

# ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΞΙΑΔ)

\$2.00

April 6 marked exactly 68 years since the sinking of my father's ship, the U.S.S. *Bush*. On that day I thought of the 87 sailors who didn't get to come home. This issue is dedicated to their memory.

"And all that remains are the names and the faces of the wives and the sons and the daughters."

Gordon Lightfoot  
"Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald."

I have recently become addicted to a TV show called *NCIS*. It is the story of Navy detectives and their affiliated forensic staff, most notably an older coroner played by David McCallum of *The Man from UNCLE* fame. (Yes, he's still around and going strong at eighty years young.) The characters are some of the strangest mixtures I can recall on any crime show. The team's leader Gibbs is a Marine, though out of the Corps for quite a few years. Just below him is a lady's man named DiNozzo, followed by the fannish character McGee who at one point found himself translating Klingonese for Gibbs. There is also an Israeli operative named Ziva. (I still haven't figured out why *NCIS* needs a Mossad operative.)

The other odd characters are McCallum's coroner who talks to his bodies. I suppose it's something to have an audience that never interrupts or heckles. Also there is another geek character named Abby. She is a Goth and of a decided fannish cast of mind.

*NCIS* has been around for ten years which is a long time for a TV show. I have just discovered it so I find myself playing catch up on it.

— Lisa

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The 139th Running of the Kentucky Derby is **May 4, 2013**.  
The 138th Running of the Preakness Stakes is **May 18, 2013**.  
The 144th Running of the Belmont Stakes is **June 8, 2013**.

**Pascha is May 5, 2013.**

Printed on April 10, 2013  
Deadline is **June 8, 2013**

## Reviewer's Notes

My energy is more and more abated. For example, at this writing I have somewhere between three and five fanzines to LoC. At least the piece I promised Guy Lillian is *done*, I just have to mail it to him. (It involves several gaijin in Japan, including one very pale one.) But I have to sit down in the public library, where there is room, and write.

ConGlomeration (here in Louisville) fell just after the deadline, so a longer report will be on hand nextish. There was a good bit of literary programming, albeit primarily by our local small-press publishers, though there was one joint panel where they asked people to pitch their submissions. After hearing what one writer did (she had a web page for the organization in her book) I felt a bit overwhelmed. But it looks like people still want to write, and to get published in actual physical dead-tree things.

The school year is starting earlier and ending later. This means that events that want to have young folk are getting crammed into fewer and fewer weekends. This means WorldCon . . . and family reunions. Having family ties means family reunions.

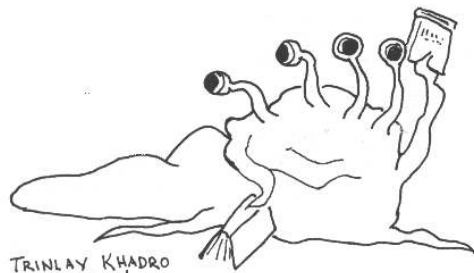
And there are a lot more connections. I was thinking about how few of my father's contemporaries are still alive. And seeing the remnant of First Fandom last year also saddened me, that they are going to pass on soon. Those who attended the Jophan Family Reunion will understand.

On to San Antonio.

— Joe

## RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



Symposium would be “under new management”. Given that Cathy Gill’s health has been deteriorating, I can understand that, and wish her and her husband Stewie well.

I picked up a most interesting book at Half-Price books. It is a combined edition of the novel *Operation Heartbreak* (1950) by Duff Cooper and the nonfiction book it produced, *The Man Who Never Was* (1953) by Ewen Montagu. There is an introduction by John Julius Norwich, Duff’s son and heir (and he is identified by title in the copyright, © 2010 The Second Viscount Norwich). All it needs is the book by the guy who tried to break the real story but got sidelined by the original source, *The Unknown Courier* (1953) by Ian Colvin.

## OBITS

**Doc Smith Department:** United States Steel has a training facility at the Mon Valley Works in — **Duquesne, Pennsylvania**. Unfortunately, there is no Perkins Café there. (The nearest one is in Mars.) Whether the facility trains employees to make defective spacecraft has not been disclosed.

From 1982 to 2001, the company owned Marathon Oil. In a so very mundane manner, the general holding company was named USX, not “Metals & Energy, Inc.” (NYSE listing METENGE).

**Sir Ran Fiennes, Bt.** has been forced to drop out of his latest expedition, a wintertime Antarctic crossing, due to frostbite on his injured hand incurred during training. He took off a glove in minus-twenties temperatures and froze the fingers.

In spite of their busy schedules, **Benedict Cumberbatch** and **Martin Freeman** will return for a fourth series (or, to translate into the Yank, “season”) of *Sherlock*. The third series/season is beginning shooting. As of now, the only title announced is “**The Empty Hearse**”. Quick, Watson, the lines!

The forthcoming “Lone Ranger” movie will star as the title character **Armie Hammer**. Nobody noticed this because everyone was looking at Johnny Depp. It would probably be too much to hope that the plot would be about a sinister crooked millionaire who is running money from a foreign power seeking to conquer the West. Like, for example, Armie’s great-grandfather **Armand Hammer**.

(Hammer the elder decided to be religious in his old age and even picked his own religious name. However he forgot that you’re not supposed to name your children, or grandchildren, or great-grandchildren after a living relative.)

Armand Douglas “Armie” Hammer  
<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm2309517/>

It appears that the SH/ACD Symposium in Dayton for 2013 has been canceled. The announcement added that the 2014

## COUNTDOWN

Commentary by Joseph T Major on  
**THE PILGRIM PROJECT**  
by Hank Searls (1964)

The Mercury program was over. Four years later, astronaut Gus Grissom was killed, along with astronauts White and Chaffee, when fire swept through their Apollo capsule. But on that glorious day in May 1963, Gordo Cooper went higher, farther, and faster than any other American — 22 complete orbits around the world; he was the last American ever to go into space alone. And for a brief moment, Gordo Cooper became **the greatest pilot anyone had ever seen**.

— “The Right Stuff” (1983)

Gordo [Leroy Gordon] Cooper (1927 — 2004) is buried in space. After mishaps, his ashes were finally transported to the International Space Station on the Space-X “Falcon”. This was no big deal.

Back when he was living, though, it was a different matter:

The next greatest achievement would be the successful launching of the first man into space. In the United States — no one could say what was taking place in the land of the mighty Integral — the men chosen for this historic mission took on the archaic mantles of the single-combat warriors of a long-since-forgotten-time. They would not be going into space to do actual combat; or not immediately, although it was assumed that something of the sort might take place in a few years. But they were entering into a deadly duel in the heavens, in any event. (*Our rockets always blow up.*) The space war was on. They were risking their lives for their country, for their people, in “the fateful testing” versus the powerful Soviet Integral. And even though the archaic term itself had disappeared from memory, they would receive all the homage, all the fame, all the honor and heroic status . . . *before the fact* . . . of the single-combat warrior.

— *The Right Stuff*, Tom Wolfe [Page 125] (1979)

If Chief Designer Sergei Pavlovich Korolev had ever read Zamyatin’s [We] (1924), he might have felt a certain sympathy for D-503, the designer of the Integral, along with a certain relief that he had come out of his experiences better off. The man is lobotomized and turned into a zombie, devoid of human feelings. Korolev had only been sent to Kolyma, where one might retain one’s feelings, though not necessarily one’s life.

When T. Kenneth Glennan, the director of NASA, introduced the press corps to “the

We regret to report the death of long-time fanzine fan **Richard E. Geis** in Portland, Oregon, on **February 4, 2013**, at the age of 85. Beginning in the fifties, Geis published zines that contained reviews, articles, and other commentary (far too much conspiratorialist). He began with *Psycho*, which later was retitled *Science Fiction Review*, and after dropping that began again with a fanzine that was variously known as *Richard E. Geis*, *The Alien Critic*, and *Science Fiction Review* (yes, again). He publicized such matters as the anti-New Wave group Second Foundation, Christopher Priest’s critique of SFWA, and the problems of the Pocket Books writers’ contract. His fanzines won six Best Fanzine Hugos and he won two Best Fan Writer Hugos.

Geis wrote in other areas, being notorious as the porno novel author “Peggy Swenson”. He was a recluse, and after reading of how one ex-girlfriend got mixed up with a murderer, that may not have been the worst of ideas.

We regret to report the death of fan **Jan Howard Finder**, the Great Wombat, on **February 26, 2013**. In the eighties he was quite exuberantly across fanzines, and his slow withdrawal seemed unfortunate.

We regret to report the death of our recipient, and a long-time friend, **Coleman Todd Fluhr**, on **March 29, 2013**. Todd had had a varied life, going from triumph to disaster, and again, in a number of ways. He was a murder mystery party organizer, an online gamer, a regular gamer. He is survived by his parents, his brother and sister, and two children.

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\* (113) 22 Pulk Ulanów

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

nation's Mercury astronauts", on April 9, 1959, Korolev was still launching his *Semyorka* R-7 missile on tests and the occasional satellite. But he had the ear of the First Secretary, and a year later, twenty young representatives of Soviet Power were selected and put through vigorous training. It was costly; those who were expelled were in Stalinist fashion retouched out of history (literally; space writer James Oberg has presented in his books before-and-after retouched pictures with some cosmonauts removed from the scene). One even died, horribly.

But on that glorious day, April 12, 1961, Yuri Alexeivich Gagarin went higher, farther, and faster than any other Russian. He was the first person ever to go into space. And for a hundred and eight minutes Yuri Gagarin became **the greatest pilot anyone had ever seen**.

No one knew about Valentin Bondarenko, who had burned his skin off in a training accident. No one knew about Grigory Nelyubov, who had in a fit of public drunkenness embarrassed the corps. There were rumors enough, reports from chance encounters in hospitals, from radio amateurs whose reception capabilities seemed far greater than those of the authorities. None corresponded with what minimal detection capability of the time could confirm; now, when records are far more available, all are disproven.

If we don't have Jeff Goldblum running down the hallway to open the door and bellow, "They've got a man up there! It's Gagarin!" we did have a concerned response that the U.S. had suffered a significant injury to its image, and needed to do an extraordinary response. Yet Wolfe doesn't half capture the wild, anything-goes, *¡más allá!* spirit of the time, for all that he comes closer than most. Some of the proposals put forth then seem even more outré and deranged than some of the realities.

To read of, for example, the MISS (Man In Space Soonest) program is to be surprised. The Air Force took its top test pilots, civilian and military, and said they would put them into a capsule and shoot it into space. In the crisp, bitter, dismissive phrase that Wolfe uses, "Spam in a can." Many of these had been, or would soon be, flying the X-15, a real air and spacecraft. The last of them died recently. MISS was folded into the civilian NASA program.

That was not the ending of the ideas. In the aftermath of Gagarin's flight, an officer of the U.S. Air Force made a very strange proposal. If it was so important to get to the Moon quickly, why not make it a one-way mission? Not a one-way suicide mission, not the American way, though others might do so. (See Pierre Boulle's *Le Jardin de Kanashima* (1964) [*Garden on the Moon* (1965)] for one fictional example.) It would be possible to send a resupply mission on a regular basis, as a century ago Michel Ardan had confidently declared to the skeptical artillerists of the Gun

Club:

*«Rien de plus simple. Est-ce que la Columbiad ne sera pas toujours là? Eh bien! toutes les fois que la Lune se présentera dans des conditions favorables de zénith, sinon de périgée, c'est-à-dire une fois par an à peu près, ne pourra-t-on pas nous envoyer des obus chargés de vivres, que nous attendrons à jour fixe?»*

— *De la Terre à la Lune: Trajet Direct en 97 Heures 20 Minutes chapitre XXV «Derniers Détails»* (1865)

["Nothing would be simpler. The Columbiad will be always there. Well! whenever the moon is in a favorable condition as to the zenith, if not to the perigee, that is to say about once a year, could you not send us a shell packed with provisions, which we might expect on some appointed day?"]

— *From the Earth to the Moon*, Chapter XXV "Final Details" (1867)]

Like M. Ardan, this officer even offered to be the voyager. (M. Ardan underestimated the need of more precise guidance control, but the planner should realize that this "shell packed with provisions" would have to be guided to the landing site of the voyagers.) One has to have *L'Étoffe des Héros*.

Henry Hurt "Hank" Searls (b. 1922) is a writer with a long-term interest in both aviation and the oceans. Though how that latter connects to doing the novelization of *Jaws 2* (1978) is another matter. His previous work, *The Crowded Sky* (1960) was a story of an unauthorized drill to prove the value of manned bombers. It was made into a movie of the same name later that year. This followed, recounting a different sort of practice.

The opening scene is set in Earth orbit, where Apollo Three is conducting a rendezvous-and-docking training mission with a Lunar Excursion Module (that was the terminology used then for the Lunar Module) simulator. The crew consists of Steve Lawrence, Rick Lincoln, and a more senior astronaut who is referred to only as "the Colonel". They have docked with their target already, and are resting before going at it again.

What can we deduce from this? Assuming the development is the same (there is a mention of Gemini), then it is the summer of 1967. It looks like there has been no equivalent to the Apollo 204 fire, since the program is proceeding without self-deploring delay. Apollo Three was launched on a Saturn Ib rocket, since it is mentioned that the Saturn V is not ready yet.

Steve and Rick are from the second or third astronaut groups — the "Next Nine" that included Neil Armstrong, or the "Fourteen" that included his fellow crewmen Dave Scott, Buzz Aldrin [then still "Edwin Eugene Aldrin, Jr."], and Mike Collins. Similarly, of the Apollo 204 astronauts, Ed White was in the "Next Nine" and Roger Chaffee in the "Fourteen". The fourth astronaut group was the "Scientist" one

that included Harrison Schmidt, the only scientist to reach the Moon.

The Colonel is from the Mercury Seven. Since he is a colonel, he is either Marine (Glenn) or Air Force (Grissom, Cooper, Slayton). Later on he will say, "I might have run for the Senate, like Glenn!" [Page 108] Slayton had retired from the Air Force in 1963. The Colonel seems more voluble than Grissom and less cocky than Cooper. But then, Searls obviously didn't want to commit himself (or get sued). However, given that Cooper may have had some problems with higher authority, and that in spite of his antics, Grissom was favored for the Apollo moonlanding mission, it seems possible that gruff Gus has opened up a little. Yes, there definitely was no Apollo 204 fire.

The Apollo Three mission is intended to practice the maneuvers required for rendezvous and docking, with a simulator instead of the actual spacecraft. Following our history, the program here has gone with the "Lunar Orbit Rendezvous" model, having a separate craft descend to the lunar surface and return to the main craft, which will be orbiting the moon. The alternatives were "Direct Ascent", with one large craft flying there directly and back, *Destination Moon* style, and "Earth Orbit Rendezvous", where the mission craft would be put together in earth orbit from separate launches, something like Arthur C. Clarke's "Venture to the Moon" (*Evening Standard*, May 1956). Direct Ascent would have required something on the order of the proposed Nova rocket, the next step past the Saturn.

There was no definite Nova proposal, merely a variety of design studies. The proposals would have produced rockets capable of sending, depending on the design, from 24 to 75 tons to the Moon. Since the Saturn V translunar injection payload was 50 tons, this design doesn't seem to be that far off.

The simulator is called "LEM the Gem". The landing craft of the Lunar Orbit Rendezvous plan was at that time the "Lunar Excursion Module". This terminology may confuse readers who had not encountered it.

The Apollo Three was launched using the Saturn Ib missile, since the Saturn V is not yet ready. This mission is the equivalent of the historical Apollo 9 mission, which practiced rendezvous in Earth orbit, but Apollo 9 was launched using a Saturn V, docking with an actual Lunar Module. Apollo 9 was March 3-13, 1969, which indicates the different schedules of the hypothetical space program in this book.

So, the astronauts are preparing to dock with their target again. Only . . . Houston has a problem. They say that telemetry reports that there is an oxygen tank failure and the Apollo has to abort on the next orbit. The gauges on the Apollo don't show any such problem, and there is some debate, but orders are orders. They begin the re-entry checklist.

Down on Earth, in the Mission Control Center at the Houston Space Center, another member of the Mercury Seven has a

consultation with someone who is supposed to be an engineer on the Apollo Project staff. It's a cover — Sy Larson is a CIA officer, and they are discussing how the other two astronauts are going to decide that something is not on the up and up. The "something" has to do with a classified mission called "Pilgrim Project". Which in turn has to do with a Soviet-launched mission that is well on the way to the Moon.

One of the Peenemünde Team veterans is on his own way, to Washington on a consultation. Dr. Franz Ludwig has something burdening his mind, and it's not the working conditions of the Nordhausen rocket production facility. He had drawn up a proposal and now is going to Washington about it. Along the way, he is reminded that not everyone in the country finds the space program worthwhile.

All these things are related.

The project that Doctor Ludwig had proposed was just what Michel Ardan had proposed — a direct-ascent, one-way moon mission. He now opposes it. Even to the President, which was why he was summoned to Washington so peremptorily. Ludwig is taking the longer view, that a manned Mars mission in 1977 or 1983 will be a more significant accomplishment. For now, the Soviet program is definitely in the lead. They have had a manned space station for some time, and have just launched a manned mission that has flown around the moon.

In other words, or perhaps from other time-lines, what Searls has would be considered in our time line to be a Salyut station and a Zond mission. The development of a Soviet manned space station began in 1964, coincidentally; their *Almaz* ( , "Diamond") military program. The *Almaz*, developed by Vladimir Chelomei's design bureau, was combined with a civilian program being done by Sergei Korolev's design bureau, which had also been the lead bureau for their lunar landing program, to create the *Salyut* ( , "Fireworks", or "Salute").

The vehicle for the lunar program was the *Zond* ( , "Probe") capsule, a lighter version of their *Soyuz* ( , "Union") orbital capsule. The first Zond mission to circle the moon and return, Zond 5, flew September 15-22, 1968. The launch vehicle was the Proton rocket, which had approximately the same payload capacity as the Saturn Ib. (Technically, Zond 5 was designated Soyuz 7K-L1.)

However, the Zond 5 mission would probably not be considered man-rated, in spite of the fact that the main payload, two tortoises, survived. The capsule was supposed to make a skip reentry but the guidance system failed. Unlike previous Soviet missions, the Zond 5 made a water landing, in the Indian Ocean.

Meanwhile, Steve Lawrence, newly returned from orbit, sorts through his personal life. His wife, it seems, has a history of

drinking when confronted with problems, and he fears she may revert to that. The press is less than satisfied with the premature termination of the Apollo Three mission, an unusual attitude for the astronauts to confront. And then, there was that mysterious comment he had heard in the background during a communication from Houston, which was not in the transcript:

*Pogrom . . . program . . . pilgrim?*

There was something odd about it. The typists had sharp ears and plenty of time to run and re-run the tapes. He wished he had time to listen to them himself . . .

— *The Pilgrim Project*, Page 40

Other people have heard similar items, in other places. The honorable senator from California, Ralph Fellows, who is wondering what is this project that has been having NASA funds diverted into it, and meets the President to discuss the matter. Like Dr. Ludwig, Senator Fellows is less than pleased about it. Some of his comments, about the Moon being a very poor choice for a military base, sound familiar. The meeting is less than totally successful.

The list of those allowed to know about Pilgrim is, understandably, short. Now it is being expanded. Steve Lawrence and Rick Lincoln meet with the Colonel, who has a little explaining to do about that mysterious comment of "Pogrom . . . program . . . pilgrim".

And he shows them. Pilgrim uses existing technologies. It's a bit of a wonder of improvisation. The vehicle will be a standard Mercury capsule. The launch vehicle is the Saturn Ib, fitted with a solid rocket booster — a Polaris missile upper stage. For landing or other maneuvering, the capsule will be fitted with an off-the-shelf liquid rocket engine.

There was a proposed seventh Mercury mission that would have a three-day duration, MA-10 "Freedom 7-II", flown by Alan Shepard, the first Mercury astronaut. ["MA-10" stands for "Mercury-Atlas Mission 10", the tenth combination of that capsule and rocket.] The mission was canceled in 1963 since it was envisioned that the Gemini program would provide the required information on long-term endurance. It would presumably be possible to use this capsule, though whether the Mercury capsule could contain enough consumables for such a mission is another matter. The Saturn Ib could launch a payload of eighteen to twenty tons into Earth orbit.

The Polaris missile was the first submarine launched ballistic missile, predecessor to today's Trident. It was produced in its own surge of developmental effort, and no fewer than **forty-one** nuclear submarines, each with sixteen launch tubes, were built and deployed to deploy it. (The Navy had considered deploying cruise missiles, but the technology at that time was inadequate.) It was a solid rocket, with the concomitant problems of throttling and deployment.

The explanation here is emblematic of the change in society since then. The program uses existing technologies and hardware; nowadays

a submission for an entirely new capsule and rocket would be mandatory, and with political interference, conflicts, bid scandals, and so on, what would happen would be that a system would be built, have one testing problem, and be dumped for an entirely new system using new technologies and methods, and again. And for a contrast for the other way, the astronauts do their calculations on — slide rules!

From the briefing they go to Higher Up; a direct meeting with the President to inform them of who will fly the first mission to the moon. The Colonel is bitterly disappointed. Steve Lawrence is a civilian, so he will be chosen, with Rick as his backup pilot. At least the CapComs will be chosen from among the Original Seven.

The political backing is also given. The President is never named, of course, but given the circumstances he must be LBJ, but as with "The Colonel" and Grissom, the identifiable personality traits are elided or omitted. Writing long after, Mark Whittington (for example) could have real people in *Children of Apollo* (2001, 2012; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 3 #1). It's like the difference between Sinclair Lewis's *It Can't Happen Here* (1935) and Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America* (2004); Lewis had invented characters but Roth had the actual people. (And then there was *President Fu Manchu* (1936) by "Sax Rohmer" [Arthur Sarsfeld Ward] which in spite of some glaring misconceptions of American ways was still more plausible than Roth's or Lewis's work.) The President is having to deal with not a full-bore war in Southeast Asia, but a number of small harassments across the world. And one of them is this Soviet space platform, and how they are going back on offers of cooperation.

In domestic fields of conflict, the President is dealing with Senator Fellows, who can bring the Senate down against funding the space program or portions thereof. Fellows himself is not particularly for or against spending money on this, but he is looking for economies.

Steve gets into the training program. A crucial step is learning how to land. The Lunar Landing Research Vehicle was built to give the astronauts as much experience as they could get in doing this. There seems to be a certain priority associated with this mission that seems to conflict with its secrecy, as one LLRV has been refitted with a Mercury capsule simulator. You'd think someone would notice.

Then a further complication ensues. Someone did notice. The physician who examined Steve after his abrupt return from orbit has his own problems. Dr. Gus Scarbo is a Korean War veteran, who it turns out has what we now call "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder" and then called "shell shock". He had been assigned to a carrier flying strikes against North Korean and Chinese positions in Korea during that war. One pilot had been in a crash which ended up with him being burned over almost all of his body. The man lived a few hours. (It seems very highly unlikely that Searls knew about Valentin Bondarenko, for all that the similarities are there.)

Scarbo is having constant nightmares where not just his friend, but all the pilots he knew, die in similar accidents, while an uncaring Naval command structure blithely ignores the situation. And now, it seems, it may happen again. He has to stop it.

Part of the Pilgrim mission is the dispatch of the lunar base structure. Steve does some training in the methods he will employ for getting the base capsule in service. Someone has taken note of the problem of solar flares, for part of his mission is to dig a trench and cover the capsule with lunar material as protection. And in accordance with the general trend of space training, real-world and otherwise, the simulations always have the most extreme of faults.

The mission for flying the base capsule is titled Chuck Wagon. That was the cover item for several of the matters related to Pilgrim. The very real Chuck Wagon is launched, heads to the Moon . . . and the telemetry goes out. The Chuck Wagon capsule is lost.

Or is it? There is a faint signal from the moon, from the area where the Chuck Wagon's trajectory is directed. So it may be a GO.

In fact, it has to be a GO. The Soviets have launched another unspecified mission from their space station.

The Chuck Wagon was supposed to use as its target Surveyor Six, in the Oceanus Procellarum ("Ocean of Storms"). In the real world, Surveyor 3 landed on the Oceanus Procellarum on April 20, 1967 and sent signals from the lunar surface for 65 hours. On November 19, 1969, the Apollo 12 Lunar Module *Intrepid* landed 1180 feet away from Surveyor 3, for the purpose of collecting parts of the probe for studies of lunar conditions.

In spite of everything, public opinion of Pilgrim is overwhelmingly positive. This is, after all, a single combat warrior jetting off to another world to confront the enemy. Apparently NASA has a more effective public information effort. Indeed, before he met with the President, Steve did a little walkabout in Washington, and found young people of all classes supportive. How things change.

There is no big land war in Asia, or anywhere else, so the focus for the disenchantment described in, for example, James Piereson's *Camelot and the Cultural Revolution* (2007; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 6 #5) is absent. There are other factors. At one point in a discussion with the President, the problem of a negative media response to a failure of Pilgrim comes up. The network correspondents in particular are mentioned — but not Walter Cronkite! (Unlike in *Children of Apollo*, where he features significantly.)

Dr. Ludwig is still disavowing his project. However, his disavowals become a little less effective when he suffers a stroke that leaves him half-paralyzed. Gus Scarbo has been tracked around the country but now he has been told he is sick and needs a hospital stay.

Senator Fellows's opposition declines from the political to the personal. With signs of a desire to go ahead and so it surrounding

him everywhere, his attitudes shift away from their previous positions, and he finally surrenders.

With a brittle backing and a dubious destination, Steve Lawrence is launched to the Moon on his wonder of American improvisation. Going by the designations above (which Searls never uses), this would likely be MS-1, Mercury-Saturn One.

Somenow, hospital security is lax. Gus Scarbo is permitted to wander around the hospital, and he walks into Dr. Ludwig's room, to tell him that in spite of everything they've done, the Pilgrim mission is go. Somehow, the doctor seems reassured by this, and turns to the problem of recovering the use of his body.

The focus shifts to Steve's mission. The Soviet mission has been launched from their space station, but has fallen silent.

(Historically, Soviet missions were announced after they were launched, while the cosmonaut(s) were in orbit. This policy, which fits with all known missions, is another item of disproof for the "Lost Cosmonaut" theory — the missions that fit with no known rocket launches, feature no otherwise-known cosmonauts, and were not detected by any radars or any other radio listeners.) Another thing to worry about.

Steve is supposed to make a last visual survey of the Chuck Wagon landing site. That will be his final go-nogo decision. And, in a momentary glimpse of the site, he sees the capsule. He is committed. He jettisons the Earth landing components of the Mercury capsule and prepares for a Lunar landing.

(This is one of the few technological oddities of the book. It would be possible to jettison the parachute, in the neck of the Mercury capsule. However, he is also jettisoning the heat shield — which is between the body of the capsule and the landing engine. That would take some delicate engineering.)

Committed, he fires his landing engine, and goes down towards the Chuck Wagon site. Except, as he gets closer, he sees it isn't. To add to his problems, his batteries are low, and he doesn't have any consistent contact with Houston, he can't tell them about this problem.

But he lands.

In a resigned attitude of doom, he decides to see the false sign that lured him to his death. (It is reminiscent of the ending of Clarke's "Transit of Earth" (*Playboy*, January 1971), which ends with the last astronaut going out on the Martian surface to go out marching.) It is not far and he discovers —

It's the Soviet capsule. They used an all-up model, space capsule and lunar base capsule combined. But the landing was bad, the capsule broke up on landing and the cosmonaut is dead. And, Steve notes, in spite of being silenced, abandoned, and disavowed, he still tried to plant his country's flag on the surface. He can understand that spirit.

As noted, Soviet announcements of manned missions were made after launch — the Semyorka R-7 rocket was not always successful — but before landing. Moreover, the capsule is referred to as "Vostok", the name of the original Soviet manned program. "Vostok" ( )

means "East" in the sense of "Orient". As noted, in the real world this would be a "Zond" capsule. But again, this isn't something that had been established back then.

The idea of the lost cosmonaut becoming an unperson is not just from the odd assertions of the Judica-Cordiglia brothers. It would later appear in *Ascent* by Jed Mercurio (2007; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 6 #4) . Like Mark Whittington, Mercurio used real space vehicles; his description of his "lost cosmonaut" Yerebin having to transfer from the Zond to the lander by doing an EVA was indeed what the heroic exemplar of Soviet Power and Socialist Technology was supposed to do as the penultimate act of making sure the Soviet People did not go to bed by the light of a capitalist Moon. (That's right, he had to go outside the Zond to get to the lander.)

Steve has an American flag. The Colonel gave it to him at the last minute, and he took it with him when he left the lander. Now, he goes to the lip of the trench where the Soviet lander landed, builds a small cairn, and puts the two flags on it.

Someday, they will be found, he thinks. So, standing by the grave of his colleague, he begins to write a few last notes to his family (the way that Lucius Vorenus began carving a farewell inscription for his wife and family while he and Titus Pullo were stranded on that waterless Illyrian island in Episode Seven, First Series [Season] of *Rome* (see *Alexiad* V. 4 #6)).

Then he notices something. A star blinked. He looks at the location and . . . a light comes on and off again. It's the Chuck Wagon, just over the horizon; the capsule landed upright, functioning, and is waiting there for him to come and set it up for a stay. He might count himself more fortunate than the nameless protagonist of Theodore Sturgeon's "The Man Who Lost the Sea" (*F&SF*, October 1959), who used a calculation of a satellite's period to determine his location. Steve considers his resources, gathers his will, and makes his decision.

"Then he struck out across the eternally quiet dust of the Ocean of Storms." [Page 221]

One can speculate about What Happens Next. There must have been quite the furor back home when Steve fell out of communication. What will happen when he starts broadcasting from the Moon about his unfortunate colleague? Assuming he makes it there, he intends to but that's not a sure thing.

The world presented is one less indifferent about space, with more resources. One can imagine an expanded space program reminiscent of that in *Children of Apollo*. The driving force there, recall, is that by encouraging the Soviet Union to devote resources to space, their military development is degraded. The thought of Steve Lawrence explaining to Dr. Wendy Pendleton of *Children of Apollo* what it was like living on the Moon and what the prospects there were is intriguing. One hopes it would not get as bad as the crisis in Martin Caidin's *No Man's World* (1967), where an American-Soviet lunar war is brought

to an end by a Chinese attack on both. (If you think Searls and Whittington are optimistic about launch rates and payload, Caidin is beyond optimistic.)

While for literary purposes having an inadequate Deep Space Network (which could theoretically track the Chuck Wagon capsule to landing, and keep in contact with Steve Lawrence throughout) provides drama and focuses the action on the principal character, it comes across as contrived, melodramatic isolation. This shows the conflict between dramatic necessity and reality; the protagonist should be the initiator of action, and being isolated focuses that. But it just doesn't work that way.

Searls's focus is tight but incomplete. The mission is a continuation of the *¡más allá!* spirit of the time, when we would pay any price and bear any burden.

All unknowing, the spirit that drove the competition was dying. Korolev's patron was unmasked as being a reckless adventurer and forcibly retired in 1964. The mighty Integral, the Chief Designer, died during an operation for cancer, complicated by his medical history, in January of 1966.

This is a portrait of an era which is gone forever. Once upon a time, we really cared about going Out There. The astronauts were the single-combat warriors who displayed the finest and most human traits of our country. But Buzz Aldrin has lived long enough to see his iconic picture turned into an advertising image for a series of short subjects where to loud, often bad, music dull-witted performers stick their faces into the camera and grimace. He has lived long enough to see "a man on the moon" refer to a movie where one unfunny comic portrays another unfunny comic. He has lived long enough to see "moonwalking" become a performance by a bizarre, epicene figure. He has lived long enough to be confronted in public by a journalist who brazenly called him a liar.

Technology has advanced. Your cell phone now has as much computing power as all of NASA had in 1969. NASA used it to launch men to the Moon. We use it to launch birds into pigs.

*The Pilgrim Project* was adapted into a movie, *Countdown* (1967). Robert Altman directed, the movie starred James Caan as the civilian astronaut (for some reason all the character names were changed) and Robert Duvall as the military guy who had been scheduled to go.

#### Countdown

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0062827/>

#### FAR CENTAURUS

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**BOWL OF HEAVEN**

by Gregory Benford and Larry Niven  
(Tor; 2012; ISBN 978-0765328410; \$25.99;  
Macmillan (Kindle); \$12.99)

"Far Centaurus" (*Astounding*, January 1944) is a story by A. E. van Vogt about the problems of being an early adaptor. Four astronauts set out on a 500-year mission to travel to Alpha Centauri. When they get there, they discover, much to their embarrassment, that faster-than-light travel has been discovered in the intervening period, the star system has been colonized, and in fact they are not quite fit for life in the present.

(The story was incorporated in his *Quest for the Future* (1970), one of his less than entirely successful fix-up books, and one of the first books I ever got from the Science Fiction Book Club. One of the other stories incorporated was "The Search" (*Astounding*, January 1943), with the young woman who sells super-science items to commuters on a train and the older man who cleans up the technological anachronism by breaking the items. Imagine the fun with him breaking people's smartphones and tablets.)



Alpha Centauri has been colonized now but the *SunSeeker* is setting out on a five hundred year mission (during which the somewhat larger crew will be awakened in shifts while most remain in suspension) to explore a strange area of the Galaxy. The crew might well wish to find colonizers there who could use the power of the psychology of electrons to send them through time and space . . .

What they encounter, instead, is something Bigger Than Worlds (by Larry Niven, *Analog*, March 1974), a giant cup-shaped spaceship containing many different kinds of sentients, traveling at sub-light speeds between the stars. The humans are admittedly in need of investigating this structure, since between some unexpected defects in their own vessel and the additional personnel needed to observe this unexpected object, their supplies are falling short of the required levels.

And, basically, that's it. The humans explore in curiosity and investigation, the aliens watch and draw conclusions. For both, some of their deductions follow, others don't.

#### THE CHINA INCIDENT

Review by Joseph T Major of

#### THE NANKING WAR

by Ryan McCall

(Amazon Digital Services; 2012; \$2.99;

CreateSpace; 2013;

ISBN 978-1482030051; \$9.95)

It's not surprising that nationalist elements in Japan were pleased when Iris Chang (Chang Shun-Ru [pinyin Zhang Chunru]) committed suicide. They knew she was wrong and a fabulist anyhow.

Nevertheless, the *Rape of Nanking* (Chang, 1997) could have been even worse. In this work, McCall explores what could have happened if whatever brake on bushido fervor had been removed.

The even worse horrors of this extermination order create strange bedfellows, leading Nazi Germany into alliance with Britain and the U.S. The Japanese are waist-deep in the Big Muddy already, and a curbstomp is in the cards.

The allies, though, have their own flaws, and the aftermath may be worse than the war itself . . .

Unfortunately, for all that this is an intriguing concept, the book is at best marginal. It suffers from the frequent production problems of ebooks — poor line-editing and indeed nonexistent general editing.

McCall is unclear on a large number of minor points regarding military protocol and activity. He often seems less than totally informed about the careers of some people, or the structure of some organizations.

Some of the consequences he mentions could be more important in the future of this history; for example, an off-handed reference to British acquiescence in the Nazi seizure of the Sudetenland. They couldn't challenge their ally.

He does realize that events have other consequences. For example, a reference to a Republican victory in the Spanish Civil War, a result that follows from his point of departure.

This is, sad to say, a potentially fascinating idea, poorly done.

#### GOING WALKABOUT

Review by Joseph T Major of

#### LONG WALK TO THE SUN

by William Peter Grasso

(Amazon Digital Services; 2012; \$2.99;

CreateSpace; 2012;

ISBN 978-1480095076; \$13.95)

I sort of wonder about the premise of this work. Wouldn't a Japanese effort to hold the Cape York Peninsula of Australia mean they would become *even more* overstretched?

Grasso has this invasion come about because Japanese pilots bombed and destroyed the fuel bunkering tanks at Pearl Harbor, thus severely constraining the ability of the Pacific Fleet to operate. Without such opposition, the Japanese run wild for longer, not only securing the Solomon Islands but invading Australia.



Where foulball Jack Miles has been sent. He was at Pearl Harbor, saving lives when he was supposed to be reporting to General Short. So, before his own relief, Short has Miles reprimanded.

Then, Miles gets sent in with a long-range patrol to investigate the Japanese landing in Cape York, to mark it for a bombing mission. And, also, to assassinate an Australian woman who has been collaborating. At least the soldiers are competent.

However, things aren't quite as expected .

Grasso has given some thought to the problems of a knocked-out fuel supply, even though his exact scenario is problematic. His portrayal of the ordinary friction of war is realistic, his soldiers neither "Howlin' Commando" superheroes nor "Dirty Dozen" yardbirds and thugs.

Yet . . . would an American officer have either the authority or the audacity to order a summary execution of an Australian? And what now seems to be Grasso's "King Charles's head" of "the faker gets the plaudits, the real hero gets nothing" reappears, the way for the longest time Robert Conroy had the idea, "dress in an enemy secret policeman's uniform".

This is a realistic story of a grim time in a war, the bootprints on the ground by the doggies taking their first step on the way back.

#### FOR WANT OF A PASSWORD

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**CONFEDERATE STAR RISES**

by Richard Small

(Amazon Digital Services; 2012; \$3.99)

"First Book of the Confederate Star Trilogy"

The concept is not uninteresting; the book begins with the dying A. P. Hill, in a final flash of lucidity, describing how an angel came to him on the field of Chancellorsville, telling him that he should take care that his commanding officer did not encounter friendly fire. The reader will be prepared for the prospect of telepathic time travel.

What this volume delivers, instead, is a meticulous, indeed almost excruciating, blow-by-blow description of a battle near Harrisburg between Jackson's corps and the Pennsylvania State Militia, following a somewhat perfunctory description of Jackson's smashing defeat of the lead elements of the Army of the Potomac at Gettysburg.

Small has a grasp of the situation and some intriguing overviews, as when in a conference, Lee tells President Davis that the loss of Vicksburg is less important than the loss of the garrison. But overall, the reader is practically numbed by the foot-by-foot, moment-by-moment description of the maneuvering of regiments. (Including the 47th North Carolina, with nothing on the doings of Sergeant Caudell, Private Bean, and so on..) The presentation comes across as ignoring the forest, not for the trees, but for the leaves.

There are hints of the time to come, some more standard than others. If they were the focus of this work, its appeal would be enhanced.



#### KING ANDREW'S HEIRS

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**THE LAST FULL MEASURE**  
by "Jack Campbell" [John G. Hemry]  
(Subterranean Press, June 30, 2013;  
ISBN 978-1-59606-0; \$20.00)

In *If the South Had Won the Civil War* (1961), there is a tragic and rueful scene set in the aftermath of Lee's great victory at Gettysburg, where Major John Singleton Mosby makes a desperate dash to Washington, to take the American President to captivity in Richmond.

The events of this work copy that and yet turn them completely around.

Hemry describes a United States that has gone the way of so many independent nations in our time-line, maintaining a facade of democracy as a flimsy cover for a military autocracy. Naturally, a time-serving, toadying military at that. (How the Hero of Jallabad Colonel H. P. Flashman is not on the British Embassy staff in Washington is beyond me, this being a state of affairs totally within his experience and comprehension.)

Our story begins in a secure military tribunal, where a number of seditionist agitators

are being dealt with. One being the notorious Illinois lawyer A. Lincoln, who receives a long term in fortress imprisonment. Another is a seditious college professor (can't trust them thar long-hairs) by the name of Chamberlain, who merely gets sent to hard labor.

But a daring raid by partisan rangers of the Army of the Republic releases Professor Joshua Chamberlain, and with Major Mosby and a number of disgruntled West Pointers who were cashiered for the offense of being competent, they plan a daring rescue of a worthy spokesman for their cause. Provided they can outwit or overcome the painfully honest and loyal Colonel Lee, R. E., commanding Fortress Monroe.

All which leads to a desperate and despairing last stand in a little town in Southern Pennsylvania . . .

Mike Resnick is on record as saying that independent electronic publication and print-on-demand publication alike are a fool's game. But what is one to do when a story is not considered worth publishing, because the fad is otherwise?

#### ICE STATION ZEBRA

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**ALONE ON THE ICE:**

*The Greatest Survival Story In The History of Exploration*

by David Roberts

(W. W. Norton and Company; 2013;

ISBN 978-0-393-24016-0; \$27.95;

Amazon Digital Services; \$14.99)

Even the loyal devoted aides of Howard Hughes had their breaking points. One, for example, responded very negatively to what might seem a trivial incident at a party he was invited to. He heard something in an adjoining room and nearly went off the deep end.

During his final decline into the depths of madness, Hughes became once again captivated by the filmic art. The man who once produced *Hell's Angels* (1930) and *Jet Pilot* (1957) now watched only a few movies over and over again, the most frequent one being *Ice Station Zebra* (1968). Hearing the all too familiar theme music made his former associate react in quite an unsettled manner.

The aides had other unpleasant tasks, such as emptying out the jars of urine that Hughes had saved. One wonders how Hughes would have done in an even more isolated ice station.

For the past few years, the definitive book on the Australian Antarctic Expedition of 1912-14 has been Lennard Bickel's *Mawson's Will: The Greatest Polar Survival Story Ever Written* (1977, 2000). One of the most noted chroniclers of polar travel of late has been David Roberts, author of *Great Exploration Hoaxes* (1982, 2001).

This work combines those skills to recount the story of the most far-flung expedition of the Heroic Age, and the most desperate event of that expedition.

Douglas Mawson had been on the British Antarctic Expedition of 1909. While

Shackleton turned back a hundred eleven miles short of the Geographic South Pole, he and two others made it to the Magnetic South Pole, doing useful research on the Earth's magnetic field along the way.

He decided to go back. This took more than a bit of work, but his plans were more spread-out than south-directed, unlike (it seemed) all the other expeditions of *1912: The Year the World Discovered Antarctica* (by Chris Turney (2012; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 12 #1). Mawson intended to explore along a vast stretch of the unknown coast of the continent, the one facing Australia.

The expedition had two stations, one under his own command, the other under the command of the chronic Antarctic Explorer Frank Wild. [When Wild was finally buried, in the cemetery in Grytviken on South Georgia, his ashes were interred on the right hand of Shackleton's grave, in keeping with the Boss's opinion of him.] Wild was tasked with sending out no fewer than three separate parties, which took all the personnel of his station, some of whom seem to have been spectacular foulballs.

While another team headed out, Mawson reserved for himself the key journey, heading for the South Magnetic Pole from the other direction.

Now Mawson used dogs. Indeed, one of the expedition's dogs was named "Amundsen". (This dog survived everything, only to die of heat stroke in Australia.) He also brought an airplane (which broke down) and a wireless (Yank: "radio") transmitter, which would have its own features.

One of the other people at Mawson's base was the photographer Frank Hurley, who would go back again. His photographs of this expedition are also noteworthy, including one that looks like an outrageous joke, or a piece of Photoshopped work. It shows a man leaning forward so far he cannot possibly keep balanced, but apparently he is. The expedition base was in what seems to have been the windiest part of the continent, with winds in excess of 100 miles per hour. That's **miles**, not those bloody French kilometre things!

Mawson's exploration took a dozen dogs and two other men, Swiss mountaineer Xavier Mertz, and British officer Belgrave Ninnis. They set out eastward, towards the Magnetic Pole from the other side. Things were going well.

Except when Mawson and Mertz learned why it's a good idea to have the types of supplies equally distributed. Ninnis was driving the sled with most of the food and equipment. They crossed a crevasse. He got partway over.

Mawson and Mertz now had to get back, without most of their equipment (no ground cloth for what they could improvise in the way of a tent, for example), without almost any food. Their principal food ate food.

Slowly, heading west, they made their way back to the base, eating the dogs as they became weaker. Then Mawson and Mertz became weaker. Mertz in particular had

severe problems. And then he died.

Mawson cut the sledge in half, with what tools he could improvise. He abandoned a lot of gear — including, fatefully, the crampons, the spikes to fit to his boots.

He was coming apart, too. Quite literally, his hair was gone and the soles of his *feet* — not his boots, his feet — had come off. It snowed once, burying him in his tent. He fell into a crevasse himself, only restrained by the weight of the sledge on the lip of the crevasse. So he climbed out — and just as he got to the edge it broke off and he fell in again!

In spite of everything, including a prolonged blizzard that kept him from moving, Mawson struggled along. And then, as he approached the expedition hut he found a cairn. It had food, real food — and the other members had left that miring! He ate, recovered some strength, then made his way to the advanced base, a cave called (very appropriately, in his state of health) Aladdin's Cave. There was more food. He recovered out of the wind. Oh yes, there was another blizzard.

And other problems. The last stretch of the trip was over steep ice. For which he needed crampons. Of which he had none. He improvised, using some of his other equipment. They weren't very good, kept on breaking, but he managed. And so, finally, Mawson made the last stage of the trip.

"Which one are you?" they asked. The expedition ship was under deadlines. They had to recover the other party, under Frank Wild. And they had left, five hours ago.

Mawson would have to stay another winter in the Antarctic. On the other hand, Frank Wild had been wondering if he was abandoned. If the expedition ship had sunk, it would have been as if they had disappeared entirely. By comparison, his subsequent experience on Elephant Island with the stay-behind body of the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition was far easier. At least he had boats there.

The men settled in for the winter. Mawson had to limit personal messages, though I doubt anyone could object to him telling his fiancée that he was alive. Maybe he should have been in charge of the expedition to rescue Umberto Nobile and the men of the *Italia*, which as you will recall had problems in that field, with the survivors' broadcasts being ignored, since the radio operator on the rescue ship was sending long voluble personal messages back to Italy.

At least the Italian radio operator was sane. One of the frightening events of that second wintering-over was the gradual descent of the wireless operator into madness. He became convinced that the other men were plotting to kill him. His hygiene deteriorated; he began storing his urine in jars under his bed. If Mawson had lived to see Howard Hughes in the sixties, he would have known.

And one of the other members of the party may have taken against Mawson. But we don't know, because the man's journal has not been published; just a book based on it, which is highly critical of Mawson.

In spite of everything, somehow, everyone got back to Australia. The wireless operator

was committed to a mental hospital, after a bad psychotic break, and died there. Mawson married his fiancée, was knighted for his remarkable accomplishments, and had a long and happy life, going back to the Antarctic on another expedition in the thirties, dying in 1957 surrounded by his family, having worked on his scientific duties to the end of his life.

Roberts has some new revelations. He describes how Mawson became dubious of Shackleton, after a 10,000£ donation to his expedition became unaccounted for, which Mawson suspected was to fund Shackleton's plans for gold-mining in Austria-Hungary. (And when he quotes Shackleton's effusive praise of Mawson, it makes Mawson look a trifle ungrateful.)

Roberts also questions Bickel's theory regarding hypervitaminosis A as the cause of Mawson's symptoms. He cites a number of experts who ascribe it to simple malnutrition. There is also the question of why Mertz died and Mawson didn't.

People have different physiologies, they react to the same diets and such in different ways. It would be possible to exhume Mawson's body and see if there were traces of hypervitaminosis A in the bones. I don't think mere malnutrition causes such effects as Mawson suffered.

This is, nevertheless, a thorough inspection of a superhuman effort. You realize that a modern explorer, in good shape, tried to recreate Mawson's traverse, and could only match his times and mileage by in effect cheating. Just as no modern climber has ever been able to cross South Georgia in the time achieved by Shackleton, Worsley, and Crean. The demigods of the Golden Age passed from the world, making it a coarser and harder place.

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#### IT'S MISSING Con Report on ConCave by Joseph T Major



When all the world was young, and Jophan set forth to the enchanted convention, he went with a light heart and a brisk step. He brought his Shield of Umore and his Magic Mimeograph, which weighed naught, and by their innate powers, lightened his heart and put vigor in his limbs. And all his mundane possessions were kept in a simple paper bag.

At the enchanted convention, he was one of a dozen in a single room,



where the Trufen carpeted the floor. They regaled themselves with the simple provisions they had foraged from hither and you. They were of one mind and one soul, and spoke lovingly of all their common heritage.

Thus it was in the Elder Days.

Now, Jophan the elder wraps himself in body armor of sarcasm, layered with cynicism. The Magic Mimeograph has ceased to turn, its sources no longer produce. And when he does travel, it is with a great container for his medicaments, many accessories for his Spells of iPhone and iPad and Tablet and Laptop. And a covey of porters must needs bear his wardrobe. Including splendid vestments for the dining facilities for the elite.

With his ailments and his indignities and his requirements, he must needs have a room of one. Or perhaps two, if there is a Janephan. His comrades of old have gone their many ways; some to exotic drawings from across the broad oceans, some to recondite visual tales of creatures of the night, and still more to even more alien realms. Or the sombre realms of Mundania. Of those few who remain, not one has perused a tome perused by any other.

#### Thursday, February 21, 2013 Louisville

The weather was so tricky that Lisa took precautions. After having read Johnny Carruthers's con reports about ChattaCon, which always ended with his discussion of how he managed to beat the blizzard home, or remembering the time there was a cold snap in Florida, I couldn't exactly blame her. Aside from getting our last-minute packing done and changing the litter boxes, there wasn't much else to do aside from making arrangements for Friday night dinner.

And so to bed.

#### Friday, February 22, 2013 Louisville — Bowling Green, KY

Grant had an early-morning appointment to get to the Hyperbaric Oxygen chamber, but it had been that way all month, so this wasn't exactly new. I got some of the baggage down while he was washing up. He went off on the TARC3 bus and we finished loading. I also fed the cats and refilled the food bin.

Not that we would go all that far right away. Lisa had to pick up a prescription and get a haircut. And then I had to get some money and leave something at the doctor's, or technically at the lab at the doctor's.

But we got to Bowling Green before noon, without getting run off the road by more than two or three speeding SUV's. Since we were early, we went to Barnes & Noble to do some shopping, and then to the Five Guys across the street for lunch. I didn't look at their SF section much since I figured I'd go shopping

for that at the con, and there wasn't much else I wanted enough to overcome the realization that the book would have to go home and go somewhere in the house.

We checked in without trouble. But the room was on the second floor and almost adjacent to the Denny's that is connected to the hotel. And all the carts were in use. So we had to carry our stuff up there.

Various people from up the road were present, including **Mike** and **Susan Baugh** and **Joel Zakem**. However, Larry Smith wasn't; he would have to rent two rooms, one for the books and one to sleep in, and with his profits already low . . . Joel was working with Steve Francis on the Jack Young Memorial Book Sale, and selling his own stock of older magazines. There were also two game dealers and a tattoo parlor.

We registered once the original line had shortened, and went back to socializing. **Tom Feller** showed up. We would discuss later in the con such things as the relative popularity of *Sherlock* and of *Elementary*, the poor receipt of *John Carter*, and other such matters. Incidentally, we are grateful for Tom's vote of confidence.

I thought I had put **Rickey Sheppard** on the mailing list, but I hadn't. He gave me his email address and from now on he will be there. Similarly, I gave **Naomi Fisher** a copy, and now she and **Pat Molloy** will be getting this. Naomi's daughter was there and I even got to use the line from *The Addams Family*; she was selling Girl Scout cookies and I asked her if they were made with real Girl Scouts. Alas, they don't have any sugar-free cookies.

But we had to get ready for our dinner engagement, which readiness wasn't helped by my sudden fear that I had lost the stylus for my iPad. So, I was in the room when the guests arrived in the lobby — and worse yet, the stylus had been at the bottom of my book bag all the time.

My niece goes to some very . . . interesting . . . places as part of her job. She works on support for the families of National Guardsmen. And Sarah had brought her little boy, Wilson. He can read — I modestly informed her that he got it from his great-uncle.

For some reason, deciding where to eat is always such a problem, since everyone says, "I'll eat where the rest of you guys want to eat." We finally decided to go to Outback Steakhouse. Wrong; it was forty minutes wait. So I suggested Longhorn Steakhouse. Or I thought I had. When we got there it was an hour's wait. Lisa stayed there to inform them and I went over to the O'Charley's next door, where it was only forty minutes wait. That looked like the best possible deal, so I got in line.

Then Lisa went there to hold the pager while I waited for Sarah and Will. Finally, I called her. They had heard me suggest Logan's Roadhouse, and had even got a table. This is why your uncle has white hair, kiddies. They came over there and we got our table. Wilson had been at the circus (maybe he will have to go backwards and have a day at the races, followed by a night at the opera, and then dine on duck

soup) and was tired, as you can see from the picture posted above.

We parted, and Lisa and I went to Walgreen's to get a prescription taken care of, then back to the motel, where I ended up parking all the way the other side of the building. Went in, chatted some more, and finally passed up all the parties, since I am too old to stand for so long, don't drink, and like to see who I'm talking to.

And so to bed.

Miles driven: 129.4  
Sunrise: 7:25 AM (EST)  
Sunset: 5:32 PM (CST)  
Weather: Cold, intermittent clouds

#### Saturday, February 23, 2013 Bowling Green

After dragging ourselves down to the breakfast, and dining sufficiently, we prepared ourselves for **Tim Lane** and **Elizabeth Garrott**, who were making their usual day trip. ConCave's cook was sitting at a table by the repast, and I told him, "While I won't kiss the cook, I will appreciate him." He likes being appreciated. I will note that you can dine very economically there, another good reason to come. Called Grant, found that Tim had dropped off his laptop for some updates and maintenance, and was on the way.

They were a bit disappointed that Larry Smith wasn't there, but soon got into the flow. Bob Emblar said he would start his annual OutsideCon cookout; I ended up having a couple of hot dogs, the buffalo-burgers had all been taken by the time I finished.

My cell phone said I had two voicemail messages. After making several calls I finally got the doctor, who told me he had looked at the lab results before they went to my internist, and noted I did have an infection, and prescribed something for it. You don't want to hear about my problems in that regard.

Also, somewhat to my embarrassment, I was out of shaving cream, so I went back to the Walgreens up the road to get some. At least I got my former parking space, next to the end of the building where the room was.

We all chatted with the Fellers (**Anita** was up and around now) until it began to get close to sunset, whereupon Tim and Elizabeth had to take their leave.

After dark, the younger sort began to come out. There was music and dancing, which made conversation something of a lost cause. For partygoers, the party rooms are all around the pool, so you can sit in the atrium, look at the banners — ah, "How Beautiful With Banners" (James Blish, *Orbit One* (1966)) indeed — and figure out where to go.

And so to bed.

Miles driven: 2.4  
Books read: *The Nanking War* by Ryan McCall  
Sunrise: 6:25 AM  
Sunset: 5:33 PM  
Weather: Sunny, warming

Sunday, February 24, 2013

**Bowling Green — Tompkinsville, KY — Louisville**

The hotel was being very flexible about checkout time. This gave us a little time to have a going-away chat. Including meeting a guy who really recommended *John Carter and the Gods of Hollywood*, and was quite pleased to see my ebook edition.

We left the con about noonish and went to Tompkinsville to see my cousin Jean. It didn't help that the map in the GPS hadn't been updated, so by looking at the screen I could see myself driving on empty fields, while in the real world, whatever that is, I was on a new road.

I did help Jean find out something about one of her ancestors, Tom Swift (yes, really), and intended to look further when I could get to other venues. About four Lisa felt it was time to go, so we took off, drove up to Elizabethtown for dinner, and then got home about eight-thirty. Then we had to unload the car and take the trash out. I. Was. Tired.

And so to bed.

Miles driven: 182.8

Books read: *Long Walk to the Sun* by William Peter Grasso  
*Final Failure* by Douglas Niles

Sunrise: 6:24 AM (CST)

Sunset: 6:30 PM (EST)

Weather: Sunny, mild.

It's ironic; I bought four books during the con — and they were all ebooks! Also two dragon statues and a warhog (an A-10 model with the Big Honking Gun). The dragon statues also had a rather easy-on-the-eyes dragonlady with them, so I got Lisa's approval. In Tompkinsville, I got some DVDs, including *Monsters, Inc.*

The guest of honor was the webmaster of Fark.com. Strangely enough, there were no program items; the banquet, for example, was canceled when not enough people signed up. I'm not quite sure what that indicates.

My cousin Jean doesn't believe that women could love vampires. I wish it weren't true.

Total mileage: 314.6  
Gas bought: \$72.57  
Time out: 9:08 AM  
Time back: 8:33 PM

**HORSE NEWS**  
by Lisa



I would like to report that I have picked a Derby horse. I haven't. This year Churchill Downs is trying a new plan for choosing the twenty horses who go to the post the first Saturday in May. I would like to explain this system. Unfortunately I can't. Different races get different points. I might understand it better if it were so many points for winning a Grade I race, so many points for a Grade II and so many for a Grade III. It is not so. Different Grade I races get different points. Earnings seemed much fairer to me. It was at least something resembling an objective criteria even if it did keep my favorite horse out. I don't think it is possible to come out with a system that is totally fair to everyone. No matter what the system is there is always going to be some good horse who isn't eligible and horses that don't belong in a prestigious race like the Derby. The worst thing about the system is that there are no points for filly races. I have to wonder if that aspect of it would survive a court challenge. Given the time it would take to go through courts it's doubtful a challenger would be able to make it into the Derby. But the next top filly might benefit from such a challenge.

**THE JOY OF HIGH TECH**  
by Rodford Edmiston

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

**Emergency Lighting**

As superstorm Sandy recently demonstrated, our modern world is not exempt from natural disasters. Throw in accidents, equipment failure, deliberate sabotage and who knows what else, and sometimes I marvel that things work as well and consistently as they do.

Anything which removes access to electrical utilities — including simple wilderness camping — also takes away the light those utilities produce. One of the more persistent efforts of humanity is to develop better and more convenient light sources. This isn't surprising when you consider how useful artificial illumination is to us. Lighting provides both practical and psychological benefits: It helps you see, and it helps you be at ease.

From the time our ancestors first mastered fire, making light also meant making heat. Even many electric lights — including the incandescent bulb — create significant heat. (After incandescent bulbs were banned on one area, an imaginative entrepreneur tried importing them as "Ninety-seven percent efficient heaters." It didn't fly.)

Incandescent bulbs work by heating a controlled resistance to incandescence. (Hence the name.) They have to be hot. Fluorescents are nearly the same age as incandescents, but until very recently their greater efficiency didn't compensate for their initial expense. Fluorescent lights produce far less heat and are more efficient overall. However, just as compact fluorescent lamps began having their heyday, other technologies started moving in to replace

them. Besides LEDs there are things like gas discharge and electroluminescent lights. It should be noted that both fluorescents and LEDs — in fact, all known sources of electrical light — still produce waste heat. Just far less than incandescent lamps, halogen bulbs or — an extreme example — arc lights.

So, if the power goes out you have an assortment of emergency lighting types to choose from. Of course, you should make your choice well before then, or you're likely to remain in the dark for the duration.

Fire, of course, is the obvious solution. Just be certain there are no flammable fumes — such as natural gas — around before lighting up. Also, keep in mind that in a small area even a single candle can produce a great deal of heat. That can be an advantage in cold or cool weather, but if the power outage occurs on a warm Summer evening with no AC and no breeze...

Candles work well, as long as you keep their disadvantages in mind. Unless you have a candle lantern, you're dealing with a completely open flame. A slight gust can blow them out, and if knocked over they can start fires. As mentioned above, they also produce a lot of heat; you can even cook over them, to a very limited extent. If you acquire candles for emergency lighting be certain they are unscented. The last thing you need is to discover you're allergic to the scent used, or to breathe it in an enclosed space for hours on end.

Candles can be made from a variety of substances, from beef tallow to straight paraffin. Bayberries — also known as candleberries — are still used to make some candles, though the physical and chemical characteristics of the wax makes it less suitable than modern paraffin or paraffin-beeswax mixtures. Given that paraffin is a petroleum byproduct and can have desired characteristics designed in, it and the mixtures with beeswax are generally the most suitable for nearly every modern candle type. Beeswax by itself generally has too low a melting point for hot areas. However, adding some to certain paraffin formulations improves the physical and chemical characteristics of the candle, and also a nice scent.

Chemically fueled lanterns and lamps of various types are more contained and easier to regulate than candles. Some even have a built-in sparker for ignition. Best of all, you can refill them. Just remember that these, too, generate more heat than light. I strongly recommend a good kerosene lamp, especially the mantle lamps. These have a thorium dioxide-impregnated mantle — an inverted bag on a wire frame — which is placed over the more familiar kerosene wick after that is lit. These act as afterburners, both allowing more of the fuel to be used and reducing fumes. Also, heated thorium gives off a nice, white light.

Pressure lanterns give off more light, due to the fuel being forcibly injected through an orifice into the flame holder as a vapor or very fine mist. The majority of these also use

thorium impregnated mantles. The most familiar types are the Coleman “white gas” (naphtha) lanterns, but there are other brands. Some pressure lamps run off automotive gasoline (much safer with these days without the lead) and others use kerosene. A few pressure lanterns are multi-fuel capable.

A good kerosene lamp can run for many hours without refueling. Pressure lanterns generally don’t last as long, but that’s because they’re burning fuel at a higher rate to produce a more intense light.

One drawback of all combustion light sources is that they use oxygen. They also produce carbon monoxide, though most of them in trivial amounts. With modern designs CO and other noxious fumes are minimized. However, besides combustion there are also other methods of generating light through chemical reactions, and some of those are much less hazardous than anything with an open flame. This includes being safer to use where there might be natural gas or other flammables in the air. One type of these cold chemical light sources is very common these days.

Chemical light sticks are very handy, and come in a variety of colors and brightnesses. (Just remember, the brighter, the shorter the duration.) However, they are quite variable in their shelf life. A bundle of the same type of light sticks bought at the same time from the same manufacturer should all last at least to the expiry date (though some makers don’t put those on the package, giving the false impression that the store indefinitely). However, whether they’ll work well much past the date marked is a roll of the dice. A year beyond and half may work fine and the other half not at all.

This is supported by personal experience. I made a bulk buy of some standard eight hour light sticks several years ago. (By the way, the duration is a bit arbitrary. The sticks will gradually dim after activation, but continue giving off some light for much longer than the rating. The value given is likely to some point of visibility.) A couple of years back — well after their expiration date — I decided to test those remaining from that batch, after I tried to use one and it was completely dead. Some worked fine; some were completely dead; some glowed but dimly. I’m not sure of the mechanism by which lightsticks fail, but they do have a limited shelf life.

Lightsticks are a good choice for power outages of a few hours, especially if extra heat is not desired. However, they can’t be recharged or refilled, which makes them costly for extensive use. They come in claimed durations ranging from five minutes to twelve hours. They also come in a variety of colors, including white (and even infrared). Just be sure to buy good quality ones and pay attention to the expiration dates.

Until the invention of white LEDs (all LEDs are actually monochromatic, giving off light in a very narrow band of frequencies; the “white” ones are actually ultraviolet LEDs in a phosphor coated capsule, the same method

used in fluorescent lights) flashlights were a very poor choice for more than short-term emergency lighting. Today, we have a vast assortment of LED flashlights — and even some lanterns — which produce plenty of light for long periods on one charge of battery. They emit little heat, they are generally inexpensive and very reliable.

Moreover, modern flashlights come with a huge assortment of potential features. Variable focus, variable light levels, variable flash rates — including automatic SOS signaling — solar charging panels, and on and on. Some made for police and security use have a special rapid strobing feature which can render someone helpless through disorientation and nausea. These are popular with prison guards. Modern aluminum alloys and polymers mean today’s flashlights are lightweight, handy and very, very rugged.

Even good flashlights are poor choices for lighting a room or campsite. A few — like the Maglights — can be converted to modest lamps by such measures as unscrewing the head. LED lanterns are a better choice for this function. Again, these have a wide variety of features available, including charging ports for cell phones.

One type of non-electric lighting not often seen today is the gas mantle wall fixture. These can use propane or butane or even natural gas from a utility line. As with the mantle lamps mentioned above, they have a thorium-impregnated bag around the aperture, and give off a clean, white light. Many are rated for indoor use, and can be switched between fuel types by changing an orifice. They are most commonly used for isolated cabins or permanent camps, where hauling in propane tanks is easier and more efficient than running a generator.

Besides choosing which light source to acquire (having more than one type is a good idea, too) you need to decide whether to go with something strictly for emergencies or a more general light source which can function well in a power outage. As mentioned above, a third choice is to have more than one type on hand; a general, handy light source for short term use (including looking to see what just knocked over your trash cans) and medium and long-term use for extended loss of utilities.

As mentioned above, some flashlights can function as lanterns. If power outages are rare in your area and you need a good flashlight anyway, two or three those could carry you through, especially if you keep a supply of batteries for them on hand. Most people would be better off choosing one or two good quality, general-purpose flashlights, a few cheap ones to keep in handy places around the house, plus another light source to illuminate whole rooms during outages. If you live in a location with frequent, extended blackouts, you should consider getting a generator . . . or maybe moving. :-)

Something which sees regular use is probably more rugged than something intended only for emergencies. Of course, the purely emergency equipment is likely simpler to use

and more reliable than regular equipment, if only because it isn’t used until an emergency. It is also likely to be more expensive, due to that increment of reliability.

Some more unusual light sources include radioactive isotopes in phosphor-lined capsules. The radiation source is usually tritium, which has a half life of twelve and a third years. This is not as exotic as it sounds. The technology behind this is rugged and safe, and has been used for decades to provide illumination for firearm night sights, watches and many other items. However, these lights are expensive, and not really appropriate for area illumination.

This leads us to the very exotic realm of radio thermal generators, or RTGs. These have had some terrestrial use, but their most common application by a huge margin is for space probes going places where photovoltaic panels aren’t practical. The New Horizons probe to Pluto is a prime example. These units are heat engines rather than reactors. They contain a heat source — usually plutonium 238 — and that heat is used to generate electricity. Most Plutonium isotopes are alpha emitters. Alpha particles are very easy to block — the layer of dead cells on the outside of your skin will do that — so shielding is easy. Pu 238 has a half life of 87.7 years, so is not the limiting factor on service life. (The Voyager probes’ RTGs have gradually deteriorated in output, but that is mostly due to other factors.) A lump of Pu 238 gives off enough heat to glow a dull red, so it is a light source, all by itself. Just not a very practical one. :-)

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## LOSCON 39

Con Report by Robert S. Kennedy

As usual I drove down to the LAX Marriott on Thursday afternoon leaving here about 2:30 p.m. The traffic was even a bit lighter than usual and I made it to the hotel in about 45-50 minutes. (The distance is about 50 miles.)

After checking in and getting my things set up in the room, I went down to the lobby. There was Milt Stevens. So, we arranged to meet later to have our Thanksgiving dinner in the hotel restaurant.

The programs I went to were—“Books That Changed My Life” where one of the participants was Milt; “Does Hard SF Have To Be Dry?”; “What If Super Powers Were Real?”; “Firefly: 10 Years Later”; “Real Aliens”; “Good Villains”; “GoH: Lloyd & Yvonne Penney”; and “Military Tactics in SF.”

There were no Opening or Closing Ceremonies. Apparently it was decided to drop these functions.

In comments about 2011 I mentioned about how fast the Ice Cream Social ran out of Chocolate Chip and suggested they might think about getting two tubs for 2012. So much for that suggestion. In 2012 there was not any Chocolate Chip ice cream. Apparently that was a screw up on the part of the hotel.

The Masquerade seemed to have even less participants than in 2011. It was enjoyable. But, with so few participants it appeared that

once again everyone received an award.

Back to the session with Lloyd and Yvonne Penney. There were only some 5 of us in the audience. Chris Garcia was the Moderator and did an excellent job of asking Lloyd and Yvonne questions. One thing that I learned is that none of them care for Heinlein. Before the session began I introduced myself to Yvonne and reminded her that we had met several years ago at a tour of JPL. She did not seem to remember. I then introduced myself to Lloyd and reminded him of our exchange in *ALEXIAD* concerning the various spellings of his last name. (I have Penny in my ancestors.) He did not seem to remember but gave me an explanation of the three different spellings.

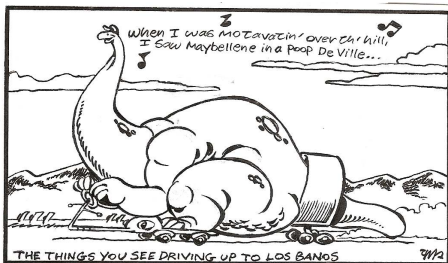
Only two items were purchased in the Dealers Room—A T-shirt of the con and an autographed copy of *Captain Vorpatril's Alliance* by Lois McMaster Bujold (2012).

There was one great disappointment. I took my copy of *The Unincorporated Future* (2012) by Dani and Eytan Kollin in the expectation that they would be there as usual and autograph it as they have done with the prior books in the series. However, they were not there so no autographs.

LoneStarCon 3 was offering a small discount and I upgraded myself from Supporting to Attending. Now, I just hope that I really make it to San Antonio.

I paid for LOSCON 40 and look forward to being there in November.

The trip home took about 60 minutes.



### Capricon XXXIII Con Report by Leigh Kimmel

Capricon XXXIII was held over the weekend of February 7-10, 2013 at the Westin Chicago North Shore in Wheeling, Illinois, one of the northwest suburbs of Chicago. Capricon is one of the Chicago area's big three conventions, along with Duckon and Windycon. The very first convention I ever attended was Capricon XV back in 1995, and I always enjoyed attending. However, we'd stopped attending for a number of years, due to poor sales and some interpersonal difficulties with someone who no longer holds significant responsibilities on their concomm.

This year we thought that our t-shirt line might add enough sales to make the con economically viable, so we decided to give it another try. Since we were going to another convention the weekend afterward, we went to

my folks' place in the Bloomington-Normal area on Wednesday, then continued to Chicago on Thursday. Unfortunately, the weather turned for the worse on the way up. By the time we arrived, the rain had turned to sleet, which made load-in particularly nasty.

We had to take every cartload up a ramp that was so slick we could hardly get any traction. Worse, the flatbed cart was wet, which meant the bottoms of our boxes got wet too. By the time we got everything in, I was seriously concerned about damage to our merchandise. It didn't help that one of our volunteers got shirty with me when I requested she load the merchandise in a particular way to protect it. If any of our volunteers at Anime Crossroads got like that to one of our merchants, that person wouldn't be volunteering any longer.

Then we had to get everything set up. We were already running behind because load-in took longer than usual, so we got done just in time for the brief sales period that evening. By this time I was hearing some really scary news about the road conditions. We almost wished we'd stayed in the main hotel in spite of the greater expense.

When the dealers' room closed for the night, we took a look around the parties in hope of buying a little time for the road crews to do their work. There weren't many parties, and finally we had to brave the roads back to the hotel where we were staying. It was very slick, to the point I had to just creep along. I was very glad to get back to our sleeping room and turn in for the night.

On Friday we were able to sleep in a little, since the dealers' room didn't open until noon. The late start also gave road crews time to work on the roads, which meant the drive back to the con hotel wasn't quite so hairy.

However, sales were slow, which meant I had plenty of time to work on a story. I also had time to go over to the con suite to grab munchies several times. Capricon has a really nice con suite with lots of good food, including nightly surprises such as pizza or chili nachos.

By the time the dealers' room closed, we were both feeling rather disappointed by the sales levels. However, we were willing to allow that the weather might have delayed some members' arrival.

At least the drive back to the other hotel was more manageable on cleaner roads. We spent some time on the Internet before we turned in for the night.

On Saturday we headed back to the con hotel, hoping to see some serious sales as people got in. However, the first several hours we were open proved disappointing. A good bit of it we spent just sitting and waiting for things to happen. I got a bunch more work done on that story, but we were seriously questioning whether we wanted to come back in future years, especially given the high probability of foul weather.

During the last few hours, sales did pick up, but not to the levels we really wanted to see. Thus when we closed up and headed back to our sleeping room, we were quite disappointed in the con. We had a pretty serious talk about

whether we'd even be able to consider coming back to sell another year.

On Sunday, we packed up our personal belongings and got checked out of our sleeping room. Then we headed back up to the con hotel for our last day of sales. Because the dealers' room wouldn't open for almost an hour, we hung out in the con suite, eating bacon and talking with the dealers' room coordinators of some other area conventions.

When the dealers' room finally opened, we headed over and got our tables open for business. We talked to some of the other dealers, who all agreed that sales were slow for them.

Right after the doors opened to the general membership, sales were pretty slow. I got my art off the art show, but there'd been some problems with the hanging fees, so they were going to have to redo the check. I was supposed to go back and get it later, but that was about the time we finally got busy. After that, I was too busy between dealing with customers and packing merchandise to do anything else.

Once we had everything packed, I moved the van to the loading dock area and we started hauling stuff out. At first we had fairly good weather, which meant that we were able to get the books loaded before the rain started in earnest. However, once it moved beyond sprinkles, things got difficult, and it didn't help that several times things came out in the wrong order due to communication problems and I couldn't put them into place until other things arrived.

However, things finally all worked out and we were able to get on the road. We were rather late by the time we got back to my folks' place, but I was still glad to be able to turn in for a much-needed good night's sleep.

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### Visioncon Con Report by Leigh Kimmel

Visioncon was held over the weekend of February 15-17, 2013 at the Howard-Johnson in Springfield, Missouri. It's one of the largest science fiction conventions in the Ozarks, with a strong emphasis on media and gaming.

Because it was our second convention in two weeks, we'd stayed during the week at my parents' place in the Bloomington-Normal area. This gave us an opportunity to visit some of my husband's family on Tuesday.

On Wednesday we headed off to Springfield. The drive was pretty ordinary until we passed St. Louis and got into the Ozarks. The van's engine was definitely complaining on some of those steep grades, and I had to take it off cruise control. At least now I have a better idea of how it's apt to handle in the mountains if we make a trip to the East or West Coast.

We were staying with friends on Wednesday night, so we had to make connections with them. We spent the rest of the evening visiting.

On Thursday we headed over to the convention hotel and got checked into our

sleeping room. Once we had our personal belongings in, we pulled the van around to the front and got ready to load in. Although our table arrangement was less than ideal and left us with about half the backspace we'd been hoping for, the logistics of loading in more than made up for it. We were able to pull our van right up to the front door and carry everything straight into the dealers' room. We even were able to use a huge flatbed hotel cart, which meant we made about half as many trips.

Because of the tight table arrangement, setting up our tables took longer than usual and we had a lot of stuff we couldn't get out. Then I had to take a couple of loads of empty boxes back to the van. By that time we were really tired, so we headed back to the room to turn in for the night.

On Friday we got up early to get the hotel's free hot breakfast. Then we headed back to the room to get a nap before we headed to the dealers' room to do some final adjustments on the merchandise in preparation for it opening for business for the day.

However, that may have been a mistake. When we arrived, we discovered that the dealer beside us had set up a display in such a way that he was blocking one of our displays from being seen. I was rather annoyed, but our protests received the response that he had the right to set up his displays as he saw fit, and it was our problem to make adjustments. We figured out a way to get pretty much equivalent visibility for our products, but I was still annoyed at his obliviousness toward our setup and its relationship to his.

After that I got my art on the art show. Then I went to look for the con suite and discovered that they're more like anime cons in not having a regular con suite. Instead they have a concessions room, where you can get all the pop you want as long as you get it in the cups they sell. At least we had an adequate supply of our own pop, so it wasn't a disaster, but it was a disappointment.

The first few hours we were open, business was so slow that I was beginning to despair of getting any sales. We hardly had even any window-shoppers, let alone actual buyers. But then things picked up and I became busy enough that I had no further writing time. By the time we closed for the evening, I was actually feeling rather good about our situation.

In the evening we ate supper. Then we took a look around at the parties, but they all seemed to be centered around booze. Since neither of us can drink, we ended up heading back to the room and going on the Internet for a while before turning in for the night.

On Saturday we headed over for breakfast, then got our tables open for business. At this con they open the dealers' room at 9 AM rather than 10, as is typical at most conventions. Again, business was slow at first, but soon picked up to the point I was too busy dealing with customers to get any writing done.

However, it didn't help that I'd had only

fitful sleep the night before, and as a result kept making dumb mistakes. None of them cost us a huge amount of money, but they were still annoying as all getout. I also was having some technology problems that didn't help the state of my temper. By the time the dealers' room closed for the day, I was almost ready to turn in for the night.

Once I had some supper, I was willing to check out the parties. However, Saturday's parties also centered around drinking, so after a token appearance, we turned in for the night.

On Sunday we got breakfast, then gathered up our personal belongings and got them out of the sleeping room. After that we headed down to the dealers' room to get our tables open for the final day of sales. It followed the same pattern of being slow at first, then picking up speed within an hour. By the time we were needing to start packing, we were really busy, which made it tricky for me to leave long enough to get my art off the art show, or to retrieve boxes from the van.

However, once the dealers' room did close, our problematic neighbor got packed up and cleared out in nothing flat. Thus I was able to get in and break down our big gridwall without too much difficulty. After that it was just a matter of carting stuff out and getting it arranged in our van. At first I was parked some distance away from the door, but once the dealers with smaller setups got loaded out, I was able to move right in front of the doors and we got the last few loads out with surprising alacrity. Being able to use the hotel's giant cart for a couple of loads helped too.

Because the trip was so long, we stayed Sunday night with our friends before continuing our journey on Monday. That day we had windy travel through the Ozarks, but after we got into Illinois, we started having rain. The last hundred miles to my folks' place, the rain was so heavy I was fighting it the whole way.

At least we just had wind for the final leg of our homeward journey on Tuesday, but we'd heard some disturbing noises from our van as we started out, so we decided it needed to go to the shop when we got home. Thus I had to spend Tuesday evening getting everything unloaded into our storage unit so that I could turn our online sales back on.

As it turned out, we were lucky to get back home safely. We thought the sounds we heard were from the muffler, but in fact we had a pretty serious problem with the brakes. At least we got them fixed right away, so we should have a safe vehicle on our next trip.

## BLAND

Review by Taral Wayne of

**BRAVE** (2012)

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1217209/>

You have to hand it to Pixar. Even in a downward spiral, they can create soul-stirring animation. The latest case in point, *Brave*. Despite the title, it is rather Bland.

I feared so from the first. Trailers usually show a film's highlights. After all, showing its dull spots is likely to hurt at the box-office.

*Brave's* highlights showed nothing that I found very inspiring, though — a perky young woman with red hair, a lot of stupid Scottish oafs in kilts, a bear, some generic Medieval backdrops and comic relief in the form of three younger brothers with all the personality of the last three plastic cups at a smoker. We've seen it all before. In fact, wasn't the craze for all things Scottish at least *two* pop cult fads ago?

The plot concerns a girl in Medieval Scotland; roughly 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> century, so far as it corresponds to any time at all. Like all heroines, she is a Princess. She has been informed by her Da, the King, that for the good of the kingdom, she must marry . . . and since she seems to have about as much interest in making babies with any of the local clods as a potato has in making au gratin, she refuses. The Queen, her mother, insists . . . and arranges an archery contest, with the winner taking the daughter's hand. Naturally, the daughter is the best archer in the kingdom, and wins her own hand.

This is when I realized it was going to be another of those goddamned "spunky young woman in a man's world" movies. Have you noticed how many of these annoyingly positive role models have appeared in movies lately? For that matter, when was the last time you remember anything like a historically accurate female character for *any* film set much before 1800? There probably hasn't been one made in decades. It's easy to see why. In most eras, the role of women was to do what she was told, and deliver male heirs. If she didn't, she was apt to be smacked upside the head until she complied. The law upheld the husband's right to do so . . . though inflicting injuries leading to death tended to be frowned on.

So here's Princess Brave, yet another tiresomely spunky young lady who has just won her own hand in an archery contest . . . but her mother is at least a strong willed as *she* is, and won't be circumvented as easily as that! She insists her daughter *will* marry, and that's the end of it.

Except it isn't. There's still 75 minutes left in the film. Predictably, the daughter runs away, intending to become a knight-errant or some other self-delusion that would have lasted only until she had to take a leak and realized her 14 male companions-in-adventure were all hanging around, watching expectantly. However, before she can meet any fellow knights on the road, she meets a wacky witch in the woods. The witch gives her a potion that will change her mother's mind about marrying Brave off, and, feeling reprieved, she goes galumphing back home. She is sure in her heart that magical simplistic solutions *do* happen just this easily.

The potion will change her mother's mind, alright. But first, it changes her into a bear. Now the two of them have to sneak out of the castle to find the wacky witch and get the Queen turned back.

Did I mention that in "spunky young girl" movies, all men are oafs? The corollary of these movies seems to be that all men are dim of wit, clueless, unable to look after themselves



and totally deluded about who really keeps the household clocks wound. They also have paunches, balding heads, geometrically unlikely shaped noses, warts, ear hair like a pair of scrub brushes and an IQ usually associated with Bell Telephone representatives at the door. The sole exception is the one obligatory “hunk” — the love interest aimed at the teenage girls in the audience — who sweeps the heroine off her feet and carries her Away From All This, off to a life time of being spoiled and obeyed by an army of cringing servants. The hunk is exempt from having to be an oaf . . . at least until middle-age, or upon signing a contract to appear alongside the little woman in a TV family sitcom. Then he becomes a dumb cluck. Happily, we are spared having a “hunk” in *Brave*.

In keeping with the status of men in the mythical middle ages, *Brave* has three young brothers. I forget if they had names. If they had, they might as well have been Huey, Dewey and Louie, for all the difference it made which was which. They don't even speak, and have freakishly huge heads that set them completely apart from the semi-realistic designs of the other characters. Why are they there? Who knows? They could have been easily written out of the story, and without the slightest loss. More difficult, but perhaps more rewarding, would have been to write in *one* comic character, with a real personality and lines of his own. I have to suppose that someone found three, unspeaking, clowning younger brothers more amusing . . . especially when they are also turned into bears. Viewers with taste will find them merely unbearable.

To make a long story short — which might have helped this film — the transformed Mother becomes more bear-like with time, there is the usual mistaken identity leading to Hubby and his friends chasing Mother bear down to what might have been her death, the merging of a subplot about another, killer bear and the formulaic last moment counter-spell cast by the heroic daughter . . . yada yada yada. Oh, and a final and utterly predictable bear-bottomed gag at the end when Huey, Dewey and Louie are turned back into nerdy human brats.

A good movie *could* have been made . . . instead of this one. *Brave* might have been a movie about a believable daughter of a medieval Scots laird, but we would have had to watch her father beat her half to death when she refused to marry the man selected for her. Her mother would have then lectured the girl about serving the family, a woman's lot, and how God ordained women should suffer for their sinful nature. Then, short of hanging herself, that would be that. *Brave* would have married the man and had 11 children, most of whom would have died of dirt and respiratory diseases. It wouldn't have made a very nice story, but that's probably why so few movies are made from a woman's point of view that are set very far back in the past. Almost invariably, “enlightened” filmmakers try to introduce “historic” characters who have

modern views instead. *Brave*, made as a serious film, would have been quickly relegated to the Cinema Festival circuit.

I'm not saying, “don't see this movie.” Just don't feel that you've missed much if you don't, however. The eye-candy is sweet, and the wacky witch is moderately funny. There are good moments here and there, but just don't expect a serious story. It will *feel* serious *at times* . . . but it's much too shoddy and lightweight a plot for that. Watch *Brave* for the moving pictures rather than the narrative. Odds are that if you don't think about it too much, you will enjoy the film.

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## NEBULA NOMINEES

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### Novel

- Throne of the Crescent Moon*, Saladin Ahmed (DAW; Gollancz '13)  
*Ironskin*, Tina Connolly (Tor)  
*The Killing Moon*, N.K. Jemisin (Orbit US; Orbit UK)  
*The Drowning Girl*, Caitlín R. Kiernan (Roc)  
*Glamour in Glass*, Mary Robinette Kowal (Tor)  
*2312*, Kim Stanley Robinson (OrbitUS; OrbitUK)

### Novella

- “On a Red Station, Drifting,” Aliette de Bodard (Immersion Press)  
 “After the Fall, Before the Fall, During the Fall,” Nancy Kress (Tachyon)  
 “The Stars Do Not Lie”, Jay Lake (*Asimov's* 10-11/12)  
 “All the Flavors”, Ken Liu (GigaNotoSaurus 2/1/12)  
 “Katabasis”, Robert Reed (*F&SF* 11-12/12)  
 “Barry's Tale”, Lawrence M. Schoen (Buffalito Buffet)

### Novelette

- “The Pyre of New Day”, Catherine Asaro (*The Mammoth Books of SF Wars*)  
 “Close Encounters”, Andy Duncan (*The Pottawatomie Giant & Other Stories*)  
 “The Waves”, Ken Liu (*Asimov's* 12/12)  
 “The Finite Canvas”, Brit Mandelo (Tor.com 12/5/12)  
 “Swift, Brutal Retaliation”, Meghan McCarron (Tor.com 1/4/12)  
 “Portrait of Lisane da Patagnia”, Rachel Swirsky (Tor.com 8/22/12)  
 “Fade to White”, Catherynne M. Valente (*Clarkesworld* 8/12)

### Short Story

- “Robot”, Helena Bell (*Clarkesworld* 9/12)  
 “Immersion”, Aliette de Bodard (*Clarkesworld* 6/12)  
 “Fragmentation, or Ten Thousand Goodbyes”, Tom Crosshill (*Clarkesworld* 4/12)

“Nanny's Day”, Leah Cypess (*Asimov's* 3/12)

“Give Her Honey When You Hear Her Scream”, Maria Dahvana Headley (*Lightspeed* 7/12)

“The Bookmaking Habits of Select Species”, Ken Liu (*Lightspeed* 8/12)

“Five Ways to Fall in Love on Planet Porcelain”, Cat Rambo (Near + Far)

### Ray Bradbury Award for Outstanding Dramatic Presentation

*The Avengers*  
*Beasts of the Southern Wild*  
*The Cabin in the Woods*  
*The Hunger Games*  
*John Carter*  
*Looper*

### Andre Norton Award for Young Adult Science Fiction and Fantasy

- Iron Hearted Violet*, Kelly Barnhill (Little, Brown)  
*Black Heart, Holly Black* (S&S/McElderry; Gollancz)  
*Above*, Leah Bobet (Levine)  
*The Diviners*, Libba Bray (Little, Brown; Atom)  
*Vessel*, Sarah Beth Durst (S&S/McElderry)  
*Seraphina*, Rachel Hartman (Random House; Doubleday UK)  
*Enchanted*, Alethea Kontis (Harcourt)  
*Every Day*, David Levithan (Alice A. Knopf Books for Young Readers)  
*Summer of the Mariposas*, Guadalupe Garcia McCall (Tu Books)  
*Railsea*, China Miéville (Del Rey; Macmillan)  
*Fair Coin*, E.C. Myers (Pyr)  
*Above World*, Jenn Reese (Candlewick)

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## HUGO NOMINEES

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Ah . . .  
 It's Hugo  
 voting time  
 in Fandom!

### Best Novel (1,113 ballots)

- 2312* by Kim Stanley Robinson (Orbit)  
*Blackout* by Mira Grant (Orbit)  
*Captain Vorpatril's Alliance* by Lois McMaster Bujold (Baen)  
*Redshirts: A Novel with Three Codas* by John Scalzi (Tor)  
*Throne of the Crescent Moon* by Saladin

Ahmed (DAW)

### Best Novella (587 ballots)

- “**After the Fall, Before the Fall, During the Fall**” by Nancy Kress (Tachyon Publications)  
 “**The Emperor’s Soul**” by Brandon Sanderson (Tachyon Publications)  
 “**On a Red Station, Drifting**” by Alette de Bodard (Immersion Press)  
 “**San Diego 2014: The Last Stand of the California Browncoats**” by Mira Grant (Orbit)  
 “**The Stars Do Not Lie**” by Jay Lake (*Asimov’s*, Oct-Nov 2012)

### Best Novelette (616 ballots)

- “**The Boy Who Cast No Shadow**” by Thomas Olde Heuvelt (Postscripts: Unfit For Eden, PS Publications)  
 “**Fade To White**” by Catherynne M. Valente (*Clarkesworld*, August 2012)  
 “**The Girl-Thing Who Went Out for Sushi**” by Pat Cadigan (*Edge of Infinity*, Solaris)  
 “**In Sea-Salt Tears**” by Seanan McGuire (Self-published)  
 “**Rat-Catcher**” by Seanan McGuire (*A Fantasy Medley* 2, Subterranean)

### Best Short Story (662 ballots)

- “**Immersion**” by Alette de Bodard (*Clarkesworld*, June 2012)  
 “**Mantis Wives**” by Kij Johnson (*Clarkesworld*, August 2012)  
 “**Mono no Aware**” by Ken Liu (*The Future is Japanese*, VIZ Media LLC)

Note: category has 3 nominees due to a 5% requirement under Section 3.8.5 of the WSFS constitution.

### Best Related Work (584 ballots)

- The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature* Edited by Edward James & Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge UP)  
*Chicks Dig Comics: A Celebration of Comic Books by the Women Who Love Them* Edited by Lynne M. Thomas & Sigrid Ellis (Mad Norwegian Press)  
*Chicks Unravel Time: Women Journey Through Every Season of Doctor Who* Edited by Deborah Stanish & L.M. Myles (Mad Norwegian Press)  
*I Have an Idea for a Book... The Bibliography of Martin H. Greenberg* Compiled by Martin H. Greenberg, edited by John Helfers (The Battered Silicon Dispatch Box)  
*Writing Excuses Season Seven* by Brandon Sanderson, Dan Wells, Mary Robinette Kowal, Howard Tayler and Jordan Sanderson

### Best Graphic Story (427 ballots)

- Grandville Bête Noire* written and illustrated by Bryan Talbot (Dark Horse Comics, Jonathan Cape)  
*Locke & Key Volume 5: Clockworks* written by Joe Hill, illustrated by Gabriel Rodriguez (IDW)  
*Saga, Volume One* written by Brian K. Vaughn, illustrated by Fiona Staples (Image Comics)  
*Schlock Mercenary: Random Access Memorabilia* by Howard Tayler, colors by Travis Walton (Hypernode Media)  
*Saucer Country, Volume 1: Run* written by Paul Cornell, illustrated by Ryan Kelly, Jimmy Broxton and Goran Sudžuka (Vertigo)

### Best Dramatic Presentation (Long Form) (787 ballots)

- The Avengers* Screenplay & Directed by Joss Whedon (Marvel Studios, Disney, Paramount)  
*The Cabin in the Woods* Screenplay by Drew Goddard & Joss Whedon; Directed by Drew Goddard (Mutant Enemy, Lionsgate)  
*The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* Screenplay by Fran Walsh, Philippa Boyens, Peter Jackson and Guillermo del Toro, Directed by Peter Jackson (WingNut Films, New Line Cinema, MGM, Warner Bros)  
*The Hunger Games* Screenplay by Gary Ross & Suzanne Collins, Directed by Gary Ross (Lionsgate, Color Force)  
*Looper* Screenplay and Directed by Rian Johnson (FilmDistrict, EndGame Entertainment)

### Best Dramatic Presentation (Short Form) (597 ballots)

- Doctor Who: “The Angels Take Manhattan”* Written by Steven Moffat, Directed by Nick Hurran (BBC Wales)  
*Doctor Who: “Asylum of the Daleks”* Written by Steven Moffat; Directed by Nick Hurran (BBC Wales)  
*Doctor Who: “The Snowmen”* Written by Steven Moffat, Directed by Saul Metzstein (BBC Wales)  
*Fringe: “Letters of Transit”* Written by J.J. Abrams, Alex Kurtzman, Roberto Orci, Akiva Goldsman, J.H. Wyman, Jeff Pinkner. Directed by Joe Chappelle (Fox)  
*Game of Thrones: “Blackwater”* Written by George R.R. Martin, Directed by Neil Marshall. Created by David Benioff and D.B. Weiss (HBO)

### Best Editor - Short Form (526 ballots)

John Joseph Adams  
 Neil Clarke  
 Stanley Schmidt  
 Jonathan Strahan  
 Sheila Williams

### Best Editor - Long Form (408 ballots)

Lou Anders  
 Sheila Gilbert  
 Liz Gorinsky  
 Patrick Nielsen Hayden  
 Toni Weisskopf

### Best Professional Artist (519 ballots)

Vincent Chong  
 Julie Dillon  
 Dan Dos Santos  
 Chris McGrath  
 John Picacio

### Best Semiprozine (404 ballots)

- Apex Magazine* edited by Lynne M. Thomas, Jason Sizemore and Michael Damian Thomas  
*Beneath Ceaseless Skies* edited by Scott H. Andrews  
*Clarkesworld* edited by Neil Clarke, Jason Heller, Sean Wallace and Kate Baker  
*Lightspeed* edited by John Joseph Adams and Stefan Rudnicki  
*Strange Horizons* edited by Niall Harrison, Jed Hartman, Brit Mandelo, An Owomoyela, Julia Rios, Abigail Nussbaum, Sonya Taaffe, Dave Nagdeman and Rebecca Cross

### Best Fanzine (370 ballots)

- Banana Wings* edited by Claire Briailey and Mark Plummer  
*The Drink Tank* edited by Chris Garcia and James Bacon  
*Elitist Book Reviews* edited by Steven Diamond  
*Journey Planet* edited by James Bacon, Chris Garcia, Emma J. King, Helen J. Montgomery and Pete Young  
*SF Signal* edited by John DeNardo, JP Frantz, and Patrick Hester

### Best Fancast (346 ballots)

- The Coode Street Podcast*, Jonathan Strahan and Gary K. Wolfe  
*Galactic Suburbia Podcast*, Alisa Krasnostein, Alexandra Pierce, Tansy Rayner Roberts (Presenters) and Andrew Finch (Producer)  
*SF Signal Podcast*, Patrick Hester, John DeNardo, and JP Frantz  
*SF Squeecast*, Elizabeth Bear, Paul Cornell, Seanan McGuire, Lynne M. Thomas, Catherynne M. Valente (Presenters) and David McHone-Chase (Technical Producer)  
*StarShipSofa*, Tony C. Smith

### Best Fan Writer (485 ballots)

James Bacon  
 Christopher J Garcia  
 Mark Oshiro  
 Tansy Rayner Roberts

Steven H Silver

### Best Fan Artist (293 ballots)

Galen Dara  
Brad W. Foster  
Spring Schoenhuth  
Maurine Starkey  
Steve Stiles

### John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer (476 ballots)

Award for the best new professional science fiction or fantasy writer of 2011 or 2012, sponsored by Dell Magazines (not a Hugo Award).

Zen Cho \*  
Max Gladstone  
Mur Lafferty \*  
Stina Leicht \*  
Chuck Wendig \*

Congratulations to Steve, Brad, and (x3) to Chris.

The usual has happened.

**Two** "Chicks Dig" books were nominated. Given the way these people work, those who voted one for first place will vote for the other for second place. Meanwhile, works like **The Law of Superheroes** (by James Daly, J.D. and Ryan Davidson, J.D.; Gotham Books (really, but it's a division of Penguin wak wak wak); **2012**; ISBN 978-1-59240-726-2; \$26.00; Penguin (Kindle) \$12.99), a work that seriously discusses the legal considerations of comic universes (which considerations creators of other universes should keep in mind), don't get nominated.

Tansy Rayner Roberts is a minor pro with a blog. Mark Oshiro is a one-trick pony; he runs a blog where people discuss books he hasn't read.

### FANZINES

#### Askew #3

John Purcell, 3744 Marilene Circle,  
College Station, TX 77845-3926 USA  
[j\\_purcell54@yahoo.com](mailto:j_purcell54@yahoo.com)

#### Beyond Bree February 2013, March 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 #13, #14

Taral Wayne

#### The Drink Tank #336

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

#### Fadeaway #34 April-May 2013

Robert Jennings, 29 Whiting Road, Oxford,  
MA 01540-2035 USA  
[fabficbks@aol.com](mailto:fabficbks@aol.com)  
<http://www.efanzines.com>

*Fish Out of Water* #518, #519, #520, #521,  
#522, #523, #524, #525, #526, #527  
Marty Helgesen, 11 Lawrence Avenue,  
Malverne, New York 11565-1406 USA

#### Lofgeornost #110 February 2013

Fred Lerner, 92 Worcester Avenue, White  
River Junction, VT 05001- USA  
[fred.lerner@dartmouth.edu](mailto:fred.lerner@dartmouth.edu)

#### MT Void V. 31 #31 February 1, 2013 — V. 31 #39 March 29, 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>

*Opuntia* #259 February 2013, #260 St. Urho's  
Day  
Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta  
T2P 2E7 CANADA

#### The Reluctant Famulus #92 March/April 2013

Thomas D. Sadler, 305 Gill Branch Road,  
Owenton, KY 40359- USA  
[tomfamulus@hughes.net](mailto:tomfamulus@hughes.net)  
<http://www.efanzines.com>

#### Vanamonde #1012 (November 7, 2012), #1024 (January 23, 2013)

John Hertz, 236 S. Coronado Street, No.  
409, Los Angeles, CA 90057-1456 USA

DAS  
FANTOD



### 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

Paris

<https://sites.google.com/site/parisin2019/>

2020

New Zealand

<http://nzin2020.org/>

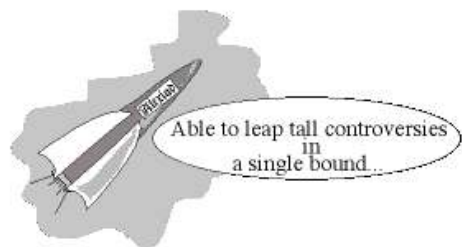
The Helsinki, Orlando, and Spokane bids have all filed their papers for site selection, as have the Detroit and Phoenix NASFiC bids.

We would tend to support Orlando and Detroit, even though there are problems with both. The Detroit one is a bit personal, but the Orlando will have the problem of shutting out people who don't want to, or can't afford to, stay at the Poopy Panda Palace and eat at the Poopy Panda Pub.

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 Letters, we get letters
 

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From: **Kent McDaniel** February 16, 2013

Just wanted to say thanks for the review of *Jimmy Stu Lives!* issue before last. I especially appreciated a review from a serious scholar of the genre like Tom Feller and thought he showed a clear grasp of what I was up to in the book. If any of your readers would like to check out the book, I'm going to make it possible for them to do so for free, if they have an e-reader or iPad, or read on their computer.

They can go to [www.smashwords.com](http://www.smashwords.com) and use the coupon code AG82S to download a free copy formatted for whatever e-reader or computer they use. They just need to log in (if you don't have account you can open one in less than five minutes. I did, and I'm far from computer savvy). Enter the title in the search window, go to it, and download. If you have a Kindle Fire you can just go to the site and download the book by hitting the button. With an iPad the easiest way is downloading it as a PDF and saving it to your book library. With a computer, also download it as a PDF. With a regular Kindle or most other e-readers, you just hook your e-reader up to the computer via the USB port. The e-reader then appears as an external link (like a flash drive) and you download the book and save it to your e-reader.

Smashwords is a cool site and worth checking out, imho. The coupon code for the free download of *Jimmy Stu Lives!* is good until 6-30-13.

Thanks again for the review.

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** Jan 20, 2013  
1779 Ciprian Avenue, Camarillo, CA  
93010-2451 USA  
[robertk@cipcug.org](mailto:robertk@cipcug.org)

Thank you for Vol. 11, No. 6.

*HAVEN*: My TV Guide did not indicate that the January 17<sup>th</sup> program was a two hour Series Finale. Only the first hour was indicated as being new. So, I just recorded the first hour. As a result the second (and final) hour was missed and I do not know how the series ended. If any reader of *ALEXIAD* saw the final hour and knows how the series ended it will be very much appreciated if they could furnish me with that information.

On the other hand, the January 18<sup>th</sup> two

hours of *FRINGE* were indicated as the Series Finale. I recorded it and did get to see how this series ended.

For an interesting site check out <http://www.wimp.com>. It's recommended by one of the writers in my PC User Group magazine. "it's a wonderful site with clean videos of everything from cute animals to TED Talks on the nature of the universe. Check it out for hours of mindless fun and education."

**Lisa Major**: Excellent commentary "Innocence of Muslims".

**Joe Major**: There is no similarity between our government turning the Soviet soldiers in Hitler's army over to the Soviet Union to face certain torture and death and Martin James Monti. Monti surrendered to the Americans and received 15 years in prison for desertion. He was pardoned on the condition that he join the Army. Subsequently, when it was realized who he was, he was arrested and charged with treason. He was given a sentence of 25 years. He was paroled in 1960.

Thanks for the review of *Captain Vorpatril's Alliance* (p. 4). I enjoyed the book very much and proceeded to check out some of the other books in the series that I had not read from the library.

In your review of *Rising Sun* (p. 5) you make reference to Homer Lea. I recall reading about Homer Lea when I was in High School. (Not an assignment. Just something I picked up on my own.) I will not proceed with what is in my memory other than to say that if I remember correctly he became a General in the army of Sun Yat-sen.

Hector Bywater's *The Great Pacific War* contains an oblique reference to Lea. Bywater pointed out that Japan could not transport an army to the American West Coast, much less supply it.

— JTM

**Jim Stumm**: Yes, I know that there is not any Constitutional basis for the Census Bureau survey I completed. A couple of my answers might stir them up a bit and why stir them up even more by refusing to complete the survey?

March 17, 2013

Thank you for Vol. 12, No. 1.

In some past issues the existence of Neanderthal DNA in we Homo Sapiens was mentioned as well as another called Denisovans. Now it appears that there may be a third. There is an excellent seven page article in the March 2013 issue of *DISCOVER* magazine on the subject—"Interbreeding With Neanderthals" starting on page 38.

I recently read Vince Flynn's latest novel *The Last Man* (2012) which was finally obtained from the library after a long wait because I started out on the wait list as #29 of 29. The novel is something like #14 in the series. I could hardly put it down. One can only wish that there were an Irene Kennedy (no relation ☺) at the head of the CIA and several

Mitch Rapp's as part of the CIA. But, that's probably wishful thinking. Obviously recommended.

Another non-SF book I would like to recommend is *Killing Kennedy* by Bill O'Reilly & Martin Dugard (2012). It's been on the Best Seller list for a long time and that is usually not a recommendation for me. But, in this case I decided to read it and obtained it from the library after a long wait because I started out on the list as #37 of 37. There were a few problems. They refer to JFK as "a young second lieutenant" (p. 20) when there is no such rank in the Navy. That's an error that should have been caught in proof reading. It isn't made again. They don't mention that his running his PT Boat on only one engine was against regulations. Obviously, that is why he could not maneuver out of the way of the oncoming Japanese ship. That in no way detracts from JFK's subsequent heroics. There are a few other items. But, I didn't make note of them and no longer remember. One thing that the book did do is change my opinion of the marriage relationship of Jack and Jackie.

No doubt most everyone knows about Christopher Dorner. I said to a friend that I hoped he didn't survive because I did not wish to see a long and expensive trial. Well, thankfully he didn't. I highly recommend that anyone with a computer read his manifesto. Especially his commentary on a number of politicians and other people.

One of my Christmas presents was the DVD *Terry Pratchett's Going Postal*. It's two discs. The first one having Pratchett's Introduction (approx. 5 minutes) and then the movie (Approx. 185 minutes). The second disc has Interviews (52 minutes), Deleted Scenes (6 minutes), and a Bloopers Reel (4 minutes). I enjoyed it very much and recommend it highly to any Pratchett fans.

OK – Here's another non-SF book. A *World Without Islam* by Graham E. Fuller (Little Brown and Company, 2010). I obtained the book on Interlibrary Loan because the title sounded interesting. Sadly, the title of the book is grossly misleading. Other than the author saying that things would basically be the same, the book is a paean to Islam and the West is to blame. Not recommended because of the failure to match the title.

For some reason I purchased a DVD of *Star Crash* (1979). Probably because it is Roger Corman's Cult Classics, a 2 – Disc Collector's Edition. Supposedly they were trying to make a movie that would be in competition with *Star Wars*. If so, it was a failure. Otherwise it was a fun movie with mediocre acting. The opening scene is a star ship going across the screen just as the opening in the first *Star Wars* movie to be in theaters. The Star Ship is named the *Murray Leinster* and one of the first scenes is an announcement: "Major Bradbury to the Communications Bridge." I was hoping they would also call for Admiral Heinlein. But, no such luck. The second disc is mostly interviews and a long B&W amateur movie of the making of the movie. If this seems like something you might like to watch, try to



obtain it as a rental if possible.

**Joe:** Thanks for the update on Grant.

**Milt Stevens:** Regarding your comment concerning fanzines. My position is that fanzines are paper or can be printed out from a site on my computer.

**George W. Price:** I am in complete agreement with your definition of a "Gun-Free Zone": "A place where victims assemble to be killed with no chance of defense." I'm going to steal it and use it whenever appropriate.

From: **Bill Patterson** February 22, 2013

We are in the middle of a deep-freeze in Los Angeles — or, rather, that's the impression you would get talking to the locals. When the temperature drops below 70, everyone is "freezing." It has been a little chilly, with daytime highs topping out at 56 or 58 — but I remember that winter in Iowa City, when the daytime temp got up into the 40's and we all went out in shirtsleeves to play tennis in the snow. (It was 65 below on the day I left Iowa City).

Last time we were in San Antonio, one of the other congoers was complaining about the unbearable humidity; 30%. Lisa and I tried not to laugh.

— JTM

You know, in theatrical release, *John Carter* made something like \$283 million, which is by no means a lackluster performance. Some of the "failure" talk comes out of the studios' funny accounting methods.

"On a wider than local scale, money becomes more important than volunteers" for political organizations. Well, yes, but that's because they've got extremely skewed values. All politics is ultimately local — and the local scale has been all but abandoned. Which is not good.

I think Heinlein's 1946 book seems more out of touch than it pragmatically is because it is really concerned exclusively with retail politics — that is, the local level. And one element that goes into local level politics is that it becomes the social life for people in it — social media is a very different mode, with its own appeal (as anyone in club fandom can attest).

Darrell Schweitzer. I'd like to have a little actual evidence in hand before I came to any sort of "conclusion" about the Heinlein mystery device that "there is nothing there. Heinlein made it up." All you've got — or probably more appropriately, all the *New York Review of SF* has got — at this point is airy-fairy speculation masquerading as a judgment, a frustratingly common state of affairs.

In response to Joe's (?) remark that "not everyone has an intimate relationship with the collecting community" — well, yes, but Ed also started this research in the early-to-mid-nineties, when collecting itself was much more difficult. I searched diligently

for three rare minor pulp issues for years, for example, before EBay came along — but then was able to collect them all in six months. In this respect, the internet has done a very good job of correlating and indexing and making accessible the information needed by collectors. None of this was available when Ed was trying to find LTBL.

Alexis Gilliland: I'm not altogether sure your criticism of George Price "erroneously assign[ing] the blame to the government hats rather than the players wearing them" is well-taken. The very state of players in the credit/securities game "wear[ing] hats for both business and government, moving from one to the other in pursuit of advantage" is a state of incredible corruption of government. The "revolving door" between industries and the regulators of those industries is a very serious problem, one that was greatly exacerbated by the Bush administration but which the Obama administration has done nothing to ameliorate. At the time the Occupy Wall Street movement emerged a couple of years ago I quipped something flippant but which has, nevertheless, a serious basis: if they were really interested in effecting (positive) change, they ought to be occupying K Street instead.

"The historical cycle is that the previous credit crisis generates rules to make business safer..." Well, yes, but the problem is that "safer" is exactly the wrong environment for a business to be operating in — in terms of the well-being of society at large, I mean. Society benefits from "business" only to the extent that business experiences and makes use of the negative-feedback mechanisms the market is made up of; but "safety" for business means insulation from negative feedback mechanisms, which means the ability to ignore the myriad of factors in the market that make up the wellbeing of its host society. We are far down that road now in that pathology.

In response to George Price, Joe, you blamed your lack of hyphenation in Alexiad on WordPerfect. I don't understand what you mean. I use WP for *The Heinlein Journal*, and you can set the hyphenation sensitivity to any degree you wish. Of course, I gave up full-justification some years ago because I didn't care for the manual work involved in keeping control over spacing and kerning. By now, the left-justification of columns has become a stylistic feature of the look of the magazine.

Reacting to Taras Wolansky's "one of those stalkers who are filled with rage because the object of their affections barely knows they are alive": You're quite right to note that Heinlein referred to Kemp as a "friend" (and I can confirm that your paraphrase of the letter to Kemp, so far as it touches on this particular matter, is "true in tone and spirit") and that they had a more-than-casual relationship before Panshin started to write *Heinlein in Dimension*. I would not call their relationship "intimate," but there is a fair amount of correspondence before ChiCon that seems to imply they had what C.S. Lewis called "clubbability" and shared interest in non-stfnal subjects such as

burlesque joints and such — that is, their relationship had expanded beyond talking pleasantly at room parties, but had not progressed to a state of real openness, sharing of secrets, or any kind of exposure of personal vulnerability. However, I don't think any of this invalidates Taras' basic observation (though it may nuance it and clear out hyperbole).

I would like to take this opportunity to praise-with-faint-damns your (George's) "hinted at, but didn't outright threaten, a lawsuit." It's a more measured, more nearly accurate way of talking about this (though still not quite accurate) than the usual "Heinlein threatened to sue" blather. Having knowledge of what he had reason to think was a presumptive libel, Heinlein was under legal obligation to put Advent on notice that he had no intention of allowing a libel to pass. That's all. There may have been emotional heat cluttering up the environment, but this aspect of things was just business, nothing more, and not a threat of a lawsuit but informing Kemp/Advent that there was a contingency in existence: IF a libel was published, Heinlein reserved his right to bring an action and furthermore put Kemp/Advent on notice of this fact — which is a point that helps prove one of the essential points of the statute of libels — that the libel was done knowingly.

The legal purpose of this putting-Advent-on-notice is so that Advent could carefully consider what it intended to do. You took that exactly the way it was intended, considered what you were doing, and decided to publish. I think that was exactly the right thing for you to have done. The system functioned the way it was supposed to.

There is just too damned much uninformed blather out there!

From: **Lloyd Penney** February 25, 2013  
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Thank you for Alexiad WN 67, I've printed it out for my ease of reading, and while our computer is in the shop, I will borrow Yvonne's laptop, and keep a-loccin'.

Conspiracies try to find the truth, but wind up clouding the truth, especially when the actual truth doesn't come out to be the 'truth' that was expected or wanted. Truth is becoming a rare commodity; with the Oscars coming out, there was a report on how nominated movies often screw up the truth to the point where it's completely hidden. You might be surprised at how many people (I read over a thousand) wanted their money back after seeing the first few minutes of *Lincoln* (starring Daniel Day-Lewis) and not finding anything about vampire hunting . . .

I have a VHS tape copy of something called *Uncensored Toons*, with great old animation full of completely un-PC topics. If you are black, or Japanese, or female, or German, you are bound to be offended by at least one of the cartoons. Most of them are from the 20s to the



50s. I've been meaning to get it transferred to a DVD for the longest time, but sometimes I think I have perfected procrastination.

I still haven't heard anything from Montreal fandom re their intentions of another Worldcon bid. They just recently liquidated the corporation that staged Con\*cept, so that convention is well and truly dead. There are rumours of a replacement, but with the strained status of literary SF conventions these days, all I can say is that I will continue to monitor what's happening, and hope for the best.

You say in a response to Milt Stevens' letter that 'fan' increasingly equates to 'minor pro', and I have to agree with you. Last year's fan Auroras suffered the same fate, details in my letter in this issue. To prevent ballot stuffing, one must register to nominate and vote on the Auroras, but the result of this is that fans do not care to put out \$10 for their registration, and pros do. We get what we deserve, and I think at some point, the fan Auroras will be done away with, too.

More and more local fans only go to ComicCon or DragonCon, or the local equivalents, like Fan eXpo, a huge media convention staged at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, where Torcon 3 was. They advertise lots of movie and television actors, plus comic artists, and other guests galore. The fan-run events can't compare, and recently, Toronto lost its big fan-run media convention, Polaris, because they couldn't fill their committee and staff rosters. I sure hope I am wrong, but I can see conventions being only the pro-run variety, and all attendees will simply sit on a chair all day, and get a pre-digested feed of shows and movies coming up, no participation allowed, or even expected on either side. Much of this, I think, is indicative of the public's general lack of ability to imagine and dream.

And, again, what happens when Dragon\*Con collapses under the Kramer scandal, and ComicCon dies because the movie people stop coming?

— JTM

No matter the religion, it is the extremist faction of each religion that gives it a bad name. I recently heard of a Muslim father who raped and killed his three daughters because they somehow dishonoured him, probably through trying to be typical Western kids. To me, that is Muslim extremism, and probably seen through Sharia lenses.

I believe that as the US government continues to flood the market with paper money, the value of the US dollar will continue to drop, and that pushes up the value of gold. The Canadian dollar has risen a little bit in value, but the US dollar has dropped to meet it, and for a while now, the two currencies have hovered around or at parity. Right now, the Canadian dollar is worth about 98 US cents.

I lost my job the day after Christmas

holidays, so I am hunting again. What else is new? Even when you try your best to do your job and stay on, companies seem almost too eager to let you go. They do not treat people like assets, but like liabilities.

Joe, you mention the advances in cataract surgery . . . good to know, because I have cataract surgery coming up on May 9. This cataract is the logical result of the retinal reattachment surgery I had close to five years ago now.

The Canadian government announced that it would no longer issue pennies to banks. The coins are still legal tender, but it is now illegal for stores to issue pennies in change. I think most of us think this a little extreme, and if the government was concerned that people would hoard the coins, they sure are doing it now. Some stores are giving out pennies anyway, saying the government edict was ridiculous to begin with, and there's no way to determine exactly how much your revenues are. I know other countries eliminated small denomination coins; whether or not the voters agreed with this, I don't know. Here, I think this decision is not a popular one.

I think I am done now, Joe...like I said at the top, the computer is in the shop, but there are always other ways to get the letters out. Many thanks for this issue, and please do keep them coming.

From: **Rod E. Smith** February 25, 2013  
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Opening with a bit of potentially good news. In mid-February I got busy (after the month's copy of an e-mail magazine for writers I subscribe to came) and submitted (in some cases resubmitted to new publishers) three novels and two short stories.

I haven't heard anything about the other works, yet, but less than a week later one of the publishers let me know he wanted to see more than the sample chapter and synopsis.

This is still far from being published, but it is the closest I've come with a novel, and closer than I've come with any story in nearly a decade. They primarily publish e-books, but will also print actual, physical books on demand, or if they think the book would do well in stores.

Now, on to comments!

I inherited a heated massaging recliner from my Dad. It's literally falling apart, but the heater still works. Wonderful for cold nights in front of the TV or for naps with an Afghan. Would one of these work for Grant?

In theory, possibly. In practice, where would we put it?

The Fleischer Brothers were brilliant animators but had trouble with their business. They produced some fine work, and are greatly under appreciated even among most animation fans. At one MarCon I used an open period in the video room to show "Popeye Meets Sindbad

the Sailor." As it played, someone walked into the room, stared for a moment, then said "That's a three-level shot! Only Disney could do a three-level shot!" They then stomped off in high dudgeon.

Continuing with animation, I have a DVD of animation by Winsor McCay, much of it only recovered and restored in the last decade. This includes his *Centaurs* and several Rarebit Fiend shorts, as well as Gertie and the sequel and some Little Nemo.

Just remember, though, that before Bugs, before Mickey, there was Felix. Sing it! "Felix kept on walking, keeps on walking still!" ;-)

George W. Price mentions large mistakes by computers. Even before computer spreadsheets became common, engineers (at least; being one they're what I know about) were taught to make order of magnitude estimates to check final results. Of course, you wouldn't expect to need to do that with a phone bill (going out, that is; customers should always check their incoming bills).

However, these days, folks without the right training not only deny that spreadsheets existed before computers, but that humans can do math in their heads. (I often surprise clerks by handing over very close to the amount they want before they tell me. I just keep a running tally in my head and round up to the nearest whole dollar.)

Nowadays clerks just hit the pre-programmed keys. As when I ordered bagels with butter and got billed for bagels with cream cheese.

— JTM

From: **Murray Moore** February 27, 2013  
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I recommend Gmail, Joe, if you want to be spared spam and other nuisance mail. I switched to Gmail from a Toronto ISP address, several years ago, in part because of the increasing percentage of junk mail. My experience of Gmail is that spam rarely reaches me. I waited a year to stop paying the ISP, to tell senders to that address to replace that address with my new address.

Also you observe "everything seems to be getting squeezed into a shorter and shorter period." This perception is a result of getting older and, I suggest, the occasional thought 'I'm not going to live forever.'

Hotel rates? There Ain't No Such Thing As A Free Hotel (TANSTAAFH). "Let's try to arrange things in San Antonio beforehand." For the record, Faneds Feast attendees at Chicon 7 were Murray Moore, Mary Ellen Moore, Rose-Marie Lillian, Guy Lillian, Cathy Palmer-Lister, Joseph T. Major, Lisa T. Major, Martin Morse Wooster, Anita Feller, Tom Feller, Naomi Fisher, Joel Zakem, and (I think) Milt Stevens. Worldcon bids for 2017. New York is out, and possibly Japan, according to a well-positioned smof.

Best review: One Day In The Life of Mr. Smith. Best Description: Sing You Sinners. And, Carol Clarke, your review of *High Hearts* interested me.

Some of the history books reviewed in *Alexiad* are published by publishers with names I do not recognise. The other day I was combing through remaindered books and I took in hand and skimmed *Rule by Secrecy: the hidden history that connects the Trilateral Commission, the Freemasons, and the Great Pyramids* (Harper Collins, 2000) by Jim Marrs. In it I read the suggestion that Hitler's father was a Rothschild because his mother was a Rothschild servant in Austria. Other Marrs titles: *Alien Agenda: Investigating the extraterrestrial presence among us*; *The Rise of the Fourth Reich: The secret societies that threaten to take over America*; *The Trillion-Dollar Conspiracy : How the new world order, man-made diseases, and zombie banks are destroying America*; books all owned by my public library.

The Citizen Wynand article: you couldn't wait until April 1?

You should have seen the scene where Wynand asked Roark for a neoclassical design for Xanadu!

— JTM

From: **Alexis A. Gilliland** Feb. 23, 2013  
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Thank you for *Alexiad* 12.1. The local news is that on January 15<sup>th</sup>, Lee had parked her car in front of the house, and when she opened her door to get out, a white Ford SUV with Virginia plates, hit the door and drove off. Lee's hand was on the door and hand and arm were jerked forward, producing a nasty bruise on her upper arm but X-rays showed no broken bones. Despite the injury the police didn't pursue the hit and run case, because Lee said she couldn't pick the driver out of a lineup. Her reason being that the driver's face was hidden by the cell phone, on which she had been talking. At this point Lee's arm is fully recovered, and her car is fully repaired, and Virginia is one of the states where it is still legal to use a cell phone and drive. However, Virginia recently made texting while driving illegal, so maybe something will be done about cell phones and driving.

In his two letters Bill Patterson has some interesting comments on my discussions with George Price, first that what we call homosexuality is a range of behaviors, going from obligate homosexuality, to those who are mostly heterosexual but not averse to experimentation (particularly in the heat of youth) should the opportunity present itself. My estimate that 10 percent of the population is homosexual included that full range, and I imagine that obligate homosexuals might amount to 1 to 2-percent, as suggested by Price. However, expression of these numbers may be influenced by the culture, so that the Mormon hostility to homosexuality forces all homosexual Mormons to embrace heterosexuality, to the extent that they find it possible; Mormon obligate homosexuals are pretty much out of luck, their choices being either to leave the church or commit suicide. However, in ancient Greece the political subjugation of women meant that male-to-male pairing was socially acceptable. For example, the Sacred Band of Thebes was an elite fighting force that explicitly required its members to be lovers, on the battle tested theory that a warrior would be less likely to run in the presence of his lover. Second, Bill says "that the application of political institutions to the economy IS corruption." Well, no, or at least not in my opinion. In the US, economics and politics form a sort of composite, in which the money and influence of the economy shapes the state's economic policies and their enforcement over time. Generally this means drifting towards what advocates for the economy think is good or say they want, until the bubble bursts and a correction is required. Other countries do it differently, as may be seen in Russia, a kleptocracy, where the state confiscated the largest oil company, jailed its owner, and transferred a multi-billion dollar asset to some of Vladimir Putin's cronies. If a state is unable to apply politics to the economy, what you get is Robber Barons making the rules, and having the state enforce them at state expense, which maximizes their profits but leaves the state prone to civil unrest. The reasons for such unrest are left as an exercise to the reader, but in a democracy the effect is to create an opposition to the rule of the Robber Barons, aka Noble Capitalists, who are thus obliged to leave some of their potential profits on the table to secure the social stability needed by the state. So the application of politics to the economy is a dynamic process in which maximization of profit is opposed to social stability. Corruption may be involved in the making of any given policy, but the process itself is not corrupt, though it tends to overshoot the mark on a regular basis. Bill's observation that calling homosexuality "a gross developmental defect" is a political position rather than a scientific one is spot on. I had merely thought such a description mistaken. Lisa's comment, on Darryl Schweitzer's Turkish nephew who wants to start a punk rock band, that punk rock is apostasy to fundamentalist Muslims and merits the death penalty, is supported by events in Mali, where in the north a fundamentalist Muslim takeover

has banned all music, cutting off the right hands of musicians who persist in playing. The fact that the musicians involved were Christians may have been more important than their choice of music.

What else? We saw the movie "Les Misérables" which was okay, but the singing was less impressive than the stage version, which was more opera than action/adventure. Cat stuff; Squeak runs into the bedroom closet, and can push the folding doors to let herself out if she gets shut in. The last time she did it, Pest sat herself next to the fold so Squeak couldn't get out, purring up a storm all the while.

My brother and his wife the professors just got a kitten and they're going through the various stages of kittenhood.

— JTM

From: **Milt Stevens** February 28, 2013  
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I'm glad Joseph knows what to nominate for the Hugos. I've always hoped that somebody knew what they were doing. Personally, I've only read three 2012 novels, and *Bowl of Heaven* was the only one I thought was worth a nomination. I've read the fiction in *Analog* and *Asimov's*. Unfortunately, I find most of it unmemorable. About half of it seems to be by writers who have never appeared before and will probably never appear again. Aside from the fiction and fan categories, I have little information and less interest.

I recall Larry Niven's comment on aging, "It's a thing called entropy, and nobody has ever found anything good to say about it."

As usual, you have heard of more worldcon bids than I have. I notice the three bidders for 2015 are bidding for three different weekends. It would be totally evil to suggest we vote for all three and have a month long worldcon. Aside from that, the idea is entirely bonkers. Of course, no idea is perfect.

In 1998 RiverCon was the weekend before Bucconeer. I told Steve Francis that he had a really great Dead Dog Party.

Will Kansas City win the 2016 worldcon? I suppose if nobody bids against them they might have a chance. At a recent Westercon, there was only one bid for a future Westercon, and that bid lost. This led to a three hour business meeting which had to be one of the strangest fan business meetings of all time.

I suspect the Japanese bid for 2017 will be withdrawn. The people who are still paying off the 2007 convention have suggested that 2027 might be a better year. A bid from New York! There hasn't been a New York worldcon since 1967. As far as I know, there are still a large number of fans in New York City, but many people don't feel much enthusiasm for visiting New York. Montreal is a nice city, but it seems

like we've been there too recently.

I think the GPS I now have has Canadian maps. That was part of the problem, the Montreal traffic was really hard and the GPS I had then didn't have Canadian maps.

— JTM

From: **Rodney Leighton** February 20, 2013  
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CANADA

I was thinking I should throw something vaguely resembling a loc in your direction. My regular mail carrier is on disability leave or something; replacement is learning slowly and mail arrives much later than I am used to. But it did appear yesterday with 3 fanzines, albeit one was *Data Dump* which I tossed unread. *Opuntia* 259 was pretty good. I wonder how many of those 139 non-FAPA zines Dale got in 2012 were SF fanzines. Would Arnie katz classify any of them other than the single issue of *Trap Door* as a SF fanzine? Hey, did you know you were mentioned in *Fanstuff*?

Well, it is winter. This has been a bit more like a normal Maritime winter than we have had recently. Although; forecast for today calls for rain. I have been hibernating. Those days it was minus 30 I stayed in the house except for a brief foray to the mailbox if there was any mail.

Bill Patterson disliked the writing of the early *Castle* shows but loved the Castle character. I, on the other hand, abhorred the bastard. I liked the show; I watched all 80 episodes in about 2 ½ weeks. But part of it was because I kept hoping that someone, anyone, would punch Castle in the mouth. And that they would let Kate be the lead at least once. No such luck. I enjoyed most of the rest of the characters; liked the actual shows apart from the fact that they became so predictable; a murder, a scary situation, superhero Rick will solve the case or rescue the damsel or both. I did recognize it was essentially a show built around a superhero and as such Castle had to be the main character and the super stud. I just found him totally obnoxious.

Canadian Tire scrip can be redeemed elsewhere, but I guess I better be honest and state straight out that it may have been some sort of local promotion. There was a time when a local gas station would accept Canadian Tire money for gas. The gas station part of the business is an Irving Oil dealership and I think other dealerships were taking Canadian Tire cash. But I am not sure of that. The other part is a Ford dealership. Business is locally owned and they do charitable stuff and it may have been /may be (I am not sure if it is still valid) a local charity thing.

There was also another business which would accept C. T. cash but I know that was a local promotion. Canadian Tire cash is only a

rebate if you pay cash at the checkout; debit or credit cards don't get you any. Now that I rarely use cash I haven't seen any C. T. money in awhile. New Canadian cash looks and feels counterfeit. Like plastic. Given the ever increasing use of plastic in lieu of money I wonder if someday the only cash to be found will be C. T. cash. But almost since they only give that for cash transactions, I wonder if that will not disappear eventually. Like the poor old penny.

I see Chuck Lipsig is still alive.

From: **Joy V. Smith** March 5, 2013  
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What a collection of intriguing reviews and news tidbits. "Swing You Sinners!" sounds surreal and strangely modern. *The Doctor and the Rough Rider* is an interesting and offbeat alternate history; I mostly avoid AH, but that sounds like fun, or as you said, "the weird west." *John Carter and the Gods of Hollywood* is a good look at how frustrating it must be to work in Hollywood.

What interesting history in the the Antarctica and Velikovsky books and *The Way Back* (movie), and I appreciated the other reviews also because most of those books I'll never read. I enjoyed your vacation report too. (We used to have a Shoney's here; it's long gone.) Ah, Winter Storm Euclid. Naming the winter storms does make it easier to keep track of them. Oh, nice quote re: December 22, which seems like a million years ago. I presume you're referring to Dr. Who?

The survival kit book sounds useful. I have *Just in Case: How to Be Self-Sufficient When the Unexpected Happens, When All Hell Breaks Loose: Stuff You Need to Survive When Disaster Strikes*, and the *US Army Survival Manual* in my library. (I was doing research for my post-apocalyptic novel.) "Be prepared, not scared." — Cody Lundin, author of *When All Hell Breaks Loose*. He also wrote 98.6: *The Art of Keeping Your Ass Alive*.

Even more interesting news and views in the LOCs, and I pulled Christopher Anvil's *War Games* off the shelf, Joe, after your mention of "Babel II." (I am so grateful for Baen's classic SF reprints.) Uh, can you give me more info on the David Irving reference? (insert in my LOC) Oh, I almost forgot to thank you for the Ayn Rand background on the back cover. That filled in a few more blanks for me.

That was what Irving said to an Auschwitz survivor when she confronted him. I saw him at a gun show here in Louisville. It was unnerving.

— JTM

From: **John Purcell** March 11, 2013  
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Dang it, you two! These damned zines just keep on showing up in my mailbox. Oh, wait. Does that sound like I'm complaining? Sorry about that. In fact, keep doing it.

Recently there has been a wealth of paper fanzines plopping into my mailbox: besides *Alexiad*, I have received two issues of Andy Hooper's ensmalled fanzine *Flag*, plus John Hertz sent a loc along with a recent issue of *Vanamonde*, Fred Lerner's *Lofgeornost*, Tom D Sadler's latest *The Reluctant Famulus* . . . Yeah, quite a few good zines to loc. Thankfully it is now Spring Break and I can do some serious catch-up loc writing in addition to revising my dissertation. As far as that damned thing goes, it pleases me to report that all is proceeding apace. Things are Happening, and I guess that's good. A bit freaky when I think about defending that monster, but by summoning my inner Gloria Gaynor, I will survive. Wait a minnit. Maybe I should change the gender of that analogy . . . Would alluding to Luke Skywalker work?

So. I wonder if *John Carter* will make it to the short list on the Hugo Awards? I liked the movie as being the fun adventure flick it was meant to me, and nothing more. It was okay. Sometimes I wonder about not just Hollywood — which is a given, considering their penchant for blowing things out of proportion and ignoring original story-lines — but also SF fans. It makes me think that we've lost our "ghosh-whow" sense of wonder along the way. As much as I enjoy mentally challenging fiction and movies, sometimes I just simply want to be entertained, and there is basically nothing wrong with that. Maybe we all need to regress a bit to our childhood and stop acting our age. Which, by the way, is my life's philosophy — I refuse to act my age. So there.

You know, I think I would enjoy reading *The Doctor and the Rough Rider*. Alternative History novels have fast become one of my reading pleasures. Must be that damned Steampunk influence.

I hate to say this, but quite frankly there is not much else for me to comment upon in this issue. That, by no means, means I didn't enjoy reading it; on the contrary, I did. Sometimes it just happens that way. In the meantime, I hope you enjoyed the recent issue of *Askew* that I sent to you. The next one will probably come out at the end of March, first week of April, and will contain a capsule review of Aggiecon 44, which features George R. R. Martin as the special guest of honor. Hey! Maybe I will do a quickie review of the con for April issue of *Alexiad*? An interesting thought worth pursuing.

In any event, many thanks for the zine.

From: **Christopher J. Garcia** Mar. 14, 2013  
[chris@computerhistory.org](mailto:chris@computerhistory.org)

So, I really enjoyed your look at *Swing, You Sinners*, and it just tells the story of how YouTube has helped along the cause of film history. So many early films have been uploaded to YouTube (or Vimeo, and even MySpace and Facebook) and that has led to

wide-scale re-discovery and a new generation of early film fans. I've found a lot of great old stuff, including the only known footage of *Little Tich's Big Boot Dance*, a French film which is the only known footage of that routine. There are so many other great early animations, including the wonderful *The Original Movie*, a wonderful comedy about the filmmaking process by The Herbert Dawley Company. It's a lot of fun. I came to it via the Treasures of American Film Archives DVD set.

Watching the Out of the Inkwell series of shorts back-to-back-to-back can get a bit tiring. KoKo's one of the great characters in the history of animation, but they do start to run together after a while. I think I like *A Trip to Mars* the best of 'em. There's a 1910 Edison film also called *A Trip to Mars*, which is really weird even for early SF short films!

Schirm pointed me to some of the Fleischers' really adult cartoons, such as "Barnacle Bill" (1930) which has Bimbo and a doggy Betty Boop, along with someone who looks remarkably like Mickey Mouse towing the ship into harbor. It had a lot of the old sea chantey, though the line, "Open the door, you cleanliness-challenged sex worker" was not included.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=APISL\\_XRh4d](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=APISL_XRh4d)

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0020666/>  
— JTM

Good issue overall, though I must disagree — *Ishtar* was a fabulously entertaining film!

*Little Tich's Big Boot Dance*

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DpoGy\\_WlCfY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DpoGy_WlCfY)

*The Original Movie*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bfKiCL1dYck>

*A Trip to Mars*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kRf3mYItfNY>

From: **Jim Stumm** March 12, 2013  
Post Office Box 29, Buffalo, NY  
14223-0029 USA

George W. Price: I agree with what you say about the Community Reinvestment Act. But as to "if the borrower didn't repay, the lender got stuck," it's not necessarily so. Lending banks apparently sell the mortgages they initiate to Fannie or Freddy as fast as they can. So it's Fannie or Freddy (i.e. taxpayers) who stand to lose if the borrower doesn't repay. The banks don't run any risks from bad mortgages. They make their money from fees charged every time the paper is shuffled. The debts of Fannie and Freddy that taxpayers are stuck with comes to about \$5.1 trillion.

Richard A. Dengrove: Regardless of what

some lawyer may say about blasphemy, Art VI of the US Constitution says that the Constitution and treaties shall be the supreme law of the land. So if there is any conflict between the US Constitution and British common law, the Constitution and all Amendments made to it shall prevail and the common law is overruled.

You've made a complete hash of what I wrote. I'll try again: The reason a new currency ends hyperinflation, at least in the case of the German hyperinflation of the 1920s, was because the new currency was indirectly backed by gold. It was directly backed by US dollars which were, at that time, freely exchangeable for gold coins.

Currency issued privately has nothing to do with banks being too big to fail. If you can't imagine how banks, companies, and private persons could insulate themselves from the harmful effects of the over-issuing (inflation) of a private currency by some bank, consider how they do it today with various different national currencies. Multinational companies are not terribly inconvenienced by the present-day Zimbabwe hyperinflation. Furthermore, companies can use currency futures contracts to hedge against unfavorable changes in the value of other currencies. The same kind of futures contracts would undoubtedly be issued in connection with privately issued currencies.

Darrell Schweitzer: Hurricane Sandy may well have been a record-breaker in the dollar value of property destroyed, not because of the severity of the storm, but because so much more valuable property was at risk than would have been the case many years ago. If people foolishly build expensive homes on ocean beaches and barrier islands, they should do so at their own risk and not expect taxpayers to compensate them when the inevitable storms destroy what they have built. If someone's basement is at risk of being flooded by a 4 inch rise in sea level, then he should have built on higher ground, and not in such a vulnerable place.

Just to be clear, today no one would pay any income tax on a \$4000 annual income. A single person pays no income tax on an amount that is less than one exemption plus the standard deduction, which come to \$9750 in 2012.

Information I have here from the non-profit Tax Foundation shows how a family of 4 with a gross income of \$45,000 not only would pay no income tax, but would receive a refund of all taxes withheld plus \$637 more. The 4 exemptions plus 4 standard deductions would reduce the taxable income to \$17,900. Then the earned income credit plus child tax credits would more than cancel out the remaining tax liability.

A growing number of refundable tax credits have been added to the tax code in recent years. The Tax Foundation says that in 2010 some \$112 billion in refundable tax credits were paid to non taxpayers. In that year 41 percent of Federal tax returns had a zero or negative tax liability. And the refundable credits of some 23 percent of returns exceeded not only the Federal tax withheld from paychecks, but also the social security tax as well. The Tax Foundation

deplores this trend, saying that the IRS was never meant to be the distributor of such welfare payments. But I disagree. If the Federal Govt is going to hand out such welfare payments, the tax credit method is an efficient way to do it. I agree with Milton Friedman who advocated a negative income tax something like the earned income tax credit. To cut spending, I believe that the Federal Govt should first eliminate corporate welfare, and cut payments and subsidies to the rich rather than the poor. I would means-test all payments to persons and companies. I would say that no one should get any money directly from the Govt if his income is above \$100,000 per year (an arbitrary figure), including no social security checks or Medicare, excluding, of course, Federal Govt employees and vendors who sell to the Govt. The rich don't need the Govt to help them provide for their own needs.

From: **Dainis Bisenieks** March 18, 2013  
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PA 19143-3310 USA

Not for nothing did Churchill decree that any mention of Iceland, the frozen isle, in wartime documents should be followed by (C). I like to think that during the editorship of George Scithers, when I read copy and proofs, *Amazing* had fewer typos than any of the other zines. But even there, the Emerald Isle once got undeserved credit. \*Sigh\*

I just got a copy of *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, which is replacing *A Diary from Dixie*, a much slimmer work edited by Ben Ames Williams. And behold, there was a misspelling of that tricky word, ordinance.

Other recent upgrades have been of *My Rocking Chair Across Russia* and *The St. Trininan's Story* — pb to hc. I'm passing the pbs on to a woman (about half my age) whose artistic education had somehow not included my favorite cartoonists. It is the way of the world that new generations have new interests. The civilized world is full of people who have never heard of Hitler, never mind Mussolini (to pass into the realm of world affairs).

Great was my surprise when I found Mrs. Chesnut speaking of someone as an Admirable Crichton. The old Brewer's names a 16th c. personage who died young; what he was admired for may indeed have been utterly forgotten. The 20th c. Brewer's (HMcO '92) has nothing: not the Harris play of 1902. Is even this newer Crichton not a byword any more? I do not own the newer Brewer's but have leafed through it at the library, hunting as is my wont (I'm one of those) for omissions and finding them. But this has a good entry. What is folk memory if not refreshed at intervals by works like this? For just this were writing and printing invented.

Going from the sublime to the ridiculous, if you watched TV in the fifties or sixties, you were familiar with the Three Stooges. When the Farely Brothers made a new Three Stooges movie last

year, it did not do all that well. So often a production is of its own era.

The Three Stooges (2012)  
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0383010/>

A book on the Doolittle Raid passed through my hands recently but, like the one on the Flying Tigers, departed. Both of them had all the names. I did wonder how many still survived, and soon learned that the recent death of one left four. The book told of a bottle of liquor that was for the last two to consume. Will this come off?

Major Thomas C. Griffin  
 Navigator, Crew 9  
 July 10, 1916 — February 26, 2013

The 71st Reunion will be at Fort Walton Beach, Florida, April 17-21, 2013. Surviving are Richard E. Cole (Copilot, Crew 1), Robert L. Hite (Copilot, Crew 16), Edward J. Saylor (Engineer, Crew 15), and David J. Thatcher (Gunner, Crew 7). The tontine bottle of 1896 Hennessy cognac is with the Raider memorial goblets at the Museum of the USAF in Dayton.

I rarely trouble myself to take note of names. Rather a shame, but there are so many, and only a few are attached to deeds or fates that capture the imagination. *The Economist* often features obituaries of people who, in their way, changed the world — like, for example, by inventing the Etch-a-Sketch — but their names remain obscure, unlike Birdseye or Carrier. To whom do we owe the modern cargo container? And did that ever change the world!

Inquiring about possibly forthcoming books, I learned what Lindsay Davis has had in the works for us. Scheduled for June, it is (are you ready for this?) *The Ides of April: A Flavia Albia Mystery*. It will spoil nothing for the uninitiated to disclose that Albia was a protégée, rescued from servitude in Britain; growing uneasy with that status, she decided to strike out on her own. She would appear destined to kick ass — and more sensitive parts of the anatomy — like the female lead of Gillian Bradshaw's *Render Unto Caesar*. Or of Lucia St. Clair Robson's *The T kaid Riad*, well trained in the uses of the nagata. A keen mind is what we want.

Can the Vampyrus Affectus Micandum be far behind? And then the best-selling book Quinquaginta Umbri Canitiei?

I can't stand to read such 19th c. concoctions as *The Woman In White*.

I've found another Indian-head cent, but a crummy one, not collectable. I think I'll spend it in some place with a proprietor, like a bookshop; I did this once before. But

today's "Mercury" dime (1936) goes into the little hoard. Both from city parks.

Reviewed in the current (Mar. 18) issue of *The New Yorker* is *Consider the Fork*, which I shall pursue at the library though not to purchase for myself. It is told in the review that the Chinese disdain to wash and re-use wooden chopsticks, that's why they use so many gazillions of them. It was sad to read that an American firm exporting them has gone bankrupt. But about the Chinese — where they still cook over wood fires, surely they can also burn used chopsticks? Perhaps they do.

I read somewhere that in Paris before there were railroads, it cast as much for the fuel to cook a meal as for the foodstuffs. Another trivia fact cluttering up my memory.

The cat comes and sits on my work. I once shared a house with one that not only did that, but licked my face. Never have my ears been so clean.

One morning my sister-in-law came down to use the computer and it was very slow. Turned out the kitten had sat on the keyboard and opened 700 copies of MSWord  
 ® © TM K Bill Gates is GOD!

— JTM

From **Sue Burke** March 27, 2013  
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As I mentioned in my last letter, Spain suffers from frequent strikes these days. On February 13, the 110 workers at NASA's Deep Space Station near Madrid held a two-hour strike to protest their pay cut, which was part of an across-the-board cut for all national government workers. Since NASA pays the salaries of these workers plus an extra amount to cover processing costs, and it was still doling out the same amount of money as ever, the workers thought their paychecks should have remained the same. As far as I've been able to learn, NASA sided with the workers, but the Spanish government has done nothing.

(The government also withheld taxes on all its employees based their original pay rather than their reduced pay, and I don't know if they've rectified that, either.)

In unrelated news, wolves have returned to the mountains near Madrid after a 60-year absence. The Iberian wolf (*Canus lupus signatus*) is characterized by blue eyes and cleverness — they've learned to seek out pedestrian overpasses to cross busy highways rather than risk getting run over.

I'm sorry I forgot to mention the attendance at HispaCon: 155 paid, plus a few extra, since everything was open to the public because public facilities were being used. Historically, this was a high attendance, probably due to good organization. Costs were low, so the economy didn't factor in much. But it was held far in the north of Spain, so not many fans and

writers came from the far south. No bids have been received yet for the 2013 convention, but a crew down south in Andalucía seem to be working on something.

And I thought ConCave had low membership!

In related news, a group of us are pondering how to improve EuroCons. The group, so far using the name Eurotopia, is still in its formative stages. Watch for further news.

Sue Blom had polio as a child, which is why she used crutches, but in later years she switched to a motorized wheelchair, which she loved for the freedom it gave her. I critiqued her novels about Inca alternate history and discussed them at depth. I think the sequels got more and more exciting. I'm sorry they didn't get printed, and I miss her.

These days I'm studying to get a Spanish driver's license. I drove for years in the United States, so I'm not worried about the behind-the-wheel test — but the written theory exam is killing me. Of the 15,500 possible questions, I will be asked 30, and I must get 27 correct to pass. And they're hard questions, so I'm spending my free time taking practice exams. Here are some examples:

1) A motorcycle driver on a urban road must maintain a distance with vehicles at his or her side...

- A. of at least a meter and a half.
- B. proportional to the speed, width and characteristics of the pavement.
- C. of at least one meter.

2) Is a motorcycle an automobile?

- A. No, because all automobiles have four wheels.
- B. Yes, because all vehicles that have motors are automobiles.
- C. Yes, because it is a motorized vehicle that serves to transport people.

3) Pedestrians who use roller skates or skateboards...

- A. must circulate on the pavement when they move faster than a human walking speed.
- B. always circulate on the right shoulder.
- C. are permitted to circulate on residential streets.

4) In sections of roads too narrow for two vehicles to pass, the vehicle with the right-of-way is the one that...

- A. has greater difficulty in maneuvering.
- B. is headed downhill.
- C. enters the narrow section first.

5) In the absence of other signals, a green light in the shape of an arrow pointing down over a lane of traffic...

- A. obliges the driver to remain in the lane over which the light is lit.
- B. does not exempt the driver from the obligation to fulfill the general regulations about the priority of passage.
- C. awards preference over all other vehicles.

6) In case of contradiction between street signs and traffic regulations...

- A. the regulations prevail.
- B. the most restrictive rule should be followed.
- C. the sign should be obeyed.



7) When teams of animals, animals bearing loads, or livestock have to circulate on a road, they must do so...

- A. on the right shoulder, and if there is no shoulder, on the right side of the pavement.
- B. always off the pavement and the shoulder.
- C. on the right side of the road as a requirement.

ANSWERS:

- 1) B.
- 2) C. This question involves specialized vocabulary, and I have to know it. What we would call an "automobile" in English (for example, a Honda Accord) is a "turismo" in Spanish.
- 3) C. "Residential streets" are a special class of streets. I need to know the classes of streets, too.
- 4) C. In the event of a tie, a 12-point list of rules determines who goes first. I need to memorize that list.
- 5) B.
- 6) C.
- 7) A. And here I thought I was learning to drive a car, not cattle.

And a sign at an intersection with a black arrow pointing upward/forward within a green circle means NO TURNS. It cost me Can. \$154 to find this out.

— JTM

From: **George W. Price** March 29, 2013  
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February *Alexiad*:

Bill Patterson says "I was brought to a halt in confusion at George Price's remarks about homosexuality . . . I find it quite impossible to understand what George is talking about, absent some better grasp of what he means by 'homosexuality.'"

Sorry, I didn't realize I was so obscure. I define a homosexual as one who has a strong preference for sexual activity with his or her own sex, usually to the exclusion of the opposite sex. (I do not count as homosexual those who more or less indiscriminately pursue both sexes.)

What makes this a defect or deformity is that it precludes reproduction. Yes, I know that homosexuals can and do reproduce, but only by behaving in a heterosexual way. (And the children thus produced are no more likely to be homosexual than anyone else.)

Because the faithful practice of homosexuality cannot lead to reproduction, the fact that it keeps recurring indicates that it is not hereditary, but is caused by something going askew in the development of each individual. That's what I meant by "gross developmental defect," a term which Mr. Patterson says is "a political position, rather than a scientific one, and . . . quite out of touch with . . . essentially all research on the subject since at least Kinsey's time."

He cites Kinsey's "finding that sexual

behavior was a continuum with more than two positions." I note that Kinsey's research has been seriously challenged, especially for being skewed by using as subjects an unduly high proportion of prison inmates and others in sexually abnormal conditions.

Still, that defects occur on a continuum does not mean that they are not defects. For obvious example, eyesight varies from eagle-sharp through degrees of fuzziness to completely blind. It's a continuum, but all the same we think of near-sighted people (such as myself) as having defective vision. We would laugh at anyone who says Mr. Magoo has "an alternate vision system."

No, we regard them as speakers for an oppressed group demanding fairness.

Also, "continuum" usually implies a more or less smooth progression from one end to the other. But the presumed sexual continuum is rather peculiar: it has a huge hump at one end (those who are entirely heterosexual), a far smaller hump at the other end (those who are entirely homosexual), and a scattering of bisexuals and other oddities in the middle. Maybe we should call it "bipolar" with numerous outliers from each pole.

However, I do agree with Mr. Patterson that it is a mistake to think of homosexuals as "men who feel like women." They are men who are horny for other men, and they can range from effeminate to blatantly macho, the same as straight men. Likewise, lesbians can be very butch or very feminine, or anywhere in between.

The Supreme Court has taken up cases on gay marriage. I hope the Court finds that this is not a civil rights issue. Gays are not, repeat not, being wickedly denied a right that everyone else has.

Traditional marriage laws have hardly ever discriminated between heterosexual and homosexual. A heterosexual man has the right to marry any woman who will have him, subject to certain limitations such as both parties being of age, not closely related, and not already married. A homosexual man has — and has always had — precisely the same right with precisely the same limitations: to marry any woman who will have him. He can even marry another homosexual, if he can find a willing lesbian.

Obviously, that's not what gays want. What they demand is not an end to discrimination, but that marriage be redefined as no longer the heterosexual institution that it has been throughout history. This is a much bigger step than merely ending invidious discrimination, and should get a lot more debate.

(Another way to look at it is that homosexuals do not want to redefine heterosexual marriage, they just want to set up a parallel institution that caters to their own condition — as we might say, separate but equal.)

I strongly suspect that the push for gay marriage is only partly about gaining the legal benefits of marriage. It is also — and perhaps

mostly — about using the power of the state to force straights to recognize homosexuality as normal rather than (as I believe) a gross defect. This is a perfect example of what the late Senator Moynihan called "defining deviance down."

The Supreme Court should not treat this as a civil rights issue. However, it should recognize that state legislatures have a constitutional right to change their laws to allow gay marriage (or to explicitly forbid it). While I oppose gay marriage as very poor policy, if we must have it that's the constitutionally legitimate way to go — let each state make its own decision.

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Martin Morse Wooster reports attending the "Secret History of Science Fiction" panel at the recent Chicon, and says it convinced him 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 [Phil Farmer's long Hugo awards speech] were taken into account." Funny, I was there and I didn't notice any riots. There were some ringding riots in Chicago that week, at the Democratic Convention, but I don't remember hearing of any in Berkeley or nearby at that time. (I also didn't notice the marijuana; but then, I wouldn't have unless it was puffed in my face.) In fact I had a pretty good time, including the one and only time I ever hooked up with a woman I met at a con.

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Richard Dengrove informs me that the gold standard won't really work to prevent inflation, because "If politicians find the gold standard inconvenient, it will be sidestepped whether it is enshrined in the Constitution or not." This is a counsel of despair, but still, he may be right. Maybe there is nothing we can do to prevent Washington from screwing with the money supply, short of lynching a batch of politicians every so often.

Still, I note that in the century that the gold standard more or less prevailed, up until the Federal Reserve was established in 1913, we did have very low inflation overall. According to the *Historical Statistics of the United States 1789-1945* (1949), p. 245, Series L 36-39, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York Cost of Living Index was 65 in 1820 and 100 in 1913, with a low of 51 in 1843 and a high of 103 in 1866. That's amazingly stable compared to the century since 1913, and especially since we completely abandoned the gold standard under Nixon. The index is now around 2300.

To be sure, the credit is due not just to the gold standard, but to the character of the people who abided by the gold standard. They had a different idea of what honor and decency required. Perhaps the truth behind Mr. Dengrove's position is that once we elect people who are determined to play games with the money, they will find a way. And that way usually includes getting rid of the gold standard

at the earliest opportunity.

Sue Burke makes some similar comments, comparing Spain's "euro" problems to the effects of 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." I suspect that the real problem is in the government policies prompting that capital flight. Maybe the currency really should be rigid, to enforce clear limits upon what governments can do. There would be no euro crisis if those governments had lived within their means and not borrowed far beyond their ability to repay.

The best use of the gold standard may be as an early-warning system: If you're on the gold standard, and a politician tries to persuade you to abandon it, that tells you loud and clear to get rid of that bastard — he's got some inflationary scheme that the gold standard would thwart.

From: **Richard A. Dengrove** Mar. 29, 2013  
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*Alexiad* Feb. 2013 presents its usual potpourri of topics intellectual, political, literary and personal. I, of course, am going to comment on all of the above. However, I will try for more balance. I know, on personal topics, I am lagging; I will try to catch up.

One area, though, where I am very comfortable is conspiracy theories, which you discuss in "Reviews Notes." You're very right that conspiracy theorists turn disproof into evidence in order to forward their pet conspiracy. The conspirators wish to take us off the trail, didn't they?

While that conspiracy theorists reason illogically is a big strike against them, everyday experience opens a chasm few avoid falling into. Namely, real life conspiracies prove porous and incompetent. Porous because only two people can keep a secret — if one is dead. Incompetent, because those praising themselves about their airtight conspiracy have already proven their worth.

While conspiracy theorists practice bad behavior in all the ages, sometimes bad behavior in ages past can be justified as run of the mill then. Anyway, that is the best justification for Richard III's killing the two nephews, which you mention in "Monarchist News." Among the powerful in the 15th Century, fratricide, matricide and patricide were par. Sad but true.

Hey, some bad behavior constitutes par in this era. We see that in your review, Joe, of Michael Sellars' *John Carter And The Gods Of Hollywood*. Not fratricide et al; but knifing in the back if you get caught in a corporate battle. The knifing was even responsible for the movie *John Carter* going bust at the box office.

My heart goes out to Mr. Sellars because of the way Disney treated him. However, it goes out more to Grant, who, I hope, is not on

his last legs. That is unless it's the last legs of his ailments.

From physical ailments, we go to financial ailments, the financial breakdown. Bill Patterson takes me to task for underestimating the amount of institutionalized fraud in the financial meltdown.

I am sure he is right. However, the amount of actual fraud was not my point. My point was that if the white collar criminals responsible for the institutionalized fraud hadn't miscalculated, there would have been no financial meltdown; just a lot of people left out in the cold.

However, those white collar criminals decided that prices would go up and up and up. They could eternally foreclose pigeons' homes and resell, netting them ever increasing wealth. That was not the case. The prices dropped and they were left holding turkeys. In that way, they veritably committed fraud against themselves.

From financial ailments, we go to social ailments. I like a lot of what Darrell Schweitzer says here about Islam. I have a somewhat different take, though. In answering Lisa, Darrell is right we can easily find Americans with red hot hatred of Islam and Arabs. Her quotes themselves do not constitute evidence. Nonetheless, it is also true that all hell has broken loose with religious and ethnic hatred in the Middle East. Also, since the most current Islam was forged in such hatred, I agree with very little of it.

The reason, of course, is a major portion of my belief could be summed up by tolerance. And while the US is a very tolerant place, it seems to me dislike of Arabs and Islam serves as a force going in the wrong direction. And, no, I don't believe the slightest tolerance will bring about the victory for al Qaeda on our shores. To the contrary, I believe what intolerance has grown up since 9/11 encourages al Qaeda.

From deep into politics, we have a respite in the Stratemeyer boys' novels. I have to agree with Joe's comment to me: the Stratemeyer Syndicate was totally apolitical. With children, most publishers are. Stratemeyer's problem with his '50s Tom Swift, Jr. novels wasn't in hiding his politics, but not hiding them very well: he made Tom Swift, Jr.'s enemies the spitting image of Russian Communists. He may as well have named the country and their politics.

On the other hand, no one ever accused George Price of being apolitical.. George, this time around, claimed that the Financial Meltdown was due to the Community Reinvestment Act, because it forced banks to grant minorities mortgages.

I can see why he and his ilk love this explanation. In fact, I can't understand why he didn't embrace it before. It blames the Meltdown on the Federal government and Liberalism. What better outcome could George desire? Also, if he was of a mind, like others, he could have used this theory to blame Barney Frank and Nancy Pelosi as well.

Many Conservatives wonder what's there to dislike about this theory. Well for one thing, that the evidence for it is virtually nonexistent. As the Meltdown approached, one would have expected the banks to be screaming bloody

murder that that Act was bankrupting them.

As far as I can tell, such screams were nonexistent. The bankers, and their fellow travelers, were proclaiming a new era. One where everyone would own a house, where prosperity would continue forever on a totally free market trajectory, and where Liberalism was a thing of the past. Of course, after the Depression hit, Liberals were blamed for it.

Next, we go from economics to law. I thought George wanted to make the gold standard airtight against politicians, whom I took to mean the Congress. That would take a Constitution that couldn't be amended.

However, George now claims I got him wrong. What he objects to is not that the Constitution should never be amended, but that it shouldn't be reinterpreted by judges. I think I've dealt with this before. In our legal system, the idea is that the judges will interpret. As opposed to the German system, where justices are supposed to follow certain principles in making decisions..

And interpret, the justices do, based on their own inclinations. Not only Liberal justices but Conservative justices. I read a brief by Robert Bork on free speech once. Though never a Supreme Court justice, he has been a Conservative darling over the years. He did not, at any point in his brief, mention the opinion of the Founding Fathers. He argued, instead, based on his feelings that that freedom should be curtailed; just as, I imagine, Liberal justices had argued that it should be expanded.

From the law, we go to medicine. John Purcell mentions his wife Valery had an operation to correct some severely compressed discs. I wish her luck as I had wished Grant luck earlier. I met her once and I really liked her. Fortunately, for her, it looks like she had luck, and the anterior cervical discectomy was a success. I hope that proves the case.

From a tentative answer about Valery's operation, I go to a non-tentative question about a river. I would like to ask Dainis Bisenieks whether the River the Ister is same as the Hister. Nostradamus writes of the Hister numerous times, and modern interpreters have claimed what he was doing was predicting the rise of Hitler. However, others have claimed that the Hister refers to a river.

is "Ister" the way  
Σ is "Ellas"; that is "Hister"  
and "Hellas" ("Danube" and  
"Greece", respectively).

— JTM

While there is a mystery about the Ister/Hister river, there is no mystery about why movie directors and producers cannot film Ayn Rand's novels *The Fountainhead* and *Anthem*, as is. Joe, in his discussion of Orson Welles' filming of the *The Fountainhead*, mentions in passing that they haven't. To my mind, any film maker would have a problem with making greed and egotism look good.

Of course, in Welles case, he wanted, as well, to redirect the film to be about his character.

With greed and egotism, I end this letter. I guess, more than not, we can take greed and egotism as the theme for this letter. It works for conspiracy theory, Richard III, the movie *John Carter*, the Financial Meltdown and the river Ister/Hister. Of course, we have to ignore Islam, the Stratemeyer novels, the Constitution, and Valerie Purcell's operation.

From: **Taras Wolansky** March 31, 2013  
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*Leigh Kimmel (inConjunction XXXII report):* **"I discovered a gap in our Star Trek books that looked an awful lot like someone had taken a five-finger discount."** How often does that sort of thing happen? Any trend as to the kind of books that are stolen?

*Milt Stevens:* **"The idea of car hops on roller skates is an exotic memory."** Everything old is new again: the Sonic Drive-In chain currently has almost 3600 locations. in 43 states, it sez here. I've seen them around, but I've never eaten there.

*Alexis Gilliland:* More and more climatologists are talking about the failure of the climate to warm the way it was supposed to. For example, James Hansen of NASA, a fierce global warming hard-liner, thinks it's due to China and India's binge of building coal-fired power plants – China was doing two a week, but I think it's down to "only" one a week lately – which is putting sun-reflective particles in the air. This explanation is disputed by other climatologists, but the real significance is that Hansen admits the pause is occurring, even if he's confident it's only temporary.

Here's *The Economist*, a few days ago:

"Over the past 15 years air temperatures at the Earth's surface have been flat while greenhouse-gas emissions have continued to soar. The world added roughly 100 billion tonnes of carbon to the atmosphere between 2000 and 2010. That is about a quarter of all the CO2 put there by humanity since 1750. And yet, as James Hansen, the head of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, observes, 'the five-year mean global temperature has been flat for a decade.' ...

"[S]urface temperatures since 2005 are already at the low end of the range of projections derived from 20 climate models (see chart 1). If they remain flat, they will fall outside the models' range within a few years."

*George W. Price:* **"Now what if we develop an accurate test to determine if a fetus will become a homosexual, and most mothers then start aborting such fetuses?"** Greg Egan wrote a story much like that,

several years back, except in his version the suddenly removable cause of homosexuality is not genetic.

In real life, the deaf face a similar dilemma, with cochlear implants making inroads into their population. One of my guilty pleasures is a show called *Switched at Birth* on the ABC Family Channel. (The switched girls' dad was just elected to the State Senate as a Republican – and he's not evil!) This past season it went heavily into deaf politics, self-segregation vs. mainstreaming, as the kids fight against the imminent closure of their school.

I had a bit of disenchantment with differently-hearing organizations a few years ago when they portrayed happy differently-hearing children who used ASL and sad ones fitted with cochlear implants and so joining the temporarily hearing.

*Richard Dengrove:* It's Federalist No. 78 that says "the Judiciary is beyond comparison the weakest of the three departments of power" and talks about "the natural feebleness of the Judiciary". It presciently warns of the danger of mixing the judiciary and legislative power; that is, letting judges create the laws they then go on to "interpret".

*Robert S. Kennedy:* The "shape-changing humanoids" in *John Carter* (actually illusionists is my understanding) come from other books in Burroughs' Mars series, I'm told.

April 1, 2013

*Joe:* **"[I]n Robert Charles Wilson's *Julian Comstock* ... a silent film is shown with live voice actors."** In the Heroic Age of Anime in America, there wasn't much available except for whatever fans distributed among themselves. At one Lunacon, the anime room presented the Jules Verne-inspired *Nadia: The Secret of [the] Blue Water*, edited down to six hours from about 20; without dubbing or subtitles, but with a narrator who knew (some) Japanese and tried to explain what was going on. I remember he was better at rendering common salutations than expository dialogue.

*Review of John Carter and the Gods of Hollywood:* The sad story reminds me of the Worldcon panel with Hollywood screenwriters Ted Elliott and Terry Rossio (*Pirates of the Caribbean*) about how a Disney executive sabotaged their dream project, *The Puppet Masters*. Of course, my position is that *John Carter* failed primarily because it needed a marquee name in the title (or major supporting) role.

*Review of The Pseudo-Science Wars:* I'm not surprised John W. Campbell was unimpressed by Immanuel Velikovsky. Velikovsky's ideas would have reminded Campbell of decades of slush pile rejects written by scientifically ignorant crackpots. I read a lot about it in the Seventies, including some Velikovskian literature. The impression I got was that his ideas appealed to what might be

called Orthodox Jewish creationists.

But by then his principal appeal was among New Leftists, who saw him as an example of someone who thought differently and so was repressed by The Man.

*Review of Fatal Friends, Deadly Neighbors:* **"Any case against Josh Powell had to be most carefully and thoroughly made"** lest he be acquitted. But keeping his kids away from him so he couldn't kill them shouldn't require proof beyond reasonable doubt.

*Bill Patterson:* **"I didn't much care for the new Moriarty"** (in the *Sherlock* series starring Benedict Cumberbatch). In truth, until you mentioned him, I had forgotten he had appeared in the series. It would have been better, I think, to never show the character at all. And let everybody but Holmes think he is a myth.

Consider how Moriarty is treated in *The Seven Percent Solution*; an absolutely innocent scholastic who finds himself being accused and persecuted, out of Holmes's cocaine-induced mania. Or, perhaps, the way Michael Kurland has it; Holmes can't prove anything and some of his accusations are wrong, so it looks like paranoid mania.

**"Considering how much attention transparent flubdubbery like 'War on Christmas' gets in the national press":** rather, Christmas (and now Easter) is just a skirmish in the long "War on Christianity". Some earlier campaigns were: the inversion of the First Amendment from protecting religion to suppressing it; and: setting up government-subsidized state universities to put religious schools out of business.

**"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."** Well, philosophically fraught, anyway. What constitutes a "defect" of development? What we might call "vulgar Darwinism" suggests homosexuality is a malf of some kind but then, by that standard, celibacy and the lack of a desire to have children are malfs as well.

One could argue that removing homosexuality from the psychiatrists' bible in 1972 — where it had been lumped in with other paraphilias, I suppose — was a political act. Much in the same way that redefining marriage to include homosexuals (but not polygamists, or incestuous or younger age relationships) reflects the political clout of the one group.

I would hesitate to cite Kinsey, the J.B. Rhine of sexology. Everything I've heard about him over the last 20 years suggests his research was questionable; for example, making scientific claims about the sexuality of

children based on reports by child molesters!

**Darrell Schweitzer:** See previous comments about the current stagnation of global warming. Remember, global warming is supposed to be, well, global: it's always possible to find particular locations that are warming (or cooling).

**"I am sure that on the right hot-button topic you could find just as many bigoted, hate-filled Christians".** Darrell, you know better than that. I've always numbered you among the rational atheists, the ones who recognize that different religions have different origins, different doctrines, and different social effects. (For all religions to be equally good or equally bad would require the intervention of a deity.)

An important difference between Christianity and Islam is that attitudes that put you in the lunatic fringe of the former put you in the mainstream of the latter. Some Christians oppose gay marriage; fundamentalist Muslims oppose gay breathing.

**"Hoover wanted to do nothing"** about the Great Depression. This is an oft-repeated myth. The sad reality is, in an age when the parties were not politically polarized the way they are now, both Presidential candidates in 1932 were progressives, what we would call liberals. FDR's progressive policies failed just as much as Hoover's had, but the people gave FDR a pass (much like Obama in 2012) because he was perceived as having inherited the problem. He also spread money around, buying votes (much like, etc.).

**"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'."** Obviously nearly everybody pays some kind of tax. The difference is that some are net tax payers (they pay in more than they get back) while others are net tax consumers (they pay in less than they get back). For example, illegal aliens pay sales taxes, if nothing else, but the much heavier costs they impose on social services, schools, hospitals, criminal justice systems are driving cities and counties into bankruptcy. Thus, my point was that the net tax payers voted for Romney, while the net tax consumers voted for Obama.

H. Beam Piper had a pungent phrase: he talked about societies that failed because the hitchhikers grabbed control of the steering wheel.

Space Viking is available for free on the Kindle. I think it's time everyone reads it, again and again, until the lesson sinks in..

—JTM

**Carol Clarke:** I thought about doing a review of Steven Spielberg's *Lincoln* as a sequel to *Abraham Lincoln, Vampire Hunter*. Obviously the Democrats are tools of the vampire conspiracy. The only actual vampire we see, though, is Jackie Earle Haley as Alexander Stephens.

#### WAHF:

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

**Pat McCray**, with thanks.

**John G. Hemry**, with a discussion of AH sales trends.

#### NOT a summary of Season 4 of Downton Abbey by Darrell Schweitzer

Shortly after the "accidental" death of Matthew on the same day as the birth of his son, Barnabas Crawley, the 200-year-old vampire who lies in the basement, reveals the nature of the family curse. It seems that one of the former earls of Grantham oversaw the burning of a witch in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The witch's mother, who was quite good at this sort of thing, put a curse on the Grantham line that for each birth of a potential heir, there shall be the death of a member of the immediate family. This has been playing out already, with the death of Sybil and now the death of Matthew.

The witch and the vampire were lovers and enemies way back when. She will appear in future episodes as a ghost.

Tom, the Irish former-chauffeur, who used to be a political radical, is murdered by IRA assassins as a traitor to the cause, since he wimped out, fled to England, and joined the British landlord class. His child by the late Lady Sybil is carried off by the Little People.

Lady Mary in her grief goes mad. Her baby (the late Matthew's child) disappears. She swears it was nibbled to death by demonic ducks with glowing red eyes. The faithful family doctor is called in. He explains this as a "women's complaint."

Barnabas Crowley, who is actually a secret protector of the Grantham line, explains that the only way to remove the curse and possibly recover the missing children (or at least Tom and Sybil's child; there may be no cure for the ducks) requires the current Lord Grantham performing a very undignified rite involving himself, his surviving daughters, and several sheep, in the nude, under the full moon on the village common in front of the entire community. (This was one of the witch's mother's really artistic touches. She was presented with the Best Curse of the Year Award, Comedy, by Satan himself in 1687.) Lord Grantham refuses to consider it, placing the reputation of his house above all else. All previous earls have done the same, which is why the curse has had such a long and successful run.

But the witch's ghost appears to the butler, Mr. Carson, and suggests that a method more likely to preserve the dignity of the house may be found on page 751 of a complete edition of the *Necronomicon*. Unfortunately the Grantham family copy, which has been sitting unopened in the library for several hundred years (because among British aristocrats, books are for show,

not reading) proves to be defective. The hunt for the missing page is on. Later we discover that Barrows, the discontented under-butler tore the page out. What he does with it alone in his room at night is left to our imagination.

Meanwhile, Lord Grantham has become desperate for an heir. He prevails on his remaining unmarried daughter, Lady Edith, to do "whatever necessary" to provide him with one. Her almost-beau the magazine editor proves to be a high-ranking member of a certain dark cult. On May Eve, lying naked amid a circle of standing stones on the Grantham Estate, Edith is impregnated by Something. Nine months later she is reputed to give birth to twins, although one of the offspring is never seen and kept in a barn which is constantly being enlarged. The other one, Wilbur, grows at alarming speed, and is precocious, 8 feet tall, goatlike, and smoking Lord Grantham's best cigars by the time he is three. He too takes a disquieting interest in page 751 of the *Necronomicon*. He and Barrows seem to have come to an understanding on the subject.

Lord Grantham, financial imbecile that he is, loses the rest of the family fortune (the late Matthew's money) investing in the original Ponzi scheme. The only hope now seems to lie with Cousin Obed Crawley, a very distant and disagreeably lower-class relative, a nautical chap with an odd smell, bulging eyes, and an endless supply of curiously wrought gold jewelry produced by no known culture. The Countess Grantham, meanwhile, uses her American connections to enter into a potentially very profitable liquor smuggling deal with Nuckie Thompson, but she does so without her husband's knowledge.

Lily Rose MacClare, the wayward teenaged ward of the Granthams, who has been shuffled off a Scottish estate with a particularly tiresome elder relative, escapes one night, runs down to the local loch (possibly with the intent of drowning herself out of sheer boredom) but instead discovers that there is a monster living in the loch. She begins to develop strange powers and is last seen levitating over the loch in the misty moonlight while the monster circles below, singing in an eerie, almost human voice.

At the end of the Season 4 Finale, a spaceship lands on the Downton Abbey lawn. The white dog we see in the opening of every episode begins to speak.

Darn it, we were going to mount a Paris bid. Fans could stroll the Left Bank (of the Licking River), go see the show at the Crazy Horse (of the Nokota horses), and enjoy the cuisine (at the Bourbon County Farmer's Market). Tour the wonders of Paris, Kentucky. Where were you *thinking* we were going to bid?



## FLASHMAN AND THE BEGUM'S MILLIONS

. . . I was hoping to soothe my shattered nerves with a few weeks in some of the finer establishments of New Orleans. And if I got there fast enough, I could escape the authorities wanting to ask me a few questions about Custer's timely demise.

There was a man waiting for me when I got off the riverboat. "Colonel Flashman?"

"Sorry, you must be confusing me with someone else. Buckley's the name, William Buckley," says I with an ingratiating smile.

"What an amazing coincidence! We want to talk to that there feller, too. Now come right along, Mr. Buckley!"

Of all the nicks I've been clapped into, a Yank gaol would not be the worst, though close to it. Those days with Cassy . . . Instead, I wound up in the U.S. Marshal's office, slung in front of a very big official who did not bother to give his own name. "Colonel Flashman," he said. And he had a picture of me, taken from my better side.

When I didn't say anything, he continued, "We have had a communication from the British War Office authorizing their loan of you to us."

They had finally got shot of Cardwell and his meddling with the Army, but the new man, another Tory time-server, didn't seem to be any better. If this were an example of what mires he could push me into . . .

"Are you aware of the Oregon Extraterritoriality Act of 1871?"

I tried not to seem too ignorant. The man explained further. As the result of some splendidly superb programme of bribery, the federal and state governments had been persuaded to hand over two large plots of land on the Pacific. That was the sort of procedure that was the ordinary order of business under Sam Grant's genially whisky-fuddled Presidency, so I wasn't surprised by that.

One of the grants had been to some damfool health society, the sort of chaps who were absolutely bonkers about proper underclothes, diets of plants that normal people would eat only out of utter desperation, physical training that squeezed one into contortions similar to the drawings from a Hindu love manual, but without a compliant nautch girl as support and partner, and the like.

The other, though, was a little more serious. Some kraut-eating professor had got it into his head that this would be a perfect place to build an artillery factory. I wondered if that scoundrel Bismarck was trying to get his revenge for Strackenz that way. If the Yanks wanted to give away their land to fools and knaves, thought I, why should I be involved?

"Your acquaintance with Sir François Sarrasin-Langevol's son Octave."

For a moment I tried to remember who that had been and how I could deny it. After that nightmarish venture into Abyssinia, I had been sent to Paris to recover my health. Naturally, that was when the war came, followed by the uprising, and I had had the less than distinct pleasure of nearly being executed by the Germans, the Communards, and the French government in succession.

This chap Octave Sarrasin had been a regular client of one of the more splendid maisons close there, once affairs had returned to normal, and I had ventured to take him under my wing, as it were. He had all the ready one could ask for. Then some narrow-minded friend of his got his claws into Sarrasin and it was back to London for Flashy.

Evidently, it seemed, his father had somehow inherited a baronetcy, through some queer provisions of the original grant of the title, though he was a Frenchman, and something like ten millions from the prior holder, an imbecilic Indian Prince (which, from my observation, would describe a fair number of 'em). Then he had taken it and put it all on this wild scheme, like a bad bet at Ascot. Octave had better uses for it.

Still, there seemed no reason for me to get my hide endangered again but this chap had an answer to that also.

"There have been a number of protests from various sources regarding the policies of the Autonomous Community of Franceville. The Chinese government has protested the working conditions of the Chinese labor there, the Oregon state tax collectors have been denied an accounting and even access, and the U.S. Secret Service was refused entry for the investigation of a counterfeit currency ring.

"Your association with Octave Sarrasin should enable you to gain access to the authorities there, enable whatever proper operation of law enforcement may be required, and if necessary cause the collapse or destruction of the community. If you are caught, or killed, we will have to disavow any knowledge of your mission . . ."

— Jules Verne and George Macdonald Fraser were not harmed in the composition of this work. Harry Flashman, now . . .

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