

# CHALLENGER 18

THE SFPA EDITION  
of  
CHALLENGER 18

Spring-Summer 2003

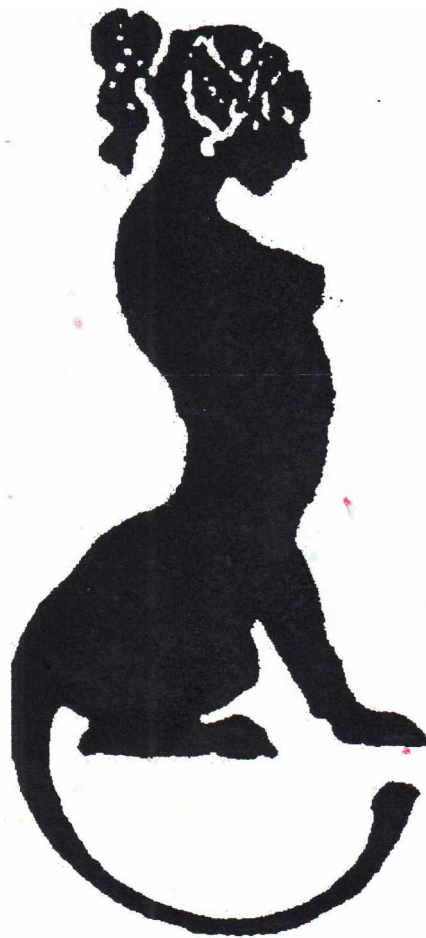
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Cover: by LINDA MILLER  
depicting "Darth Vator"

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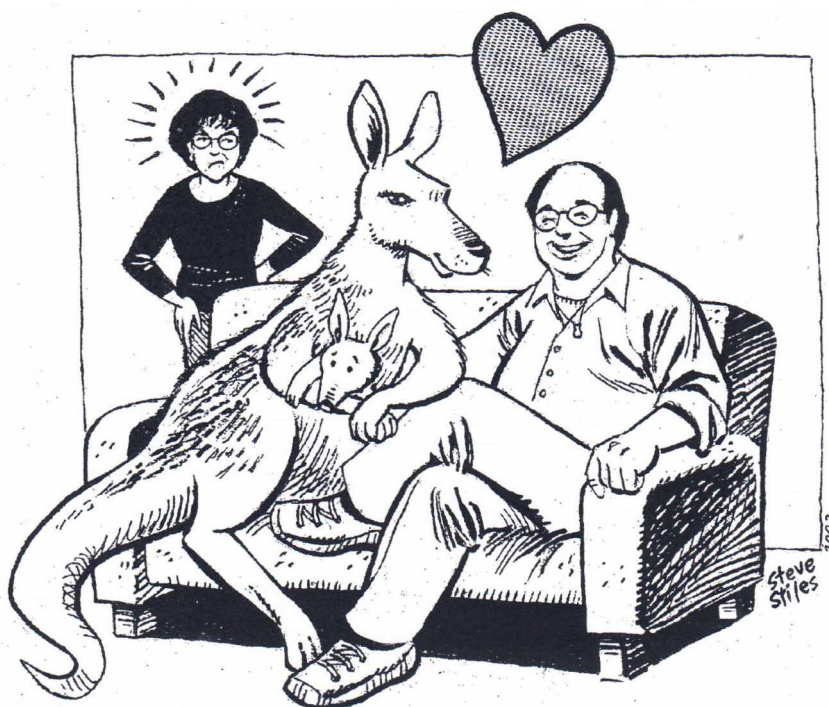


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note: pages 37-62 have been deleted from this edition.

# THE IS OF OZ



*The Moon itself is different from the land downunder.*

I am *not* kidding. When you're south of the equator, when you're in the wonderful magical land of Oz, the Man on the Moon doesn't peer down and to the right as he does in America. He looks *right at you*. It's a bit disconcerting. It's wondrous.

*La belle* Rose-Marie and I spent three splendid weeks in Oz – Australia – as the U.S. delegates to the 2003 Australian National SF Convention, courtesy of the Down Under Fan Fund, DUFF. And yes, the sky is different there. You see stars you've never seen before. You see Alpha Centauri. You see the Southern Cross.

It was ... well, wondrous. We still coast high from the joy of the experience – and stagger under the tonnage of our gratitude.

We'll be writing up and publishing a detailed, illustrated report on our journey as part of our duties to DUFF. We'll be conducting auctions, raffles and sales of various Sfnal goodies to restore the fund for the next lucky winners. All this will occur in time.

But here and now in **Challenger** – issue #18, summer of 2003 – we can express a bit of our joy and let spout some of our thanks.

*Thank you*, Bill Wright, for our picnic at Hanging Rock – even though we almost never made it down. Thank you, Robin Johnson, for the *Batavia* in Fremantle, and the quokkas of Rottnest Island. Thanks for the fresh bread and crash space, Cathy Cupitt and Scott, and for everything connected with Swancon, thank *you*, Craig Stephenson. Thank you, conventioners, for fetching the ice for our party, and thank you, David Cake, for showing us koalas and kangaroos – at last.

Lucy Sussex, Julian Warner, ten thousand thanks for letting strangers use your house while you were away. Thanks several times to Alan Stewart, for meeting us at the Melbourne airport and taking me to the footy game.

Thanks – again, and forever – to Craig and Julia Hilton for the futon, for the fire fountains, for showing us the platypodes and even “Ron Jeremy.” Donna Hanson, thanks for sharing your birthday dinner, for Alpha Centauri, and Bello Camillo, and to Tony's sister Pat Gibbs, thanks for the elegance of Parliament House and the majesty of Tidbinbilla.

A volley of thanks to Nick Stathapoulos for enduring unexpected visitors for the second week in a row, for giving us Sydney, its Opera House and Botanic Gardens, not to mention Mr. Squiggles. How can we ever thank Marilyn, the Pride of the Blue Mountains, for her magical home, or Sue



Batho for the cliff overlooking the Jamison Valley and Mount Solitude, or the both of you for the trip “just up the road” to the home and gallery and spirit of Norman Lindsay?

Of course, there are dozens – hundreds – millions of Australians more to thank, and much much more to thank these few mentioned for. (Boy, is that a sentence. *Is that a sentence?*) Basically, we thank them being *themselves*, the funny and friendly folks of Australia, a country where cleanliness, warmth, humor and affability reign, a country of pretty turf, amazing critters, heroic history, and let’s hope, a grand future.

*Oz is!*

My urge is to turn this whole issue of **Challenger** over to the Australian trip. We brought back so many great memories, so many fine photos (we’d’ve had more if my camera would have worked consistently) that restraining myself has been almost impossible. So you’ll find at least one article and several pages of pictures that I probably should have held for the DUFF report. But there *is* more. Loyal **Chall** pals Mike Resnick and Greg Benford chime in with travel stories of their own. Poet Michael Estabrook, E.B. Frohvet, Trinlay Khadro, and Terry Jeeves – not to mention our lettercol chorus – add immeasurably to the mix. And although I’d rather not, I must relate a story bound to bring the whole issue down to Earth. But before we get to all that, an event and a eulogy, tightly connected ...

On June 3, 2003, a TV clip aired show called **The 100 Greatest Movie Heroes and Villains of All Time**. The American Film Institute had polled its members for the listing. Not expecting much of either sense or sensibility, we watched it off and on, mainly to see where our favorites ranked.

Of course, the finest of all movie characters wouldn’t show at all. How would you classify Charles Foster Kane? But many terrific cinematic people fit in nicely – for instance, Will Kane, Gary Cooper’s invincible marshal from **High Noon** (and Charlie’s grandfather?). We watched and wondered, who would be at the top?

My two favorite movie menaces, Hannibal Lecter and Norman Bates, came out first and second in AFI’s villains listing. I would have reversed that ranking, but maybe AFI felt that Lecter could make Norman cry. Okay, what about movie heroes? James Bond, to my astonishment, ranked third, behind Indiana Jones. That, I felt, was ludicrous. We waited for the announcement of the top spot. Rose-Marie mentioned a name that we hadn’t heard yet, but I refused to believe that the movie people could have that much subtlety, sensitivity, and class. Then the familiar theme from **To Kill a Mockingbird** came on ... and I was abashed.

The American Film Institute had named Atticus Finch as the #1 film hero of all time.



That character changed my life. I saw **To Kill a Mockingbird** in 1962, when I was 12 years old. Atticus’ speech to the jury started me thinking that someday I might want to be a lawyer. Watching the film on tape for the thousandth time, just recently, I noted how beautifully the role was played – the way in which Finch said his simplest, yet most resonant line, “I’ll take the case”; how the actor allowed an edgy nervousness to infuse the courtroom scenes; how humanity never seemed more attainable than in the scenes with Scout, Finch’s daughter – and I felt again the call to justice not as an ideal, but as, in Finch’s words, “a living, breathing *reality*.” I remembered that, no matter how poorly I practice it, mine is a profession to take pride in. **To Kill a Mockingbird** and Atticus Finch set me on its path.

Californian, Berkeleyan, liberal, gentleman, Gregory Peck died on June 12, 2003. Californian, Berkeleyan, liberal, *someday* a gentleman, I try to honor him whenever I defend a guy.



# FANDOM, THE GENETIC FACTOR

Trinlay Khadro  
trin1066@hotmail.com

I grew up fannish, though I didn't discover the kingdom of Fandom until fairly recently. Yeah, there was the occasional news blurb about something like a "Star Trek" convention: but "gosh" I thought, "those people are even weirder than me..."

My dad was born in the late 30's and still has a well worn, fragile pile of comic books: **Batman**, **The Shadow**, tales of space travel and speculation about The Future. <"Where are the Flying Cars? There's supposed to be Flying Cars..."> Dad claims that he was never much of a reader, but he regularly watched the Buck Rogers and Flash Gordon serials. He had a Buck Rogers space station & a Space Cadet poster on the wall of his room.

My sister and I grew up sharing the usual activities with our Dad, assisting automotive and household repairs, camping and whatnot. Our evenings with Dad were magical though, sharing episodes of Classic Trek, and later **Battlestar Galactica**. Weekends were for **Twilight Zone** and B movie scifi and horror beside Dad in the den. Sis and I papered out rooms with posters of Yoda (my fave), Luke Skywalker, and Han Solo...

My sister and I are major readers, reading things like **Lord of the Rings**, and **Brave New World**, before we were in Middle School. Later we discovered **The Narnia Chronicles** and **Xanth**, and many many other wonderful worlds. Mom is our reading parent, but I don't think I've ever seen her read SF or Fantasy, and she rarely reads horror. But we have the devouring of books from her.

Somewhere between 7 & 10 years old I was bitten by the 'zine bug. My zines came out only occasionally in editions of 4-5 copies, each handwritten and drawn. I didn't have access to a ditto or a Xerox, let alone any idea of people outside the family who might be interested in my zines. Occasionally I'd get to run a ditto or do the stencil for a dittoed class project. But nothing really of my own till I was an adult, when I found myself raising my daughter alone, and wanting to keep in touch with friends far away. I also, on occasion, managed to pry material for that zine from some of my friends. It was great fun.

I also enjoyed taking my daughter to SCA events, Pensic war when she was about 2... an event in Madison when she was 4 or 5 where she ate too much candy and later threw up on my sisters's friend Kaiyt. Do *not* play airplane with a toddler who's been drinking Mountain Dew, and mooching boy scout candy (without mom's knowledge) all day.... The summer weekends of taking her to gawk and to shop at Gencon...

... and along the way, I discovered Fandom...

Now my daughter is just shy of driving age, we hangout with a fannish crowd. Video night weekly with one subset of local fans. Game night weekly with another subset of fans, and once a month for the local APA. Now also occasionally a trip to a local, or not so distant con.

Now, I see her, emailing fan-fic of her own, choosing and reading books from friends and from the library, now that she's read ALL of my books. She's busy playing SF & Fantasy themed video games, and movies, enjoying SF themed TV shows that she's discovered herself. She's found friends of her own with fannish tendencies, who enjoy reading, and sharing their books and videos.

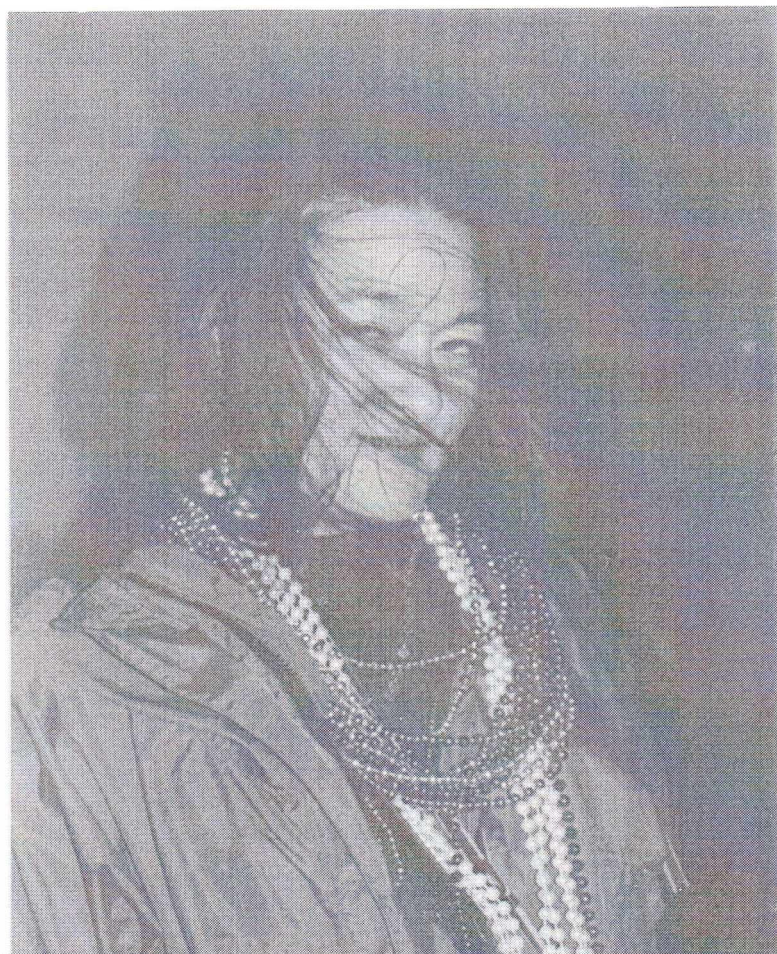
With many of her friends, I've noticed there is a parent or stepparent who is a reader or a fan. Occasionally one of the friends has a parent who is an active fan. Though more common seems to be the fannish, or borderline fannish child who comes from a family with no idea what could possibly be fun about SF or Fandom. I wonder how that happens.

I'm glad to have a family to share my passion with, and that I've been blessed with being able to pass my love along to my child.





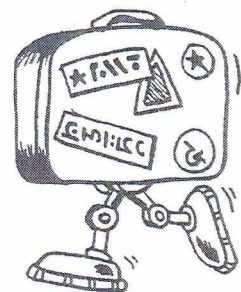
# VISITORS ...



The days before we left for Australia saw fan buddies come to New Orleans to bid us a good journey. To left, Naomi Fisher celebrates Mardi Gras ...

And the very night before we left, Joe Celko came down to visit Justin Winston at the N.O. Symphony Book Fair ...

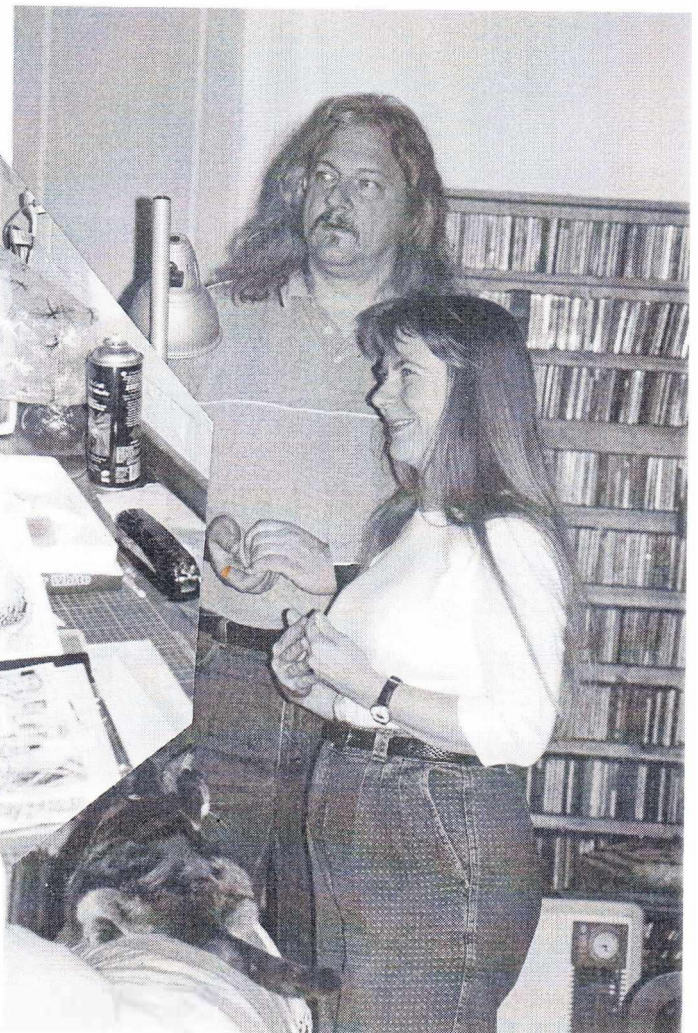
and host Annie Winston, Dennis Dolbear, Rosy, me and Justin at an elegant feed.



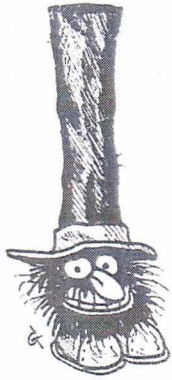


and **VISITED;**  
some of our many new  
friends in Australia

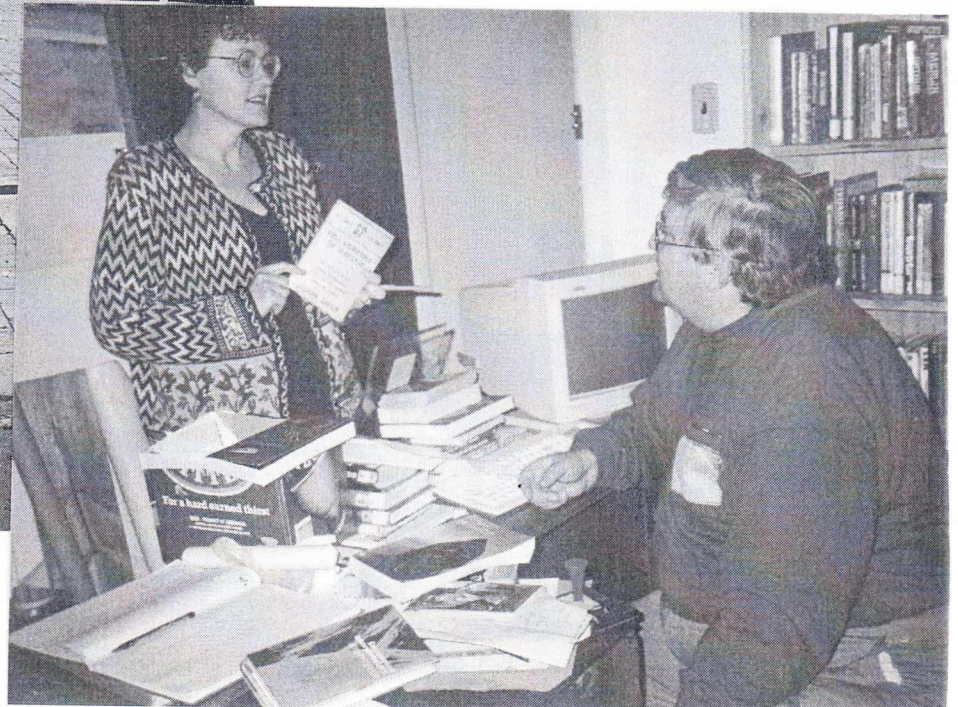
Right, Nick Stathapoulos  
with his portrait of Mr.  
Squiggles, below,  
Marilyn Pride and her  
drawing desk ...



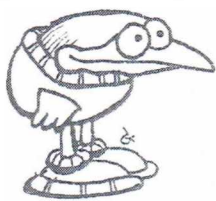




Above, Craig Hilton fondles candies;  
left, I join Robin Johnson and Bill Wright  
at the National Maritime Museum; below,  
Rosy is delighted that the library of the  
Melbourne Science Fiction Club features  
four books by her father, Joseph Green



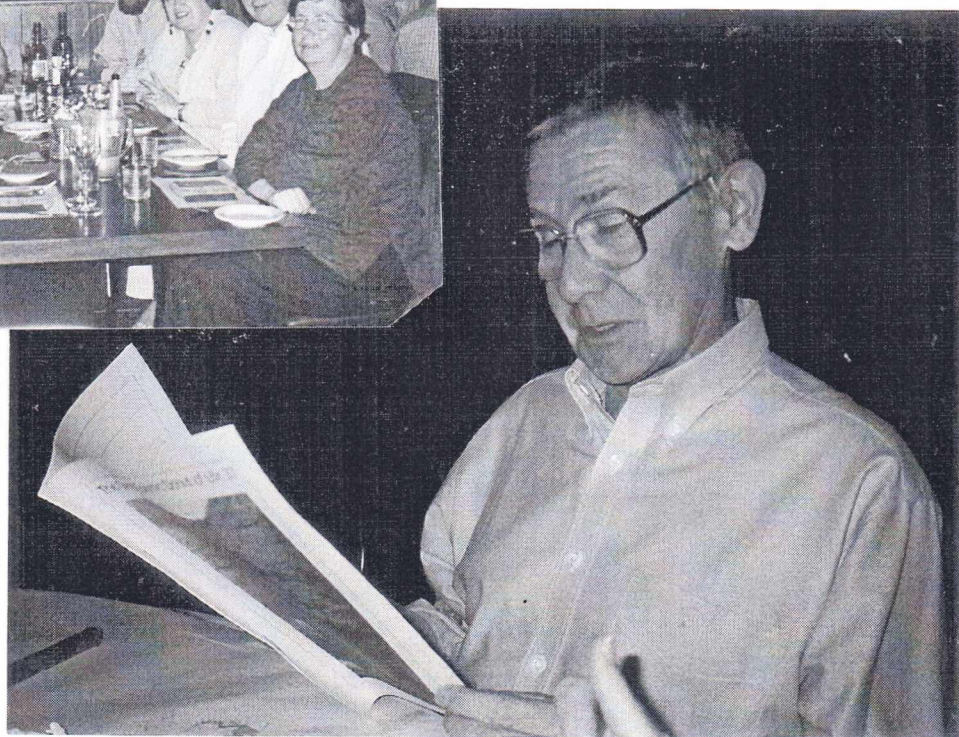
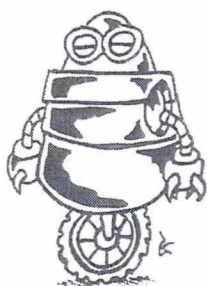




Swancon, the 2003 Australian National SF Convention, featured at least one other American, author Lynn Fleweling (r), shown here at our hurricane party. Below, in Melbourne, we chow down with Craig Hilton, Alan Stewart, Julia Hilton, and Bruce & Elaine Gillespie, and 'way below, at another repast, the great Aussie artist Dick Jenssen (a.k.a. Ditmar) peruses a fanzine.



9





*La belle* lends grace to Tidbinbilla, the Sydney Opera House, and the skyline of Sydney itself ...

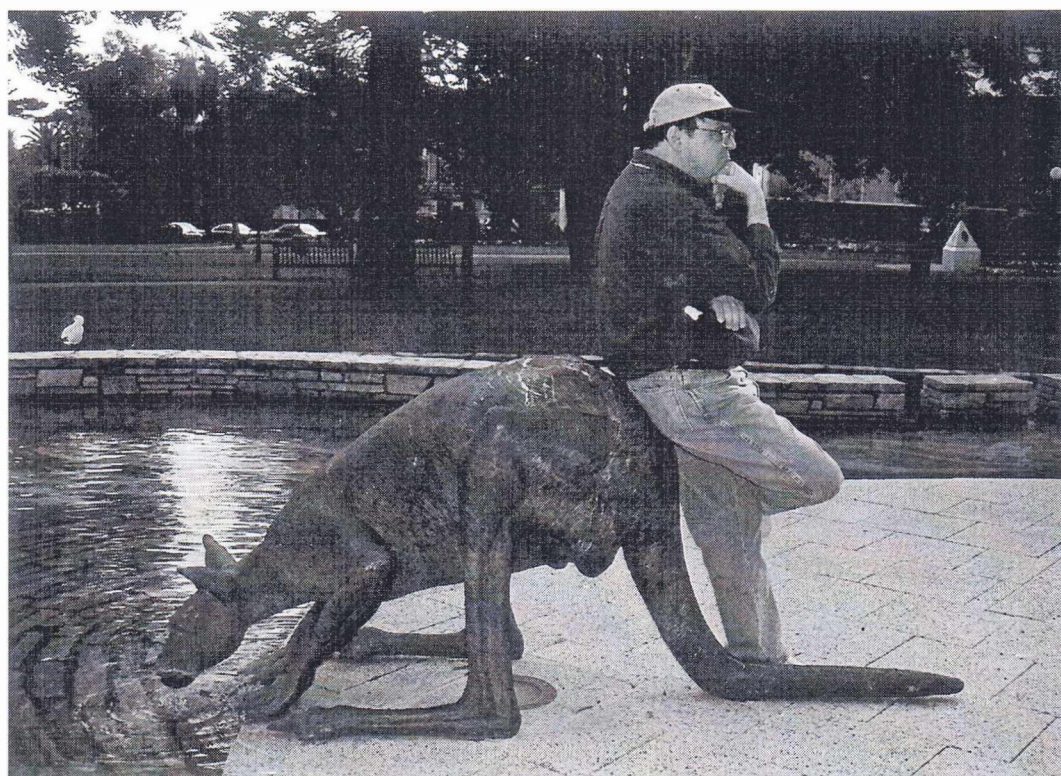






At a zoo outside of Perth I make contact with an Australian native. True, his conversation consisted solely of “Hellooooooooo?” ... but so did mine. The ‘roo I met downtown had even less to say.

Ah, Australia ... what a country; what an adventure.





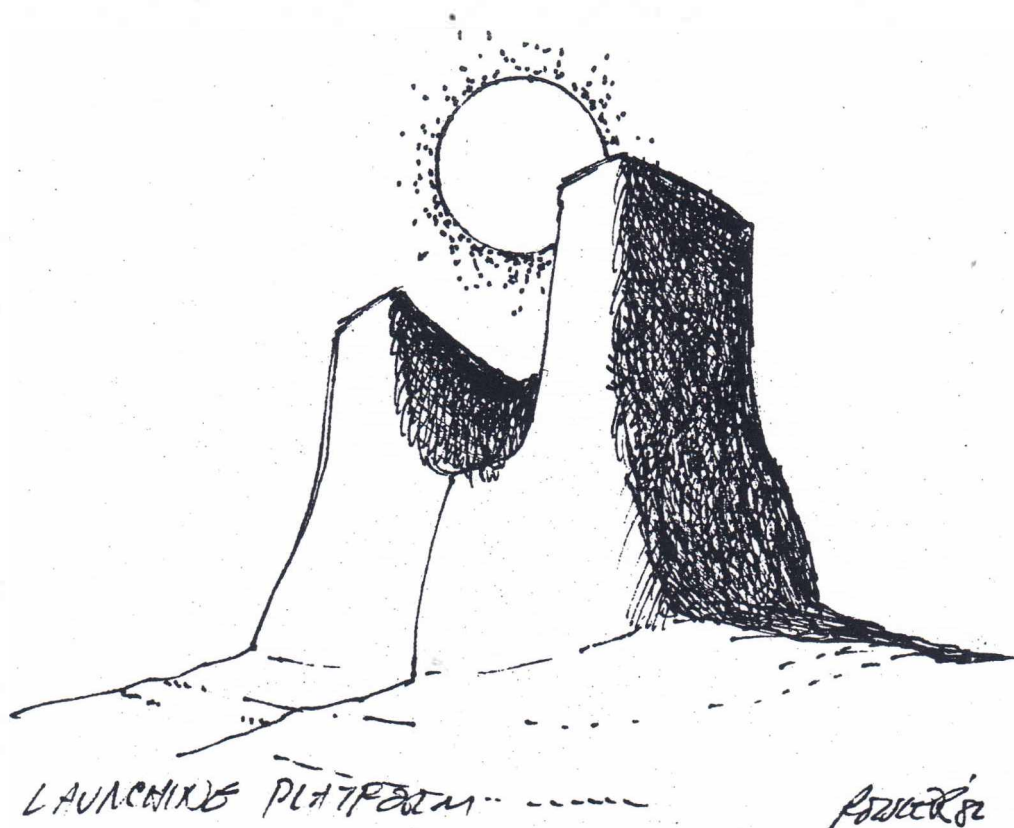
# POEMS by MICHAEL ESTABROOK

one of the times I scared  
the living hell out of my brother Kerry

The summer of 1966 both my brother and I worked at the *Cranberry Veterinary Hospital*, and we loved it. Doc Johnson didn't have children so maybe that's why he was so nice to us, encouraging our schooling, giving us responsibilities and praise. We felt important even when giving a dog a tic bath or cleaning-out the runs. That's what I was doing one quiet afternoon, cleaning out the runs, while Kerry was wheeling the food cart in and out of the wards dishing out *Alpo* and biscuits. I decided it was too quiet, and his insipid singing and humming was driving me nuts. So I crouched alongside the door of Ward 3, and as my dopey brother came in, humming some stupid *Supremes* tune, I leapt out clawing and scratching at his legs, barking like a demented Doberman pinscher. The poor guy screamed and jumped into the air, sending the foodcart toppling into a clutter of bowls and cans and paper towels. All the animals in their cages were extremely confused, and when the Doc came to see what all the commotion was about I was out back whistling peacefully, and feeding the ducks.

## Egret

Tall gray bird, an egret I think  
standing in the shore of a small pond  
poised, quiet, intent, focused,  
his head and long beak  
suddenly snapping into the water.  
He stabbing at one of the numerous  
plump brown tadpoles beginning to kick  
their frog legs, but he misses,  
comes up dry, guess I'm not the only one.



*Others have traveled the world since our last issue. Here's the author of Timescape and The Martian Way reporting on his journey to*

# ASIA MAJOR

*Gregory Benford*

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*China* – the name had beckoned to me for decades. Yet I put off going, largely because I was waiting for it to – well – *improve*. (The same is still true of the Middle East, alas.)

As the Hong Kong University's conference loomed in late March, 2003, news came of SARS, which seemed to be an exponentiating plague, easily moving on moisture coughed out by the unsuspecting carriers. Scary. And Hong Kong was site of the first detections.

Still, I was immortal, wasn't I? And we had planned for the conference and trip afterward for months. I had gone through a very rough year, marked by the deaths of my wife after a long bout with cancer, and of my father at age 90. Each had fought long, punishing battles. Mortality loomed. I needed a trip that would take me out of myself, and away from the importunings of phone and internet. I wanted to go, without knowing what I sought.



So we duly flew, and Hong Kong was a delight--like Japan with the subtle style superheated by tropical moisture and breezes. The conference itself was on "techoscience and the future" so I talked about the coming world of smart cities and invasive technologies, all married to agile robots. Others winged into critical theory and politics and the best parts of the meeting were those devoted to food and drink and talk, as usual.

Charles DeGaulle once said that China is full of promise and always will be. He implied that it would never get out of its vexed potential well, and he may yet prove right. But Hong Kong's bright commercial glaze belied the argument. Its exuberance denied passing problems like SARS. The conference attendees wore masks for the first day, including the group picture (quite funny), then abandoned them.

The business at hand — the thing I came for — was important to me. I wanted to know — to learn in person — that China was entering the "world of science fiction," that this place, vital to every plausible human future, was at last starting to bathe the rich stew of both hope and warnings that only SF can offer. I did my best to help stir the pot a little, and the local cooks put up with my advice, then returned to their own recipes. I can report it's simmering nicely.

That job done, I could turn to the rest of the voyage.

We sailed after the conference on a cruise up the coast, waving goodbye to the bright lights, big city, and wondering if the communist coast would be as gaudy. It wasn't. Shanghai tries hard — busy, bustling, but strangely subdued. Little neon glitter, though with a fine and stylish museum featuring ancient artifacts from a main branch of Earthling history. It was like Hong Kong without the polish, and with a pall of coal haze that hung like a persistent metaphor over the city and countryside. We may seek to constrain the energy needs of the developing world, but the coal haze of China refutes all arguments. They will run their motors and breathe their fumes, and to hell with the rest of us. What to do? Innovate. We had better innovate, and fast.

#

SARS had made the government close all Internet cafes, so no information got in or out. tour guides claimed to know nothing of this, and when asked about population they regurgitated identical statistics and homilies. They penalize families with more than one child, withdrawing the socialist support net from the child, including health care.

And it's *crowded*, yes. Everywhere that one might expect to see jobs done by machines, there instead labor teams of workers in loose cotton pajamas--digging ditches, sweeping streets with reed brooms. Construction projects are carried out by ant-like squadrons, swarming over great lattices of bamboo, laced with strap. About 70% of the work force farms, vs. 5% for the US. (The US produces more than China, and had 90% on farms in 1900.) There are few tractors, but many people digging and plowing by hand. Sad, really. One of them might be an Einstein, given the chance.

Outside Shanghai, I saw two MIGs peel overhead in a loud, showoff roll maneuver. MIGs! Like seeing a dinosaur break from the brush, howling. Bought from the crumbling Soviet Empire back in the early '90s, I guessed. It felt odd to be without my daily diet of both the Los Angeles and the New York *Times*, dutifully consumed at the breakfast table over a pot of tea. What was going on? Iraq should have been a walkover, but was it?

The Second Iraq War was raging, and I picked up a copy of the *New China Times*, the local English-language *Pravda* — and found that it used the same rhetoric, the same sur-realistic take on the news I was also getting on CNN by satellite. Iraqis had stalled the allied advance, said the *China Times*, and the international peace movement was forcing a negotiated end to the war. The state TV news took the same line, running only pictures of civilian casualties. I always appreciate local humor. At least our brainwashing is more subtle and varied. And you can still argue. Still.

Then, surprise surprise, Baghdad fell. The story shot to the back of the paper and soon vanished altogether. No pictures of Saddam's statue falling. I wondered what the ordinary readers thought. But then, they know how to read the unwritten, just as in the old Soviet world.

Beijing and the Great Wall were striking. The hills had that beautiful bulging curvature one sees in Chinese art, unlike any other landscape I know. Alas, many of the ancient shrines were destroyed in

the Mao years. Mao's figure still remains in statues but more often on the face of comic watches, his hands pointing to the time. Instead, the latest Party Chairman beams from posters. In the street markets, commerce flows through tiny stalls of vendors. In Dalian the food markets had ranks of suggestive vegetables, some shaped for all the world like sexual appliances. Eating them would be a cross-cultural challenge, yes. Considering that they still use human sewage in their fields, even more so.

In the ancient shrines and gardens some hint of the earlier world remain. In Wu Xi outside Shanghai a serene city block still held the essentials of a classic garden: Stone, water, bridge, pavilion. A hovering presence. But the city crowded around.

And *where were the birds?* None in the farms, no herons to steal fish, no seagulls. They had either been squeezed out or hunted down, like the herons. This is what a denuded future would look like. Humans were the sole focus; the natural had vanished. I saw a rat scramble across a cobbled street and recognized it as my collaborator. And shivered.

A thousand miles of Chinese coastline had gone by. Admiral Cheng Ho once sailed the same course while returning from the greatest expedition of all time... expecting accolades and a new world-age led by an outgoing China.... Only to find that his brief renaissance was over and a hostile Court would return to isolationist ways. They lost the world from loss of nerve.

#

The garden in its presence was the first moment when I felt real contact with the Asia I remembered from the three years I had lived as a boy outside Tokyo. China had only tatters of it. But Japan lay ahead.

Nagasaki was delightful – a smallish city, with a bomb memorial that held more atmosphere than the larger one at Hiroshima. We then sailed through the Inland Sea, dotted with wooded islands and humming with commerce as we drew into Osaka harbor. I had stopped paying much attention to the news by this time. The rest of the world seemed quite far away.

The train to Kyoto was speedy and jammed. To arrive there and reach the traditional inn, a *ryokan* of some vintage, is a relish, surprisingly restful. The food was excellent, breakfast and dinner in your room in the old style. Since my boyhood I have liked sleeping on futons and eating in a geometrically perfect room of tatami mats. The Japanese sense of style is the world's sharpest minimalism. I'd greet aliens in one of these rooms, in order to make a guaranteed good first impression.

We met old friends and fine members of the SF community there (Japan is already a member of the Civilization of SF) and saw the usual sights. I have been to Kyoto several times, but it never palls; perhaps it is the most impressive city I know. The cherry blossoms had opened the day we arrived, timing I had hoped for when booking half a year before. The famous Philosopher's Walk, a stream course running beneath bowers of impossibly lovely pink-white, was the most striking vista I had yet seen. Everyone turns out at this season, but somehow in the mild air the crowds did not intrude upon the mood. Wonderful, but there was more to come.

The Zen retreat in northern Kyoto is modest, and the mottled walls of the Ryoan-ji garden holds a stillness that had been etched in me half a century before. A 31-meter long rectangle, 15 meters across, it can only be viewed close up and so no photograph can catch it. Lenses chop off corners or distort its flat



gravel expanse through neck-cracking camera angles. Ancient stones set into the gravel loom like mountains, some surrounded with a skirt of moss. Raked lines in the gravel are straight in the broad expanses but circle the fifteen stones. A low, baked clay wall frames the garden, so that the rising stones and flat gravel can be seen only from the veranda of the Abbot's Quarters of the Zen retreat.

I sat and studied. Perhaps it was important to the unknown creator that only a tantalizing fourteen of the stones could be seen from any one position. Perhaps it was significant that the number of stone islands, five, and the number of independent stones, two, were both prime numbers, and that the sum of them was seven, also a prime. And perhaps it was not, for the total number of stones in all was fifteen, not a prime. Did the designer intend this joke? Very Zen.

The garden's appeal is intellectual, not sensual. Austere, barren, it makes you see what you wanted to, much as a desert landscape forces concentration through its spareness. I stared into it and a slight mist fell silently. Were the raked lines waves in a sea, currents in a river, the swirling patterns of iron filings around magnets? And the stones--mountain tops above clouds, the coils of a dragon arcing from the water, a tigress leading cubs across a treacherous river?

There was no answer and never would be. It's a Zen koan made real, subversive of easy answers. The art of the void. Moving ghostlike around the eternal riddle of the garden was as hypnotic as staring into the flickering flames of a fire.

After that, Tokyo was an anticlimax. Dinner with my publisher (who booked the whole restaurant for the night, I slowly realized as course after course arrived). The slick, stylish Ginza. A walk through the cacophony of the electronics district. A tour of the Honda robot center.

The Asimo robot can see you, respond, walk smoothly beside you to a conference room, look where you point. Honda leases a dozen of them to high tech firms so they can introduce stockholder meetings and kick off sales conferences. People invariably treat it as a person, and it has a boy's voice, appropriate to its height. The Japanese are far ahead of the rest of the world in this because they come to the technology unburdened by a literature (especially SF) that sees robots as ominous and threatening. It was refreshing to meet one at last. I could not stop myself from embodying it--that is, reacting as if to a small, friendly boy with a high-pitched voice.

But the garden, sublime and certain in its silence, stuck with me. A week in Hawaii spent diving and swimming did not alter my mood; indeed, it helped. I had come to some conclusions.

Calamity and travel had \*somehow conspired. Life narrowed to the essentials: look after your friends and yourself, and grab all the fun you can find. Continue your involvement in the world's future, but forget about your enduring legacy in that future world -- a world that will be more Asian than we egotistical Westerners would like to contemplate. That may be a good thing. Anyway, Legacies take care of themselves.

Skip reading all the bad news in the newspapers, which was most of it, and thereby improve your digestion. Write off the past and don't dwell in the myriad possible futures. Live *now*. Love, friendship, fun: get 'em while they're hot.

The trip had well paid for itself.

5/29/03





*The editor of Twink chimes in from real life ...*

## INSURANCE LAW FOR FUN AND PROFIT

*E.B. Frohvet*

I am by profession an insurance claims adjuster. Although my job involves both legal and medical aspects, I have no degree or advanced training in medicine or law. Neither my college (English major) nor my Army (military intelligence) training has much to do with the subject. The sum of my qualifications consists of a ten-week company training course, and four or five months of supervised on-the-job experience in which my decisions were reviewed. After that, save for the occasional class on company policy, I've been on my own. My decisions, my notices, go out as the company's official response to claims. Only rarely are they appealed – I'll get to that later – and if any of them have given rise to a lawsuit, I've never been called to testify.

Decisions cover a surprisingly wide range of subjects, even though I work chiefly on death and disability cases. (Seldom on homeowner's insurance or car insurance. These are handled chiefly at local offices. I work at a regional claims center, and almost never meet or speak to policyholders.) The guidance for legal aspects can come from general principles, federal, state or local statute as applicable, company policy or regulations, or any combination of these, leavened with individual judgment. I do not make medical decisions as such but I do have to have some basic familiarity in order to read and evaluate medical records on the disability claims. Occasionally on the death claims as well.

In theory, I can bounce a case up to the legal staff or the medical consultant staff to request an advisory opinion from an actual attorney or physician. In practice, this is discouraged except for really difficult problems – my manager and the division manager have to sign off on it, and even if it goes up, chances are I'll get back an evasive fudged answer that amounts to "Use your own judgment." I

probably have a couple thousand cases pass over my desk in an average year, more than half of those involving final decisions on my own authority. I might refer three or four cases a year for opinions.

The vast majority of cases are routine, of course. Many can be handled in ten minutes. Here's what the policy says, here are the standard company rules, plug in the facts and the answer comes out. Maybe 75% of the notices I send are form letters, fill-in-the-blanks and send it to be printed out. (It used to be that letters had to be typed, which got me in trouble with the typing pool. I once used the word "analogous," and the typist complained "There's no such word." I showed it to her in the dictionary.)

Certain cases, however, stick in the mind. Let's consider "Alfred." (All names have been changed.) He was married to "Bridget" and by all accounts they were a devoted couple, though they never had children. Alfred suffered from a chronic mild depression – what the **DSC (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders**, a staple reference in the field) would call "dysthymia." He took a mild dose of a standard antidepressant and had never shown any unusual reaction or side effect.

In his mid-50's, Alfred took an early retirement from his place of work. He and Bridget bought a mobile-camper, a Winnebago type of thing, and spent much of their time seeing the country. On evening they stopped at a campground on the northern California coast. Very early the next morning, Alfred got up and told his wife he was going down to the beach to fish. Bridget thought nothing of it, Alfred went fishing often, it was a favorite hobby of his. Alfred took his fishing gear and his revolver (why he took a handgun to go fishing was never explained) and left the Winnebago.

And was never seen again.

A few hours later Bridget got up, had breakfast, tidied up the camper, and walked down to the beach. Well above the high tide line she found Alfred's fishing rod, with the holstered revolver lying next to it. His tackle box was never found. According to the local sheriff, the handgun was loaded, with the safety on, no fired rounds, and in his professional judgment ("from the amount of

dust in the barrel”) had not been fired in several weeks.

The sheriff further testified that the shore dropped off sharply in that area and the tides could be “tricky” – he knew of two or three instances in the past 20 years in which people had drowned, the bodies had been swept away and recovered some distance away, or not at all.

The commandant of the nearest Coast Guard station agreed with the sheriff: such things were recorded in the station’s files, though he had never encountered such a case personally.

The National Weather Service stated that the weather in the area had been clear and breezy that day and the tides had been “normal” for the time of year.

Bridget acknowledged that Alfred was a very experienced fisherman, he had done surf fishing, or fished in fast moving rivers, many times. Yes, Alfred could swim, he was a good swimmer for a man his age.

The sheriff’s official report concluded: “Missing, possibly drowned.”

A few months later, Bridget filed for Alfred’s insurance; she and her lawyer claimed “death by misadventure,” legalese for “accident.”

Anyone with whom you attempt to do thanatological business – legal business related to or contingent upon death – will immediately ask for a copy of the death certificate. (The funeral home will make certified copies for you. Get at least ten.) In Alfred’s case there was none. The county coroner declined to issue a death certificate and ruled there were “insufficient grounds” to hold a coroner’s inquest.

The death certificate is normal practice, though not carved in stone. The most usual exception is the “common disaster” rule, where people die under circumstances where death is pretty clear but recovering the bodies is not feasible. A typical example could be shipwreck. Legally: a reasonable expectation or presumption of death.

While it is therefore possible to have a legal finding of death without a body, it is exceptional and dependent on circumstances. The unwritten common law rule for presumption of death is “seven years’ unexplained absence.” (Your mileage may vary: under Florida statute, five years.) In short, you can’t just run out and claim death with nothing to show for it.

I denied Bridget’s claim. I ruled that presumption of death was “purely speculative” on the evidence, citing the sheriff’s report of “Missing” and the coroner’s refusal to hold an inquest. Further, I ruled that suicide “while of unsound mind” could not be ruled out in view of Alfred’s history of mental disorder. (Suicide is excluded from almost all life insurance, as is death in combat – except military insurance underwritten by the services – or death in “riot and insurrection.” I’ve seen cases in which death during a riot was ruled murder, and covered; conversely I’ve seen a case in which a man provoked the police into shooting him ruled a suicide.)

There is, as I previously alluded to, an appeals process. A claimant can ask a company review board to reconsider my decision. Bridget and her attorney requested an appeal. I was asked to submit an informal memo as to how confident I was in my ruling. I said it seemed to me “a very clear-cut decision” on the evidence. Bridget’s lawyer submitted a letter from Alfred’s doctor: asked if he thought Alfred likely to commit suicide, the doctor replied, “I wouldn’t have thought so.” Numerous depositions were submitted by friends and relatives concerning what a “normal” and devoted husband Alfred was. Counsel argued that neither suicide nor abandonment was a plausible scenario, and death by accidental drowning was “the only reasonable conclusion.” The appeals board upheld my decision and refused to pay on the policy. I don’t know if a lawsuit was ever filed.

There was another policyholder – we’ll call him Xavier. Xavier was domiciled in Michigan when he died. (“Domicile” is defined as “a true, fixed and permanent residence to which, whenever one is absent, he has the intention to return.” This is relevant because Xavier’s estate will be probated under Michigan law.)

Xavier was formerly married to “Betty” and they had two children, “Charles and Danielle.” Betty and Xavier were divorced some years before he passed on. He died, Betty filed for the insurance. The policy was taken out when Xavier and Betty were still married, and listed Betty (“wife”), Charles and Danielle as beneficiaries. The policy had not been updated or amended after the divorce – a mistake that many make, by the way.

At this point, enter "Yolanda," who is domiciled in Minnesota. Yolanda is the woman for whom Xavier left Betty. Yolanda also files claim for the insurance, saying she was "married" to Xavier. Yolanda admits there was no license and no ceremony, and that Xavier was still married to Betty at the time; but Yolanda says that she and Xavier "exchanged vows" in a lawyer's office (in Wisconsin, where neither lived at the time), and this made them "married." Yolanda further asserts that her daughter "Zoe" is Xavier's child and is also entitled to a chunk of the insurance money.

The lawyer in Wisconsin, "Fred", is contacted. Fred agrees that Xavier and Yolanda did consult him, and that there was a "general discussion" about marriage, but heatedly denies that there was any "exchange of vows," and further states that even had there been, that would not constitute a "marriage" according to Wisconsin law.

The pastor - "George" - of a church in which Zoe was baptized, formally certifies from the records of the church that Xavier represented himself as Yolanda's "husband" and Zoe's "father" on the occasion of the christening. Pastor George states that he personally remembers the baptism, at which he officiated, and that Xavier and Yolanda seemed to him a very ordinary couple and he had no reason to doubt they were married.

At this point, Xavier's sister Naomi gets into the act, deposing that in the months prior to Xavier's death she discussed this matter with him, and Xavier repeatedly denied that he was ever "married" to Yolanda or was the father of Zoe. Naomi also produces Marie, a neighbor, who swears that she heard with her own ears Xavier make these denials.

Keep in mind the presumption of the validity of the more recent marriage. Keep in mind that this is only a presumption and may be rebutted by "clear and convincing" evidence. Keep in mind that "clear and convincing" is a term that means what a court says it means. Keep in mind that even though there was no license or ceremony, Yolanda may have a claim for "common law" marriage, which is still recognized in some states (Minnesota, but not Wisconsin). Even though a common law marriage would have been invalid at the time it was entered into, because Xavier was still married to Betty, it might have matured into a valid common law marriage once they were

divorced. Keep in mind the general principle of putative or "de facto" marriage: a person may have gone through a marriage in good faith, in ignorance of the fact that there was a legal impediment to its validity, and good faith should generally not be punished. However, keep in mind that ignorance of the law is no excuse.

Now consult the marriage and inheritance laws of all three states, the relevant federal rulings (since this is an interstate case it may wind up in federal court); have a cup of coffee, and you tell me: who gets the insurance money?

In this case, I made a Solomon's Decision, which the legal staff approved and the company accepted. Betty gets nothing, even though she was still listed as a beneficiary - her claim to being a beneficiary was explicitly as "wife" of the insured, and they were divorced. Yolanda gets nothing, she was never "married" to Xavier. Charles, Danielle, and Zoe split the money in equal shares. Zoe gets a cut because Xavier represented himself as her father on an occasion (the baptism) when he should have understood a permanent record would be made. Church records, while not binding on government agencies or private companies, are frequently recognized as highly reliable evidence. Xavier's recognition of Zoe on that occasion constitutes admission of paternity for purposes of inheritance. Zoe gets a share.

Consider the case of "Henry" and "Irene", a middle-aged couple who operated a farm in Iowa. They had a son, "Jack", a major whack job by any standard.

Jack lived alone in his room, leaving it only under two circumstances. He spoke seldom to his mother, rarely to his father, and never to anyone else. Jack did not bathe nor wash his clothes, and wore the same clothes for weeks at a time, until they were literally in filthy rags. Jack could not be persuaded to eat with his parents in the kitchen; whatever Irene cooked, she had to put in a bowl (the *very same* bowl every time, else he wouldn't touch it - she lived in constant fear of breaking that bowl) and take it to his room. If this was not done, Jack would sit in his room and starve rather than come into the kitchen for a piece of bread. He could not be persuaded to use the bathroom; when he had to relieve himself, Jack would go outside behind the barn. The



only other time Jack would leave the room would be if any person other than his parents was admitted to the house; then (even if it was a relative or family friend he had known since childhood) he would flee outside in panic, wearing whatever clothes he had on, regardless of the weather.

All very sad, you may well say; but what has this got to do with insurance law? Here we arrive at the legal rather than the medical problem. Henry, the father, tried to claim Jack as a "partner" in his farm operation, relevant to getting Jack covered under the farm's insurance policy.

Partners are two or more people "contractually associated as joint principals in a business"; further, partners are persons who contribute "property, funds, skills, labor, management, or other assets" to the joint operation of an enterprise.

Put on those terms, it seems pretty obvious. Jack had no funds or assets of his own; he contributed no labor or skills to the operation of the farm. I denied the claim. Again, there was an appeal; Henry claimed that he "consulted" Jack on "management decisions." The review board quoted from my memo in affirming my decision: "not only is there no evidence that petitioner [officially Jack] contributes to the management of the farm operation, by claimant's [Henry's] own statement, petitioner is unable to achieve even basic skills of self-care or personal hygiene."

I felt very sorry for Henry and Irene, but my responsibility to give the claimants a fair decision balances against my responsibility to the stockholders not to give their money away on obviously frivolous claims.

Then there was the dubious case of "Pablo & Pablo", two total strangers, one in Arizona and one in California; each claimed to be the estranged son and sole beneficiary of the deceased policyholder, "Gustavo". And each of whom had a birth certificate to prove it. The *exact same* birth certificate.

It's well known, of course, that the stealing or forging or otherwise falsely obtaining documents – birth certificates, driver's licenses, Social Security cards, Immigration & Naturalization Service resident or "green cards" – is a thriving industry. Last number I heard, the certified birth certificate of a Hispanic male citizen born in the U.S. went for \$2,000 and up.

Each Pablo claimed to be the "real" Pablo, the son of the deceased, and each denounced the other as an illegal alien fraudulently using his identity. Last I heard of this case it went back to the Flagstaff, Arizona local office for "further development of evidence." I have a glum feeling that it will wind up back on my desk.

Another favorite was the old fellow who was trying to prove he was age 65 in order to cash in a retirement policy. Of course he had no proof of age – "I was baptized but the church burned down" is a standing joke, I've heard it's also common in the Social Security Administration or other government agencies where proof of age comes into play. This man's excuse was at least original: of course his birth had been recorded when he was born in Nicaragua, he said, but unfortunately the rebels mortared the courthouse during the revolution, and all the records were destroyed. After a good round of laughs, we found the first Census Record after the claimant arrived in the U.S., and used that.

"Veronica" was another favorite; I saw her file regularly though it seldom required any action. Her late husband had wisely set up his insurance so that it would pay her, not the typical lump sum, but a regular allotment or stipend. From all indications she was a perfectly nice old lady, but a little dotty; any time she had cash in her hand, she would go out and spend it on any frivolous thing that took her fancy, and then not have anything left to pay the electricity bill. So every month we sent her a modest check; and every month she'd send the company a nice little note on flowered paper, telling us about her day. She went down to the check cashing place, where they were always nice to her, and then she went to the market, there was a sale on pork chops, she didn't usually buy pork chops but they were on sale; and then she bought a doll for her grand-niece ...

The general perception is that insurance, like accounting, is boring. Don't be misled. I bet accountants could tell some interesting tales, too.



# NO PICNIC AT HANGING ROCK



*Guy  
Lillian*



*The complete story of our DUFF journey must be reserved for our trip report. But I can't resist sharing moments of Oz's magic ... such as this one. Believe me, it was*

# NO PICNIC AT HANGING ROCK

Guy Lillian

*The Hanging Rock is a spectacular volcanic uprising on the plains below Mount Macedon [in Victoria, Australia], of special interest to geologists on account of its unique rock formations, including monoliths and reputedly bottomless holes and caves ... It was thought at the time that the missing persons had attempted to climb the dangerous rock escarpments near the summit, where they presumably met their deaths; but whether by accident, suicide or ... murder has never been established, since the bodies were never recovered.*

Picnic at Hanging Rock by Joan Lindsay

Bill stepped on a patch of wet grass and his feet went flying. He crashed onto his rear end. A backpack containing his thermos and other expensive gear hit the slope and slid, slowly as a turtle, towards the edge of the abyss, in the midst of Hanging Rock.

"Guy!?" Rosy cried. "Get it!"

I stretched my hand towards the sliding pack. It felt as if I were reaching through molasses. The pack escaped me by inches, reached the edge – and went over. I watched it skid to a halt fifteen feet down, inches from yet another chasm – still deeper and even more inaccessible. One of us, obviously, would have to go after it.

Bill Wright couldn't, of course. He is a large man, hearty with exercise, but pushing 70 and still learning to master his diabetes. He really shouldn't have tried this trek up Victoria's famous mamelon, known from Peter Weir's masterful film **Picnic at Hanging Rock**, and which absolutely *had* to be the first item on our DUFF trip agenda. But he was a great fanzine editor, an enthusiastic friend of the Down Under fan Fund, had generously appointed himself our guide, and couldn't be refused.

Rosy volunteered – after all, she said, she was the lightest and we could easily haul her back to safety. *As if.* I didn't risk insanity on a 14½ hour transoceanic plane ride to send my wife over a cliff and into peril. *I had to go. I had to descend into that pit – and worry about getting back later.* So over I went, following the pack, sliding on my personality into the unknown.

I reached the pack and tossed it easily back up to Rosy and Bill. Now what? Below – where the pack had almost fallen – was an impenetrable jumble of grey stone. The only way out was up. How? The sides of the pit were about ten feet at this edge – and sheer. No hand- or footholds.

Above, a thin white sapling grew by the edge of the rock shelf. Rosy bent it down to me. I grasped its rubbery limbs and began to haul my heaviness up, hand over hand., my feet seeking purchase on the featureless sides of the crevice. The roots of the tree gripped into the Rock's thin layer of soil. As they bore my weight an inch – two – ripped free. I took a great interest in those roots. If they gave way, down I'd crash, and there would be no way for Rosy and Bill to get me out. Like Miranda in **Picnic**, I'd stay there.

Not to mention the fact that we were *lost*. *Lost ... on Hanging Rock.*



Our road to Hanging Rock began, of course, in the early '80s, when laudatory word-of-zine from west coast fandom propelled me to see the movie. I was living in North Carolina and the other theatergoers must have thought the title referred to the Hanging Rock there. They may have been disappointed, but I wasn't. I was enraptured.

Peter Weir's poignant and subtle parable of death and nature was a new thing in so many cinematic ways. The subtext was both spooky and insightful. The message was both serious and heartening. The metaphor was powerful and compelling. Amidst the stones of Hanging Rock – and the pages of Joan Lindsay's novel – Weir found an acceptance of nature, and death, that was neither cynical nor despairing. To compensate my sensitive first wife for making her endure the violent insanity of *Apocalypse Now*, I took her to *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, a sane, comforting, beautiful reconciliation with life.

Which was also *Australian*. Aside from its substantial value as a metaphorical movie, *Picnic* also introduced me to downunder film making, then in genuine renaissance. I glommed onto every Aussie flick that opened, from *The Road Warrior* and Weir's extraordinary *The Last Wave* to *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith* and *My Brilliant Career*. I noted as much the landscape on which the films were set as I did the actors – although who would notice turf when Judy Davis is on screen. A vague desire to *go there* began to percolate – not that I'd ever get the chance to, of course.

There matters rested.

Until I married Rose-Marie and found there was something in life that could overcome my fear of flying. And, propelled by *la belle's* conviction that "it would be fun," we ran for DUFF.

The movie was on my mind from the very start of the campaign. In our flyer, remembering one of my favorite scenes, I promised "to climb Hanging Rock, and bring [fandom] down a scrap of calico." When the Down Under Fan Fund race came out in our favor, two ambitions were foremost in my mind: tour the Sydney Opera House – and keep my promise.

So here we were.



*Everyone agreed that the day was just right for the picnic in Hanging Rock – a shimmering summer morning warm and still, with cicadas shrilling all through breakfast from the loquat trees ... and bees murmuring above the pansies.*

### **Picnic at Hanging Rock**

*This* didn't seem a propitious day for a picnic. As we trundled into downtown Melbourne to catch our train, we eyed not only the red "rake" river sculpture and the huge FCUK sign on the department store (French Connection United Kingdom, that is), but the sky ... which was thick with clouds. If there's one thing a picnic doesn't need, it's rain.

Bill Wright, who met us at the train station, didn't seem deterred. Bill is one of Australia fandom's senior zine editors, publisher of *Intermediate Vector Bosons*, and during the DUFF race had helped both us and our rivals distribute campaign material. He had met us the day before at the house where we were crashing, and had hosted our first dinner downunder with Rose Mitchell, Paula McGrath and Alan Stewart. His offer to guide us to Hanging Rock had been gratefully accepted, and getting us onto the train to Woodend was the first step. N.B.: he carried two thick backpacks of picnic goodies. We brought cameras – and in the pocket of my coat, a two-inch fluff panda with one eye and a red bow tie: Mib, whose adventures have been many.

The hour's train ride north of Melbourne was a revelation – our first look at the Victorian countryside. The low hills and sublime greenery delighted me with memories of North Carolina, as the sheep fled in droves from the train. But the beauty of the surroundings and the joy of travel



on a clean, spacious train (we scored a private compartment) were all but lost on me. Clouds hovered. Rainspecks tickled the windows. Would our picnic be inundated? If so, would this be our only chance at Hanging Rock? Wright still wasn't worried. Mindful of the hole in the ozone overhead, his main concern was that Rosy slop enough sunscreen onto my baldness.

When we reached Woodend Bill plowed off through the touristy town in search of transport to the Rock. Ladies at a stationery store showed typical Aussie friendliness, letting us check our e-mail and Bill call a cab. The day remained cloudy, but sunshine still broke through, in the form of our taxi driver. Her name was Sue. She and her mother ran the Woodend cab company, and it must be the jolliest business in Australia. Her smile was constant, her chatter was happy, and her word was "YEHHEHHHHHHH!!!" See for yourself – I run her photo on a later page. YEHHEHHHHHHH!!!

I rode with Sue in the front seat – grabbing instinctively for the steering wheel, which wasn't where I instinctively felt it belonged, on the left. I was enjoying her talk so much – YEHHEHHHHHHH!!! – that Hanging Rock sneaked up on me. Suddenly there it was, to our left.

*While they were talking the angle of vision had gradually altered to bring the Hanging Rock into sudden startling view. Directly ahead, the grey volcanic mass rose up slabbed and pinnacled like a fortress from the empty yellow plain. [They] could see the vertical lines of the rocky walls, now and then gashed with indigo shade, patches of grey green dogwood, outcrops of boulders even at this distance immense and formidable. At the summit, apparently bare of living vegetation, a jagged line of rock cut across the serene blue of the sky.*

#### **Picnic at Hanging Rock**

Sue dropped us off at the gate to the Reserve, and we walked up the road toward the rugged hill before us. Playing in my mind, the haunting melodic theme from Peter Weir's movie, "The Pipes of Pan".

Hanging Rock is a mamelon, an extinct volcano, some six million years old – a whelp by geological standards. It rises 105 meters, about 345 feet, from the forest at its base. Its rocks loom from the Earth – as if newly awakened from eons of sleep. The stone, we learned, is *solsbergite*, lava rich with soda, which accounts for the rugged appearance of the dark grey rock. We tarried a moment at the gift shop, and then headed up along the path.



CW



"Miranda!" I shouted. A joke. Everybody calls for Miranda, one of the girls lost on the Rock in the Lindsay novel and Weir film. She's never answered.

The path wound through verdancy thick and wild. No resemblance, here, to the trimmed and tamed and civilized landscapes surrounding America's parks. Up a steep slope, and then the bottom stand of rocks were visible. I rushed forward – groaning at the obscenity of a soggy tennis ball and a beer bottle underfoot – and put my hands into the moss covering.

*The immediate impact of [the] soaring peaks induced a silence so impregnated with its powerful presence that even Edith was struck dumb. The splendid spectacle ... was brilliantly illuminated for their inspection. On the steep south facade the play of golden light and deep violet shade revealed the intricate construction of long vertical slabs; some smooth as giant tombstones, others grooved and fluted by prehistoric architecture of wind and water, ice and fire. Huge boulders, originally spewed red hot from the boiling bowels of the Earth, now come to rest, cooled and rounded in forest shade.*

### Picnic at Hanging Rock

The stones of Hanging Rock are enormous, but not smooth. The lava is pockmarked and uneven, and if you've any imagination, those marks form faces for you; so it seems, as you ascend along the steep path into the monoliths, that you're climbing into a cluster off of Easter Island: half-graven moss-swathed images of the gods of the Earth, solemn, benign, ancient, and calm; utterly indifferent.

Wildness is endemic to Hanging Rock. There are no signs warning the traveler to restrain his steps to the paths, nor rangers to enforce restrictions and keep you safe. The tempting canyons and passages that open up as the rocks jumble around you are your own risk to explore. So on the way up I clambered into puddle-floored caves and scrabbled over leaning pillars – keeping Rosy and Bill within earshot, of course.

We found ourselves at a wide stone plaza, and Bill broke out the grub. We chowed down on roast beef and chicken sandwiches, and even tried the Australian sandwich staple, Vegemite. No comment. While Bill and Rosy ate, I wandered off. A couple and a few teenagers had joined us on the rock shelf, but solitude as sure as outer space was as close as around the nearest boulder. Behind it, out of the wind, a single strand of spiderweb stretched along the lava, and the moss wasn't even cold.

We were still low on the mountain. Above us the trail grew steeper, the stones crowded in even thicker – here and there, reminding me somehow of the English boy's notepaper flags, fresh plantings stood wrapped in wire mesh and orange fabric, straining into the wire with the wind. The trail was marked with tamped earth and a handrail; we followed it, upwards, towards the summit.

High on Hanging Rock the trees from the forest below surrender to the sky, and the view is clear, and far, and spectacular. The clouds had gone on their way for a while, so we could see far out over the green world, to Mount Macedon, and the "Camel's Hump". Up there, with such a view, the Rock is serene, and you think, surely this beauty is the reason you've climbed this far, and you can't help but feel that in the beauty, there is safety. As you wander through the highest monoliths, pushing aside branches of gnarled gum saplings growing somehow in this rocky soil, you have about you only sky, around you only loveliness, and by the time you discover that you have squeezed through one too many narrow gaps, clambered over one too many boulders, sneaked through one too many natural arches, crossed one too many abandoned fences, and now have no idea of the slightest kind where the path is or *how to get down* – it's too late.

*Everything if only you could see it clearly enough, is beautiful and complete – the ragged nest, Marion's torn muslin skirts fluted like a nautilus shell, Irma's ringlets framing her face in exquisite wiry spirals – even Edith, flushed and childishly vulnerable in sleep. ... The others were awake now*



and on their feet. Miranda was looking at her strangely, almost as if she wasn't seeing her. When Edith [spoke], she turned and began walking away up the rise, the other two following a little way behind. ... To her horror all three girls were fast moving out of sight behind the monolith. "Miranda! Come back!" Edith took a few unsteady steps toward the rise and saw the last of a white sleeve parting the bushes ahead.

### Picnic at Hanging Rock

The girls who vanished in the book and film of **Picnic at Hanging Rock** were symbols more than anything else, just as the Rock was, just as their disappearance was – elements in a beautiful and poetic metaphor of death and nature. But *we* weren't symbols, and this was no metaphor – we were three people lost in a clutter of blocked pathways and dead ends. There were no rangers in Smoky hats on patrol, and no one knew we were up there. It was also clouding up again.

In the midst of this trouble, I was unutterably impressed by Rose-Marie. The woman showed cool worthy of Emma Peel. This route was impassable? Try *this* one! This way leads only in circles past the same old buried fence and worthless avenue? Climb atop the highest of high boulders at the apex of Hanging Rock and take a good look around. Truly, my wife showed no fear in the midst of the Rock. 27 years I've known the woman, and she continues to surprise me. I was, after all, better off than the tragic picnickers of 1900 – I had someone precious to carry down. There you go, Rock: real life answers the terrors of impersonal nature. In Rosy I had a living face to pit against the indifferent stupor of the rock gods – a reason not only to climb Hanging Rock but to conquer it.

And we had help, nothing angelic but simply human, appearing from back the way we'd come: a smiling man, Arnold, and a smiling woman, Diane, Australian tourists. They had just left the path, and were more than happy to show us the way back. Two smiling ordinary folks, more than happy to lend a hand to disoriented neighbors, two Americans and a brother Aussie, just the thing any good Samaritan blokes would do, 'ey? Just turn *this* way instead of that, take a few steps past the place where before you'd stopped – and no worries, the way down was clear.

Awaiting us at the bottom was a happy snort (which we bought) with our saviors, who owned a small winery in South Australia, a souvenir binge (including, for Rosy, a special photo-illustrated edition of Lindsay's novel), and a hilarious ride to the trains with the mad cabbie, Sue – *YEHHHHHH!* She searched in vain for wild kangaroos for us ('roos are stupid beasts, she said, but solid on one's bumper) and on Draw's Lane, cut off the engine ... and let her cab roll *uphill*. Just part of the mystery of the Rock, she said.

*YEHHHHHH!* I believed it. Mystery abounded at Hanging Rock – the mystery of nature, beautiful and wild and deadly and indifferent – and the mystery of frail human beings, helping and guiding one another, because we *weren't* indifferent. All during the rest of our

journey Rosy and I talked about taking another stroll up among the grey, silent stones of Hanging Rock – but just as we'd feared, we never found the time. Well, this day would do. The passionless gods of the Earth had made their point. But so had we.





*Rosy and I couldn't make it to ConJose, but fortunately, we have a friend who did ...*

## MIKE RESNICK'S CONJOSE DIARY

*Wednesday, August 28:* Uneventful flight from Cincinnati to San Francisco, which is to say, I slept for all 5 hours of it. The ConJose web page had warned us that a door-to-door shuttle from the San Francisco airport to the Fairmont Hotel in downtown San Jose was \$34.00 -- but they never asked for the group rate, and it turned out that each extra member of a party was only \$5.00, so while everyone else was avoiding the shuttle, we got there for less than half the price of a taxi.

(Usually we get to Worldcon on a Monday or Tuesday to spend time with all our fannish friends, since once the con starts I'm a working pro, but since we were touring Monterey after the con with a bunch of them, we decided not to show up until Wednesday.)

We'd gotten a call the night before from Debbie Oakes, who was co-hosting the CFG suite, that it was in room 905, so naturally we asked for the 9th floor. And got it. In the new tower. Which meant that every time we wanted to go to the suite we had to take an elevator down to the ground or second floor, walk across to the old tower, and then take an elevator up to the 9th floor. On the other hand, there were no parties in the new tower and it was quiet as a tomb. Never a wait for elevators, either -- until they started breaking down.

While Carol unpacked and took a nap (she *doesn't* sleep on planes), I met Janis Ian and we registered and went over to the dealer's room. It wasn't open to the public until Thursday, but 39 years after my first Worldcon, I am not without my resources.

The convention center was a couple of blocks from the Fairmont. Not a terrible walk, but we'd packed and dressed for 72-degree days and 55-degree nights, and a few of those days the

temperature hit 90. And, like last year, I managed to bust a big blood blister, this time on the big toe of my left foot. Didn't hurt, but since I've been a diabetic for the past five years and I'd kind of like to go to my grave intact, I medicated and bandaged it twice a day. (I've *got* to remember not to wear new shoes to Worldcons.)

On the way back, Janis and I stopped at the Fairmont's bar for soft drinks, and ran into George R. R. Martin and Terry Prachett. Strange

feeling to be the only guy at the table who *wasn't* a Pro Guest of Honor at an upcoming Worldcon (2003 for George, 2004 for Terry).

As usual, I had a bunch of books coming out from small presses timed to coincide with Worldcon -- and as usual, even though I handed in the manuscripts from 8 to 10 months before the cons and proofed them a few months in advance, one (**With a**



Mike Resnick at the ConJose Dead Dog, 2002



**Little Help From My Friends**, my collection of 25 collaborations with different writers, from Farthest Star) was in the huckster's room when the con began, one (THE SCIENCE FICTION PROFESSIONAL, from Farthest Star) made it Friday, and one (**Once a Fan...**, from Wildside Press) never made it at all. Given that any specialty press can reasonably expect to double their sales on a sub-1000 print run by getting out in time for the whole of Worldcon, I have never understood why they can't seem to manage. (I remember that at Chicon VI, in 2000, I had 5 specialty press books due out for Worldcon; 2 showed up Friday, 2 Saturday, and one never. Go figure.)

While greeting old friends and buying and autographing books, I found out that my friend Charles Sheffield wasn't the only major sf writer currently suffering from a brain tumor. It seems that Robert Forward also has one, and isn't expected to last to next year's Worldcon. And this year we've already lost Damon Knight, Ray Lafferty, and two of my very close friends, Jack Haldeman and George Alec Effinger.

Saw Jack Chalker riding around on one of those motorized scooters. I assumed it was because of his arthritic knees, but he explained that a couple of times in the past month he'd become so short of breath that he couldn't walk, and was waiting for the results of some medical tests.

Not a good year for longevity *or* health.

We picked up Carol and met Tony and Suford Lewis, Rick Katze, and Debbie Oakes for dinner, and went to the Inca Gardens. Nice food, mediocre service, and horrible management (it took them 40 minutes to compute our check, and I still don't know if the tip was included. Asking them didn't help; they only spoke Incan or Peruvian, whichever is more obscure.)

Went back to the hotel, visited a bit, hit the LA party and a couple of private parties, and went to bed relatively early – about 2:00 – since I knew I wouldn't be getting much sleep the next few nights.

*Thursday, August 29:* Carol took one look at the menu posted outside the hotel's "cheap" (compared to its other restaurants) coffee shop, discovered that a glass of orange juice was something like \$9.00, and decided we were eating elsewhere, which was fine by me, since on those rare occasions I'm up before noon all I have is

coffee anyway. She found a charming little outdoor area maybe 200 feet from the hotel, outside the Knight-Ridder building, where she had some juice and rolls, and I injected a little coffee into a vein. Then I went off to the con, and she and Debbie Oakes and Cokie Cavin began touring those San Jose sights and landmarks that were, well, tourable.

Val Ontell came up to me and invited me to be Guest of Honor at Con-Dor, a February convention in San Diego. Leave snow-covered Cincinnati and spend a few extra days visiting the San Diego Zoo and Zoo Park and maybe do a little whale-watching? Tough call. Of course I accepted.

A new audio company, Audio Literature, sought me out and suggested that they wanted to do a little business. I sent them some suggestions after I got back home, and we'll see what's what. Audio Frequency, the audio "magazine" that records the Hugo nominees for Best Short Story, was there, and had asked to record my reading – but I never saw them. I think they sponsored a party in the SFWA Suite one night. (Want to lose me? Go to the SFWA Suite. I promise I won't follow.)

Ran into Caz – Camille Cazedessus, Jr. – the Burroughs fan (and 1966 fanzine Hugo winner) at a dealer's table. He's the guy who published my first fanzine articles and fiction just about 40 years ago, and introduced me to fandom (well, the Burroughs variety, anyway) and Worldcons. Said hello to all the book dealers, most of whom have been friends for ages, signed a bunch of books, then went off to do the first of my panels, something titled "The Future of Africa". I didn't think it sounded all that interesting, but we filled a huge room to overflowing, and indeed I was the only panelist who hadn't spent most of my life as a full-time resident of either Zimbabwe or South Africa. I am a pessimist about Africa's near future – say, the next half century – but my opinion was positively upbeat compared to those who'd been living there lately.

I had to go off to do a pair of print interviews, and then a radio interview. Janis joined Carol and me for dinner at Stratta, an Italian restaurant right next door to the Inca Gardens. (Why? Because the Inca Gardens ladies' room was out of order the night before, and they had to use the one at Stratta, and as they walked through the place they decided they liked the looks of the dishes.)

CFG (Cincinnati Fantasy Group for the uninitiated) almost always has a 5-day hospitality suite at Worldcon, and this year was no different. But I didn't get to it right away, because Terry



Bisson had written a radio play called "The Hugo Nominee", and had enlisted me, Janis, Lucius Shepard, Nancy Kress (before Charles developed the brain tumor and they had to cancel out of Worldcon), and four or five other pros to appear in it Friday night, and the only chance we had to rehearse was in the Fairmont lobby at 8:00 Thursday. It went rather well, and I must admit it played a lot funnier than it read.

Then it was nearing 10:00 Thursday night at Worldcon, traditional time for the Babes For Bwana party (formerly yclept the Resnick Listserv party ... but it's not limited to the Listserv. Any CFG member, indeed just about any pro or fan I know, is welcome.)

Once again Gordie Meyer (Mr. Obscura Press) graciously donated his suite, and Christy Harden-Smith served as cook and hostess. We really laid out a hell of a spread, topped off, like last year, by chocolate fondue. By 10:45 we had quite a crowd, and then the belly dancers showed up, just like last year, and entertained for maybe an hour, by the end of which a lot of the Babes (and non-Babe Ron Collins) were tentatively attempting the ballet de belly themselves. Julie and Linda, the dancers, stuck around and gave a repeat performance at about 1:00, after which Bart Kemper and I borrowed their swords and gave a brief fencing demonstration. The door to Gordie's suite was literally across the hall from the door to the CFG suite, so each party kind of slopped over into the other – and Bill Cavin, the God-Emperor of CFG, remembered to bring his video camera, so this year we've got the dancers and some of the party on video.

At some point Susan Matthews, who has the most delightful and distinctive giggle I've ever heard, showed up, and we agreed to collaborate on a story in the next few months. (Time to start stockpiling stories for **With a Little More Help from My Friends**.)

The party finally broke up around 3:30, and I stayed an extra hour or two, talking a little business with Gordie and a couple of other editors. Finally got to bed about 6:00, par for the course at a Worldcon.

*Friday, August 30:* Got up at 9:00. Showered, medicated and bandaged the toe, and went off to meet Shayne Bell for coffee. We'd collaborated on a funny Mars story for **Mars Probe**, and were in the middle of collaborating on a serious novella set on Mount Kilimanjaro when tragedy

struck – Shayne lost someone very dear to him – and we put it on the back burner for a few months. Now we're back on the track, and we hope to finish it by year's end.

I went right from coffee with Shayne to lunch with Bob Silverberg. Since he knows his way around San Jose – he lives an hour away – I left the choice of restaurants to him. Well, we wandered and wandered and wandered, as we discovered that each restaurant he fondly remembered had been torn down or sold. Finally we ate at what I consider a typical California restaurant -- they seemed to specialize in parsley-and-grass sandwiches – but we had a very pleasant visit for maybe an hour and a half. He had come straight from the SFWA meeting – I attend once a decade, and since I went in 1998 I felt no obligation to go again this soon – and he related some of the silliness that passed for serious debate, enough to make me think that once a decade is probably a little too often. Then he was off to a panel, and I had to go be photographed by **Locus**, which is replacing all their black-and-white files with color shots.

I had a midafternoon kaffeeklatsch at the Hilton, which was attached to far end of the convention center. For the second year in a row, they supplied neither coffee nor pastries – not even the usual weak coffee and stale donuts – but Joe Haldeman and I had side-by-side rooms, and we filled them. As usual, I brought a bunch of giveaways -- **Santiago** and **Hunting the Snark** cover flats, color Xeroxes of some foreign covers, leftover trading cards from Chicon – and we had a pleasant enough hour. Then I spent another hour autographing at the Asimov's booth while Gardner Dozois tried to raise a little money on the side by selling kisses to me. When that didn't work, he hit upon a far more lucrative proposition: pay him and I *wouldn't* kiss you.

Now, all during the day, Terry Bisson or ConJose committee members had been approaching me and all the other performers in Terry's play to give us a never-ending series of schedule changes. It seems that Patrick Stewart (is that his name? The bald guy in the **Star Trek** show) was going to be at the con for an hour, and we were scheduled to follow him, but he kept changing the times he'd be there, and as more con members found out about it they kept changing the venue. Originally it was in the Imperial Ballroom of the Fairmont, then in the Civic Auditorium, then the Ballroom again, then the Auditorium again. We were first scheduled to perform at 8:00 PM, then 9:30, then 7:45, and so on.

Just before I left for dinner, I was told that the final, set-in-stone, never-to-be-changed-again schedule was that we would perform at exactly 9:15 PM at the Auditorium (though all the signs advertising us at the Ballroom were never removed and a lot of disgruntled con members showed up there.)

We went to dinner with Harry and all the Turtledoves – wife Laura, daughter Allison, daughter Rachel, daughter Rebecca, and Janis Ian. Harry and I agreed to collaborate on a story for a Lou Anders anthology later this year, but I spent most of my time talking to Laura, who is the one person in science fiction who knows as much (or probably more) about the musical theater as I do. I've been trading audio and video bootlegs with her for a couple of years now. Recently she picked up an extra job creating the weekly trivia quiz for Fynesworth Alley (a small company that makes CDs of off-Broadway and truly obscure musicals.) We ate at the House of Siam, the one truly outstanding restaurant we found in San Jose.

Then, at 8:30, Carol and Janis and I walked over to the auditorium, where we would be performing at 9:15. And walked in. And heard something remarkably like "The Hugo Nominee" coming from the direction of the stage.

Right. They changed the time *again*. Whoever was in charge of scheduling – probably a former elevator Nazi – walked up to Terry when Patrick Stewart had finished and told him to put his play on. He explained that most of his actors were still at dinner, since they had told him the play would go on at 9:15. He was then told that he had five minutes to start or they were canceling it. So he got a bunch of volunteers from the audience – Dave Hartwell took my part, John Douglas took Janis', and so on – and they gave a not-wildly-impressive stone cold reading. I was just as happy to sit in the dark and relax, but Janis was annoyed and I'm told that Lucius was furious.

Then it was off to the DAW party. It was private, for DAW authors only, and I'm not a DAW author – but I did edit four anthologies for DAW this year, so I didn't have any trouble getting in. Ran into Marty Greenberg, and briefly discussed a couple of new anthology proposals with him. Someone from Indianapolis walked up and invited me to be the Guest of Honor at a new and as-yet-unnamed convention to be held in January of 2004. They laid out quite a spread at

the party, and I ate enough pastries to last for the weekend. Then I dropped in on the Japanese and Boston parties, went to a couple of private parties and Gordie's suite, and wound up, as usual, at the CFG suite, where I stayed until maybe 4:00, talking to old friends.

*Saturday, August 31:* I dragged myself out of bed and managed to meet Betsy Mitchell, the relatively new head honcho at del Rey Books, for breakfast at 10:00. Well, she had breakfast; I had coffee. I'm still officially a del Rey author, though I haven't given them anything since **Kirinyaga**, and they seem to have decided that it's time for me to sell them something else. I don't know what'll come of it, but it was a pleasant meeting/breakfast. I went from there to the convention center, where I led the Fan History tour. It was a nice exhibit, with a couple of dozen Hugos from different years, a bunch of giveaways and program books from each Worldcon, even a photo display, and we just went down the line while I told anecdotes about each item. As usual, it was the single public performance I enjoyed most. This was my third year in a row of leading the tour, and I hope they'll ask me again next year.

Then I had to race back to the hotel for lunch with Marty Greenberg. Well, officially lunch; in point of fact the coffee shop was still serving breakfast, and I was almost awake by then, so I had some Eggs Benedict, always my favorite breakfast wherever I am. Janis, with whom I am editing the big-budget **Janis Ian's Universe**, joined us, we discussed future anthologies with her and ways to promote the current one – possibly with a signed, numbered hardcover shrink-wrapped with a CD of all the songs the writers are basing their stories upon – and Marty told me he'd be hitting the DAW ladies with a couple of my proposals on Sunday and would let me know which they bought (if any) at the Hugo ceremony.

Trudged back to the con center – and by now I was really getting tired of that two-block walk, and the fact that from time to time they turned off the escalators to save on electricity (or so the explanation went) – and joined Joe Haldeman, George R. R. Martin, and Patrick Neilsen-Hayden for a panel titled "I'm Still a Fan", in which 3 multiple-Hugo-winning authors and the guy in charge of Tor's science fiction program tried to convince a skeptical audience that we really were fans. Then I spotted Fred Prophet in the audience, and announced that a former Worldcon chairman (Detroit, 1959) was sitting among them, and that all



4 of the panelists knew who it was and were long-time friends of his, and would the audience members who knew please raise their hands – and in that huge audience, only Paula Lieberman and Gay Haldeman knew Fred. Then Rusty Hevelin wandered in and took a seat, and I announced that I could also spot a former Worldcon Fan Guest of Honor (Denver, 1981), and that again, all the panelists knew who it was and had been his friends for years, and did any audience member besides Gay and Paula know who I was referring to? The answer was No. I had Fred and Rusty stand up and introduced them, and our fannish *bona fides* were not questioned again for the remainder of the panel. I had a few minutes to talk a little business with Warren Lapine and John Douglas, and then I had to do the "official" autograph session for an hour. After that I stole a few more minutes to talk some business with Mark Olson and other powers-that-be at NESFA Press, and then I had a panel called "The Horsey Set", composed of five lady writers who own, ride and love horses, and good old Mike, who wrote a weekly column on horse racing for over a decade but happens to think that horses are among the dumbest creatures that God made. I did get to explain the interesting economics of the sport – Seattle Slew was valued at \$160 million in the late 1980s, and this year Storm Cat will service over 100 mares at a fee of \$500,000 per service – and I managed to introduce the audience to George Alec Effinger's wonderful story of the one-legged racehorse who was ten yards from winning the Kentucky Derby when he broke his leg ... but for some reason the panel was scheduled at 5:30, and like most of the panelists I had to leave early because of a previously-scheduled business dinner.

In my case, it was with Carol and Eleanor Wood, my agent for the past 19 years. Eleanor's more than an agent. She's a friend, who has gone to Egypt with us (and just decided to come to the San Diego convention and visit the zoo and zoo park with us in February), and once our business was taken care of, we spent a couple of hours just visiting. And since we'd liked it so much the previous night (and no one seemed to

recommend anything else with any enthusiasm), we found ourselves back at the House of Siam again.

We weren't going to walk over to the Civic Auditorium to stand in an endless line to see the masquerade, so I decided to watch it on closed-circuit TV in the CFG suite. Then I found out that for the first time in years no part of the con, not even the masquerade or Hugos, were on closed-circuit, so to this moment I have no idea who won or if the costumes were above or below average. (Sometime Saturday people began calling the con "Nolacon II without the French Quarter.")

Carol stayed at CFG, and Eleanor and I went up to the Tor party, where I ran into David Brin, Kage Baker, Gene Wolfe, Stan Robinson, Jim Kelly, Orson Scott Card, and a number of other writers I hadn't yet seen. (Jim was really upset that I hadn't brought along my tux for this year's Hugos. I explained that I only wore it on years I thought I had a chance.

As it turned out, I think he was one of only three writers with a tux – but then, it was California.) I asked David how many kids he was up to now. His classic answer: "One human and two boys."

I got to visit a bit with Beth Meacham, my long-time Tor editor (18 years and counting) and for a change I found Tom Doherty inside the suite rather than gasping for fresh air in the hall. All the Tor writers were busy doing business with all the Tor editors, so I signaled B. J. Galler-Smith and Tom Gerencer to join me and got Tom, who was feeling expansive and loves to talk business, to give them the equivalent of a condensed college course on publishing and distributing science fiction.

I went down to the Japanese party, hit the Boston party, looked in at the Columbus party, stopped by CFG for awhile, and then went back to Tor to talk a little business with a couple of foreign editors who had asked to meet me there at 1:00 AM. I also found Joe Siclari and we spent some time discussing a book project we've been putting together. Then it was back to CFG until about 4:00, and off to bed.

*Sunday, September 1:* For a change there were no business breakfasts on the schedule, so Carol and I wandered over to the Tech Museum and had a very nice, very quiet breakfast. As usual, it felt like the only occasions we got to spend any time together at



a Worldcon were during meals. It didn't used to be like that – but I didn't used to be a pro who lined up his work for the coming year at Worldcon.

I had a panel with Rob Sawyer and a couple of others on "Genetically Engineered Pets" at 11:30. Rob had to leave early for a lunch appointment. Dull panel; I envied him.

I had to sign for half an hour at the SFWA table at 1:00, and then at 1:45 I did a reading. For the second year in a row, the Worldcon programmers didn't give us an hour – it was 30 minutes at Philadelphia, which was ridiculous, and about 35 or 40 minutes here, which wasn't a hell of a lot better, since it meant you couldn't read a novelette or even a longish short story. I read "Robots Don't Cry", which will show up in *Asimov's* next year, and was pleased to see a few tears show up on audience cheeks. And B. J. Galler-Smith cried so much that I had an almost unbearable urge to stop reading, put the story down, and just watch her.

Then it was 2:30, time for my hour's signing at Larry Smith and Sally Kobee's table, and, just like last year, I'd made an arrangement with Linda and Julie, the belly-dancers (their third member wasn't here this year) to perform right next to where I was signing. (Last year Larry, who could reasonably expect to sell maybe one Resnick book an hour at a Worldcon where I was in attendance, sold about \$600 in the hour that I autographed and they danced.) After 20 minutes I was afraid it was a one-time phenomenon – they had sold only a single \$20 trade paperback – but then everyone started buying, and they did about \$400 worth of business the next 35 minutes...so yes, the belly dancers will be back again next year, not just at the party but at the autographing.

I picked up another Guest of Honor gig – they asked me not to mention it until they announce it officially – and then Janis and I went off to be interviewed on television by Donna Drapeau, who had done a fine interview with me at Chicago and had interviewed the two of us at Philadelphia (but some jerk in the studio had inadvertently erased it before it could be shown.)

Then the Albacon crew, where I'll be Guest of Honor in less than a month, took Carol and me out to dinner, and we got back in time to change into somewhat better clothing (I wore a jacket, but for the first time as a Hugo nominee I didn't bother with a tie).

There were three elevators in our tower, which had worked to perfection all week, but on Hugo night two of them chose to break down, and it took maybe fifteen minutes to catch the other and take it down to the ground floor. We picked up Janis, who was our guest, and went to the Hugo reception, three hot blocks away at the Hilton. I was glad we'd eaten, unlike Philadelphia, they didn't lay out much of a spread.

About 8:00 they marched us across the street to the Civic Auditorium. I've been to steambaths that weren't as warm. People started sneaking out after ten minutes, and kept it up all night, which beat the hell out of staying and fainting. Even Janis, who performs under hot lights almost every night, couldn't take the heat and left before the Hugos were announced.

Tad Williams was the first (male) Toastmaster in a quarter of a century not to wear a tux, which made me feel a little less conspicuous. Evidently no one had tested the equipment, because the Toastmaster's microphone wasn't working for the first few minutes. Most people were so uncomfortable in the stifling heat of the auditorium that they didn't even notice.

The late Martha Beck, who died this spring, was posthumously awarded the First Fandom Hall of Fame Award. Very deserving; she lived for fandom, and it would have been one of the true highlights of her life. It brought back all the visits we'd shared and all the cons we'd gone to together. Then our dear friend Pat Sims won the Big Heart Award, and you can read about all the other winners in my annual Hugo Ceremony report for **Chronicle**. There were some major upsets, foremost of which was Gardner Dozois losing Best Editor for the first time in a decade. I think we could clearly see the results of massive electronic voting this year, in that electronic editors (Ellen Datlow) and publications (**Ansible**) beat the traditional favorites/winners.

And yes, for the record, I lost both the Best Short Story and Best Related Book Hugos, both to worthy winners, though not to the ones I had expected to lose to.

I never did run into Marty Greenberg again, though I later got an e-mail telling me which anthology we had sold to DAW. Jaime Levine, who has just taken over Betsy Mitchell's old spot at Warner's, walked up as we were leaving the Hugos, introduced herself, and suggested that we might do some business together. Sounded good to me, and I'll be getting back to her as soon as I catch up with all



the other commitments I seem to have made in San Jose.

Since the elevators weren't working in our tower, and there was an hour-long line for them in the party tower, Carol and I sat down with Eleanor Wood in the Fairmont's lobby and ordered some much-needed cold drinks. (I had my first beer in a decade, to show you just how warm and uncomfortable I was. Usually I only drink it in Africa, where it's safer than the water.)

At one point Connie Willis walked up to thank me for offering to write her biography for this summer's DeepSouthcon program book – the committee forgot and had someone else do it – and to assure me that it wasn't her idea. I told her that I wasn't upset at all ... but she wanted to make sure, and in the process mentioned that she would be happy to write *my* biography if I ever asked – and I stopped her right there and told her she could do it for Albacon next month. So I'm going to be written up by the dreaded Female Person From Colorado, to whom I have lost 86 Hugos (well, maybe only 73, but it *feels* like 86.)

While we were there, we signed another couple of get-well cards for Charles Sheffield, and wished him a speedy recovery for yet another video camera. It'll take all his energy just to go through all the cards and videos he receives this week.

I skipped the Hugo Losers party – I simply couldn't get to an elevator. Carol and I went to CFG for awhile. Then she went back to the room, while I ran into Bill Fawcett. I can't remember what party we were at, but it was so crowded that we went back down to the lobby – it was after midnight now, and it had emptied out somewhat – and started bringing each other up to date on what we'd been doing. And while I wasn't looking for any assignments, he came up with one for a non-fiction book he's editing with my old pal Brian Thomsen that looks like so much fun I'd have done it for free. And his wife, Jody Lynn Nye, extended an invite through him for me to write for an upcoming anthology of hers.

Sleep deprivation finally started catching up with me, and I went to our tower, waited for the one functioning elevator, and actually flopped into bed at about 2:15, maybe the earliest I've been to bed at a Worldcon this millennium.

*Monday, September 2:* Had another photo session at 11:00 AM, then went off to my final panel, "Creating Anthologies", which had a lot of

anthology editors on it – me, Ellen Datlow, Patrick Neilsen Hayden, maybe a couple of others -- but whenever I'm on one of these anthology panels, I keep wanting to suggest that they just get Marty Greenberg to do a Q-and-A with the audience and be done with it, since he's behind about 90% of the anthologies that get published in this field, even when his name's not on the book.

Then I bade the convention center farewell, made that 2-block walk for the last time, and went off to lunch with Carol, Gardner Dozois, Susan Casper (who seems to be recovering quite well from her quadruple bypass last spring), and Janis Ian. Gardner seemed to be taking his Best Editor loss quite well; at least, he knew not to complain in front of a guy who has now lost 7 Hugos in the past three years. When we were done we wandered into the gift shop and ran into Greg Benford. Greg and I exchanged some market and restaurant info for a bit, and then he, Gardner and I started going through all the toys and playing with them while our ladies waited in annoyed silence.

Since a bunch of us were staying in California to visit the Monterey Peninsula, Debbie Oakes, Bill Cavin, Carol and I, who would be splitting the driving, took a cab to the Hertz corral at the airport, where we had reserved a Windstar van, and drove it back to the hotel.

CFG had agreed to let Janice Gelb use our suite for her 25th Anniversary in Fandom party from 1:30 to 5:30 PM, provided CFG members could attend, so we spent part of the afternoon there. Rich Lynch got me to promise to write an article for **Mimosa** #30, which he and Nicki swear will be their last issue despite all their Hugos ... and with **Lan's Lantern**, another of my favorite fanzine markets is dead, it looks like I'll be doing a lot of my future fan writing for a pair of new fanzines, Michael Burstein's **Burstzine** and John Teehan's **Slight of Hand** ... plus old standby **Fosfax**, and of course Guy Lillian's **Challenger**, which I really think deserved the last two fanzine Hugos.

Carol and I went out for dinner with Janis, who seems to have become a member of the family – kid sister, older daughter, we haven't figured out which, but we're very comfortable with her – but all the restaurants were closed, and we wound up back at the Fairmont's Grill, where you could get a perfectly acceptable \$18.00 meal for only \$40.00.

Carol stayed at CFG until maybe 9:30, then went off to pack. I stayed until about 2:30, had a pleasant visit with Karen Anderson (Poul's widow), whom I hadn't seen in years, teased the hell out of

Stephen Boucher (who seems inadvertently to have become the Chairman of the Australia-in-2010 bid), passed a little time with Rick Katze and John Hertz, saw Mark Irwin (a long-time fan with whom I actually won a bridge tournament when we were both high school students back in the Pleistocene), and finally went back to our own tower, where the elevators were working perfectly now that the con was officially over.

*Tuesday, September 3:* Got up about 9:00, and while Carol finished packing, Debbie and I drove Dick Spelman and Roger Sims to pick up their rental car. Then we wasted half an hour trying to ship my largest suitcase home – UPS didn't have a big enough box – before we found out that the Fairmont had a shipping service and had boxes of all sizes.

By 11:00 we were ready to go. Carol, Debbie, Bill and Cokie Cavin, and I all piled into the van with our luggage. Pat and Roger Sims and Dick Spelman went into the rented car. Adrienne Gormley, who lives in San Jose and spent Monday night at her house doing her laundry, drove out by herself. The eight of us (everyone but Adrienne) stopped at a Marie Calendar's for lunch – I'd never heard of it, but I've been assured that it's a national franchise specializing in great pies – and about 2:00 we reached the Pacific Gardens Inn, a row of large wooden cabins, in Pacific Grove, halfway between Monterey and Carmel.

Only one problem with the inn: it had such a primitive phone system that I couldn't connect to the Internet. I had 93 auctions closing on eBay that evening, and I had promised a lot of editors, collaborators, and fans to send a lot of stuff ... but after messing around trying to log on for a few hours that night, I had to admit it couldn't be done and everyone from successful bidders to anxious editors would just have to wait until I got home a few days later.

Since we still had a goodly part of the afternoon left, and were on Daylight Saving Time, the nine of us loaded up the van and car – I don't think we ever took Adrienne's truck anywhere – and went off to see the fabled Seventeen Mile Drive, which cost \$8.00 to enter, and was worth it. Everyone else got to see the seashore and birds and seals, and Roger got to see the Pebble Beach Golf Course. (So did I, though I couldn't spot the 17th hole. Too bad; I was actually curious to see what it looked like. Some

years back I wrote a story, which has appeared in half a dozen magazines and books, and indeed just won a Prix Ozone in France, called "How I Wrote the New Testament, Brought Forth the Renaissance, and Birdied the 17th Hole at Pebble Beach".)

Roger decided that he wants to live there and play Pebble Beach every day, so I picked up a real estate listing magazine and found him a home: right on the golf course, 5 bedrooms, \$20 million. That's \$4 million a bedroom. I used to write in the sex field during my starving-writer days, and even I can't think of \$4 million worth of things to do in a bedroom.

We ate dinner in Monterey at a restaurant called The Fishwife. Very nice seafood (though I got the impression that *every* restaurant in all three towns served very nice seafood, and just about nothing else.)

Six of them went off to play Wizards, a card game that has never interested me. Adrienne, who recently became an Active member of SFWA, and I talked a little science fiction while Carol read, and then I started catching up on lost sleep. I crashed at 9:15, and never budged for 11 hours.

*Wednesday, September 4:* We had coffee and Danish at the inn, then went down to the Monterey wharf, got onto a boat with a marine biologist and maybe 20 other customers, and went whale watching. I slept for the first hour, but I woke up in time for The Sighting – and what a sighting it was! In an area where 99% of the whale sightings are humpbacks, we found ourselves in the middle of a pod of blue whales, and that's as big as animals on this planet have ever gotten to be. (Comment by the biologist: "Here's a little one. Only about 70 feet long, barely 55 tons.") Unbelievable, to be surrounded by half a dozen of these hundred-foot behemoths. To the best of my knowledge no whale ever attacked a man; any whaler who died was *killed after* they'd harassed and harpooned one of these huge creatures that seem perfectly willing to live in peace and harmony with everyone and everything – and even then they were killed because the whale destroyed the whaling boat in its crazed attempts to escape. You have to wonder just how badly we really needed oil to light the lamps of New England, or why we couldn't have just killed a few trees to light the place up.

A number of different dolphin species, including one incredibly rare one that seemed to thrill the hell out of our marine biologist, raced playfully alongside the boat at different times. Their speed and endurance is remarkable. We were going



full speed, and they paced us for the better part of a half hour before losing interest.

When it was over, we went back to the inn, grabbed some lunch, and then I went out book-shopping with Carol, Dick, Debbie and Adrienne. (There are more than half a dozen second-hand bookstores along Lighthouse Drive, the main drag in Monterey.)

By dinnertime we were all getting a little tired of seafood (except me; I don't eat anything with scales. Ever. Which means I never get tired of it) so we found another Marie Calendar's at a shopping center about 8 miles away and had dinner there. Then, just like the previous night, almost everyone went off to play Wizards, only this time I didn't even stay up to talk science fiction with Adrienne. I was in bed and asleep by 10:00.

*Thursday, September 5:* We had coffee and Danish at the Inn, then drove to the world-famous Monterey Aquarium. I've been to Tampa's state-of-the-art aquarium, to Chicago's huge, remodeled Shedd Aquarium, and to the brand-new Cincinnati/Newport Aquarium – but Silverberg, Benford and George R.R. Martin were right: this is much the best. And while they have huge tanks filled with sharks and tuna, and they have a fascinating otter exhibit, and they have tons of other stuff, Silverberg was also right about the most fascinating exhibit: believe it or not, it was the jellyfish display. It is so colorful, so beautiful, and (especially) so other-worldly that I can't imagine a science fiction writer not being able to come up with half a dozen alien species after seeing it.

The aquarium had a very fine restaurant, and we had lunch there. Then we drove to Carmel. Fascinating little tourist town, filled with stores selling the most useless and expensive trinkets you ever saw. Two stores were devoted entirely to Christmas decorations. In California. In September. Dozens of art galleries, selling unknown artists for unbelievable prices. But the architecture was charming, and the whole town was within a few blocks of the ocean. Parking was all-but-impossible. (We had been warned that even the hotels didn't provide parking, which is why we chose to stay in Pacific Grove.) City Hall, where Dirty Harry used to preside a couple of years ago, has a grand total of six parking spaces, four of them reserved.

After we'd walked around for an hour to get the feel of the place, I decided to do what I love doing in new and scenic upscale areas, and that was to drive down a number of side streets and residential lanes and get thoroughly lost and just look at all the houses and landscapes and views that aren't on the tourist trail. I've done it everywhere from Fairfield County in Connecticut to Barrington Hills in Illinois to Boca Raton in Florida, and I've always enjoyed it -- and since I had the car keys, I announced that I was going to do it here. So everyone piled in, and as it was too early for dinner, Dick and Pat and Roger followed in their rented car.

And it was the highlight of the day as far as I'm concerned. After we'd gone up and down winding roads past 3-and-4-level houses built into the hills, many with gorgeous bay views, I came to something called Ocean Drive, so I turned on it, and we spent the next half hour driving along the ocean, passing one \$15 million mansion after another, with some of the most stunning views I'd ever seen. (The smells were also stunning, in a different way. Not many places stink quite as badly as the Northern California seashore. Carol assures me that it's because of all the sea life – live seals and sea lions and otters and birds, and dead fish and fish parts washing up onto the shore – and that it's the sign of a healthy ecosystem. I never said it wasn't healthy; I just said it stinks, and I stick by it.)

For dinner, we decided not to go too far afield, and we found a delightful place in Pacific Grove right on the waterfront called The Tinnery. Then everyone went back to the inn for more Wizards, and I actually stayed up reading until maybe 11:00.

*Friday, September 6:* We all made the airport on time. I slept for the whole 150-minute ride. Then, since we were there three hours early (Bill and Cokie's flight left ahead of ours), I slept for another hour. Then we boarded the plane and I slept for another 5 hours.

By the time we got home I'd made up just about all the sleep I lost at Worldcon. Just as well. There were 974 e-mail messages waiting for me. I stayed up all night Friday answering them, and got done at 3:15 PM Saturday. At 3:30, our mail lady drove up and delivered the 11 days' worth of mail that had been on hold while we were gone. Three huge baskets' worth.

I know why I go to Worldcons. What I wish I knew is why I ever come back from them.



*From the editor of Erg. When you finish it, blame him, not me.*

# HERB GARDEN

*Terry Jeeves*

Although he'd never heard of the term, six-year-old Timmy was an ardent lover of Science Fiction. His hang-up was the square-eyed monster glowing gently in the corner of the living room as it brought him **Star Trek**, old and new, live or animated. He gazed in wonder at episodes of **Babylon 5**, re-runs of episodes of **Buck Rogers**, **Dr. Who**, or indeed anything involving robots, space travel, alien monsters, Flying Saucers or anything involving travel into the dim past or a strange future.

All this was well-known to Timmy's parents, Beryl and Tom Brewell; what they didn't know was that their box-watching offspring was also a budding genius.

This latter fact hadn't loomed on the horizon when, one sunny morning, Beryl decided to try and widen her son's interests to include horticulture. Taking him by the hand, she led the would-be spaceman around their tiny back garden and began pointing out the various plants. "This is a potato, I use them to make French Fries, you like those don't you?"

Her pride and joy gave the struggling plant a look of total disinterest, "I'd rather have cake". Beryl tried again,

"This is a rose, Timmy. Just smell its scent." Timmy duly sniffed, sneezed, then drew an imaginary raygun and dispatched the wilted flower.

"I want some chocolate cake."

Beryl remembered the rule book, 'Never speak angrily to your child, it may give him a complex'. Complexes were the last thing Beryl wanted for her son, so she bit back a hasty response and contented herself with "No chocolate cake until I bake tomorrow."

Regaining her patience, Beryl led him hopefully to her pride and joy, her own little herb garden. "Look Timmy, these are all called herbs. This is sage, this is parsley, this is rosemary, this is ...", she carefully pointed out and gave the names of all the different herbs.

For a brief moment, Timmy seemed to show an interest in one of the straggling green things before stating with even greater emphasis, "I want some chocolate cake, cake now, not tomorrow!"

Beryl's patience was at an end. Dropping Timmy's hand, she waved an admonitory finger under his nose. "No chocolate cake today! I am not going to bake until tomorrow. You will not get any chocolate cake until then, so you'll just have to wait."

She turned on her heel and stalked back into the house. Timmy gazed thoughtfully at her retreating back, then turned and gave the herb garden a long, pensive look. His decision made, Timmy set to work.

An hour later, Tom Brewell came home, gave Beryl a husbandly peck on the cheek, looked around and asked, "Where's Timmy?"

"He's out playing in the garden getting over being told he'll not get any chocolate cake until tomorrow. Let's go and get him." Tom followed her out into the garden and down the path. Beryl gave a shriek. There sat Timmy amidst the wreckage which had once been a herb garden, his face smeared with chocolate and a large chunk of cake clutched in his fist. Around him stood a weird construction of plant stems. They twisted around each other and over their creator in an eye-wrenching way which seemed to vanish into nothing.

Beryl blinked her eyes and gasped. "What's he done, and where did he get that cake?"

Timmy gave a satisfied grin, swallowed a lump of chocolate cake and mumbled, "You said no cake until tomorrow, so I went and got some then."

Tom took a painful glance at the eye-straining assembly of plant stems woven around his son.

36 He gave a surprised gasp, "Good heavens, he's made a *thyme machine*!"





*There's no place like home ... there's no place like home ... there's no place like home ...*

## GREENER PASTURES

I miss Australia. Reminders of our adventure pop up everywhere. A neon map on a bar touts Foster's (we never saw a can). **Finding Nemo** is set, in part, in magical, magnificent Sydney Harbour. On **The Simpsons** Lisa builds a sand castle shaped like the Opera House – and lordy, what an amazing building. On another episode, Bart calls Australia to find out if their toilets spiral “backwards” when flushed, and nearly starts a war. That was Parliament House where they wanted to give him The Boot. By the way, Aussie toilets are different – two buttons, one to dump half the tank, the other for the full load – but don't seem to spiral at all. And that's plenty of information on that topic, I'm sure.

We keep watching Aussie movies – **Rabbit-Proof Fence**, **Heat Wave**, **Muriel's Wedding**, **Sirens** – smiling over places we've been, lamenting sites we missed. I wish I'd brought a tape recorder, because there are Australian sounds I miss: the soft rat-a-tat-tat of the walkway signals, believe it or not – the piercing *tink* of the bell birds in the Blue Mountains – the coo-la-loo of the unknown bird outside of our window at Cathy Cupitt's house – even the “Row-row-row!” anthem from the footy game! Granted, there are some differences in Australian life that work to America's benefit. Few people there have a dryer or a microwave, and television is downright shoddy. (My favorite program was a kid's show called **Bambaloo**, but that was because the hostess was cute. *Every* Ozzie gull is cute! See the pages closing this issue.) But overall, America seems to reek of meanness and fear. I hate – I *really* hate – to think on what the difference was. All I can say is that the ills of American society never seemed more evident than now.

The grass may always be greener on the other side of the ocean, but contrasting one Pacific shore and the other, the comparison almost seems ludicrous – a garden vs. a desert; clean cities vs. slums; friendly, funny people vs. paranoid, aggressive ones. I'm fond of aphorisms, and here's one I came up with during our journey: *there are a million*



*reasons for an Australian to visit America, but not one for him to move here.*

Rose-Marie and I kept global politics to a minimum during DUFF. We were well aware of the frivolous fun fannishness of our mission, and we weren't there to proselytize for anything except good will between American and Australian fandoms. Nevertheless, American and Australians are free people, and free

people talk – and perhaps Americans nowadays have things to answer for to the other free peoples of the world.



My most political talks in Australia were with Craig Hilton in Melbourne, Tony Civelli in Canberra, and Nick Stathapoulos in Sydney, intelligent men with thoughtful concerns. Hilton expressed worry about the cultural and economic "footprint" the U.S. leaves wherever it walks; our nation's friends have had such questions since the War of 1812. Tony asked about something which had been on his mind as the Iraqi invasion went on: the American character. What does the Iraqi War say about us,? Awesome short-term competence, surely – we went through Saddam's formal resistance like it was made of paper. But also, it shows our eternal shortsightedness, our brutal concept of national strength, our slack-jawed gullibility, our talent for endless rationalization, our overwhelming arrogance. 9-11 showed us at our best. The Iraqi War – our revenge – shows us at our worst.

Nick mentioned film of the war we, in America, have been kept from seeing – terrified G.I.s, roadblock massacres, bloody mistakes. Our soldiers are fine young men and women – they could be my siblings – my children. I will never forgive this administration for dumping them into this horror, subjected to

snipers and suicide bombers and nightmares we homebodies can never imagine. Our soldiers have endured a lot of suffering and given forth a lot of suffering bringing democracy and Halliburton to Iraq. Most pain has been to Iraqi civilians. Remember the ditch at My Lai? It runs through Baghdad, too. What *about* that ditch?

Surely we're not like this. Surely America is about loving and supporting one's family, about taking on worthy tasks and performing them well, about seeking justice and equality, and maintaining respect for human rights. Surely we're *not* about confusing justice with conquest, and reassuring ourselves with comfortable lies; surely – please Christ – we're *not* a country where what matters is *what you can buy* and *who you can hurt*.

I *know* America is not like that, at heart. When we got off the transPacific plane at LAX, and were greeted by smiling photos of W and Dick Cheney, the atmosphere was downright oppressive. But then, after we were through customs, my cousin Roger and his wife Sue met us, and took us to their home, in the high desert above Los Angeles. For our one day in California, they had arranged a party at their house in the high desert above Los Angeles. Only three of my grandparents' grandchildren weren't there – my brother, in New York, my cousin Doose, in Florida, and one of my male cousins who is angry at the family and stayed home. Everyone else showed up, to laugh at my chubbiness, to meet Rosy, to hear first hand about Australia, and to remind me that however ugly and idiotic this turf of ours can act sometimes, America is still Home. When I mentioned how lucky my generation was to have the folks who came before it, and my uncle grasped my hand, I knew that Home was still and forever the place I belonged.

And so Home again, to New Orleans, where John Guidry picked us up and drove us home, and we resumed our American lives. My seven hours in jail ten days later? A far less attractive story.



*You know, in some ways I'm having far too interesting a year.*

# THE CLINK

GHLIII

In May 1993 – close to the time when I founded **Challenger** – I received a speeding ticket in Gretna, Louisiana. I don't remember it. I remember being stopped by a female cop because of an expired license plate, in Gretna; I worked there at the time as a public defender and that *might* have been 1993. I also remember going to a window inside the Gretna City Hall for *something* at about the same time – but it could have been 1992, or 1994, or anytime. I don't remember what it was all about.

I *do* remember having my license renewed, many times, in the decade since 5-11-93; I remember buying cars, getting license plates, even being grilled by hostile cops outside of a client's house – they thought I was buying drugs. On each occasion my name and number were run through police computers. On each occasion they came back clean.

So why *didn't* they come back clean on May 14, 2003?

May 14<sup>th</sup> is a pivotal date to my family: my brother was married on it in 1982; my father died on it in 1988. I had neither of these anniversaries in mind as I turned onto the street where Rosy and I live at a few minutes past 5 on May 14, 2003.

The car I was driving was a wine-red 1986 Nissan ZX, and it was no prize ... in fact, it was barely moving. My last auto had been smashed in the car wreck described last issue. Its value had been so puny that the insurance check could only cover such as this, purchased from a somewhat seedy lot. The mechanic boyfriend of a friend of a friend had given it a positive bill of health, but it had overheated and popped belts and by May 14<sup>th</sup> had cost me almost as much in repairs as it had cost to drive home. More to the point, while we were in Oz the temporary tag had expired, and being dissatisfied with the thing, I was in no hurry to purchase a license plate. This irritation caused me to do a very stupid thing.

When Rose-Marie and I inspected the smashed remnants of my old Ford Festiva, I brought home its license plate. Rather than be ticketed for an expired temporary tag, I stuck this plate in the rear window, and for one or two days, drove it like that. I confess: I knew this was illegal. But I was so sick of the car and so pooped from Australia that frankly, I didn't give a rat's patootie. Until May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2003, just after 5PM, when I learned the error of my ways.

That evening, as I came home, I noticed no police, only a panel truck in front of my house, blocking most of the street. I parked across from it and it was only as I was hefting my briefcase and dry cleaning that I noticed the black & white squeezing between us. It made it through; I got out of the car; I was halfway across the street when the officer's call stopped me in my tracks. Uh-oh.

If you've ever been in such a position you know the feeling: *embarrassed doom*. Okay, I sighed to



myself. Take the ticket. Indeed the young cop – close-cropped blond hair – seemed the slightest bit apologetic as he asked for my license, insurance card and registration. I had everything but without a good plate there is no good registration. Ticket time.

The police car pulled up, facing the wrong way on our one-way street. The second cop got out. The role of this burly lout in our little drama became quickly evident; he was the “bad cop” providing the impetus for me to tell all. Sheepishly – and rather foolishly – I admitted to substituting the old plate for the expired tag. This was the one thing I did all day that I now regret. When dealing with the law, a citizen should keep his mouth shut and let the facts speak for themselves. But like 99% of the rest of humanity in confrontation with authority, I was moved to babble – to try to explain. I pled lack of time and going to Australia and and and ... and the big cop strode redfaced back to his car. I saw him clicking keys on their computer.

The smaller guy leaned in the window and conferred. In a moment he returned to me. “Sir, I’m afraid you have a warrant.”

My heart fell away. A *warrant*? For my *arrest*? The cop looked the slightest bit sheepish. “Yes sir. A traffic warrant from 1993, in Gretna,” he said, naming the small city across the river where I’d worked in 1993. “Have you ever been arrested before?”

I got on the cell phone to Rosy. “I need you out here *now*!” She was by my side in moments. I gave the cool but concerned lady my laundry, my briefcase, my wedding ring and watch, my wallet and my *figa*. I kept only my driver’s license. I called my boss in St. John, David Richter, and Dennis Dolbear, who practices in Orleans, and yelped for help. Both promised quick assistance. “Say nothing!” Richter ordered – always the best idea in *gulp* custody. That said, I gave Rosy my cell phone, and all my change. No vending machines in ... did I dare even think the word? *Jail*.

How did I feel in these doomed moments? I’m not certain. Neither frightened nor angry – just calm. Maybe I’m giving myself too much credit. But maybe I saw there was no way out of the situation. What could I do? Make a mad dash for City Park? Hide behind Rosy? What I *could* do was lean on the hood of that damned Nissan, in the sight of God and gawping neighbors, and submit to a quick frisk. I asked the cops for two favors. First, not to be handcuffed. Second, to use the bathroom. Sure, said the shorter cop. Sorry, said the big one. Bladder full but hands free, I took my seat in the back seat of the patrol car.

It was crowded, no leg room, and hot. There was a plastic shield between the front seat and the back and after we roared off, the air conditioner took a while to work around it. We swooped through city streets towards Central Lock-up. Big Cop wondered why I said it was a familiar place, then reminded himself oh yeah, I was a lawyer. The car pulled into the CLU driveway and I was escorted in. I entered a huge, noisy room, and the universe of *process*.

I was stood by the metal door with another miscreant. Some guy wondered why I was smiling. Not exactly a smile, officer, I would have said. First, I wanted it known that I’d make no trouble. Second, seeing Booking from this side of things was something of a hoot. The huge central area was filled with high desks and ersatz easy chairs, pliant plastic jobs I recognized; they used to be in the waiting room outside, where I’d met many a client. Windowed rooms – cells – lined one wall of white cinderblock, desks another. It was noisy, and busy, and it would get noisier, and busier. “Face the glass,” I was told, “and spread’em.”

I faced the glass and spreaded’em. A large white cop wearing rubber gloves patted me down and went through my pockets, confiscating the one item besides my driver’s license I’d brought with me, a cheap pen.

“Take off your shoes. Hold them by their toes. Slap the soles together.” From my tennies they got nothing but lint.

The no-nonsense officer gave me back my license. Could I use the bathroom? Not yet. He sent me into an adjacent area, very like a hospital waiting room, to be photographed and get my “white sheet.” I sat on a bench built into the wall, while the personnel bantered. Working folks, going about their day.



A bald cop called me to stand in front of a board lined with height markings. I flashed on **Lineup**. He had me doff my glasses and took a polaroid photo. I'll bet my expression was telling. He snapped a band of orange elastic around my wrist and I sat again. I wanted this part to be over. I had two lawyers pulling strings to get me free. But none of their string-pulling could get me released until all the paperwork was finished.

Finally I was handed my white sheet and got the answer I needed about the bathroom. It had no lock, of course, which made doing my bizness perilous. Still, I decided not to hold back – I might not get a chance later. In this place, I was out of the life where I could go to the crapper whenever my body commanded.

A bit lighter on my feet, I went back to the bald cop. "In here," he ordered. A cell.

It was a small concrete room with another built-in bench. It had a drain in the floor. The metal door swung heavily on its hinges, and closed. The bald cop locked it; I could not leave. Although the door had a big window and the room was cool, claustrophobia grew. When I've interviewed prisoners in such rooms, I've hated being *locked in*. I fought the feeling. I told myself, Relax– it's all you can do.

Strangely, the panic faded when three black kids, also wearing orange wristbands, were led in. Their life gave the room size, and their predicaments gave me identity – again, I could be a lawyer, talk to these frightened (two) and angry (one) boys, and try to calm them down. Their attitudes differed in a way that became familiar – one kid quiet, resigned, another mildly disgusted, the last depressed, angry, shouting like a fool to the unresponsive glass.

Soon the door was opened. "Take your sheets down to medical," we were told. We walked to the appropriate desk and, one by one, were ushered to the medical staff. Was I on any meds? High blood pressure, thyroid, an antibiotic for a bug bite I picked up a billion millennia ago, in Australia. The doctor, or tech, or whatever he was, was on such distracted autopilot that he asked me if I had sickle-cell anemia. Underscoring the most obvious fact about Booking – the room, its cops, its workers, its "processees," were ninety percent black.

Medical was adjacent to a bank of phones, and I grabbed the chance. Collect calls only. To my dismay, there was a block on my home line. When did *that* happen? I tried other numbers, and finally called Justin and Annie Winston – and praise him, Justin took the call. I asked him to pass along my relative well-being to Rose-Marie and to get a progress report out of Dolbear.

I sat with my cellies in the "easy chairs" until gestured against a wall. Other orange-banded males joined us. Then we were sent, en masse, into a large cell – the tank.

We were about thirty, all black but three: me, a bearded guy in worn work clothes, and a teenager in a bandanna and loose, low-slung jeans. I dubbed him "Eminem." I was the oldest there, except maybe for the beard and a neatly-dressed black gent, who sat calmly against the wall, his arms folded. Why was *he* here? I wondered ... but didn't ask. *Don't approach, don't ask, say nothing, be* – as my poor mother used to say when afraid we'd embarrass her – *quiet and inconspicuous*. No one was threatening – they ignored me – but some of those guys were indeed stupid. One angry goof kept banging his fist against the glass and shouting until he was hauled out and away. Another kid begged a guard for a roll of toilet paper – then showed off the second roll he had under his shirt. What would he do with it?

And then there was Eminem, who not only took the cake for sheer moronic nerve, but the whole bakery. I'd found a seat near the door, or more truthfully, the crack beneath it. I didn't feel claustrophobic or scared, but a terrible concept had flashed on my mind and I wanted to be near open air. *Fire*. For Eminem and a black kid had cloistered themselves above the toilet in the corner and were smoking a joint.

The twerp had smuggled a bag of grass and a lighter into jail, stuffed up his ass. Is there any limit to the stupidity of druggies? The sharp reek of burning hemp filled the room. Other guys raised a howl, and even I joined in. "Watch yourself, son!" I shouted. "That's a *felony*!" (It is, too: La. R.S. 14:402 (A): "No person shall introduce contraband into or upon the grounds of any state-correctional institution." Possible sentence: five years.)

Eminem laughed. "Don't be scared!" He showed me a photo he had crumpled up in his pocket. Cute little black girl. "Want to see her *sooner* or *later*?" I asked – and then the door whopped open and guards poured in. I knew that smell carried. They trundled Eminem and the other smoker out.

I'd had enough. I leaned over to the cop who had frisked me and told him look, I *am* a lawyer. Let me talk to your rank. He glanced me up and down and said, "Hold on a minute." Within a few the door opened again and I was gestured over to the sergeant's desk.

Some of the cops at Booking were surly and thuggish – understandable, considering their clientele. Thank God, this guy was not. He saw that my crime against humanity was a ten-year-old traffic ticket, and although I'd left my Bar card in my wallet – home with Rosy, a galaxy or two away – I was obviously who and what I said I was. This hero, a black guy named Penn, asked why I hadn't gotten a judge to parole me. I told him it was in the works. Hearing that, he allowed me to stay outside.

I took the time to use the toilet again (because you never know) and collect-called the Winstons again. Annie answered.

My dear redheaded buddy was obviously flustered by the situation and as we talked, I had to keep calling her back on track. But she got across that Rosy was reporting progress on the Richter side of things – the Gretna ticket – but Dolbear was now nowhere to be found. I asked her to tell Rosy that I continued okay, but was getting antsy, and had a seat.

Soon my name was called and I followed the call to be fingerprinted – for the first time in my life. I pressed my fingers onto an inky pad and pushed their mark onto the appropriate card. The ink felt gritty and didn't wipe off completely. I felt a touch of fear. Inmates were being taken upstairs to the dorms after being fingerprinted, and I *didn't* want to go to the dorms. Horrors I could only guess at waited there. Penn signaled to the nasty cop in charge to let me stay where I was, but still, whenever he led a group out of the room, I hurried to Penn's desk.

I sat in the pliant plastic chair and watched the sad parade of petty criminality pass by. They came and went in noisy waves, quick tidal flows of beaten humanity, into the tanks, into the chairs, up the stairs and away. I saw only one face I sort of recognized, a scrawny redhead, perhaps a client from my drug court days. I didn't speak to her, nor to the hooker who seemed to have jelly in her pants, nor to any of the poor sick slobs who were, for the moment, my peers on this planet. I sat and I watched and I waited, calling Annie every interminable hour or so for progress reports. Every so often a shout would bellow from the front – "FEMALE SEARCH!" Every so often an angry kid would blow up, and there would be a flurry of trouble, and then relative quiet.

Penn was helpful. He called me "Guy." He told me the Orleans parole had come through – bless Dennis – and they were just waiting on Jefferson. This was a confusion: Annie had reported that Rosy had reported that Richter had reported that Gretna had given me a new court date, and *dropped the attachment that had caused my arrest*. There was no reason left for me to be there. But I had to sit and wait and sit and wait and sit and wait for the paperwork to go through. Sit. Call. Wait.

While I sat and waited another white guy sat and waited – and suffered – in a nearby chair. About 35, in shorts and a tee, he too had been nailed on an ancient traffic ticket – while applying for a liquor license – but he was in far worse straits than me. A diabetic, he had missed his shot, had told medical about it, but was ignored ... and none of us had been fed. He was beginning to get sick.

I tackled Penn when he walked past and told him about it. A medicine for my increasing anxiety: someone else to worry about.

Wait, and wait. I called Annie for the umpteenth time. It was after 11 by now. Rosy, she said, had been on the phone again to David, and felt so confident in my imminent release that she had asked John Guidry to drive her to the jail to pick me up. I wished I felt so confident. Wait. Wait.

And then, suddenly, Penn called me to the wall to stand in a short line. "Good news?" He nodded. I was glad to see the diabetic guy brought over to join me. From behind the window to the female tank a dusty 'ho smiled and winked. I smiled back. It was time to smile.

Or almost. We had two more rooms to pass through, to sign papers and recover our property – if I'd wanted to, I could have recovered my pen. The guy with diabetes was having a hellacious time by now,



slumping to the floor, barely able to perambulate or talk. They told us to keep quiet but I had to speak up at the last stage, when a bitchy clerk went off at him for not responding when she barked a question. That took nerve; if I pissed her off, she might hold up my release. (An angry black kid – quite a few of them in Booking – sneered that I'd never help a *black* man who had diabetes. I asked him to show me one, and *see*.) But Penn intervened, and got the guy out of there – down a last long highway past one last guard out one last door. After signing papers for the harridan clerk, and having the orange band snipped off my wrist, I followed.

One last corridor, one last guard to glance at the release paper, and then the last door was before us. I held up at it – by now I was used to waiting for permission to move. But the angry black punk pushed past and burst through, and before the door could close I saw Rosy and John looking up at me from the waiting room pews, and I was through it and once again a free man.

From Rosy's embrace I looked around for the diabetic, but Penn, behind the counter, told me he'd been met by a lady with an insulin shot, and was already on his way to the hospital. Outside, we saw them hurrying away. I gave the girl my name, as a witness, just in case, but since then we've heard nothing, so he must have been all right.

I was certainly all right. Racked by sheer joy, I walked with my wife and friend to John's car, as Rosy called Richter on her cell to advise him of my release. It turned out that David had enlisted his wife, a Jefferson Parish detective, to track down my ticket and get the attachment lifted. The problem had been with getting the idiots at Orleans lockup to listen – one of their witless minions had even hung up the phone on the lady. At the jail, Rosy had pestered the desk clerk to find the proper papers, which had already been on hand for *two hours*. Penn – who had said "Oh yeah! He's my lawyer guy!" when Rosy had asked about me – had been an exception: sullen stupidity still ruled at the jail.

But it no longer ruled me. John drove us home and Rosy fed me a slice of re-heated pizza, the most delicious meal I'd ever had. Her radiant face was the most beautiful sight in life. In its light I contemplated the lessons of the day.

I'd learned that chaos can erupt anytime, anywhere, on anyone. I'd deserved my traffic tickets; getting nailed for the license plate was only just. The ten-year-old attachment was nonsense, but it only proved that forgotten sins, perhaps long taken care of, can still surface and capsize you. Nothing you can do but take care of your business, and when bad stuff happens, *handle* it. (I handled my problem by whining my way out of three of the four Orleans charges: professional courtesy from the D.A. The Gretna ticket is still pending.)

Also, with chagrin, I noted how easily I had accepted being *controlled*. The feeling of helplessness in custody was gone by the time we were out of the jailhouse door – but it was real: the idea that obedience to authority, even unto imprisonment, was the natural state of man. It took being free to return to me the fundamental American faith, that authority is an aberration, to be applied and accepted only with caution, for the natural state of man is *freedom*. That thought was a conscious decision – a choice – a faith. It's the only choice a defense lawyer and an American can allow himself to make. *The authority of the state must be applied only when it is backed up by proof*. All of us – *us*, now – who have been under its heel deserve no less.

Lastly, a very personal lesson. Before this night I'd taken love and friendship too much for granted. Rosy, my *belle* Rose-Marie, never stopped fighting for me. My boss, David Richter, and his wife never stopped fighting for me. Dennis Dolbear fought for me. Annie and Justin Winston served as a lifeline for me. John Guidry brought my beloved lady to me. I can never adequately thank these people; I can only try to emulate them, and be as good a friend to them as they were to me.

And I'd also taken freedom and sanity too much for granted. Chaos is. But it is not the only thing that is. Friendship is. Freedom is. Friendship is nice. *Freedom* is nice.

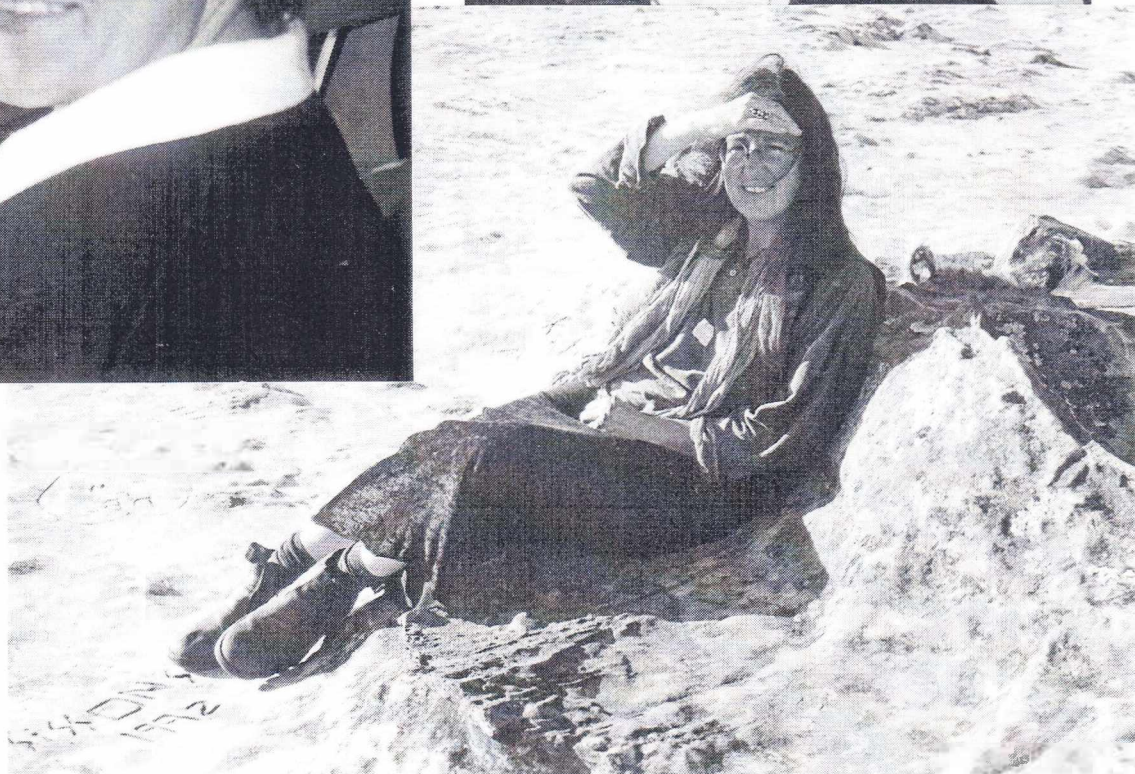


The  
Challenger  
Tribute

"Do yuhseves a favor, lads ...

Git yuhsef an

# OZZIE GULL

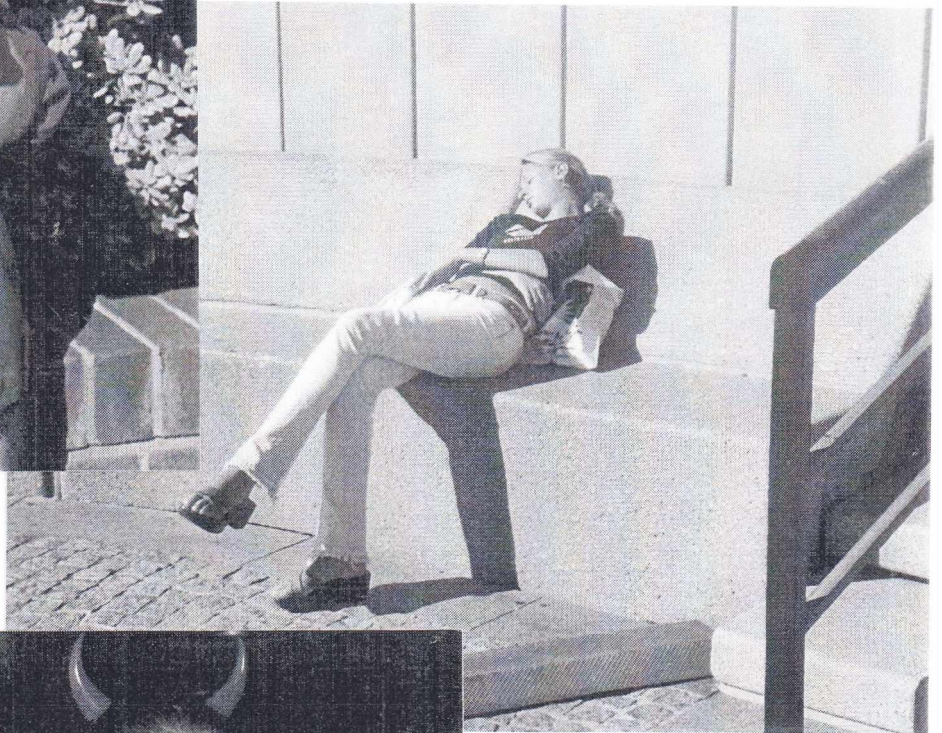


They were everywhere – the prettiest gulls girls in the world. So what if some were born in England or America? Being in Oz brought them all a special magic, and **Challenger** salutes them ... all.

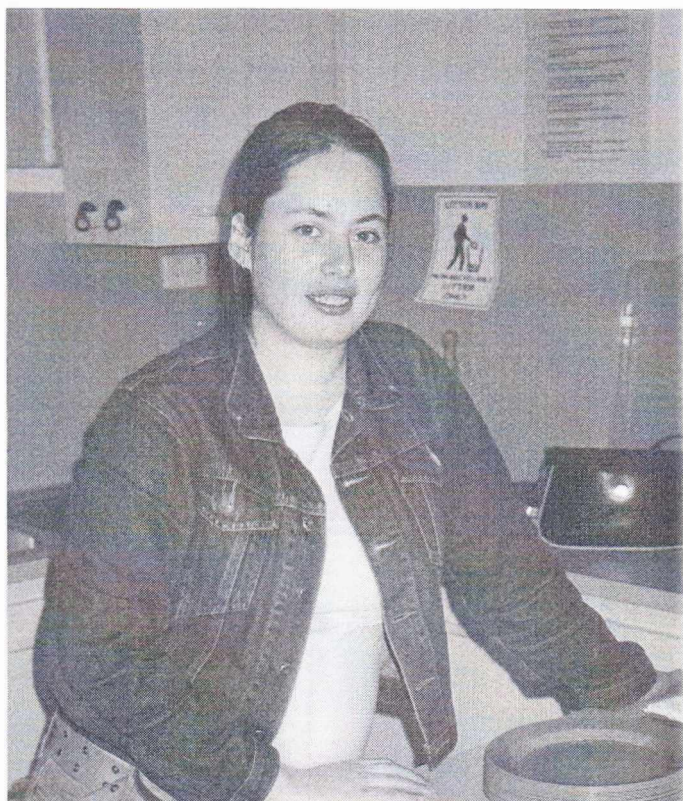




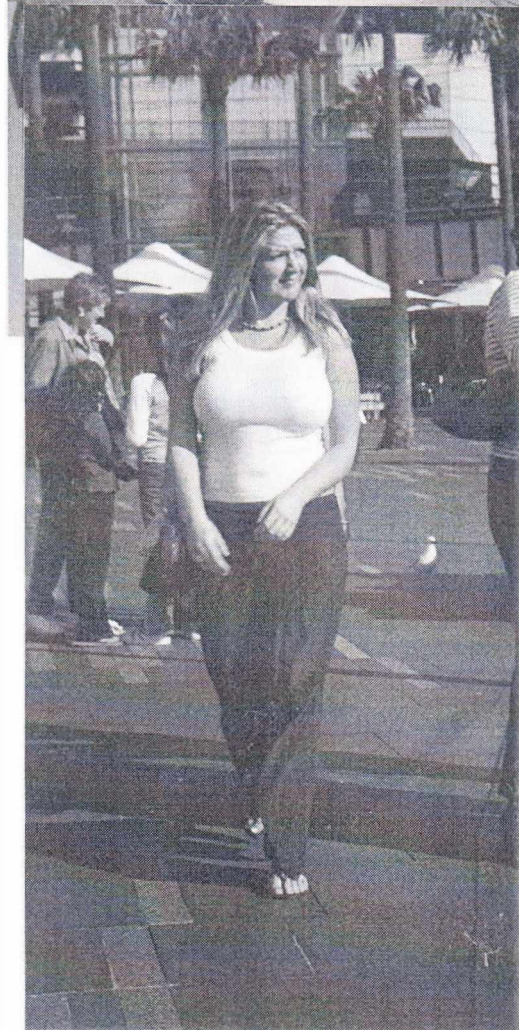
Yes, they were everywhere on our DUFF trip – showing us the sights at Tidbinbilla, asleep on a bench by the Sydney Opera House, acting devilish at Swancon in Perth ... you Aussie boys don't know how good you got it!







They were at club meetings, and dinners, and standing in line queue at footy games ... friends from fanzines, or visits, or never met at all ...

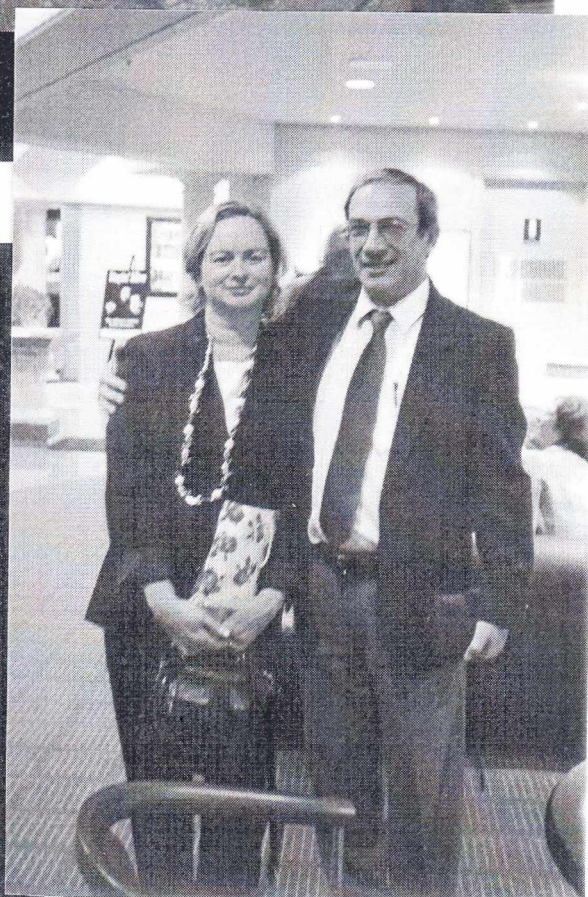




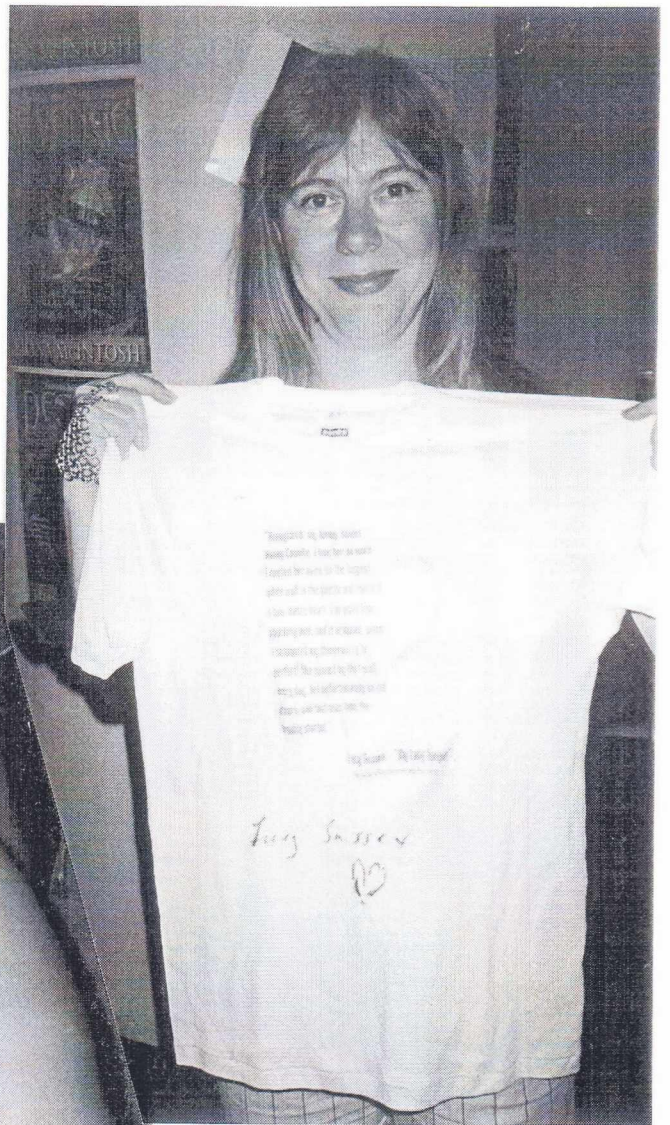
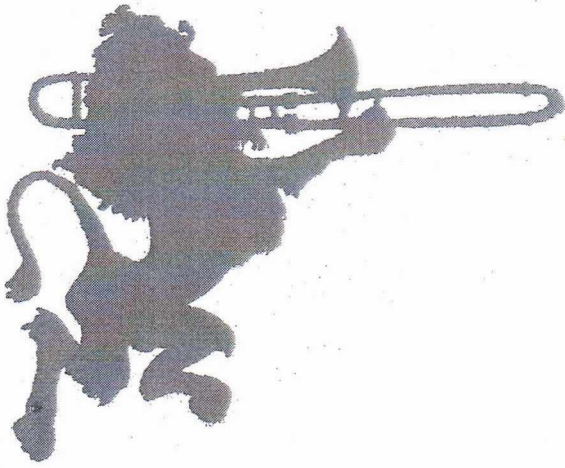
Be they fans, be they pros,  
they make the world  
a place we should all want to be.



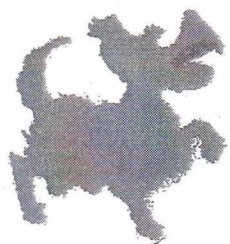
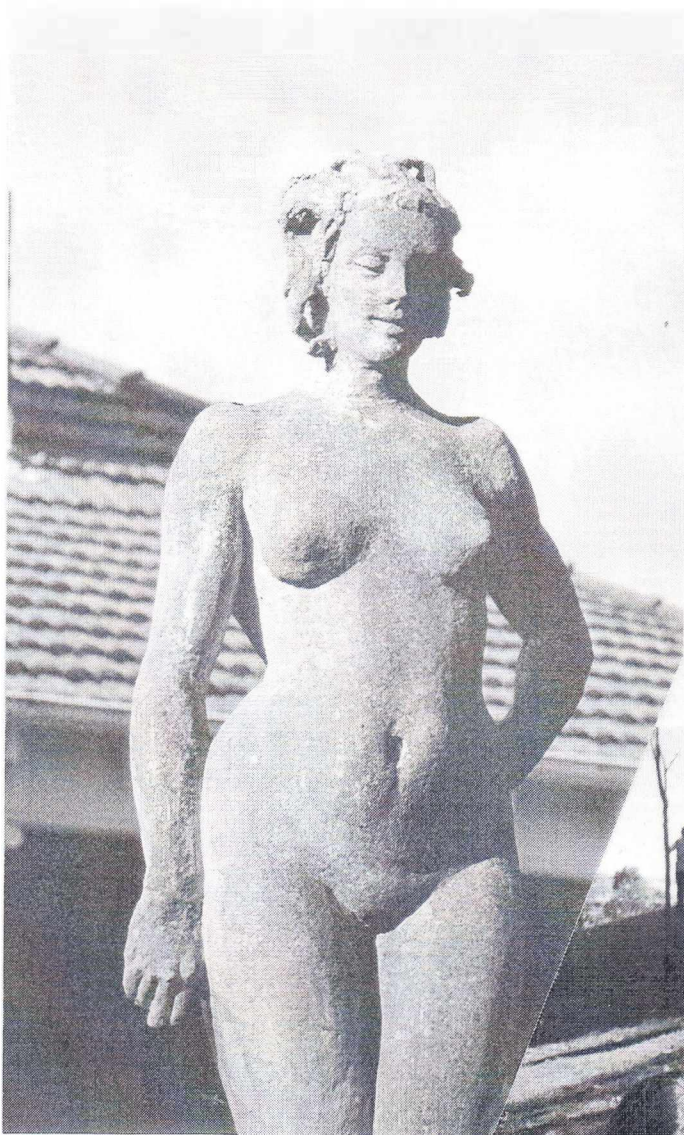
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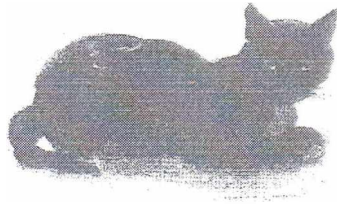






T'was ever thus, too, as Norman Lindsay could tell you, as this lucky lad on the Rottnest ferry could tell you, as the other fans at the footy game could tell you ...





This small adoration of Ozzie Gulls includes, clockwise: (p.1) Sue the cabbie, Ruth & Rachel Hunter, Marilyn Pride; (p. 2) Emily McLeay of MSFC, Paula McGrath, Julia Hilton, pretty girl on the Sydney quay; (p. 3) Pat Gibbs at Tidbinbilla, unknown napster at the Sydney Opera House, a devilish lady at Swancon; (p. 4) Lucy Sussex, Coreynn with Craig Stephenson, a remarkable conventioneer; (p. 5) Cathy Cupitt, Sue Batho, Donna Hanson (with Tony Civello), a lady in red; (p. 6) a statue by Norman Lindsay at his Blue Mountains home, a lady on the ferry to Rottneest Island, another after the footy game, and below, me and my favorite girl, at the wishing tree in Sydney, in Oz, in Oz, in Oz.

