

# Askew #33

January-February March 2021

The extremely behind schedule and opinionated personalzine of John Purcell, who resides full time at 3744 Marielene Circle, College Station, TX 77845 USA Contents copyright © 2021 by John A. Purcell

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Well, yes, this issue is verging on way too late, so I am going to rattle this bugger off once and for all so I can send it to my faithful readers.

## Madness in the Capitol

Amazingly enough, in the time since the last issue the world has not completely destroyed itself yet, and as I begin to draft this issue there has been, shall we say, a tsunami of bullshit hitting the fan. It all started late last spring when Humpty Trumpty started seeding discord and doubt into the election process of this country. We all know how that ended. To say “very badly” would earn the Gold Medal of Understatements in the Rhetorical Olympics. Never in my life would I have believed that I would see a horde of American citizens, draped in both American and Confederate flags, storm our nation’s Capitol building and run amuck through its halls, breaking down doors and windows, fighting with the Capitol Police, eventually leaving five people dead, and hundreds injured, including dozens of police. The last time something like this happened in Washington, DC was way the hell back in August of 1814 when the British army invaded and torched the city. We can disregard the Christmas Eve 1929 West Wing fire in the White House because that fire was not intentionally set: “either a blocked or faulty chimney vent or defective electric wiring had overheated and caused [many historical] pamphlets in the attic to ignite” (White House Historical Association). Not even the real Confederate Army was able to do that despite repeated attempts.

Anyway.

I really do not want to recap what every responsibly aware person in America and the world knows. In short, Trump was impeached again on grounds of inciting an insurrection against the government of the



"Enter Donald J. Trump, two-bit conman, television huckster, a denizen of gaudy casinos and smoke-filled back rooms, who conned himself into the biggest job of all. He is our guide to a new realm you won't find on any map: a world of his own creation, where words like 'truth' and 'lie' no longer have meaning, where man's darkest instincts are given license, and where things like human decency and tolerance are relics of a bygone day. Case in point: Mr. Donald Trump, a man with one foot in his mouth and the other... in the Twilight Zone."

United States; Trump was acquitted (again), but a strongly bipartisan vote was in favor of impeachment in the Senate (57-43, oddly enough a guess I made on Rich Coad's Facebook page early on the day this vote was taken), and now we have President Joseph Biden, Jr., who was sworn in under what can only be described as the strangest inauguration in American history. I wish him and Vice-President Kamala Harris well and as much good luck as they can possibly amass. With DC's political morass, they are really going to need it.

## **Why I Don't Trust any Politicians – even the ones I vote for**

A lot of my fannish and non-fannish friends are very happy that Joe Biden has been inaugurated as the 46<sup>th</sup> President of the United States of America. Truth be told, I am too, but only because the orange-faced hellbeast called Trump is no longer president.

The way I look at this situation is that Biden is an old-school democrat; a centrist who believes that concession and negotiation is still possible in Washington, DC these days (I completely disagree on this), and a generally nice guy, but he is still a career politician. When politics is your sole career, human nature takes over and even the most honorable person with any semblance of integrity can be corrupted. A brief review of Biden's career as a Senator and Vice-President is enough to reveal questionable decisions he made all for the sake of "political expediency." As presidential candidate Sen. Kamala Harris pointed out during the first 2020 democratic nomination debate, Biden's busing vote in the late 1970s cast doubt on Joe Biden's devotion to the equal rights issue. Granted, that was a political gambit Harris made during that debate, and it helped push her forward into the front ranks of potential VP nominees once Biden had guaranteed the nomination. And again, we know how this turned out.

The point I am attempting to make here is that career politicians will say and do things that run counter to what we the people would like them to do simply because it cements and solidifies the political alliances they make along the way while they remain in public office. Check the estimated assets of the elected officials currently serving in Congress. According to [opensecrets.org](https://www.opensecrets.org), a non-profit organization that monitors donations to political campaigns across the United States, as of 2020, "more than half of those in Congress are millionaires, data from lawmakers' most recent personal financial disclosures shows. The median net worth of members of Congress who filed disclosures last year is just over \$1 million." Personally, I find it hard to believe that someone with that kind of net worth is going to be much concerned with my middle-class income level. By nature, I am a very skeptical person. I was raised that way. It requires effective persuasive power to convince me of a position that differs from mine. I encourage respectful, informed debate from all sides of an issue, and try to teach my students this concept in my ENGL 1301 Composition and Rhetoric classes. You can thank my high school philosophy teacher John Loegering for educating me on the principles of dialecticism. See, I do believe in the concept of productive disagreement. Through that, progress on divisive issues can be made. Slowly, yes, but it is nonetheless progress.

Growing up in suburban Minneapolis throughout the 1960s and 1970s, my political heroes were progressive democrats, notably U.S. Senator Eugene McCarthy; I liked Hubert Humphrey, but when he supported LBJ's Vietnam War positions as Johnson's VP, that soured me on HHH. Mondale was okay, but I really admired Senator Paul Wellstone, and still mourn his unfortunate loss.

So to elaborate on the topic of this section, I can never fully trust any politician, no matter how appealing they may look or how hard they try to woo my vote, simply because of the fact that these are people who

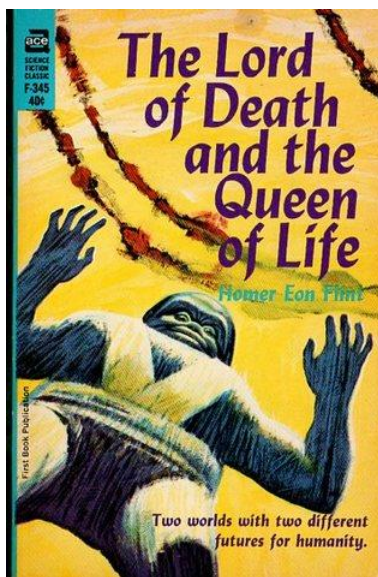
may start out in politics espousing noble goals and rattling off all the right talking points, yet they turn into Part of the Problem by selling their souls to the Gods of Politics. As the old axiom goes, “absolute power corrupts absolutely.” That certainly rings true to my ears.

The upshot of this is that while I do like Joe Biden as president, I cannot fully trust him. Frankly, that is the right of the electorate; we are the ones who employ him and Harris as our leaders: they were hired by the people – well, the Electoral College, but that’s a topic for another issue some year – making all elected officials public servants. To me that means they are to serve the public; the public does not serve them.

## Recent Nook Reads

About five years ago I received a free Nook from a colleague at Blinn College who was upgrading to a Kindle, and I still have it. The danged thing still works, so occasionally I peruse my Nook and read something I downloaded from Project Gutenberg. There are something like 50 or so short stories or articles stored on this Nook, and naturally some of these are pretty danged old. Ergo, here are three recent stories I have read from this handheld electronic library.

### **The Lord of Death and the Queen of Life – Homer Eon Flint (1919)**



I also have a copy of this in the 1965 Ace edition – pictured here – so I really did not have to read it on my Nook, but I did so to preserve the quality of the paperback; the idea of bending pages and the spine, etc., makes me cringe, so having it downloaded from Project Gutenberg was a win-win to me.

Needless to say, this is actually a two-novella combination that first takes the reader to Mercury, where the intrepid explorers from Earth comb their way through the ruins of an ancient civilization, and then off to Venus, where this same team meets up with that planet’s women descendants of the male-dominated (and ruined by men) society on Mercury. Not surprisingly, these are heavy-handed warnings about the future of mankind, and full of sexist language, too.

While these two tales are definitely clunky in writing style, it helps to read these to put the development of science fiction into perspective. I am definitely glad that SF has become a very literate genre.

### **With the Night Mail – Rudyard Kipling (1905)**

Okay, I do like Kipling, but unlike Fred Lerner I am no aficionado. However, I have not read this story in so long that my memory of it was barely hanging on deep inside my head. I think I first read it in a junior high English class, and while I liked it, there was no real plot to it. This is why I decided to read it again after all these mumbledy-mumble years to refresh the memory banks. Barely into the second page I realized that this story – written 116 years ago – could be considered an example of early prototype Steampunk.

Thanks to so many years of reading science fiction stories, “With the Night Mail” comes across as an exercise in world-building, and the dirigibles used to convey mail from England to Canada – and elsewhere around the world – are the actual subject of the tale: their specifications, how well they handle the super-

storm encountered over the North Atlantic, and all sorts of descriptive passages about how the Aerial Board of Control monitors and directs the fleets of mail and passenger carrier dirigibles. The story even adds in a brief bit about “seditionists” who are demanding the right to vote (perish the thought!). Well, the women’s movement was in full swing by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, so this doesn’t surprise me. What does surprise me is that the tale is set in the far-flung, unimaginable future year of 2000 AD! As a result, I am not impressed by “With the Night Mail” as a story, but more or less as a literary exercise on Kipling’s part.

**Flatland**, Edwin Abbott Abbott (1884)

Now *here’s* an odd story that is well worth reading if you are interested in world-building, especially if you’re mathematically inclined. *Flatland* is definitely an exercise in perspective – a bad pun, I know, but sometimes I can’t stop myself – while making all sorts of social commentary about the Victorian Era. This is dry reading, but I really liked the digs on authority, and reading about how Abbott defined the differences between males, females, and social ranks via geometric means. It is interesting reading, and then I searched the internet to learn about the animated movie version that I remembered hearing about. Sure enough, *Flatland: the Movie* was released in 2007 and features the voices of Martin Sheen, Michael York, Kristen Bell, and Tony Hale. It is available on Amazon Prime – which we have – so I may have to give this a watch and see how the story translates to film.

## Skewed Results

Here ye shall find letters of comment on the previous issue of *Askew*. I promise to shall keep these opening comments to a minimum and simply jump right into it. The 32<sup>nd</sup> iteration of this zine discussed the just-concluded presidential election, plus comments on COVID-19, our dog Duckie, whom we lost just before Christmas, and then closed with a brief remembrance of Phyllis Eisenstein.

*{My comments to these letters will follow in bracketed and italicized Constantia, size 12 font}*

Paul Skelton  
St. Ockport, UK

20 December 2020

I’ve got my fingers crossed for Duckie, though a quick Google tells me the average life expectancy of a yellow Lab (chocolate Labs do not do so well) is 10-12 years, and whilst obviously many Labs do live longer, he is certainly not of an age where you want him to be experiencing mysterious medical problems. I fully understand your closing remarks – I still miss Bestie every fucking day, and he’s been dead getting on for four years. *{By now you know that we lost Duckie on 22 December 2020, and we miss him terribly. It is just not the same going for walkies without him.}*

As I type this Cas is in the kitchen getting the evening meal ready (we are having chips with a heated-up store-bought quiche) and listening to radio commentary of Manchester United playing Leeds. ‘John,’ she says, ‘will be watching the football’. We, on the other hand, can’t afford to watch it, so perforce must simply listen to radio commentary. Two very early goals for us mean she’s well happy so far.

Of relatively less importance is the political demise of The Trumpster, at least in personal terms. You really suffered there, whereas we only got Boris who is merely a semi-charismatic buffoon. His latest bumbling, a misguided attempt to 'Save Christmas', has boomeranged into last-minute chaos. We were all supposed to get 5 'unrestricted' days over the Christmas period to mix with up to two other households, allowing most family Christmases to take place, but this has been reduced at almost the last minute to 1 day and one household, and 8 million people in London and the South East of the country, who until two days ago were in relatively loose 'Tier 2' restrictions have been plunged into 'Tier 4' (which didn't even exist until yesterday) which is the local equivalent of a National lockdown. This was because a new, highly infective, Covid variant was prevalent in that area. This resulted in huge crowds fleeing London via the railway stations to beat the midnight deadline and get away to spend Christmas with relatives elsewhere and quite possibly spread the new variant there as well.



We shall be unaffected as we cancelled Christmas back in October, giving the three households who normally come to us (which was one more than we'd have been allowed under the relaxed restrictions) plenty of time to make alternative arrangements. Like Steve, we had noticed we had occasionally (but only occasionally) become lax about social distancing, but we are now girding ourselves to extra awareness. We will still do our one weekly supermarket shop, and take our twice-daily socially distanced walks, but other than that we are going to continue hunkering down and wait for the vaccine. At this point nothing else makes any sense. *{Our Christmas was a very quiet affair, too. We drove up to our daughter's home in Kurten – 20 minutes or so from our place – and had a nice time gift-sharing with the grandkids and all. Plus, Valerie and I have now each had our first round of COVID-19 vaccination shots. We are getting the second shots in a few weeks.}*

Unlike Lloyd I don't do Zoom. Avast keeps telling me my camera is spying on me and I should buy some more software from them to prevent this, but I pay no attention as it has had a piece of card taped over it for over two years now. We have long been aware, from the way discussions in the kitchen have been followed by clearly influenced adverts on Cas' iPad that Apple listens to everything. One day recently though she had her iPad propped up in the bathroom windowsill whilst she was at her morning toilette. Stripped to the waist she applied some cream to some dry skin on her arm. The very next day she received an advert on her iPad for that very same cream. It wasn't even a normally commercially available cream, but something that had been grossly over prescribed for **me** by my doctor about a year ago. Now that was scary! So no, I won't be uncovering my camera and using Zoom anytime soon.

## Skel

*{I have become quite accustomed to using Zoom, Team, and other platforms for teaching my online classes. Fortunately, I am responsibly clothed when I do so, which reduces the chances of such cyber-spying on me. Then again, I avoid bringing my iPhone into the bathroom when shaving or showering; don't want water getting all over it.}*

Lloyd Penney  
1706-24 Eva Rd.  
Etobicoke, ON  
CANADA M9C 2B2

*23 December 2020*

Many thanks for *Askew 32*. Today is Christmas Eve, the little tabletop tree is up, and there are a few presents here and there. A few goodies are in the fridge ready for some celebrating, We've spent the last few Christmases by ourselves, and with social distancing and bubbles, nothing has really changed for us. And, that's okay, it's sufficient, it reduces the amount of stress for us. No getting up early to rush through your presents so you can get ready to travel for a couple of hours to a family gathering few really like. I know you're busy finalizing your own Christmas. So, here's a fast letter on *Askew 32* you can tuck away until all the celebrating is done.

The election is done, the winners are announced, and only now are most people convinced of the outcome. I think non-Republicans were divided in 2016, which the Orange Monster in to make our lives more interesting... After four years of abuse, non-Republicans became united. It was not so much a vote for Joe Biden, but a vote against the Monster. We all win. But, in the 20-odd days left to him as President as I write, he can still create a helluva lot of chaos and damage, and like the shameful pardons he has issued, not to mention accelerating the number of executions. The next few decades will be spent undoing Trump's horrible deeds, cleaning up his mess, and convincing the American public that living and working together, being a little more social(ist), and making the effort to live up to the Christian ideals of loving thy neighbour, are all good and healing things to do. Perhaps we can also put the guns away, too.

The COVID-19 vaccines are here, too, and are being distributed to those who need it the most, all our front-line workers who endanger their lives every day. We are hopeful that in our 60s, we might get our inoculations soon, but we probably won't get them until the spring. That's okay; unlike so many in our building and elsewhere, we actually wear masks and socially distance ourselves from other, and we stay home as asked by the mayor and medical officials. We should be okay.

Our condolences re Duckie. Yvonne and I have never had pets, and as kids, we were never allowed them, but we have all lost animals we loved... ChatChat, Momcat, Tiffany, and Max will live forever in our hearts, even if we couldn't spend much time with them. I hope a present for yourselves in the New Year will be perhaps another Lab puppy, someone new to love, and make a part of the family.

My letters... I pray that within a few years, we will be able to take US politics without the horrors of the Trump regime and the Republican Party. AmazingCon II is being planned for some time in 2021, and again, it will be virtual on Zoom. The David Gerrold collection of stories is out, entitled *Adrift in the Sea of Souls*, and I got to read it through editing, copyediting and proofreading it. I hope that in-person conventions will happen in 2021...but suspect they won't return until 2022. Hope I am wrong.

We lost Ben Bova, and Phyllis Eisenstein...today, it was James Gunn, at the age of 97. We have aged right into our SFnal future, and those who created it have not lived long enough to see it through, and that is truly our loss.

## Lloyd

*{As always, it is good to hear from you, Lloyd. (\*) The tail-end of 2020 was painful for the losses in the sf-world. It was a pleasure to have known these three fine writers in my life; their works have certainly enriched us. (\*) Here's hoping that we get to see you again soon, although I suspect that will happen most likely in 2022.}*

Steve Jeffery  
44 White Way  
Kidlington, Oxfordshire  
United Kingdom OX5 2XA

srjeffery@aol.com

26 December 2020

I must admit, for a time I was worried that Trump might try and pull an extra-legal stunt after each of his attempts to overthrow the election result were thrown out by court after court but thankfully he seems to have settled for sulky frustrated brat whiney mode ("I don't want to go. It's not *fair*" and trashing the hotel room before he leaves with an unpaid bill) behaviour that makes him look like a boor and a laughing stock to most of the world and the better half of the US. I'm not sure it's a 'positive' that the election has brought a lot of racist and misogynist views of his supporters bubbling to the surface, but at least you now know who they are and can avoid them and hopefully deal with them. (I worry that Biden won't, given they are still a sizeable, if not a majority, proportion of the population, but since he can't possibly lose any votes from them maybe he should as a demonstration that the US is prepared to be a good actor on the world stage. I wish you well.

Not that we in the UK should give you any lessons on government and financial competence with our down to the wire wrangling with the EU over standards, trade tariffs, and quotas. At least we have a deal, but honestly, I cannot fathom our stance that the EU's insistence that trade of goods between the UK and EU should be on a level playing field is somehow 'unfair' when it comes to standards, especially as this seems to be exactly the same card we are playing against the US over hormone raised beef and 'chlorinated' chicken. Especially when most of the meat in supermarkets is injected with water and fillers to boost up the weight. (And please don't ask about our sausages.)

And of course, the remaining topic *de jour* in the UK is Covid, especially as large chunks of the country enter a brand-new phase of lockdown on Boxing Day. In Oxfordshire, we have jumped from Tier 2 to Tier 4. ('Do not pass Tier 3. Do not collect £200'.) That and the mourning of the loss of the traditional Boxing Day sales this year - where thousands of people inexplicably queue all night to fight each other to buy unsold and out of date tat from the last 12 months that they have studiously ignored the whole of the previous year, and then try to pass it on as next year's Christmas presents. (Gushes: "Thanks. It's what I've always wanted". Thinks: "God, that's so last year. Cheapskates. What were they thinking?")

Vikki and I of course, sensibly keep a running tab of new books, series, CDs and DVDs in our respective Amazon wish lists through the year. Or at least I do. I have to prod Vikki to keep track of the multiple authors and fantasy series she's currently following and which she has decided to triage during the year. That means we both get what we want and surprises are restricted to 'stocking fillers' added to the pile



to keep each other guessing on Christmas Day. (One of mine was a 1 kg box of shortbread. I love shortbread, but a kilo will last me a long time.) And on Christmas Eve we had a parcel unexpectedly delivered. It turned out to be a small Xmas hamper from my company (they have been spectacularly good throughout the year while we've been in lockdown, sending small parcels of masks, sanitizer gel, small gifts of treats or shopping vouchers as rewards) containing biscuits, relish and a packet of raisin, chocolate, and walnut coffee, all locally sourced. A nice gesture.

So we had a good Christmas. To be honest neither of us like the stress of big family dos and nearly always have a quiet and relaxed Christmas Day by ourselves at our own pace and not have to be anywhere or do anything at someone else's beckoning (I like my family, but they have a terrible tendency to want to organise, as if just everyone being there with plenty of wine and coffee and snacks to go around wasn't enough. It always is in my experience.)

I hope you both had a good Christmas too, and wish you all the best for the New Year.

### Steve

*{We certainly did have a pleasant Christmas, Steve, spending it with our kids and grandchildren, which is always a treat. As I finally finish off this issue, it is mid-March 2021, meaning it is now Spring Break week, meaning I can re-pack the Corflu box to ship off to Rob Jackson in a few days so that he shall have in plenty of time for Corflu Concorde (November 5-7, 2021). With luck, we shall likewise be there.}*

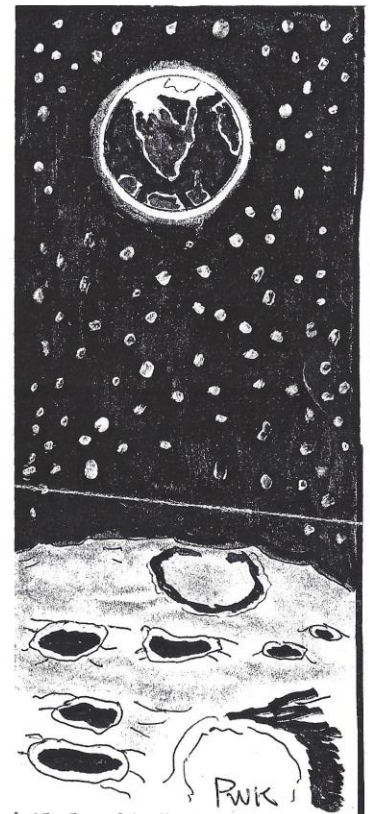
Justin E. A. Busch  
308 Prince Street, #422  
St. Paul, MN 55101

23 January 2021

Many thanks for the pleasant surprise of *Askew* 32. I had been under the impression you no longer did print fanzines at all. I'm enclosing, as requested, the most recent (and slightly ahead of schedule) issue of *Far Journeys* in trade. I find that I actually have a couple of previous issues of *Askew* (#3 and #10), so the new one expands my collection by a full third. *{What I do now is print out copies only for those few people who eschew online fanzine activity: you and John Hertz are the only two people at present who get print copies of Askew; my genzine Askance is too big of a print-job for my household printer to handle, so that needs to stay in pixels.}*

I, too, was a Sanders supporter (there was a brief period, about a week I think, when Sanders was ahead and looked likely to be the nominee, during which I realized that for the first time in my life I would actually feel joy in casting a vote for President. But, alas ....)

...I am sorry to hear about Duckie's health concerns. We had a mutt, Piesek (a Polish diminutive for dog), who lived to be seventeen or so; when she had to be euthanized it was like the end of a historical era,





emotionally speaking (I was only a couple of years older, so effectively this was a life's worth of memories being closed).

Lloyd Penney's optimism, looking forward to Trump being "arrested and prosecuted for a long line of offences," is charming if implausible; while I can't quite believe that Biden would pardon him, I also find it hard to believe that the Biden Justice Department will press forward with any investigations or charges. Still, there is the New York DA's office, so maybe Lloyd will be right and I will be wrong (and happy to be so).

I was only a supporting member of ConZealand, but I've been saving for over a year to attend Discon3. My only previous Worldcon was Discon2, forty-seven years ago, so this is (was?) almost imperative to attend. It looks, though, as if it will be wholly or mostly virtual, something in which I have no interest at all, even assuming I had an easy way to "attend". I'm with Steve Jeffery on this; virtual conventions won't "feel like a real con, just a continuation of many of the same Facebook posts and memes under another banner." The principal difference is that there is no real leisure virtually; just standing and watching the scene go by or sitting in silence with a friend thinking over the preceding conversation, are not practical electronically.

## Justin

*{Thank you for writing, Justin. (\*) As many fans have said over this past year, there is a huge loss of interpersonal fannishness that cannot be experienced in the virtual realm: it's simply not the same thing, and we all miss this. I do hope that by late summer this year things really turn around for not just fandom, but for everybody in this whacked-out world.}*

*{And speaking of John Hertz...}*

John Hertz  
236 S. Coronado St., No. 409  
Los Angeles, CA 90057

28 February 2021

Thanks for Askew 32 and your 17 Feb {letter of comment}.

I drink Dos Equis in memory of Len Moffatt. Among my own favorites are Samuel Smith Oatmeal Stout, and Anchor anything.

Far be it from me to find fault with Brother Melville, or "Bartleby" in particular. But I don't think the measure of fiction is as a statement. Essays and sermons are for that. My current favorite Dickens is Bleak House, which as it happens I just finished re-reading; I'm with Nabokov that as a story it's first-rate (and I include characterization, description), as a social satire it's flat. Do you know N's lectures, published posthumously? *{Barely. I might have read some of them 20+ years ago in college.}*

Glad to hear the Texas winter hasn't been too terrible for you, though it has been for many. A big difference between Chicago houses (where I've lived) and Los Angeles ones is that the Chicago ones are built to withstand winter. They're better insulated and like that. I repeat it here:

Back to build better,  
Into the currents again,  
Determined, dauntless.  
Every face shall have a voice  
National leadership hears.

It's an acrostic (read down the first letter of each line) in unrhymed 5-7-5-7-7-syllable lines, like Japanese tanka.

Brother {Rodney} Leighton and I kept in touch to the end. Luckily my zine is on paper. I miss Phyllis Eisenstein, too.

## John

*{Thank you for the letter, kind sir, and while Texas had a nasty week of Minnesota weather in late February, our area never lost power nor water, but even now (14 March 2021 as I finish this loccol) there are some rural areas in Texas that still have not had their water restored. This is all on the shoulders of the Republican-led state legislature, which has a history of saying "we're gonna address this problem" then never does. Like you and many Americans, I dearly hope the Biden administration doesn't let us down. Still, I am not going to hold my breath on this. (\*) I miss Phyllis Eisenstein and so many others, too.*

**I also heard from:** Nic Farey, Jacqueline Monahan, Mark Olsen, Curt Phillips.

## Meanwhile, in the Science Fiction Realm....

By the time this issue is finally completed and shipped off to people all over the known skiffy world, everybody who knows anything about the science fiction community should be aware that Toni Weiskopf, the editor of Baen Books and someone whom I have known for many years, has been removed as editor Guest of Honor at this year's world science fiction convention, Discon III. Now, there are many existing problems with Discon III as it is, and the Worldcon committee did not need the unnecessary foofaraw that exploded on the Baen Books Forum. It is my understanding that Toni, though employed in an editorial position for this publisher, is not a moderator of this particular online forum. The strong language and "hostile content" expressed within that forum was definitely uncalled for and continued for way too long, and sadly the negative publicity reflected very poorly on Baen Books and its staff. This is what led the DisCon III committee to make the decision of removing Toni as their Editor Guest of Honor role for this year's Worldcon.

Suffice to say, I think this is a bad decision and is yet another example of real-world politics invading and influencing what should be, in its purest form, a celebration of the literary world of science fiction and fantasy. I guess I am a purist fan at heart because I truly dislike it when this kind of behavior infects my hobby interest. Unlike Toni Weiskopf and many other editors, publishers, authors, and artists, I do not earn my primary income from this genre. Like many of us, I read SF&F and do fanzines, etc., for entertainment as a diversion from the stupidity of the real world. As a result, Discon III has left a sour taste in my mouth.

If that's not enough Worldcon drama, the development that the owner of the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, one of the venues under contract with the convention, "has filed for bankruptcy, announced the hotel's permanent closing, and their intent to sell the property" (from *Locus*, 1 Feb 2021) hurts Discon III even more. Oh, and the COVID-19 pandemic continues to roll merrily along. As I finish this issue in mid-March 2021, no final decision has yet been reached on whether or not the 2021 Worldcon will be held as either a live or virtual event. I believe Discon III will go virtual, which is probably the right thing to do, but I have no intention of participating if such is the case. I have been involved with a handful of virtual conventions since last summer, and while it is fun to see and chat with friends in an online real-time session, it simply is not the same thing as physically being together with my fannish friends. I don't want to do "Zoom rooms" for a Worldcon. If I am going to spend a good chunk of change to support/attend a Worldcon, I would much rather be there in person than chat with folks in a Zoom session. My intention is not to belittle the efforts of the Discon III committee; it is simply that to me, fan-run conventions thrive on the people, and like everybody else, I miss being with my friends.

### Meanwhile, in Fanfundery:

There is little that can be done at this time regarding the fan funds, except maybe to note that until face-to-face fan-run conventions happen again - notably the World SF Convention - the fan fun entities have quietly retreated into a state of hibernation, which is to be expected in this age of pandemic and fear. As it stands, people can donate to the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund, the Down Under Fan Fund, or the Get Up and over Fan Fund - or just to the fan funds in general - any time they wish. The best way to do that is go to [www.taff.org.uk](http://www.taff.org.uk) and simply follow the links to make a proper donation in either British Pounds Sterling or American Dollars. While you are on that site, feel free to peruse the vast array of publications. That nice



Mister Langford fellow maintains this website, and with any kind of luck, the fan funds will return in force for calendar year 2022 when the Worldcon returns to Chicago in the good old, USofA. <knock wood>

This also reminds me that I need to finish working on my 2017 TAFF Trip report. Once I finish this zine, the plan is to begin assembling all of the chapters I have written to date - the last section will appear in *Askance #51*, which I hope to complete by the end of March of this year. The goal is to get this entire fershlugginer trip report done by the end of 2021.

Pray for me. At the very least do encourage me to get *Askance #51* finished first.

## Final Thoughts

For this conclusion section, my original plan was to include the link to the FAAn Ballot and urge all of my fine, fannish friends to nominate and vote in this year's Fanzine Activity Achievement Awards, but since the voting deadline ended three days ago (on March 12<sup>th</sup>) it would probably be stupid to include that link now. What I can do is provide information regarding the FAAn Awards broadcast via Zoom; the relevant paragraphs from the Corflu Concorde website <https://corflu.org/> are copy-pasted here for your edification:

Because this year's con has been held back to the autumn, it would be rather late to delay the 2021 FAAn Awards till then. Once the votes have been counted, the results will be announced online in a ceremony held by Zoom video call on Sunday March 28, at 8 p.m. BST UK time (3 p.m. US EDT, or midday US PDT).

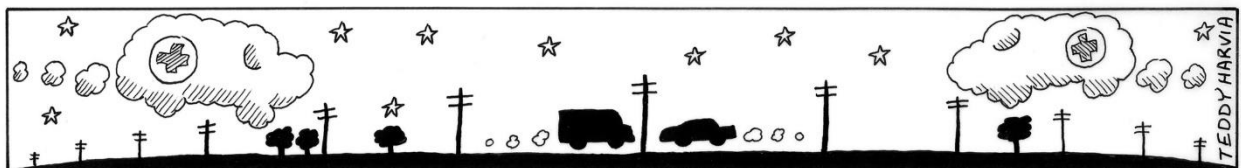
Jerry Kaufman will MC the proceedings. Rob Jackson will moderate the call and send out the Zoom link a few days in advance, along with instructions on how the ceremony will be run. As well as the FAAn Awards, this year's Lifetime Achievement Award will be announced, and the Corflu Business Meeting will nominate the site for the 2022 Corflu, which we hope will return to the usual spring timetable.

If you want to be there, email Rob at [robjackson60@gmail.com](mailto:robjackson60@gmail.com) to be added to the distribution list. You don't have to be a Corflu member to be on the call and watch; just email and ask!

Corflu 38, nicknamed Corflu Concorde, will be held in Bristol, England, over the weekend of November 5-7, 2021, the weekend before Novacon 50 in Nottingham, England (November 12-14, 2021). For those of you who might also be interested in making this a two-fer trip to Jolly Olde Phannish England, here is the link for information regarding Novacon 50: <http://novacon.org.uk/n50/> If the COVID-19 vaccinations do their work and lots of other necessary things fall into place, Valerie and I are still planning on getting there. We have our attending memberships and are currently planning a series of trips for fall 2021 that include my brother's wedding in late August, my mother-in-law's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday in late September, so England in November is a strong possibility. I sure hope so.

And with that, this issue of *Askew* is over and done with – finally! Like I said earlier, up next is *Askance* #51, which will have the last dangerous chapter of my 2017 TAFF Trip and other goodies. Then my major goal for 2021 is to compile the full-blown trip report into its final form.

*Definitely* pray for my sanity there. See all y'all in the funny pages.



I overheard this in a consuite at a long-ago convention (probably Windycon IV in 1977):

“Will somebody please explain to me **exactly** why Yngvi is a louse?”