getting somewhat labored, so I'll leave off.

You might want to look up "Babel II" by "Christopher Anvil" (*Analog*, August 1967; *War Games* (2010; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 9 #4)) for an additional perspective.



NOTHING AS RELAXING AS "MR. TAMBOURINE MAN" PLAYED ON A TENOR SOUSAPHONE...

*The Victims' Revolution* touches on matters I was forced into contact with when I consulted with UC Santa Cruz for three years. Job-seeking has become an appallingly large influence on academical activity of all sorts in the last few decades. My experience is that the academy is very threatened by an intellectual life outside the academy because it threatens their job security. This drives the closed nature of especially the squishy new disciplines — and has led to the collapse of the intellectual life of the U.S.

I'm afraid I found the succession of con reports somewhat dry, with the exception of the passage of Leigh Kimmel's ConJunction report talking about the anime panel that goes into storytelling in transliteration from medium to medium (an issue in which I have some interest). I've always found the I-did-this-then-that of a con report useful only in terms of creating the setting. The emotional and intellectual life of the narrator is really — ultimately — the only thing that is interesting, and we still read Walt Willis's con reports, say, because of the liveliness of his interactions and reflections on the interactions, with the people he . . . er . . . interacted with.

I read with interest Alexis Gilliland's remarks about having to wait half an hour for the presidential motorcade to pass. It's somewhat more grim in Los Angeles when the President Obama comes to suck up to the Hollywood moneybags. At its worst, a few years ago, traffic was diverted off every street from Sunset down to Pico — more than three-and-a-half miles — and from I believe it was Western to Barrington — about 11 miles, so a total of about 40 square miles of the most populous and traffic-dense area of West-LA. As it happens I was on a bus from midtown to the 405 when all this traffic was dumped onto Pico, and what is normally a 90 minute trip took close to 6 hours — hundreds of thousands of people. And I later discovered Obama had taken a helicopter from the Century Plaza to his fundraiser in Hancock Park, so it was all for nothing. The imperial presidency is as disgusting in respect of its impact on individuals as its impact on the world stage.

The other day, I read an interesting comparison of the cost of the British Monarchy to the American Presidency.

Robert S. Kennedy remarked on Amanda Tapping in *Sanctuary*. Yes, indeed — a fine looking woman, indeed, and if you can credit her character on *Stargate One*, the greatest scientific genius in all of history. But I found *Sanctuary* flat and unappealing — as I find most British sci-fi. Primeval, blyech. Nor am I especially fond of the new Doctor Who series, though, paradoxically, I am/was of *Torchwood*, particularly the second and third seasons. It was really the origin stories at the end of the second season that hooked me. I'm afraid if I had encountered *Children of Earth* or *Miracle Day* first, I would have had a low opinion of the franchise. But I discovered that one of the factors that pushed me over to ordering the excellent British TV miniseries *The Hour* was that *Torchwood's* "Owen" (Burn Gorman) was one of the principal actors.

There are exceptions: I have generally enjoyed *Misfits*, the one season of *Outcasts* (which seems to have been the inspiration for the recent American series *Terra Nova*), and the British *Being Human* (though I find the American version somewhat lackluster).

I was brought to a halt in confusion at George Price's remarks about homosexuality on p. 19. I find it quite impossible to understand what George is talking about, absent some better grasp of what he means by "homosexuality." It's one of those terms that people seem to think "everybody knows what I mean," but not everybody means the same thing, and in any case many of the assertions in this argument make sense with one interpretation but not with others.

But in any case "gross developmental defect" is (a) a political position, rather than a scientific one, and in any case (b) quite out of touch with — well, essentially all research on the subject since at least Kinsey's time.

One of the things that was so shocking

about Kinsey's original report was the finding that sexual behavior was a continuum with more than two positions. I wouldn't expect 10% of the population in any case, no matter what definition you apply (though 1-2% is not realistic either, for different reasons); I would expect it to fall into one of the standard you-should-pardon-the-expression deviations of population statistics; 10% sounds more like a power-law relationship, which rarely shows up in population distributions.

Living next to (when I was in Beverly Hills), or at the moment, actually within, a gay area of Los Angeles, I've become somewhat sensitized to gender political issues, and I found the rather superficial discussion of evolutionary selection and particularly the reference to "men who felt like women" embarrassingly ignorant of the realities. There certainly are some individuals with gender confusion issues (though not all of them, I understand, are gay), but homosexuals are not, generally speaking, "men who feel like women"; there is no confusion of gender involved, and to refer to the entire population tranche in that way is not merely insulting, it gets in the way of comprehending what you are talking about in even the most superficial way. I advise against it.

Richard Dengrove's "no law prevents fraud against yourself" somewhat misses the point — and in fact the entire discussion of the 2008 financial meltdown is extremely one-dimensional. Concealing balloon payments in the mass of loan documents is a tiny sliver of the fraud that was institutionalized throughout the entire industry of mortgage-backed securities. Much more serious was repackaging non-creditworthy loans and reselling them as AAA-rated assets. This is what is meant by "toxic assets" — tranches of bundles of mortgage-backed securities expected to have loan-failure rates greater than 16% were being rated by S&P and other rating agencies as AAA assets, which of course encourages the making of bad loans in the first place. Poor practices and outright fraud in the creation of mortgage-backed securities for public securities offerings is intrinsically not a fraud against oneself.

Grump.

I turned in the second volume of the Heinlein biography at the beginning of December — written in 2005, cut for submission in 2006, expanded by editorial request, I suppose with the idea in mind, which the editor didn't actually propose until February of this year, of breaking *The Man Who Learned Better* into two volumes (so the biography would be three volumes altogether), and then cut back to the same size as volume 1 when he decided against it in August. I've been working on this project for going on thirteen years, with another two to go before I can finally put it to rest. I'm tired.

We'll all keep an eye out for it.

— JTM

From: **Rod E. Smith** December 12, 2012  
730 Cline Street, Frankfort, KY 40601-1034 USA  
[stickmaker@usa.net](mailto:stickmaker@usa.net)

In a response to Sue Burke's story about using trained raptors to keep vineyards vermin free, you stated that wouldn't fly here.

Downtown Frankfort, Kentucky used to be plagued by pigeons. A couple of decades back someone managed to institute a program reintroducing redtail hawks to the area. Today there are very few pigeons or hawks in the downtown, though you can see and hear both in the outskirts. I can occasionally get the hawks to answer my calls.

Frankfort isn't a BOBO (Bourgeois Bohemian) community. If it became one Happy Chandler would rise from the grave, and Ben would just have to bury him again.

—JTM



From: **Darrell Schweitzer** Dec. 14, 2012  
6644 Rutland Street, Philadelphia, PA 19149-2128  
[darrells@comcast.net](mailto:darrells@comcast.net)

Somehow Lisa's collection of Muslim quotes doesn't impress me. I am sure that on the right hot-button topic you could find just as many bigoted, hate-filled Christians whose illiteracies can't even be excused by the language differences. I would have to agree that anti-Islamists don't have to work very hard in demonizing Islam because the Muslim reactionaries themselves are doing such a thorough job. But there are thoughtful people in the Muslim world who realize that Islam has an image problem these days, and that the real challenge for them to show the world that their religion actually has positive aspects. However, remember that Christianity is supposed to be a religion of peace too, for all that many so-called Christians find the actual teachings of Jesus a minor inconvenience to be put aside. Ignorant savages come in all varieties. Just keep that in mind. The Rev. Terry Jones doesn't seem to be a particularly loving fellow, now, does he?

Meanwhile, I have a step-niece, a niece, a nephew, and a sister-in-law who are all Turkish Muslims, and not one of them has tried to start a jihad lately. A short while ago my nephew was more interested in starting a Turkish punk

rock band.

How many of those hate-filled Christians would behead their own daughters for talking with a boy? Sharia Muslims do. I have no doubt that your Muslim relatives are lovely people. I also have no doubt they have much more to fear from the Taliban than they do from Pastor Jones. Punk rock is apostasy to fundamentalist Muslims and as such merits the death penalty in their eyes. There are signs Turkey may be Islamized. If it does your punk rock loving nephew could be in real danger. Whatever Pastor Jones' personality the reaction to his burning the Qur'an is a huge warning that Sharia and freedom are a poor mix.

— Lisa

The global warming aspect of Hurricane Sandy had more to do with the size of the storm and the amount of moisture it carried. It WAS a \*\*\*record-breaker. That it hit a nor'easter and turned suddenly left, and did so at high tide is of course a bit of bad luck, but of course the deniers continue to show why they are part of the problem. It is going to take a whole series of natural disasters in the United States before there is any political will to do anything about it. Katrina and Sandy are only the beginning. There will be many more. Meanwhile, one of the ironic political implications is that this will probably strengthen the Federal government as more and more people depend on the government for disaster relief. It is pretty basic to human psychology that they expect the government to help in such times. That was what swept Roosevelt into power in 1932. Hoover wanted to do nothing. The suffering masses were outraged. We expect the government to use its power for our good in times of distress. We will expect FEMA to clean up its act and fire its incompetents. (I admit that may be a long time coming.) We will expect Federal money for rebuilding, for the building of sea-walls in places like lower Manhattan or parts of New Jersey or Louisiana which may find themselves permanently threatened. Americans can just turn the newspaper page when they read "20,000 drowned by cyclone in Bangla-Desh" but they are not so blasé about that sort of thing happening here. Effective Federal disaster relief is going to be an increasingly important political issue.

Meanwhile you can get the consensus scientific view easily enough from everything from *National Geographic* (which ran an article on "Weird Weather" recently) to the BBC. The "Science and Environment" section of the BBC World website has global warming related stories almost daily. One of the most interesting of late was that the rising sea-level has been precisely measured. 10 cm (about 4 inches) in the last 20 years. That's just enough to flood a few basements. But I still think you and many of your readers still need to read



John Grant's *Denying Science* to understand the political basis for the lies the deniers are telling.

And, yes, the Antarctic icecap is also shrinking. Yes, temperatures HAVE gone up sharply in the last twenty years. Almost every year we live through now is the hottest on record.

As for fibs of another sort, I read about *The Great Heinlein Mystery* in *The New York Review of Science Fiction*. The conclusion there was that maybe Heinlein, who was otherwise a person of great integrity, had indulged in a bit of Hubbardeque yarn-spinning just this once. The "mystery" will not resolve, because there is nothing there. Heinlein made it up.

If Edward Wysocki went through "some effort" to get a copy of the *Super Science Stories* with "Let There Be Light" in it, that suggests he didn't know how to do it. Very few SF magazines are actually rare. You should be able to turn that one up on eBay in a couple weeks for less than \$20. A lot less if you are lucky. Find a dealer who doesn't know it is a Heinlein issue and you might get it for \$10.

Not everyone has an intimate relationship with the collecting community.

I think we need to welcome Taras Wolansky back from his trip to an alternate universe in which people who make under 50K are "tax consumers" instead of "tax payers." In the world I live in, people who make well under 50K pay taxes: wage tax, state and federal income tax, city taxes, etc. Where's he been? I paid taxes when I was a kid and worked at a hamburger joint and made \$4000 a year. One of the reasons that Romney lost is that all these working people, who pay taxes, did not want to be told they were parasites by some out-of-touch advocate for the rich.



I will agree with Taras that the fancy editions of Heinlein and Vance are more mausoleums than a way of keeping these books alive. Is there any Jack Vance actually in print in affordable editions? This keeps coming up with the Philadelphia SF Society's book discussion group. We'd like to do a Jack Vance, but the rules are the book has to be in print. I am afraid that Vance is going to become the secret pleasure of the elderly few,

completely forgotten by the general public. He may be rediscovered sometime in the future, but it isn't happening now.

A quick search at Amazon.com reveals several Vance works available at ordinary prices. I have a trade paperback edition of the Alastor novels which they list for \$14.81 with a cover price of \$18.99. Also, the Integral Edition versions are available as ebooks:

<http://jackvance.com/ebooks/shop/>

— JTM

From: **John Thiel** December 20, 2012  
[pabloleannis@frontier.com](mailto:pabloleannis@frontier.com)

Seeing you posting when the issue is being mailed out at Facebook's Faned Group is an added interest for the zine, and it inspired me to use email this time when I commented on the issue. So, if you print the comments, you can use my email address on the letter . . . something I am normally hesitant to do, but just to dip into computer fandom, of which I am highly suspicious, a bit more, having become a bit closer to it due to that same faneds group, I'll take that step, just this one time, according to my present reckoning of the matter.

So what do you think of computerized fandom? Will you reveal your thoughts about it sometime? I myself think it's an advance in many ways, but that it is apt to leave fandom somewhat behind and be more Internet than it is Fandom.

By the way, I first saw you in the N3F; the efanzine edition of TNFF doesn't list you as a member any more. I'm wondering when you separated from that organization, and why.

I never joined it. Lisa was a member, some time ago.

— JTM

I'm still looking at *Alexiad* for the first time. And here's a question I've been wanting to ask right along, especially recently. You always have the statement on the back cover that *Alexiad* is not a fictionzine. This seems to be something you regard as necessary to notify readers of, in order that tons of fiction will not pour in, until you have a slush pile. But it seems to me unlikely that any of your readers would send you or anyone any fiction; they don't seem to be people who write it. In fact, there seem to be few people around who write fiction for fanzines, and almost no fanzines that publish fiction. My own fanzine is the only one I know of that uses a lot of fiction regularly. There used to be fiction fanzines, but if they still exist I don't see them reviewed anywhere. Do you have any take on that matter?

From: **Brad W. Foster** December 22, 2012  
Post Office Box 165246, Irving, TX  
75016-5246 USA

[bwfoster@juno.com](mailto:bwfoster@juno.com)  
<http://www.jabberwockygraphix.com>

Well, looks like the end times apocalypse has been delayed yet again, so guess I'd better get caught up on writing to fanzines today!

Looks like this was my month for zine editors to feel that some of my fillos "were so nice, used them twice!" New *Askance* had a piece reused from the previous issue, and now this issue of *Alexiad* repeats the same 'toon of mine from last issue. Nice if you guys like these, but always kind of feel the readership has seen most of my stuff, and would want to move on. You should still have the small "Relationships . . . who can explain them" which I sent and thought would fit your format well, hope you can use that next time, and we'll retire the crowd of faceless little folks from this issue!

Congrats on hitting your mid-century Lisa. Come on in, the water is fine! (I personally plan to live to at least 111 years old, just 'cause I think it would be cool to be able to write that down as my age, not to mention that, by then, making three straight lines next to each other might be the extent of my physical skills!) Lots more to do with our lives, and if you count all the nonsense we had to get out of our systems until our mid twenties or so, we're really not that old after all.

And Joe, your opening note about finding the romance sub-genre lists through Cracked.com just served to remind how, what was once a second-or-third-tier reflection of *Mad* magazine seems to have morphed into one heck of a fine website for actual real information, delivered in a funny way. I find I'm checking out articles there several times a month now.

Oh, and I don't know if you've answered this in the past, but have been curious: why exactly do you run the "Monarchist News" stuff? Obviously a personal interest, but curious where that comes from.

Because fantasy stories don't feature the quest of a junior executive to rescue the kidnapped daughter of the CEO, for which he will receive the chairmanship of a principal subsidiary, or the story of a young woman's empowerment counsellor striving to release a class of students from their thrall to heteronormativity.

— JTM

Speaking of the Cracked.com above, your review of *The Axmann Conspiracy* brought up the *Harvard Lampoon*. I loved their *Bored of the Rings*, but never looked any further, so had no idea this was something that was continuing, and still doing satires. Going to have to do some research there as well now.

On a technical note this issue, some of the pages had the text slightly cropped off at one side, sometimes the first letter or so of each line. Have you narrowed the side margins so

much that the printer is now cropping off a bit? It wasn't every page, but the side margins do look extremely thin now, so it evidently only takes a slight shift in copying now to trim a bit of text.

Oh, and regarding Schirm's 'toon on page 16 — Yes, yes it IS art.



From: **R-Laurraine Tutihasi** Dec. 24, 2012  
Post Office Box 5323, Oracle, AZ  
85623-5323 USA  
[laurraine@mac.com](mailto:laurraine@mac.com)  
<http://www.weasner.com/>

Thanks for another interesting issue.

As Alexis Gilliland says, perhaps it was the extended heat and lack of rain that gave us muted autumn foliage colours. However, there was a lot of colour up in Seattle. They had no rain between the Fourth of July and mid-October, but their summer "heat" is nothing compared to Arizona or even most other parts of the country. I noticed a lot of colours as my plane approached SeaTac. I meant to take more photos of the foliage, but I only got some in incidentally as background to other photos I took.

I don't know about that. We had a hot and dry summer here, and I saw some spectacular color. Some of the trees in Tyler Park were bright red.

— JTM

I'm happy to report that the sciatica problem has been dealt with successfully and is practically gone with only occasional twinges. It seems to have been almost totally related to the way I limped because of my bursitis. It doesn't pay to limp. What happens is that some muscles then become overused and others atrophy. I now have a set of exercises to do daily and also pay much more attention to the way I walk, stand, and sit.

The bursitis is a different issue, and I hope to discuss it further with my doctor.

The physical therapy plus two trips I went on this fall really set me back as far as getting

other stuff done. I am finally almost back where I was before I left on my second trip (to LA for Loscon et al). That still leaves a lot more to catch up on. Our church choir will be on vacation for about three weeks, so that should help.

From: **Alexis A. Gilliland** Dec. 22, 2012  
4030 8th Street South, Arlington, VA  
22204-1552 USA  
<http://www.alexisgilliland.org>

Thank you for *Alexiad* #11.6. The loss of Joe's mother is noted, this being part of the cycle of life but distressing when it touches one personally; so, it seems appropriate to offer season's greetings and condolences. Not much can be done about the passing of Ur-fandom, I'm afraid. They are being replaced, but with changes reflecting the changes in our culture, so that fandom is in the process of becoming different than it was. A difference marked by the diminishing role of the paper fanzine, and the demographic takeover of watchers from readers. I liked it better the way it was when I was young, but maybe being young had something to do with that.

Our meet-up group saw the movie version of *The Hobbit*, which suffers from the inclusion of elements of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy in a sort of creeping grandiosity. The result is that while the novel was a short, fast-paced read, the movie takes nearly three hours to go about half the distance, and dwells on things the book brushes over. One result is that the quest of Thorin Oakenshield winds up looking demented, in that he is taking a squad of dwarves to do the work of an army. Another is that the movie seems excessively long, carefully recreating Tolkien's incidents and language but not his pacing.

Hurricane Sandy struck mainly to the north of us, but 8<sup>th</sup> Street South was still without power for a couple of days, during which outage our newly installed generator performed as advertised. Whether this has to do with global warming is uncertain, but the drought in the Great Plains continues, which also may not have to do with global warming. Such a prolonged drought is not unprecedented, and earlier droughts have lasted for decades. The official guess is that global warming will increase the odds of weather deviating from the norm we are used to, thereby—a safe prediction, giving everybody lots to complain about.

Credit crises occur on a regular basis because the players involved have grown up since the previous credit crisis, and no longer have first hand memories of the event (fear being necessary for checking greed) to keep them on the straight and narrow. We note that those players wear the hats for both business and government, moving from one to the other in pursuit of advantage, so that George Price erroneously assigns the blame to the government hats rather than the players wearing them. In time, and in the absence of passionate opposition, business money will influence any government to do what business

wants. The historical cycle is that the previous credit crisis generates rules to make business safer, and once business gets used to that safety, it loses its fear and begins to seek higher profits, eroding, evading, and repealing those constraining rules to lay the foundation for the next crisis.

The local news is mostly that Charles missed several days of work (including seeing *The Hobbit* with us) with what he thought was the flu, but eventually he went to his neighborhood clinic, where he was diagnosed with diverticulitis, so on the first night of Chanukah I drove him up to the emergency room of Arlington Hospital, where he was admitted and treated. The treatment was minimally invasive, a course of intravenous antibiotics, followed by a CAT scan guided insertion of a needle to drain the infection—an ulcer in the large intestine, then a couple of days for rest and observation. After being on outpatient status, I took him back on the 21<sup>st</sup> for his one o'clock appointment, which resulted in him getting another appointment on Monday, after some procedure whose name escapes me. Fortunately, he has plenty of sick leave.

What else? We note that the Mayan Apocalypse, scheduled for the end of the 13th Baktun on December 21, 2012, failed to materialize. This is a good thing since with modern technology apocalypses are harder to survive.

I wish I had had the YouTube downloaders then so I could have saved the "Apocalypto Now" video, which combined clips from "Apocalypto", "Apocalypse Now", "King Kong", and a video of "Jungle Boogie". And then there was the SNL version which put over the charging Mayans the caption, "The Jews are coming! Run for your lives!!"

— JTM



From: **Martin Morse Wooster** 12/24/2012  
Post Office Box 8093, Silver Spring,  
MD 20907-8093 USA  
[mmwooster@yahoo.com](mailto:mmwooster@yahoo.com)

Many thanks for *Alexiad*. Here are some comments on the two most recent issues.

I share Joe's concern about the mediafication of the Best Non-Fiction Hugo Award. I was appalled that the third edition of

the Science Fiction Encyclopedia would have not made the ballot if three more votes had been given to Chicks Dig something or other. But CreateSpace, an Amazon subsidiary, publishes Edward H. Wysocki, Jr.'s *The Great Heinlein Mystery*. It's not available in bookstores. How would ordinary Hugo voters see this book? Why would anyone not really really devoted to Heinlein want to read it?

I read *Some Remarks*. I agree that "Mother Earth, Mother Board" is a great piece of reporting about transatlantic and transpacific cables. I read it in *Wired* when it first came out and the article took me over an hour to read. I like Stephenson's nonfiction because he knows a lot about philosophy and ideas. On the other hand, William Gibson's *Distrust That Particular Flavor* really can't be recommended. Gibson says at the outset that he doesn't have a talent for non-fiction, and it shows. Gibson is a good to great novelist, but he isn't a very good thinker, and you won't learn very much about the world from the scraps Gibson produces.

I like Sue Burke's writing, and her report on the Spanish national sf convention was interesting. I stayed in a pension in The Hague for ConFiction, and I agree that pensions are perfectly fine places to stay and good value. The one piece of information she omitted was how large the convention was. Did the bad economy shrink attendance? It's too bad that the crummy Spanish economy means there isn't that much sf in that country, but hopefully things will get better.

Milt Stevens shares his frustration about the Fan Hugos. This may be Schadenfreude, but I think (with the notable exception of John Scalzi) the non-fans who have snuck off with Fan Hugos haven't done well. *Electric Velocipede* wasn't helped by its "fanzine" Hugo, and now seems to limp along electronically. I don't think his Hugo, as his withdrawal from future consideration shows, will help Jim C. Hines. Hasn't SF Signal also withdrawn from future consideration? I just wish the Best Fanzine Hugo nominators would actually nominate the publications they consider to be the best fanzines. But they haven't done this for what, five years? But I think Stevens's revised rules seem sensible—and probably won't pass.

Joe's review of Rob Salkowitz's *Comic-Con and the Business of Pop Culture* was interesting, and I should track this book down. I forget where I read this (probably in a *New York Review of Science Fiction*) but as I understand it the comic book publishers substantially overproduced in the early 1990s in an effort to gouge the collectors who had to have all the comic books. The prices proved too high for most collectors who cut back their purchases, leading to a near-collapse of both DC and Marvel. People who say that putting your money into comic books is a good investment might qualify their remarks to say pre-1970 comic books in excellent condition. (Having seen an episode of "American Pickers" where the pickers find an issue of the 1962 *Amazing Fantasy* #15, which marked the

debut of Spider-Man, that they overprice because the books are not in good condition, I learned how much condition matters in comic book collecting.)

As for your Chicon report—that was a fun convention, wasn't it? It's good that you found cousins to stay with because hotel rooms in Chicago are ridiculously expensive. But I very much enjoyed the night at the Adler Planetarium, including the gosh wow show about space written by Nick son of Carl Sagan. I thought it was great that the convention thought it a good idea to have fandom spend an evening learning a little science. I also enjoyed the Chicago Cubs trip, and now I have been to a game at Wrigley Field (and the Cubs actually won!). I also think the con committee did an excellent job with the con suite, which was spacious and had lots of great food (especially deep-dish pizza).

It wasn't just the room, it was the room plus the parking charge plus the internet charge. At least the parking at Orlando is supposed to be free for members.

I actually did get a seat at the "Secret History of Science Fiction" panel and it was funny and entertaining. The panel does convince me that the 1968 Bay Con was probably the most horrible Worldcon of the past 50 years, once the riots, the copious quantities of weed, and Philip Jose Farmer droning for two plus hours before anyone could get a Hugo were taken into account. John Scalzi, in my view, was a fine, funny, and professional Master of Ceremonies/Toastmaster, and MUCH better than those two doofuses who did the job in 2011. Six weeks later, I saw Scalzi at Capclave, and like it or not, he is extremely good at promoting himself. He's a very personable guy.

Sue Burke talks about Suzanne Blom, who recently passed away. I remember Suzanne as being a leading Milwaukee fan when I went to Beloit College in the late 1970s. I would always see her at Worldcons and always chat for a bit. I don't know why Suzanne wore crutches (did she have polio as a child?) but she always seemed positive and upbeat whenever I saw her. I'm sorry she wasn't able to sell the sequels to her novel. Sue Blom was one of fandom's bright lights.

As to the Future of Worldcons, I agree with Murray Moore that having three credible 2015 bids is a good sign. I did spend some time in Chicago with the Orlando bid, and the idea that the con will trade a lower admission price with a requirement that members have to stay on Disney properties at a minimum price of \$139 a night does not seem like a good bargain to me. I don't believe that all Millennial fans prefer media conventions to our conventions; I bet there are a lot of people under 40 at the World Fantasy Con and the Readercon. I think the question Baby Boomer fans have to answer is this—*how* do we get people under 40 interested in our clubs and our conventions?

I am afraid that people under forty just don't read for pleasure the way we do. While looking for information on the Racefail '09 incident, I found a website called fanlore.org that presents itself as a site for fans who create and enjoy fanworks. Media fanworks, that is, movies and TV. The fanzines listed have fan fiction and letters about media worlds.

— JTM

From: **Joy V. Smith** December 29, 2012  
8925 Selph Road, Lakeland, FL 33810-0341 USA  
[Pagadan@aol.com](mailto:Pagadan@aol.com)

Thanks for all your reviews, which gives me a look at books I haven't read and probably won't, but I still learn a lot about history from them. I did read *Captain Vorpatril's Alliance*; it'll never be a book I reread as much as the Miles books, but I was impressed by the way Bujold filled in the background.

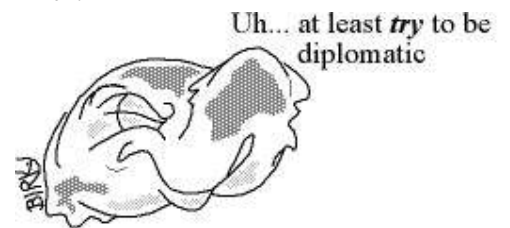
Thanks to Lisa for her article on the Muslim posts/comments. Great rebuttals, Lisa. How ignorant they are of history and facts! The Holocaust denials also make me gnash my teeth. (I've seen the documentaries with actual footage, reports from soldiers who also saw it firsthand and were appalled, and accounts by the survivors. And how do the deniers explain all those tattoos? (Btw, I read *The Second Rule of Ten* recently [better than *The First Rule of Ten*, I thought], in which a Hollywood producer has a number tattooed on his arm--and treated to look authentic — so he can bond with a Holocaust survivor...)

By what David Irving said, "Mrs Altman, how much money have you made out of that tattoo since 1945?"

— JTM

Re: the review of *Why Were They Cancelled?*, I saw an interview (taped at Comic Con, I believe) with the *Firefly* cast and how they felt when they were cancelled. And I've read articles on how even popular shows are cancelled. Sometimes they're too expensive.

I enjoyed the con reviews too, and I always enjoy Sue Burke's reports from Spain. Lots more interesting info and discussions in the LOCs. And thanks for the Blackadder piece. I enjoyed most of the timelines in that series.



From: **Jim Stumm**

December 26, 2012



Post Office Box 29, Buffalo NY  
14223-0029 USA

**SOLAR FLARES:** Re what I said about Heinlein stories and walking on the Moon in *Alexiad* 11.6, I did some further research and found out that during the years when Apollo astronauts were sometimes on the Moon, 1969 to 1972, the Sun was actually in the most active part of its 11 year cycle. But even then, solar flares are rare, bursting forth at irregular and unpredictable intervals on the order of once per year. On Earth we are shielded from harm by Earth's magnetic field and atmosphere, but the Moon has no such shielding. Low Earth Orbit and the ISS also lie within Earth's magnetic field.

Then I googled "solar flares on the moon" and the first item, with the URL that begins: science.nasa.gov answered most of my remaining questions. It turns out that Apollo astronauts were indeed lucky that they weren't harmed by a solar flare. Apollo 16 returned to Earth in April 1972. Apollo 17, the last Apollo mission, launched in Dec 1972. In between, in August, a huge solar storm erupted. If astronauts had been walking on the Moon at that time, they would have been exposed to up to 400 rem of radiation. Without treatment, this will surely cause radiation sickness and is often a fatal dose. If astronauts exposed to that much radiation had rushed back to Earth and been given serious medical treatment, including a bone marrow transplant, they probably would have survived. But it was just by chance that astronauts were on the Moon in Apr and Dec of 1972, and not in Aug of that year when the radiation "weather" on the Moon was very bad.

In the future, if there are humans on the Moon full time, they will have to have "storm shelters" buried under the regolith in which to take shelter When the Sun burps out more than its usual quota of radiation. The Sun will be constantly monitored by satellites in solar orbit SO that early warning of bursts of excessive radiation can be given to lunar residents so they will know that they must take shelter flown below.

In the Heinlein novel I'm presently reading, a solar flare seriously affects the passengers on a space liner in which Podkayne of Mars is traveling, enroute to Venus.

This was discussed in that useful work of reference and information, Heinlein's Children (2006), available from Advent:Publishers or NESFA (Advt.)

— The Author

George W. Price: The FEDERAL RESERVE was set up about 100 years ago to smooth out the business cycle and put an end to all those panics and crashes that had occurred so often in the 1800s. We know how well that worked out. Economist Milton Friedman famously recommended that the Fed

should be replaced by a rule that would automatically increase the money supply by 3 percent a year. That would keep prices flat in a growing economy.

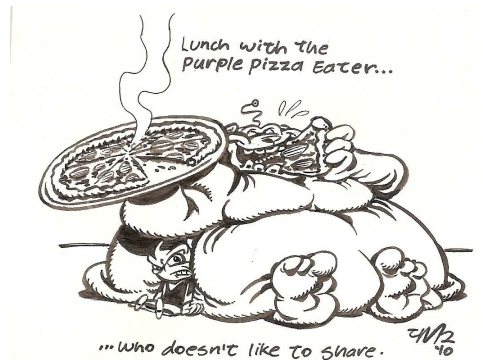
JTM: The NY State Thruway was built as a toll road some years before construction began on the Federal Interstate Highways, financed by bonds to be paid off by the tolls. By the time these original bonds were paid off, sections of the Thruway were worn out and needed reconstruction. Roads and bridges wear out and continuous revenue is needed to maintain and repair and replace them. Although we hear constant demands that the Thruway tolls should be abolished, they remain in place. I think it's only proper that the people who use these roads should pay for them.

Alexis A. Gilliland: I have read that the discovery of one planet in the Alpha Centauri system is an indication that there are probably other undiscovered planets there as well. No one has actually seen any of these exo-planets. What they see is indirect evidence, such as a star displaying a periodic wiggle which they deduce is caused by a planet revolving around it.

I have seen a graph at cato.org that shows that actual measured global temperatures are not increasing at anything like the hysterical predictions of the IPCC.

From: **Richard A. Dengrove** Jan. 12, 2013  
2651 Arlington Drive, #302,  
Alexandria, VA 22306-3626 USA  
[RichD22426@aol.com](mailto:RichD22426@aol.com)

This comments on *Alexiad* December 2012. I have been saying that even if I don't comment enough, you should know I like *Alexiad*. On second thought, I am writing enough about *Alexiad* to guarantee that.



I like that *Alexiad* reviews all sorts of things. Of course, its inspiration is SF fandom. Could it have been inspired by a completely different genre? Not as different as Rosemary Edgehill's scenario. An anti-trekkie fan figures out some way to kill Star Trek fandom; and succeeds in killing off all science fiction as well.

Then, Rosemary says, a fanzine like *Alexiad* could be inspired by the Romance genre. I beg to disagree. Never happen. Joe, you have too many unromantic correspondents

for that.

A more likely possibility was mentioned by Alan Moore in his *The Watchmen*. In a world where superheroes and supervillains go gallivanting around, science fiction's place has been taken by the Pirate genre. So we read you talking like a pirate, Joe.

Oh you mean like in Atomic Laundromat where David and Angela are deciding what to see at the cinema:

David: "So what do we want to catch at the movies? The new Batman one?"

Angela: "Ugh, no thanks. Not in the mood for a documentary."

Sometimes we can see alternative fates in the real world. Lisa commemorates a woman destroyed by Alzheimers. My mother was too – basically. At one point, she could not remember her own name. However, something survived – her artistic ability. She had been a damn good artist in life. While she wasn't as good after Alzheimers hit, something of it remained. If I remember, I will send you examples of it. As a friend said, he couldn't have sketched as well as she did without knowing her own name.

Our presumptions often turn out to be mistaken. That a woman with Alzheimers could not sketch is one. Another is that blasphemy is legal in the US. I can't blame Lisa too much because I believed it wasn't against the law too. However, I once read an article about it by a lawyer. He claimed that while the Constitution insures freedom of religion and freedom of speech, blasphemy is banned by common law. On the other hand, I gather convictions for blasphemy are rarer than hen's teeth. Not since Abner Kneeland in 1928.

Thus, sometimes misinformation has the potential to cause problems. However, there are benefits to ostensible misinformation if it is for a smile or to get some villain real or imagined. Joe mentions, in his review of *The Lost Stars*, that Cyril Kornbluth's view of organized crime, *The Syndic* (1953), was unrealistic and romantic.

I am willing to bet Kornbluth was reacting to the 1950-51 Kefauver hearings on organized crime, which was publicized to kingdom come. I am sure, whether Libertarian or just turned off, Kornbluth had had it up to here with the evil of the mob.

Sometimes, as in the above case, the problem is not misinformation but irony. Also, the problem can be too much actual information or too little. Joe reviews *Some Remarks* by Neal Stephenson, which warns against information dumps because they can make novels unreadable. On the other hand, so, says Stephenson, may neglecting to give the reader needed background.

My pet peeve is not paucity of background, but a writer fails to insert sufficient transitions so that one subject is not separated enough from another. To me, for the moment, there is

nothing more confusing than thinking you are reading about one topic when you are reading about another.

Now let us return from too much or too little information to misinformation. Joe agrees with Bruce Bawer's *The Victims' Revolution* that the liberal mind has closed. Or at any rate the radical mind has closed. No matter, yes indeed, Postmodern tomes give us a distorted version of history.

What would happen if we examined more conservative histories? I am not certain we wouldn't find that they distorted history in their own way. A recent history of China had Chiang Kai-Shek leading a united nation before and during World War II. Of course, it was well-known that, in many parts of the country, warlords ruled. In fact, my father told me that, in the province where he was stationed, a bandit leader ascended to the governorship.

Also, Bruce Bawer notwithstanding, I get the impression Post Modernism is not the force it was twenty or thirty years ago. Among other changes, the advocates of anything goes in science have since disappeared or recanted.

After growing tired of all the liars in the political arena, or who have pretension of being in the political arena, it is comforting to see fiction not parading as fact. Even a hard edged drama like the movie *Looper*, which William Patterson reviewed.

I saw the movie myself; and, unlike William, I found it both thoughtful and heard edged. I have to agree, though, that to appreciate the movie you have to ignore the time paradoxes. These, I suspect, are inherent in time travel.

Having enjoyed a reality that is fiction, I was brought back to politics by Jim Stumm. Jim, in response to me, claims that the only reason that new currencies end hyperinflation is because the government forces people to accept the new money. This is strange. I thought Jim believed that the danger behind government currencies was hyperinflation.

Then Jim, in response to me again, claims that, where currency is issued privately, no bank could be too big to fail. Somehow businesses not using the currency of that bank will not feel the fall out. What world is he living in? Unless those businesses using a currency function completely autonomous from those not using it, they will be affected. And, as far as I can tell, businesses have not functioned autonomously from one another since 1850 – if even then.

Going a few fictional decades forward, we come to the Steampunk era, John Purcell explains it to me. While he did, I was wondering about what sparked enthusiasm for the genre, which combines the Victorian era with higher tech and horror tropes.

I suspect it's a combo of crowd pleasing anachronisms and monstrosities with a more orderly, morally directed and simpler era. The type of era we secretly crave. It makes science that much more goshwow; and heroes better able to deal with the werewolves, vampires and zombies. In fact, Gail Garriger goes so far

as to have a special government agency to handle vampires, werewolves, and other supernatural matters..



Remaining in the 19th Century, there is a comment on the money then. George Price claims that the gold standard, big at the time, should be adopted now. It will prevent politicians from inflating the currency. I understand the conceit that if you have a law, people will be forced to follow it.

That wasn't my experience with government. No politician has ever been forced to do anything even if it was nailed down. I talked last time about how even money made of gold can be debased. That is not the half of it. If politicians find the gold standard inconvenient, it will be sidestepped whether it is enshrined in the Constitution or not.

My thirty-five years in government has taught me there is no substitute for political stability, a willingness for conflicting sides in the political arena to compromise, and some care for the common good. Otherwise, everything goes to hell in a handbasket.

Another person I disagree with is Tim Lane. Not as much as I disagree with George or Jim. No, I will admit, here and there, Communist sympathizers have published novels and made movies. However, I noticed another factor: publishers of pleasantries, like James Bond, would rather not get political. They might wish to sell their wares in Russia.

For instance, I remember Tom Swift, Jr., a trifle for kids. Tom, if I remember correctly,

fought the Kranjovians and the Burgundians, never the Russians. They looked like the Russians, smelled like the Russians; but they WEREN'T the Russians.

I really don't think Ian Fleming was concerned about sales in the Soviet Bloc. As for Tom Swift, Jr., the Stratemeyer Syndicate was apolitical. Their flying hero Dave Scott the Lone Eagle, first to fly the Atlantic, never had any issues with women, kidnappings, visits abroad, political speeches, etc., unlike the real-life model.

— JTM

With my comment on the Russians in light entertainment, I am near the end of *Alexiad*. I better wrap this up. Lots of politics in this letter, especially 19th Century politics. Very little sex. Come to think of it, very little sex in *Alexiad*. Joe, couldn't you get some sexier correspondents?

From: **George W. Price** January 14, 2013  
P.O. Box A3228, Chicago, IL  
60690-3228 USA  
[price4418@comcast.net](mailto:price4418@comcast.net)

December *Alexiad*:  
"Random Jottings" cites an erroneous French phone bill "in the amount of €1,721,000,000,000,000." Joe translates this into words as "eleven quintillion, seven hundred twenty-one trillion euros." Isn't that eleven quadrillion? In any case, this shows the danger of depending on computers without bothering to check if the machines got it right.

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Joe's review of Edward Wysocki's *The Great Heinlein Mystery* cites Advent's *The Science Fiction Novel: Imagination and Social Criticism* as the source of Heinlein's reference to a science-fictional gadget he had dreamed up that was then developed by the Navy and used in World War II. Yes, I remember Mr. Wysocki contacting me a number of years ago in hopes of learning more about it. I couldn't tell him anything, and I don't think he ever did find out what the gadget was. (I presume Joe's review would have said if Wysocki had finally identified it in this book.)

Advertisement: Advent still has *The Science Fiction Novel* in print (and also Panshin's *Heinlein in Dimension*, mentioned in the review). Contact me for details: [price4418@comcast.net](mailto:price4418@comcast.net).

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*Alexiad*'s house style is to justify but not hyphenate. This frequently leads to one line being stretched way out with wide word and letter spacing because all of a long word had to be dropped to the next line. Two spectacular examples are close together in Sue Burke's con report (first column of page 12). In both cases,

the “long word” is a website address.

This is also frequently a problem in publications that do hyphenate, because they generally won't hyphenate web addresses lest the reader think the hyphen is part of the address. We really need a standard convention for this. I propose a hyphen in square brackets: [-]. Now all we need is a way to publicize this and get everybody to use it. Except *Alexiad*, of course, which I presume will continue to not hyphenate at all.

It's because of WordPerfect.

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Alexis Gilliland mentions a recent report by the Arctic Methane Emergency Group saying, “it would appear that a warmer Arctic has the potential to suddenly release more methane (from methane clathrates in the shallow waters off Siberia) and carbon dioxide (from warming permafrost) than has been released during the whole of the industrial revolution.” Yes, that could be a real problem, especially since methane is far more potent than CO2 as a greenhouse gas.

Some twenty years ago, before I retired from the natural gas industry, we speculated about producing methane (natural gas) from those frozen gas hydrates in the polar seabeds. So this problem might also be an opportunity: bring the methane up to be used as fuel rather than wait for warming to release it into the atmosphere. But the technology will be daunting.

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Jim Stumm has quite a bit to say about the gold standard and the possibility of “Free Banking” — privately issued money not backed by gold or silver. I agree in general, though the details might get hairy.

He also says that “Here in Buffalo some merchants do not accept Canadian money which is not legal tender in USA.” I remember stopping in Buffalo about forty years ago and being given change with Canadian coins mixed in. I refused them and told the clerk they were no good in other parts of the U.S. As I walked out, I heard her ask another clerk, in a tone of wonderment, “Is that true?”

Since then, the exchange rate for Canadian money has varied considerably, and I expect that in the years when a Canadian dollar was worth only about 70 or 80 cents U.S., the merchants were not so ready to accept those coins as equivalent to American.

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Richard Dengrove says that “the big reason for the [financial] meltdown was not the fraud on others, but the fraud the banks and the developers perpetrated on themselves. . . . However, rightfully, no law prohibits fraud against yourself. You could only control such self-deception with government

regulation that George Price despises.”

Not quite. The big problem was not that the government failed to regulate, but that it did regulate quite extensively — the Community Reinvestment Act — and the regulations punished the banks if they didn't make enough “subprime” loans. The operating assumption was that only racism could explain not making loans in poor minority neighborhoods, and we couldn't have that, now could we?

In addition, the government guaranteed the subprime loans, either explicitly or implicitly, so banks and other lenders felt no pressure to scrutinize loans to see if they could really be repaid. And that's where the fraud came galloping in. The less scrupulous lenders swarmed to take advantage of the federal guarantees. And the regulators smiled benignly.

Had the Community Reinvestment Act not existed, the only regulation needed to prevent the subprime boom and collapse would have been an ironclad rule that there would be no government bailouts — if the borrower didn't repay, the lender got stuck. (And of course refusal to lend must not be punished as racism.)

Alas, the Community Reinvestment Act is still in force; Fannie Mae, Freddy Mac, and the FHA show no sign of having learned anything; and as soon as we've recovered from the present mess, they will be ready to start the same failed policies all over again.

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Mr. Dengrove doesn't believe that “the Supreme Court should somehow keep the Constitution as unchanging as the laws of the Persians and Medes.” He adds that “I am sure George Price finds these prospects [of judicial reinterpretation] evil because changing the Constitution reduces respect for the rule of law. I beg to differ. People disrespect laws that have become outmoded, and are irked when new injustices cannot be addressed. Unchanging laws hardly increase respect for law.”

He misunderstands me. I have no problem with changing the Constitution to meet changing conditions — as long as it is done properly, in the way the Constitution provides: by amendment.

No, what I very strenuously object to is changing the Constitution by interpretation; that is, by pretending that the same words, unchanged, now mean something different from what we all know the authors intended. This intellectual dishonesty is what reduces respect for the rule of law.

I presume that judges change the Constitution by interpretation rather than wait for amendment because they believe — rightly in many cases — that passing an honest amendment would be too hard and take too long. That is, not enough people have yet been convinced of the need for the change. So they short-circuit the political process and take the decision away from the people. That is an arrogant attack on democracy.

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I must disagree with Taras Wolansky about Earl Kemp. He says that the review of *The Proceedings: ChiCon III* led him “to look up Earl Kemp's diatribe ‘Heinlein Happens’.” Taras finds that piece “[e]mbarrassing indeed, but mostly to Kemp, who comes across as one of those stalkers who are filled with rage because the object of their affections barely knows they are alive.”



That seriously understates Heinlein's relationship to Kemp. Heinlein knew Kemp was alive; boy, did he ever! When Kemp proposed to publish Panshin's study of Heinlein (before I took over running *Advent*), Heinlein sent Kemp an enraged letter saying in essence: I thought you were my friend but you have betrayed me by taking up with Panshin. That's an abbreviated paraphrase, but true in tone and spirit. I still have that letter (but have no intention of publishing it). It's not something you'd send to someone you hardly know.

It's probably in the Heinlein Archives, available for purchase online.

After I became *Advent*'s manager, Panshin and I decided to go ahead with *Heinlein in Dimension*, with some minor changes to meet any legal objections Heinlein might have — that letter to Kemp hinted at, but didn't outright threaten, a lawsuit. That was also why, just before publishing the book in 1968, I converted *Advent* from a partnership to a corporation.



That would protect the partners' personal assets in case Heinlein won a judgment against us. In the event, he did not sue. Years later I heard on the grapevine that Heinlein had cooled off, and he may even have read the copy of *Heinlein in Dimension* that I sent him upon publication.

All the people who knew them personally believed Earl. As opposed to the one alt.fan.heinlein commentator who dismissed them as "old guys".

— JTM

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The Newtown school massacre inspires a new definition of "Gun-Free Zone": "A place where victims assemble to be killed with no chance of defense."

From: **Lloyd Penney** January 16, 2013  
1706-24 Eva Road, Etobicoke, ON  
M9C 2B2 CANADA  
[penneys@allstream.net](mailto:penneys@allstream.net)  
<http://lloydpenney.livejournal.com/>

Many thanks for *Alexiad* 66...it's a quiet afternoon, and there's still nothing of interest on television. Everything's online now, and here I am anyway...

Your comments on fans going away...just learned that Mike Deckinger had passed away early last year, but no one knew until a copy of Robert Lichtman's *TrapDoor* was returned to Robert, marked Deceased. Sometimes, we don't have as good a news network as we think.

I am continuing to keep an eye out for any reports of another Montréal Worldcon bid. I hope they will bid, for even with competing with a Japanese bid, I think many cash-strapped American voters may go with a non-American city they can afford to go to. Montréal also has a good track record, and I would hope I could go to it.

Comments on fan Hugos...this past year, some Canadian pros managed to win three out of four fan Auroras, and a lot of that comes from a lack of interest in, or awareness of fan awards on the part of fans. I don't know the actual qualification description of the fan awards, but it is vague enough that anyone can win them, and they do. Perhaps we want to be able to say that we're fans, you're pros, go win your own, and we'll win ours, but all can say they are fans. As an example, the Aurora for Best Fanzine last year was won by a pro-based, shared-universe chapbook that I had never heard of.

Yes. And these works come with their own groups of fans who don't seem to be able to tell the difference.

Comments on legal tender...there is legal tender, and then there is assigned-value currency. The Canadian Tire Corp. runs a

chain of hardware/automotive/camping, etc. stores across Canada, and they issue paper scrip in value between 5¢ and \$2, a percentage of your purchase in return. Of course, Canadian Tire is the only place where you can redeem this scrip, but it has become so common as to be jokingly considered Canada's second currency. I have no doubt some US banks have been defrauded by people assuring them the Canadian Tire scrip they have in their hands is real Canadian money, and they get exchange. For those of us who live in Toronto, we might have a third currency...the Toronto Transit Commission transit token, with assigned value of approximately \$2.65 each.

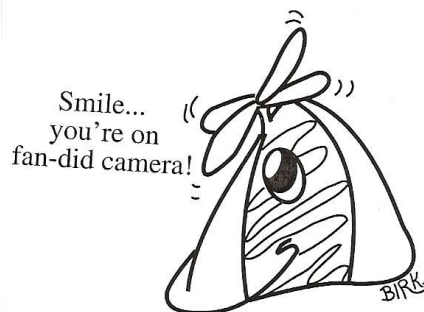
Years ago, I got Yvonne a CARP membership (AARP for Canada). She let it lapse because the few discounts it offered were for products and services we either didn't want or couldn't use, or they tried continuously to sell us insurance. They proved to be less than useless.

You sound like Lisa's father explaining why he's dropping out of AARP.

— JTM

I agree with John Purcell, steampunk is a lot of fun, it needs not be accurate as far as fashion or era goes, but it is a revisitation of a more genteel era, and it suits us right now. Looks like the public is starting to accept it more, which may or may not take the fun out of it. And, I've been raked over the proverbial coals over this interest, and we've said too bad, you don't like it, deal with it.

I wish there was more to say, I have had to start looking for work again. Nonetheless, we had an excellent Christmas and New Year's, and even a Twelfth Night dinner party to go to, wonderful time. I hope your holiday times were as much fun, if not more, and I have hopes for 2013 as being a better year. It could hardly be worse. Many thanks, take care, see you next issue.



From: **Sheryl L. Birkhead** January 14, 2013  
22509 Jonnie Court, Gaithersburg, MD  
20882-3422 USA

Happy New Year and all That! Well, one can hope...  
Very belated Happy Birthday, Joe.

Although I did not make any "formal" resolutions this year, one thing I want to do is get caught up with the locs — get whatever drawing software I feel I **have** to and move on — spending more time with it this coming yea. I'll try.

Agh, I have sadly neglected "Miles" — looks as if I have another of "his" books to read when I find all that extra time.

I just saw *Looper* (from my Netflix list) and had mixed feelings about it. I did feel the makeup for Gordon-Leavitt, as you mention, was noteworthy. I know he was in the film, but somehow forgot that fact until the very end of the movie and had one of those "I'll be darned" moments.

Hopefully readers will provide sets of Hugo nominations now that the race is open. Remember to nominate in those categories in which you feel qualified and fill in as many of the blanks as you can.

There are a number of worthy nominees for Best Related Work; the revised Proceedings of ChiCon 3, Joex, Wysocki, and Sellers. However we all know that Chicks Dig Comics will win. And the Best Fanzine will be won by a blog. And the Best Fan Writer will be a minor pro.

—JTM

Hmm, without doing some actual research, I can't recall the particulars, but some city/county (etc.) just passed a law limiting the legal (ah there's the rub) number of household cats to four. That should be interesting in enforcement.

There was a mention of hurricane names in a special I taped some time ago and just now got around to watching. I had not realized they retired any name of a storm that was responsible for a lot of damage. No information was given as to how this was determined. They did say that there would never be another hurricane named Sandy.

I hope Lloyd's "new" job is still going as strong — unfortunately it seems to be feast or famine — no work or overwork!

Benedict Cumberbatch is (so I read) actually a redhead — mentioned as "ginger". It is interesting to see... I don't think I have seen him with what appears (so to speak) to be his natural hair color. There were mentions online of comments referring to the two friends (Martin Freeman and Cumberbatch) being different Holmes at the same time. I have three stacks of VCR tapes (totaling more than 50 tapes right now) sitting here to be watched. So, Lloyd — yeah, I know about not having the time to watch... I think I am just now finishing up watching Thanksgiving stuff.

So to get one more fannish "obligation" attended to — I'll print this and get it on its way to you. Hope that 2013 doesn't have so much "turmoil" and fannish loss.

From: **John Purcell** January 25, 2013  
3744 Marilene Circle, College Station,

TX 77845-3926 USA  
[j\\_purcell54@yahoo.com](mailto:j_purcell54@yahoo.com)

Well, Joe and Lisa, it's like this:

You've probably heard of this from the denizens of Facebook, plus I've also mentioned this on the fmzfen and Southern Fandom Classic listservs, but my darling wife Valerie very recently underwent successful anterior cervical discectomy infusion. That is quite the mouthful, but in short, she had three cervical discs replaced this past Monday (Jan 21st) afternoon. Believe it or not, it was considered outpatient surgery, and in fact, that was totally correct: by 10:30 AM Tuesday her discharge papers were all set, and Val was home by noon. That just blows me away; a spinal operation under full anesthesia to do some major repair work on severely compressed discs, and less than a day later she's home. Unbelievable. I am happy to report that she is doing well in her recovery, even though some of the after-effects of the surgery — neck pain, minor swelling, mega-itchy surgi-strips covering her stitches (I am now calling her my little zipper neck) — are driving her crazy. A week from today (Jan 31st) is her followup visit to the neurosurgeon when the stitches come out.

What impresses me is the change in cataract surgery. It used to involve spending weeks afterward with your head between sandbags so you couldn't injure the surgery. Now it's an outpatient procedure that takes longer to register for than to do.

So I see Lisa is considering life at half a century. Well, that's Valerie's age, too, and she's doing pretty good (neck surgery notwithstanding). I am now almost a full decade past 50 and have adopted as my life's philosophy that I refuse to act my age. That kind of attitude should help me either live a long life or die suddenly because I tried riding my bicycle off a 30 meter ski jump. On second thought, maybe I will sort of act my age. Sounds like a plan.

Joe, I would not be surprised if here in Texas there is a publisher of Armadillo Romance novels. Personally I cannot imagine why any person in their right mind would care or dare to woo an armadillo, but perhaps in an Armadillo Romance, since the beastie is already armored, they are ridden by brave, helmeted knights, lances held high, lanyards flapping in the breeze as they wobble along their crusty steeds in search of rescuing lady ant-eaters in distress. Along the way these brave, helmeted knights do battle with prehistoric wheelbugs, overgrown fire ants, and venomous snakes of Brobdingnagian lengths. If this sub-genre doesn't exit, then I think I've finally figured out what my first sf-fantasy novel is going to be. Please don't tell anybody about this, okay? Thank you.

I enjoyed reading the con reports in this issue, and expect to read Guy Lillian's GoH

report on Archon in the next issue of *Challenger*. You never mentioned anything about Guy in the report, so he either enjoyed himself immensely or you frequented aspects of the con that did not cross paths with Guy. Oh, well. It sounds like it was a fun convention.

Leigh tends to spend her convention days in the dealers' room. That's what they do.

— JTM

And Sue Burke's convention report of the 30th Spanish National Convention was very interesting to read. A very different type of convention structure than those I'm used to attending, and much more scenic, I might add. How cool to read a con report from a country most of us here in American fandom don't think about. Thank you for running it, Joe. Oh, and Sue might be interested to know that here in College Station, Texas, on March 22 - 23, 2013, Cushing Library at Texas A&M University is hosting Deeper Than Swords: A Celebration of the Works of George R.R. Martin. He will be giving a free speech in Rudder Auditorium (tickets are already all gone), and the autograph and dinner sessions are also already sold out. He's a very popular fellow right now. Martin will also be the special guest of honor at Aggiecon 44, which is likewise being held that same weekend (March 22-24, 2013) at the College Station Hilton Hotel and Convention Center. It sounds like this town is going to be hopping that weekend. Should be fun, and I hope to see some friends that weekend.

There is something else happening that weekend, but my aging brain cells forget what that is offhand. Oh, yes! My birthday is March 22nd. Awfully nice of the local sf people to hold such wonderful events to help in the birthday celebration festivities. The big question is, who gets to cut the cake? It would be cool if George R.R. Martin did that, serving me a nice, big, honking piece of Death by Chocolate cake. We will naturally forgo on the candles. I understand that would violate Texas A&M University fire codes.

In the loc column, Milt Stevens' comments about the fan Hugos were interesting to read. I do like the wording of his proposed rules. Very clearly stated. Personally, I agree with his initial statement that this set of Hugos — the fan awards — be eliminated, but I can understand that many people want them to stay. After all, they are now a well-established tradition, so it does make sense to update these categories to be more current and clearly defined in order to avoid future kerfluffles when such-and-such blog or non-fannish-type production wins one of OUR awards. \*sigh\* This is a topic that in all likelihood will never go away. Then again, maybe it will once fanzines are no longer produced on paper and only available in assorted electronic formats. After all, Ghu only knows how fans will produce their fannish efforts in the future. As communication technology changes, so will

fanac. It is inevitable.

I believe I shall ignore your final comment to my loc, mostly because I forget the reference at the moment because I am very tired right now and my brain is beginning to shut down for the night. So thank you so much for shipping the zine to me. It is always good to get *Alexiad* because it's such an enjoyable fanzine.



From: **Sue Burke** January 26, 2013  
 calle Agustín Querol 6 bis - 6D, 28014  
 Madrid, SPAIN  
[sueburke@telefonica.net](mailto:sueburke@telefonica.net)  
[mount-oregano.livejournal.com](http://mount-oregano.livejournal.com)  
<http://amadisofgaul.blogspot.com>

The numbers for 2012 are in, and Spain's economy looks sadder than ever. "Bankia," the name of a major failed bank, was the year's top Google search in Spain. The GDP dropped by 1.3% in 2012. Unemployment reached 26% and will keep rising: 2000 jobs are lost each day in Spain. Purchasing power dropped by 1.6%. Wages dropped for most employees except for executives. Family savings dropped to their lowest level in 12 years. Food sales are down both in volume and spending, especially for olive oil and wine. Food banks can't keep up with the demand, 20% greater than last year. Telephone use, both fixed and cell phones, is down by millions of lines. Last year's drought means the 2013 olive oil harvest will be less than half of 2012. Prices — never cheap — will go up, which may cut exports.

The drought also lay behind the worst forest fire season in a decade. Wine production also fell due to the drought, although export sales remain strong. The bad economy has a social costs. Domestic violence fell to record levels, with only 50 deaths this year; experts say women can't afford to leave their abusers, and killings are usually sparked when the woman tries to break free. Abortion rose by 5%, especially among women in their 30s who already have children but can't afford another. Although drinking and drug use is down, the use of tranquilizers and sleeping pills has doubled since 2005. Homelessness has doubled

since 2008.

Retail sales have dropped by about 8%, but sales of books about economics – from classic titles to current analysis – have skyrocketed by as much as 50% for some publishing houses. Television viewing reached a new high, an average of 246 minutes per person per day, but fewer people than ever are going to movies. Taxes and government fees increased across the board, including a new 21% tax on movie tickets, but due to the shrinking economy, revenues collected by the government also shrank. Gasoline sales dropped to 1990s levels. Housing prices dropped by 11.3% compared to 2011.

While Spain received 58 million foreign tourists in 2012, a 3% increase over the previous year, tourists spent less overall and the tourism industry shrank by 1.6%. In surveys, 84% of Spaniards say the economic troubles have hurt their families, 68% think the government has no economic plan, 96% believe the government is corrupt (the other 4% aren't following the news), 88% believe politicians worry about their own problems rather than society's problems, 66% say politicians are worse than they were when Spain emerged from its dictatorship, and 73% say Spain is on the edge of major social unrest due to unemployment and poverty. Madrid saw on average 10 protests per day in 2012. There were fewer strikes than in 2011, but they were bigger.

The International Monetary Fund admitted that it underestimated by a factor of three the effect of fiscal multipliers of austerity on economies suffering recessions; austerity increases unemployment and decreases investment and private consumption, it said. Now the IMF advises against austerity in certain situations. It predicts Spain's GDP will drop another 1.5% in 2013. The Bank of Spain says the drop will be due to diminished consumer spending and government cutbacks: Germany continues to insist on more austerity for Spain.

The effect of the euro on Spain's economy has been compared to the gold standard: a stable but rigid currency that ties the government's hands but does nothing to affect, say, capital flight, which is a significant problem across southern Europe. As Milton Friedman and Anna Jacobson Schwartz point out in *A Monetary History of the United States, 1867-1960*, a gold standard in itself cannot prevent inflation or deflation – in fact in some circumstances, a gold standard can cause it by being invariant compared to business expansion or contraction. And while a gold standard does stabilize international exchange rates – no small thing – Friedman and Schwartz say it does not guarantee a stable economy, as history shows, nor does it prevent international gold flows that inconveniently expand or contract the monetary supply available to businesses and commerce. In the past decade, precisely that kind of monetary expansion, an inflow largely from Germany, is what fueled Spain's inflation and property bubble, which burst and

created the current crisis. Friedman and Schwartz also point out that exchange rate stabilization will not occur unless all major governments in the world go on the gold standard. I doubt China will do that, since currency manipulation serves it so well. In any case, governments went into debt perfectly freely, to the point of repeated bankruptcy, during times of gold-backed currency.

As for Hayek's idea of denationalized money, Friedman and Schwartz would seem to disagree. In the final chapter of their book, they say, "Our economy could not operate at more than a small fraction of its present level of productivity without a common and widely accepted medium of exchange . . . Money is a veil. The 'real' forces are the capacities of the people, their industry and ingenuity, the resources they command, their mode of economic and political organization, and the like."



From: **Murray Moore** January 28, 2013  
1065 Henley Road, Mississauga  
Ontario L4Y 1C8 CANADA  
[murraymoore@gmail.com](mailto:murraymoore@gmail.com)

Lisa, you are confused. Only people older than myself are old. I am 61 years of age. You are 50 years of age. Ergo, you are not old. Also, you are approaching old age only as you approach the end of the year (Dec. 31) on Jan. 1; okay, maybe you are on June 1. The benefit of Milt's original proposed motion to fix the Fan Hugos, i.e. delete them, would have been a shorter Hugo Awards Ceremony, not a bad result as proposals for new Hugos continue to appear and be argued.

For myself the FAAn Award winners best represent current fanzines, fan writing, and fan artistry. Neither the FAAn category definitions nor the FAAn winners are controversial among the FAAn voters.

I can see a Worldcon committee in the next decade omitting the Fan Hugos from the Hugo Awards Ceremony, as have been by recent Worldcons announcement of the First Fandom Award recipients and the less-entrenched presentation of the Seiun Awards.

Will the Big Heart Award, as part of the Hugo Ceremony, continue when Dave Kyle no longer appears in his red jacket? It is not a Hugo Award. At Hugo Award Ceremonies the Fan Hugos are the warmup act to the main event. Apr. 6 is the deadline for voting for the winners of the 2013 FAAn Awards: ballot here

<http://corflu.org/>

John Hertz has taken those over, so we'll replace the red jacket with the propellor beanie.

— JTM

From: **Dainis Bisenieks** January 23, 2013  
921 S. St. Bernard Street, Philadelphia,  
PA 19143-3310 USA

Those who listen to classical music will have heard any number of performances by the *Orchestre de la suisse romande*. Where its home-base is, I have never been concerned to find out. Not long ago, I heard for the first time something performed by the orchestra of Italian-speaking Switzerland, its existence is now enshrined among the trivia facts I could not forget if I tried.

<http://www.osr.ch/Default.asp>

"Through the high and far-off times, o best beloved, there flows a mighty river men call the Ister, having its source in the country of the Celts who live near the city of Pyrene beyond the pillars of Heracles, and at long last giving up its waters to the Euxine at Istria (that beautiful city praised by Pliny. This river, the Ister, is now identified with the Danube.)"

And to those who listen to classical music on a certain Philadelphia station, it seems that half the 18th century works for small orchestras that one hears are performed by the Capella Istropolitana. Of the cities on the mighty Ister (or Danube), which might that be? I can confidently assert that it is Bratislava, the capital of velvet-divorced Slovakia? Other, specifically Slovak-named ensembles are also heard; it seems like music is the country's principal export. Ireland is in this business, too.

Surnames and place names in German-speaking lands have a certain charm for me; so it was that I acquired, not long ago, a book on the family names found in Zurich to about 1800. Documents from the earliest times are cited, giving the full names of marriage partners, giving a line on personal names also. Among womenfolk, among the most popular are two that I have never before encountered: Regula and Verena. Locally revered saints, sure enough.

The feast of St. Regula (and her brother St. Felix and their servant St. Exuperantius) is September 11. They were "cephalaphores", beheaded martyrs who walked after their executions. The feast of St. Verena is September 1; she tended the sick.

I read Pratchett's *Dodger* (a library copy) and did not think it was up to his usual standard. It's too much of a moral tale, as *Snuff* already was. *Dodger* already defends the weak against the strong, on principle; he



already has a mentor and is happy enough to accept others. What makes a story interesting is the spectacle of the characters falling and then picking themselves up. In Pratchett's work, the falls are pratfalls — which do not diminish the characters. After all, standing on one's dignity is not the best thing to so; it makes one look absurd. In *Dodger*, far too much of the humor comes from allusion to the bad smells of London and where they come from. It is written for those who in their younger days would have enjoyed *The Book of Poo*. Our hero has a dog; as often as it appears, we are reminded that it smells. (How does it smell?)

With its nose?

I once encountered, in a doorway on a rainy day, a wet dog. On a scale of one to ten, it was a ten. I kept remembering the smell for weeks afterward.

I am an admirer of a certain kind of anecdotal cartoon art, some of it on *New Yorker* covers, but not as much as you'd think. Not Booth, not Koren, not Chast. Steinberg, Searle, and Addams are, alas, no longer with us. Beloved are Sorel and Sempé — I have books of their work. And I've saved up a bunch of *New Yorker* covers, from scavenged copies, almost all with their annoying address labels, except where they have been torn off, to even worse effect. How to remove them without stripping off the printed surface? Slowly and laboriously, and even then little bits of the surface may be lost. The stickum comes in two streaks. I think I've got it now; divide the length of the label with nail scissors and work outward, instead of along the length of the label. Other publications, different problems and maybe no good method. Ah, I remember the days when some magazines were mailed in manila envelopes!

Or when Analog had a manila jacket.

Blessed are those who just don't care.

I had a letter from Yuri Mironets in Vladivostok, twenty days on the way by slow airplane. It took a 25-ruble stamp, and isn't it about time to move the decimal point a couple of spaces? All currency units are too picayune; if basic letter postage or the price of a newspaper were \$0.05, that would be about right. And that damfool 9/10¢ in gasoline prices!

This was entered the day it was announced that Canada was discontinuing the issuance of cents.

As December wore on, I kept thinking that the expected-by-the-law-of-averages Indian head cent was behind schedule. I finally found one on January 2! Better than some, discolored but not corroded. Such things have individual character.

P.S. I sent a LoC two months ago. Lost, or

merely delayed?

As far as I know, we never got it. Which does not mean it never got here.

— JTM

From: **AL du Pisani** February 4, 2012  
945 Grand Prix Street,  
Weltevredenpark 1709, REPUBLIC OF  
SOUTH AFRICA  
[du.pisani@telkomsa.net](mailto:du.pisani@telkomsa.net)

Greetings from Sunny South Africa

And it is sunny. But it has been raining often enough to cool things down. So it is currently mostly pleasant. My sister in Upington however, does not have the benefit of rain, and has to swelter through days where the coldest it get is 25°C, with peak day temperatures heading for 45°C. Not as pleasant. And it is athletics season, so in this heat they had their school athletics day.

I am well — still rested from a quick three week long holiday by the sea. Just a pity I cannot sleep as deep and as long as by the sea.

Work is work, yet a bit unsettled — I am moving towards a different routine from the past. And even though the previous routine could bore me to tears at times, it was familiar. The new routine is not. Not yet familiar, not yet a routine.

I have been reading a bit, especially over the holiday. I am finding out why I have been so unsettled with the books available to me — I do not like the background assumptions and certain outlooks which permeates what is available. Therefore I am taking days to months to plough through books that I previously would have blasted through in hours.

Luckily I have had alternatives, including doing other stuff.

But I am mourning for what was and do not look as if it is coming back. Hopefully the new will be better in enough ways to compensate for what has been lost.

And I am going strong, with enough friends to have plenty to do.

From: **Jeffrey Allan Boman** Feb. 6, 2013  
6900 Cote St-Luc Road #708,  
Montreal, QC CANADA H4V 2Y9  
[jeff.boman@gmail.com](mailto:jeff.boman@gmail.com)  
**2009 Fanzine Aurora Winner,**  
**2010 Nominee**

Hi Joe and gang! This is Jeff from About Time . . .

(No alliteration this time)

I haven't sent a LOC in some time. I had a health issue in May 2012 that threw all my writing intentions off:

May 9, 2012 I had an infection that left me unable to move. I wear a panic button around my neck, and I was able to press it; I was so weak though that I couldn't be heard/understood on their intercom.

They dispatched an ambulance to me. They had to bust my door lock, because nobody had

a key. They brought me to Emergency at the Jewish General Hospital here in Montreal. They pumped me with fluids, and about 90 minutes later I could speak normally again.

3 days of hospital bedrest later I could go home. Ironically, my birthday was less than 2 days later.

This wasn't a major illness, but it was my first hospital stay since birth. It really threw me out of whack . . . my LOCing suffered, my own zine I haven't published in more than a year, and I've only got 1 of 4 contracted gamebooks out so far, and that because others wrote the new material for it.

While I was gone many things happened in the zine world, both good and bad/sad: congratulations to Chris Garcia for winning a Hugo. Finally an award for zines went to an actual one!

I'm still sad over the death of Robert Sabella. I had several LOC chats with him, and he was one of the first people to welcome me into it. I will miss him a lot.

I'm also sad for different reasons because after 22 years Con\*Cept, Montreal's premiere SF con, is gone for good. I was on the con-com from the end of 1992 to 99. It needed more people to organize it (I can no longer devote my energy to that), but none volunteered and now it's just a memory.

There are other conventions in town but none SF themed, and nothing where I could see David Brin, Tad Williams, Lois McMaster Bujold, Gregory Benford or Tanya Huff again, or deceased greats like Roger Zelazny and Forrest J Ackerman.

Some I may see at future Worldcons, but it won't feel the same.

I have to get back to writing the stats for my 3 other game books now. In March I start my first novel for the Kindle platform.

They're late, but with cause.  
Good luck to both AL and Jeff.

— JTM

### WAHF:

**Lloyd Daub**, with various items of interest.

**Guy & Rosy Lillian, George Price, Marc Schirmeister, George & Virginia Price, Tom & Ruth Sadler, Gary, Cora, and Kevin Flispart, Cathy Palmer-Lister, Bill Patterson, Johnny Carruthers, Carol Clarke, Mike Resnick, Mike Glycer, Elizabeth Sheppard, Trinlay Khadro, R-Laurraine Tutihasi, Sue Burke, Jeffrey Allan Boman, Lee Muncy, Andrew C. Murdoch, John Purcell, Lacy & Brenda Thomas, Ben Schilling, Steven Silver, Chuck Lipsig, Garth Spencer, Beth Willinger, and oh yes Bob Kennedy** with holiday and birthday greetings.

**Pat McCray**, with thanks.

**Marc Schirmeister**, with art and a personal note.

## CITIZEN WYNAND

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0074743/>

WYNAND: Build it as a monument to that spirit which is yours — and could have been mine.

ROARK leaves. The camera pans down to the desk. WYNAND opens the desk drawer. He takes a pistol from it. There is a brief silence.

WYNAND (o/s): Rosebud.

Sound of a gunshot.

The controversial penultimate scene of Orson Welles's adaptation (1949) of Ayn Rand's bestselling novel *The Fountainhead* (1943) remains the most striking incident of a curiously flawed masterpiece.

Readers of the novel noted at the time that producer and director Welles had substantially changed the plot line of the story, building up the character of the powerful newspaper magnate Gail Wynand (Welles) at the expense of that of the novel's hero, Howard Roark (Gary Cooper). In 1971, film critic Pauline Kael revealed in her essay "Ayn and Gail" that the shooting script was actually an amalgamation of two scripts, one written by Rand and the other by Welles, the latter based on the shooting script by Herman Mankiewicz for a movie project of his from 1941 that had been cancelled after funding had been pulled. For contractual reasons only Rand received screen credit.

While Rand did not disavow the movie as she had threatened to, she did not like to speak of it the way she spoke, for example, of *Noi vivi* (1942), the Italian adaptation of her novel of life in the Soviet Union *We the Living* (1936). Welles evaded seeing his co-writer after the release of the movie, and it was only through a substantial payment to her that a spectacular lawsuit was averted.

The movie did not reach breakeven in its initial release, but the surprising win of an Academy Award for Best Cinematography helped cement its reputation, and over the years the reputation of the film has grown. The glowing review in the *San Francisco Examiner* by a writer using the pseudonym of "John Riverside" (later revealed to be science-fiction writer Robert A. Heinlein) discussing the "integrated" nature of the movie is itself an interesting commentary.

The appearance of comic actor Zero Mostel (billed as "Sammy Mostel") as Max Bradley, the con-man developer who in a swindle oversells a resort designed by Roark, was his first major role. Some viewers (and Rand particularly) found his over-the-top act to be grating and improper, but his skill and exuberance made an impression on casting directors and led to larger and more solid roles for Mostel.

While the movie lost the Academy Award for Best Visual Effects to *Mighty Joe Young*, the efforts of Ray Harryhausen (who had also worked with Willis O'Brien on *Mighty Joe Young*) in creating such images as the final vision of the Wynand Tower were widely recognized and led to his recognition as a skilled visual technician.

In spite of the high regard the film generated among cinematic aficionados, Rand did not allow any further movies made from her works during her lifetime. After her death, the barrier was broken with Stanley Kubrick's *Anthem* (1991), which however became notorious for Kubrick's omission of the final chapter of the book in the screenplay.

After the controversial reception given to the HBO miniseries *Atlas Shrugged* (2000), where Angelina Jolie's portrayal of the protagonist Dagny Taggart was perceived as being too over the top, due to the large number of action sequences in which she was scantily dressed, as well as the explicit love scenes, the market cooled again, though a remake of *Anthem* with Johnny Depp as the protagonist is said to be being greenlighted for release in 2015.

Co-Editors:	Lisa & Joseph Major
Co-Publishers:	Joseph & Lisa Major
Writers, Staff:	Major, Joseph, Major, Lisa, & McCormick, Grant
Tech Staff:	Grant C. McCormick

**Art:** What we are mainly looking for is small fillos. Your fillo will probably be scanned in (by Grant) 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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## ALEXIAD

c/o Lisa & Joseph Major

1409 Christy Avenue

Louisville, KY 40204-2040 USA

[jtmajor@iglou.com](mailto:jtmajor@iglou.com)

<http://efanzines.com/Alexiad/index.htm>

