



 **Challenger 36**



# CHALLENGER

## #36

2013

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# ME & MY GAL

*GHLIII*

We're back! After a disgracefully long absence due to illness, other projects and rank ennui, *Challenger* reappears on the fanzine scene.

It is and it isn't the same genzine fandom has somehow tolerated over the past twenty \*irk\* years. I am still Guy H. Lillian III, I am still editor, and I am still dedicated to the idea that it is the fan who makes a fanzine fannish, not necessarily—or absolutely—the subject matter. Readers may therefore still expect an occasional stray from purely SFnal or fannish topics in this and future issues, I will still “dedicate” each issue to a female SFer (although I've wandered in that regard in the past, too). These things won't change.

But some things *will*. I've taken on a co-editor, y'see: my wife, Rose-Marie.



Considering the current brouhaha concerning gender equity in fandom, one might accuse me of caving in to political correctness with this announcement, but such is not the case. People, by which I mean Rich Lynch and Rosy herself, have long been after me to “open up” *Challenger*, to allow other voices to be heard. I finally have to admit that the time is right. Why? Illness. My doctors seem satisfied with my recovery from my diverticulitis operation of late December, 2011, but all through 2012 and until now, I still felt—and feel—literally and figuratively gutted. It showed.

Though Rosy and I and were fannishly busy in 2012—four conventions for me, five for her—and I was able to churn out a progress report for Chicon 7, the program book for the 50<sup>th</sup> DeepSouthCon, one *Challenger* in the spring, six issues of my apazine for the Southern Fandom Press Alliance and a worldcon report (which is out there on eFanzines), nothing else of general interest came from the GHLIII Press. My sole attempt at a *Zine Dump* died on the vine. Crew, I was *beat*. There was no way I could keep up the righteous publishing schedule a Hugo-worthy fanzine editor should.

A change, a booster shot, an impetus, a swat on the butt was clearly needed. And here was Rose-Marie, fresh from editing the Chicon 7 program book, eager to get involved. .

Rosy’s first input is the theme for this issue: *parties*. She’s grown tired of the gloom with which I often invest *Challenger*. In this issue, at least, happiness and glee rule the content. Rosy even added the hat to the cover logo. She’s also been after me to shorten the issues, and she’s *sort of* gotten her wish: this *Challenger* has heft, but nowhere near the bulk of some of its predecessors. Wary of the unfairness she sees in my dedicating each issue to a lady, and a lady alone, she will be answering my tributes with her own. As for content, the only specific insistence she made was that I reprint “It Pays to Advertise?”, a piece I wrote years ago for Rich and Nicki Lynch’s classic *Mimosa*. Rich has been kind enough to forward it—and Charlie Williams’ epic illustrations—and here it is. What other impact will Rosy have in these pages? *Me* you’re asking! Check out her marvelous self-introduction – “Touched by Magic”, page 10. Watch and see.

So ... party time. Boundless the limits on fandom’s ability to boogie! We have short stories from Greg Benford and Kent McDaniel (author of *Jimmy Stu Lives!* from **PenumbraPublishing.com**) set at parties. Mike Resnick celebrates his Guest-of-Honorship at fandom’s biggest soiree. Chris Garcia bids us welcome to *his* party. In a piece reprinted from *Challenger* #14, Roger Sims tells the tale of the legendary event at Nolacon’s Room 770. (I’m surprised anyone survived.) Rick Norwood’s photos illustrate the most awesome party science fiction has ever known (with text by Rick, Frankie McDonald and Joe Green, the host) and I paeon the greatest party *mankind* has ever known. Plus there’s great work from Joe Major, not party-oriented unless you consider the Joker a clown brought in to entertain the kiddies. (Think of Joe’s “Spy Who Joked Me” as a semi-sequel to his previous 007-Joker meeting, “Why So Serious?” in *Chall* #34.)

Cover, as often, is by Alan White, author of *The Zombie Effect*, available—with amazing illustrations by the author—from **www.VegasEmedia**. Charlie Williams is well-represented in the interiors, as are Kurt Erichsen and Taral Wayne. Why aren’t all four of these geniuses tripping over Hugos? There’s also a great pair of pages by Bill Rotsler—reprinted from *somewhere*. I’m sure—and lotsa other goodies. It’s a lightweight issue, but it’s fun.

Next issue’s theme? **Heroes**. Who? How? Why? With luck you’ll see *Challenger* #37 by the worldcon. Pitch in and make it happen!



Speaking of LoneStarCon, if anyone wonders, yes, Rosy and I intend to attend; from Shreveport, San Antonio is but a day’s drive to. Neither of us has duties with the event nor have we yet been invited to appear as panelists, but having nothing to do at the worldcon could be a benefit. (It’d be a change; we both had loads to do for and at Chicon 7, and ended up enjoying the event greatly. I refer all to my report, *The Escalated Route*, at **eFanzines.com**.) Anyway, if you attend LSC and can drag yourself away from the Alamo for an hour or two, Joe Major and I are already scouting locations for the traditional **Fan-Eds’ Feast**. Who’s up for Tex-Mex on the River? **PARTY TIME!**



# Welcome to My Party

*Christopher J Garcia*



I was in an unhappy marriage, except we weren't married, and with the exception that I knew she was cheating on me, I wasn't particularly unhappy. She had been a musical theatre major, was acting in a melodrama in Downtown San Jose, and when we spoke during those weeks, it was often short and stymied. Go figure. She did bring home an album, though, and she played it in the car on the way to my Mom's place for Thanksgiving. It was a cast recording for a show that was brand new, something she seldom showed any interest in. She loved Sondheim, almost as much as I did, and she seemed to prefer the old-timey musicals of the 1950s and 60s. This one, though, was different. She put it on and it instantly lit me up! This was what I listened to music for! It was Michael John LaChiusa's work *The Wild Party*, starring Toni Collette, Mandy Patinkin, and Eartha Kitt.

The thing rocked.

The story was taken from a poem, a wonderful narrative poem called *The Wild Party* by Joseph Moncure March. It's the story of two Vaudeville performers, Queenie and Burr, who after getting into a fight in the morning, end up hosting a party that night.

Oh, but it's not just any party; it's a rollicking, ugly, loud, brash, steamy, sexy party, the kind that could only happen during Prohibition in huge Hollywood mansions or tiny New York apartments. There was gin, incest, cocaine, fisticuffs, underaged sex, jazz, and general levels of bad behavior. The music was miraculous, jazz-infused and smart. The opening lines, "Queenie was a blonde and her age stood still / And she danced twice-a-day in the Vaud-e-ville." was the exact same as in the poem. I was drawn to it thoroughly, and as happens when I am drawn into something like a new play, I dove into all sorts of off-shoots, and the source material. I read and re-read the liner notes, bought an old copy of the poem (from the 1930s!), as well as a copy of *The Wild Party: The Lost Classic* which featured the original text along with new illustrations from the master Art Spiegelman! This got me reading and reading and reading and reading. I loved the story, and the characters in the poem were all perfect, humans with great, giant, cartoonish flaws; the kind of flaws that only real humans have and hide.

All that got me thinking: how could I make this into a movie?

You see, I wanted to be a filmmaker since I was a kid. When I was 6, they had a class at the Community Recreation Center in Santa Clara. They'd take a group of kids between the ages of 6 and 9 and make a Super-8 short film. We did a take-off on *Murder Can Hurt You*, a bunch of us kids all playing versions of TV detectives! I was Hutch! It was awesome! That was the first time I thought about being a filmmaker. During high school, we did a bunch of movies, mostly fan films in the Indiana Jones, Godfather, or Terminator worlds. I ended up getting into Emerson, hoping to major in Mass Communications, but secretly, in my head, I wanted to be a filmmaker and to study Film History. I did a bit of the Film History thing, but I found that I loved writing, and I ended majoring in Creative Writing. I was never very good at that, but I enjoyed it.

Of course, now I've lost the thread, right?

Just a few weeks after she introduced me to *The Wild Party*, my girlfriend left me. Well, I left her, actually, left her with the apartment that had been slowly sucking every dollar I had, but still, the

idea's the same. I had to move back in with my Mom, and I now had all the time in the world. I started working with the Cinequest Film Festival, and while I was there that first year, I was reading *The Wild Party* over and over, sucking the marrow from it as best I could. I then started writing it, the first hundred or so words in the lobby of the Camera 1 during the closing night screening (which was over-sold, so I was stationed in the lobby).

And that's where I had the kind of epiphany that you only have during moments of mind-numbing boredom.

You see, one of the themes of *The Wild Party* is that the world of entertainment plays by different rules than the regular world, that things that are not acceptable to the rest of the world can slide, and usually do, in the world that is lived in by the rich or famous. In the 1920s, the realisation about that following the murder of William Desmond Taylor and the Fatty Arbuckle trial led to the importation of Will Hays to start the entire Hays Code thing. The 20s saw the introduction of radio as an important new medium, film as the major way of communicating, and the world exploded, entertainers were bigger than ever and wider-known. In the 1950s, there was television, and entertainers who had been big before either became bigger or invisible. The Rat Pack exemplified the behavior of so many stars of the day. The 1980s saw the rise of Cable television, MTV, Pro Wrestling, Fashion Designers like Gaultier as media sensations, the explosion of Pop Culture to ever higher heights. Think of the late 1990s, early 2000s. There was money everywhere, the first era of internet celebrities, the New Thing was creating new stars, new stories. These eras were so similar that you could shoot this film with any of them as the setting. In fact, you could shoot this film with ALL of them as the setting.

And so, it began!

I started writing a screenplay that would jump between the four eras. Queenie was a blonde, always and forever, and while she was a Vaudeville dancer in the 1920s, in the 50s she danced for a variety show, in the 1980s, on a MTV music show, in the 2000s, an internet dance sensation. Burrs, a Pagliacci-type clown in the original, was a 50s costume comedian (think Uncle Miltie), in the 80s, a club-hopping stand-up, in the 2000s, a comedy clown-like stand-up. There was a boxer, Eddie, a black fighter seemingly based on the legendary Jack Johnson. A great character, gets one of the most powerful songs in *The Wild Party* musical, and I recast him through time as a boxer, a pro wrestler (in the 1950s!), and pro wrestler again in the 1980s, and as an MMA star in the 2000s. There were dark characters; dealers, prostitutes, Lolita-types, seductionists, addicts, and perhaps most interestingly, performers. In fact, every major and minor character seems to be performing, showing off, showing it all, putting on a show for a camera that isn't actually there. It's a show, for sure, and capturing that is difficult in a screenplay.

Yes, there was a film made of it, oddly enough by the great team of Merchant-Ivory. It had James Coco and the sexiest woman alive up to that point, Raquel Welch. She wasn't great as Queenie, though Coco was pretty good as Burrs. It wasn't a great movie, it was unfocused, the changes that were made confused things, and the large cast didn't all work out. Now, I was trying to do something even more scattered! The scenes would shift, you'd get a scene in the 1920s, then the '50s, then the '80s, and so on, as the film went on and the party got more hectic and the chaos spread, the timeframes would shift faster, harder. You might have a question asked by the 1950s Queenie, only to be answered by the 1920s Burrs, or there might be a flapper walking through the party in the 2000s. The time shifts would become another thing crashing in as things spun out of control.

And I had to find the perfect house, which I did!



The party in the poem is held at an apartment, tiny, fully diagrammed in the Spiegelman illustrated version, but there's no way such a place could work in a filmed version. Merchant-Ivory recognised that, so they turned the party into more of a Fatty Arbuckle-sort of bacchanalia. It's a good call, and one of the folks I met at Cinequest invited me over to hang out, and the place they lived, built in the 1920s in the shaded suburban cul-de-sacs of Palo Alto. It's big, but the way it's set-up, there are zones, and just walking in, I could see how groups would congregate to drink, to screw, to drunkenly screw, to get good and tight. It was exactly the vision I had for the place, and I had access to it. The agreement that we hammered out took a while, but it went like this.



"Hey, can I shoot a movie here?" I said.

"Yeah, just give me a couple of days' notice."

Those are my kinds of negotiations.

The sad thing is, it was a mess on the page. I had the concept down, every character would have a marker so that no matter what the era you would recognise who was who. For example: Queenie would always have a flower, a purple flower, either in her hair, on her dress, on her wrist. Burrs would always have an over-the-top watch on. You'd always know a character by either a color, or an object, or a voice. Some characters would be played by different actors in different timeframes, but you'd connect them with the continuing object.

Except for Black.

Black, a well-dressed handsome man, seemingly with no past, walks into the party with a friend of Queenie's, ends up sleeping with her and, ultimately, bringing tragedy to the party. In the 20s, he's in a stylish tux. In the 1950s, he's in a stylish tux. In the 80s, he's in a stylish tux. In the 2000s, he's in a stylish tux. One thing I sent a friend of mine on a quest: to discover a tuxedo that would work in all the ears. In two of them, it wasn't too hard,

especially for the 20s and the 2000s, but for all, it took her a while. He was a character who transcended time, who exists everywhere. He's the kind of character that moves in every scene, part-predator, part-scenemaker.

It took me four years to write a script. It wasn't great. It was barely decent. I started working on it. When I took one step forward, it would go wrong in another area. It was maddening. I've been polishing it and polishing it ever since. When I'm not writing *Drink Tanks*, or watching too many short films, I'm taking out file and polishing it again, trying to make it all work together.

I've never had the money to make it. That's the shame. I've entered a couple of contests with the script, submitted it to a few film incubators, but besides one small pre-production grant, I've not gotten much closer than I was that night when the idea dawned on me, and hey, it might never happen, but I'll probably never stop working on it. I've also thought of inviting all my favorite most dramatic friends, and just giving people cameras and shooting a documentary in the House of Perfection! I'm still working on it, I even started a Pinterest account where there are boards to hold things that would help with the set, art, and costume design. I wanna make it, but perhaps the biggest problem is that I've pretty much given up on the dream of being a filmmaker. Much like I dropped my dream of being an author, I gave up the hope of living the life of a Hollywood Visionary, and perhaps that shows my dedication to the story and concept more than anything. I'm not gonna be a filmmaker, but I am DAMN sure well gonna do everything I can to make *The Wild Party*.

Orson Welles had projects that languished for twenty, thirty years, many of which never had a frame of film shot, and what am I if not Orson Welles without all that genius baggage?



# STAND-IN

By the time I got to the party the unicorn was talking to a girl in ballet tights and the liquor was already gone.

Never throw an open house party in San Francisco. It's a town full of people who like to drink and talk talk talk; and the only ones who give parties are masochists who like trampled rugs and depleted refrigerators.

Not that I'm one of them. I'm a man who likes people, work, responsibility, the whole bit. That's why I put on parties every once in a while—without a few of us the social life of the city would fall apart. Occasionally I think it's people like me who carry the world on their shoulders.

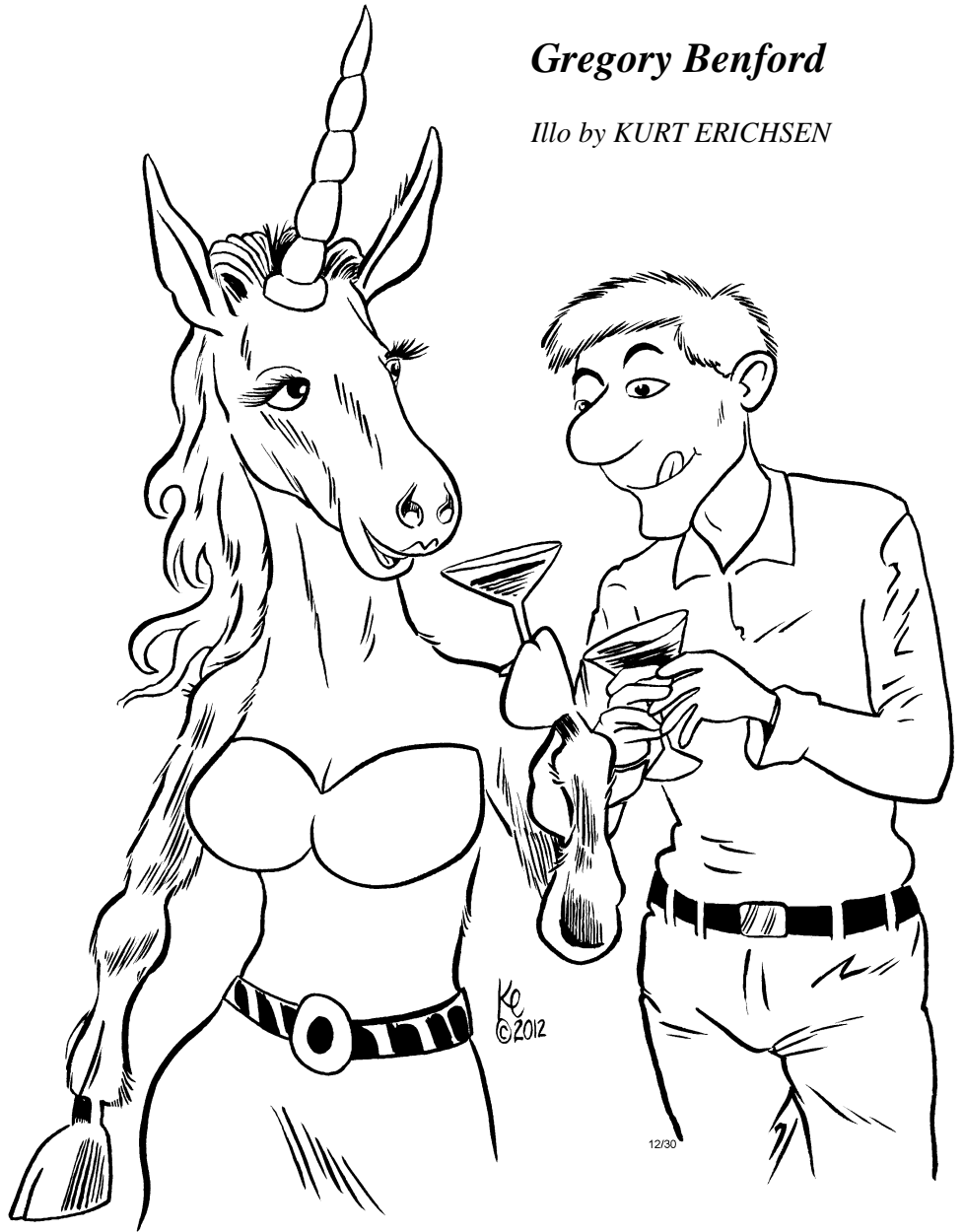
As I finished mauling the hors d'oeuvres I looked up and saw Marge on the other side of the room. The one in the unicorn costume would be a better bet, but I went over to pay my respects to the Old Flame in Residence first.

A cat would have broken an ankle trying to get through the people sprawled on pillows in the middle of the floor, looking like extras from a Cecil B. deMille Roman orgy, but I circumnavigated the bar and made it.

"It has a certain dualistic quality that lends the mode a touch of the mystical," a thin-shouldered little man was saying to her. Marge gave me a warm, glazed look and a greeting,

**Gregory Benford**

*Illo by KURT ERICHSEN*



apparently not noticing that he was rocking back and forth on his toes, trying to look down the front of her dress.

"You're an iconoclastic synthetic-ist, then," I said, to divert his attention. Not that I

blamed him for trying. When Marge walks into a room it looks like chipmunks fighting inside a burlap sack.

"Well, yes," the artist grumbled.

"Excuse me, what's that?" a husky, deep voice said. It was the girl in the unicorn costume, breaking in.

"It's a new school," he said. "We believe the only fitting medium for this crass, materialistic society is the artificial, the cheap, anything that shows the decadence of the age. True art must be done now with purely synthetic materials."

He fished a green bathroom tile out of his coat pocket. Lines webbed across it, drawn on with purple ink in random patterns.

"Ugly," the unicorn said.

The word was short, the word was apt.

"It's a whole new mode of expression," Thin Shoulders said. Marge gripped his arm protectively and gave the girl a look that would have made Hannibal think about taking the next elephant back to Carthage.

The unicorn moved off. I could stay with Marge, but I'd been that route before. She had been weighed in the balance and found wanton. I followed the unicorn.

"Pretty nice costume," I said, trying to look down her throat and see who was inside. Are unicorns supposed to have tonsils? This one did.

"Thank you," she said. "I have it brushed twice a day."

"What?"

"My coat, of course, silly." She gave a demure little whinny, undeniably feminine. For the first time I noticed that the coat was a soft, warm gold, only slightly lighter than the funny little horn in the middle of her forehead.

"You mean this isn't a costume? Your coat is real?"

As it developed, not only was she a unicorn, and real, but a good conversationalist, too. I won't make the obvious remark about the people you meet at parties—my motto is just accept everything, don't try to figure out the situation, and see what develops. Still, unicorns don't turn up every day.

"I thought you were extinct," I said.

"Oh no," she batted golden eyelashes at me. "Technically, we never existed, so we couldn't become extinct."

"Then how . . . ?"

"It's one of those proverbial long stories. If you have the time . . ."

A hint, of course, almost classic in its form. I never thought I'd get one from something that looked literally like a horse, though.

I looked around. A lot of old and new faces were mingling with each other, with the standard party types. The Quarreling Couple were trying not to make a scene, there was the Symbolic Negro, the Informed Source, and The Girl Who'll Have Hysterics Later. And as I said, no drinks. Nothing particularly to hold me.

"Yours or mine?"

Hers was an ordinary walk-up with a few tacked-on pretensions. The smell of money hung over the interior, though, and I had to wade through inch-thick rugs to reach the couch.

"It's a matter of necessity," she said, settling into a strange hammocklike affair of cloth and wrought iron.

"Human beings are always thinking up things they can't have, or think exist somewhere else. It's a habit they have, although I must say I don't quite understand it. Seems like a waste of time."

I looked at a carefully manicured hoof and tried to pay attention.

"We're from all the neighboring stars, and as soon as we achieve space travel the sensitive ones among us are drawn here by the emotional waves your mixed-up psyches give off. One we're here we can't get out. Your race doesn't understand what it's doing, but there's no way we can stop you."

"We'?"

"Oh, I'm not really like this," she gestured at the glistening golden body. "It's the form I'm forced to take. By this."

She pressed a button on a side table and the wall at the other end of the room slid aside. It was one long panel of dully blinking lights, chemical feeder tubes, and spinning magnetic tapes. A worn panel near the top had the name UNIVAC almost scratched out.

"UNIVAC? That was dismantled long ago."

"True. We have to make do with what we can, and some of the old parts are easier to get. It's more than a computer—it synthesizes the chemicals I live on, keeps this body functioning,

and gives me my instructions. I'm just in training now, before I get to work."

I felt like somebody had put my head on the wrong way. "What the . . . ?"

"I can see this form bothers you. Perhaps you would feel more at home with my surrogate body—the one left over from Helen of Troy?"

"Helen is a myth?"

She nodded and pressed a stud on the wall, spoke into a microphone for a moment. "You humans have remarkable faith that anything written down on a piece of paper constitutes history. A charming belief—but here's Helen."

Another panel opened and she stepped out. The face seemed to fit the image, but the body looked like a reflection in one of those mirrors at a fun house that makes everyone look fat. Except with Helen, it wasn't fat, just all woman. They'd also forgotten to add any clothes.

"She's been around ever since I did that part for a few weeks as a fill-in. Without my personality superimposed on her, she's a completely new person, susceptible to any command or suggestion."

Helen walked over to my chair and curled up on the arm. She gave me a dazzling smile and didn't say anything. "I don't get it," I said. "Why all this?"

"Because you and your vivid imaginations—the worst in the galaxy—have drawn us into your fantasies, right out of our own lives. The emotional pull is too strong, so we have to go along." Helen slid off the arm into my lap, brushing my cheek with lush red lips. I tried to keep my mind on what the unicorn was saying.

"But it's a strain. None of us can last very long in any one role. There have been four unicorns before me, and we've had dozens of those Norse gods—they're terrible on one's health, with all that throwing lightning around. Even a comparatively civilized character, like Sherlock Holmes and his morphine, can wear us down."

Helen murmured something into my ear, but I didn't think it had anything to do with Sherlock Holmes. "But so?" I put out my hand in a questioning gesture and a warm, white breast popped into it. Not all of it—from where I was, it looked like it would take two hands to hold on—but it was enough to make me lose the thread of the argument.

"So that's why I wanted to talk to you. We've never been very healthy, and there aren't many of us who can take this for long." The unicorn nodded at Helen and she gave me a coy little look, up from under with heavy eyelashes thrown in.

"Yes," she said, "there are a number of vacancies . . . and rewards. With just a slight modification, your body can fit the part quite well."

"Rewards? For helping you complete this compulsion of yours?" I was still a little dense.

"We can't pay much, of course. But there's always Helen."

Helen gave me a slow smile and reached down and made a gesture that started my body temperature rising. "Batman is open," the unicorn said softly. "King Lear, James Bond, Don Juan . . . and Atlas."

So you can see how I got this job.

Like I said, I'm not one of those people who carry the world on their shoulders.



## ABOUT "STAND-IN"

This story comes from 1964, when I saw a contest in *F&SF* for a 1000-worder that had to include a unicorn and a Univac (a mainframe computer of the 1950s). I wrote half of it during a statistical mechanics lecture in my second year of grad school at UCSD in La Jolla. I already knew enough about the Grand Canonical Ensemble that defines statistical particle distributions, because I always worked ahead in the book and used classes to ask questions. And an idea had just come to me; I never pass up such opportunities.

So I wrote half a story, based on a party I'd been to the night before and was still hung over from. (Some things don't change!) I had figured out by then how to get my course work at the advanced level done and steadily labor away at learning how to do research—a whole new skill set that requires you to become creative with material you'd just recently learned.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 37**







# Touched by Magic

*Rose-Marie Lillian*

I lead a magical life.

Am I referring to sorcery or witchcraft, some untamed, unknowable force?

No, I mean the everyday magic as witnessed by this photo. To you this may be science as interpreted by technology, but to me it's sheer magic.

I take photos of food and post them on social networks. Twenty years ago this would not have been possible. I dreamed of *The Lord of the Rings* someday being made into a movie, but it was deemed unfilmable until technology caught up with it.

I could give you many more examples, as could you me, but I'm sure you get the

idea—we live in a magical age, an awe inspiring era of technological marvel.

For me that magic began years ago with technology beyond the every-day. Kids across the country were living with technological marvels they took for granted—as we always do when we get over the marvel—radios and record players, televisions and microwaves, cars and air travel. But only a handful were my neighbors, living right at Cape Kennedy, as it was then, witnessing manned space flight virtually in our backyards.

My home town is a long unincorporated strip of land called Merritt Island, topped by Cape Canaveral. To be sure, it's a big island. It's about 20 miles from my family home to the Vehicle Assembly Building, known in the Apollo days as the *Vertical* Assembly Building, because that is where they put the pieces of the Saturn 5 booster together.

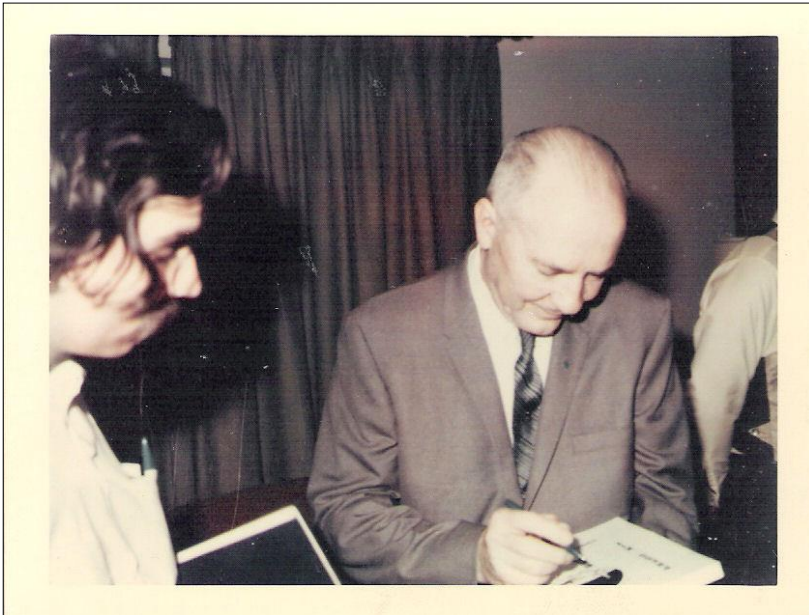
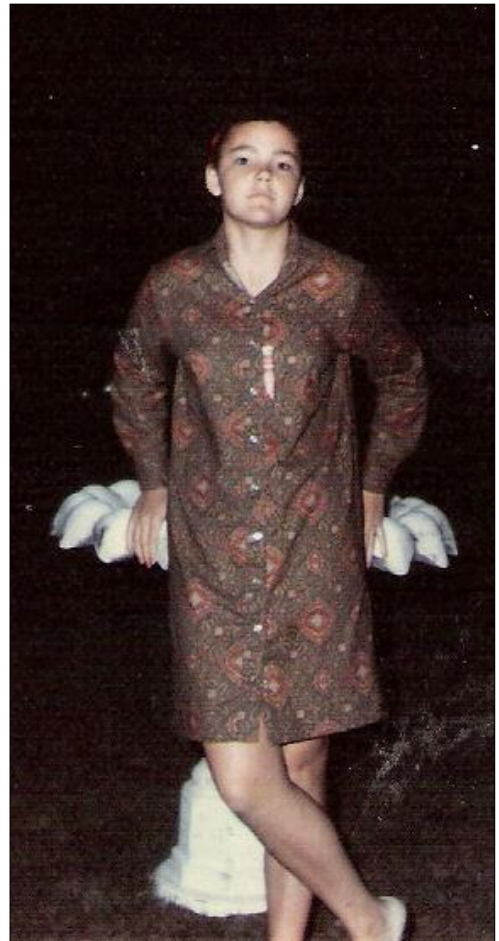
Cape Canaveral, as it is once again today, is literally that, a cape, defined by Random House Webster's College Dictionary as “a piece of land jutting into the sea or some other large body of water; point; headland.” It offers examples in the form of Cape Cod, Cape Colony, Cape Colored, Cape Coral, Cape Fear, Cape Horn—and Cape Canaveral. The only one it does not define is Cape Canaveral. I understand. I am a bit hesitant to describe it myself. Oh, there are facile descriptions, such as this one, or “the place where rockets go up.” They don't do it justice.

Which brings us to this edition of *Challenger*. I have with pleasure taken on the job of co-editor, so what better place to start than going back to my roots? I have been to some wonderful parties, but none have quite been able to match the Apollo 11 pre-launch party detailed here starting ... right here..

Welcome to my magical back yard.

# THE APOLLO 11 PRE- LAUNCH PARTY

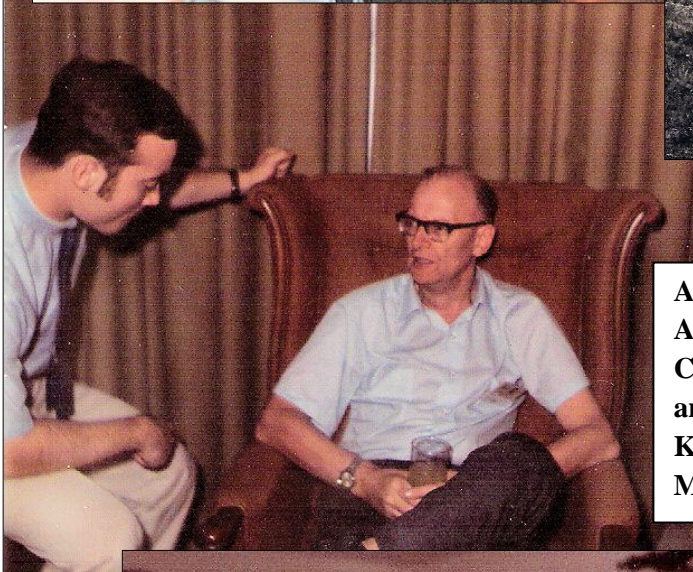
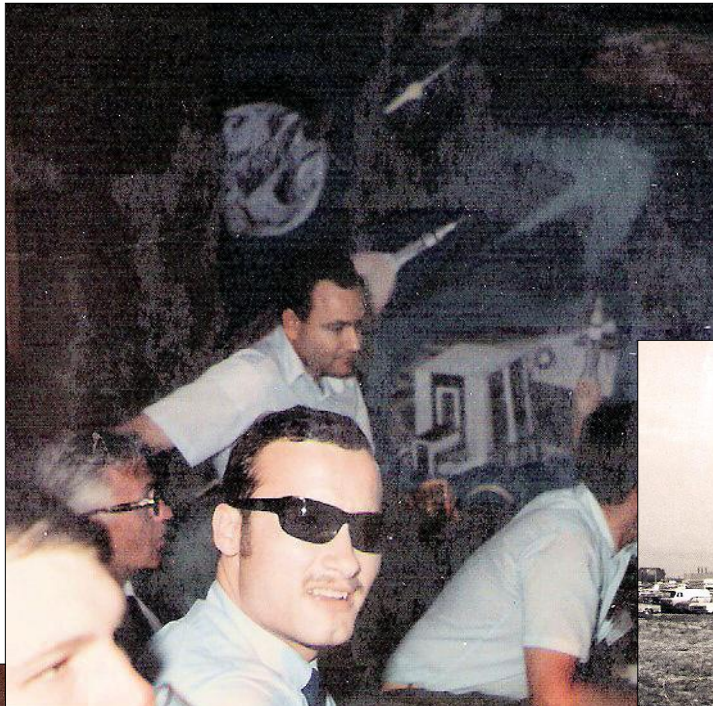
*Joseph Green  
Rick Norwood  
Frankie M. McDonald*



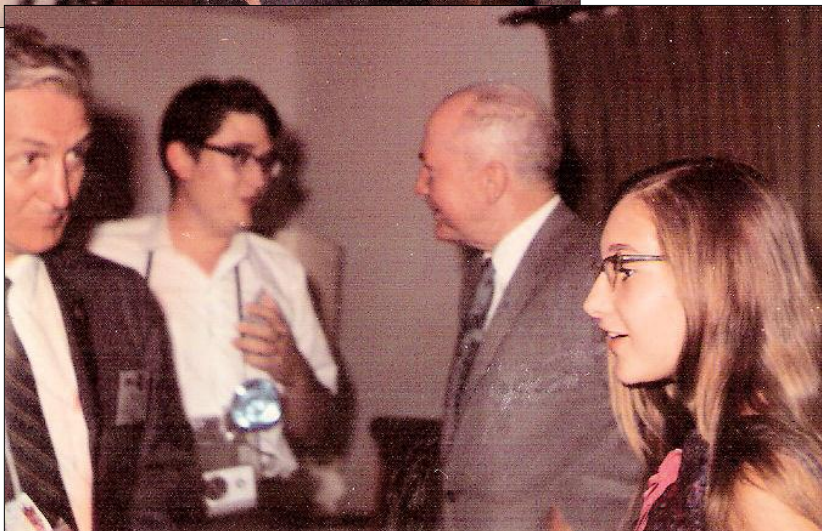
*Robert C. Hamilton*



On the previous page: Rosy at launch time, Robert A. Heinlein autographs a tome for Justin Winston, and Arthur C. Clarke enjoys the evening. To left, host Joseph Green and Don Walsh (in shades) before a space mural painted by Nita Green.



Above, John Guidry at the Vehicle Assembly Building, Arthur C. Clarke chats with Don Walsh to left, and Robert A. Heinlein joins Dave Kyle, Rick Norwood and Frankie McDonald, below.



**Joseph Green** is the author of *Gold the Man* (a.k.a. *The Mind Behind the Eye*), *The Loafers of Refuge*, *Conscience Interplanetary* and many other fine works of science fiction and science fact. He's also your editor's father-in-law. He still lives at the house where these events transpired.

Sometime in early 1969, it dawned on me that I was the only science fiction writer working at the Kennedy Space Center.

Astronauts Borman, Lovell and Anders had spent Christmas of 1968 in orbit around the Moon, on Apollo 8. Astronauts Stafford, Cernan and Young were scheduled to orbit the Moon again in May, this time with Stafford and Cernan flying the Lunar Module, the lander, to within about eight miles of the surface. But there were no plans to attempt a landing. In fact the fuel tanks on the Lunar Module would be short-loaded. Regardless of official explanations, the real reason was to keep the notably independent astronauts from changing the mission goals in-flight and going for it.

Apollo 11 would be the final step in this three-stage process, astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin actually piloting the Lunar Module to the surface, while Michael Collins manned the command module in orbit.

If all went well on what was admittedly a very dangerous mission, with lots of unknowns and potentially fatal mishaps, this would be one of the most momentous events in the history of human exploration. And little me, a charter member of the Science Fiction Writers of America (formed by Damon Knight and Lloyd Biggle in 1965) found myself in a unique position to help my fellow writers experience this launch, and its two days of prior tours and educational briefings, close-up and personal. NASA had a strict policy of not recognizing free-lance writers as reporters. Even Heinlein and Clarke didn't qualify. (Heinlein attended the Apollo 11 launch as the honored guest of a major contractor, Rockwell. Clarke co-hosted launch coverage with Walter Cronkite on CBS TV.) I got the word out to my colleagues interested in experiencing the *real* manned space flight program on how to qualify as a news-person. You needed to get an assignment from your local small paper to cover the launch, and a signed letter of accreditation. What this usually required was agreeing to cover your own expenses, and accepting the paper's standard puny rate of pay for free-lance material. Any editor in the country would jump at the chance to have his/her personal reporter on the ground for such a miniscule expense. (In fact, close to 3,000 accredited reporters attended the Apollo 11 launch. I accounted for several of them.)

Several SF writers announced they were going to attend the launch as reporters. So then-wife Juanita and I decided to throw a big pre-launch party for them. Strictly for fellow writers, colleagues; not an event for fans. I invited all the pros I knew were coming, and started planning for the drinks and food. And we offered beds and three days of hospitality to a few close friends, and several others for whom this trip might otherwise have been impossible.

The "no fans" policy lasted for maybe a month. I violated it myself, by inviting four fan friends from New Orleans. I invited a close friend who was a professional photographer, with no interest in science fiction. In addition to all the local SF fans, Juanita and I invited several local friends who were not members of the SF community. The guest list swelled to overflowing, with all beds in the Greenhouse (our name for our little four-bedroom waterfront home) occupied, and sleeping bags on the floor.

It was quite a party. Here we were, some of the most avid but little-recognized advocates of manned space flight, prematurely celebrating the first landing by humans on another planetary body. The guest list included, among many others, writers Robert Heinlein, Arthur Clarke, Dan Galouye, Russell Seitz and Richard Meredith. My four fan friends from New Orleans, John Guidry, Rick Norwood, Justin Winston and Don Walsh mingled with what seemed fifty others, names now forgotten. Dany Frolich and his beautiful then- wife, Mary, also from New Orleans, were there, along with local friends and others who will remember their attending much better than I do. The party went on long into the night, and the cases of beer and magnums of booze we had provided drained away like a light rain on desert sand. But next morning not a soul I knew of failed to get out of bed and board the various NASA buses that would

take them to the News Center on KSC, three miles from the launch pad and the closest place where civilians were allowed.

Several of my friends had arrived without credentials, and I had to use a little chicanery to get them inside (though even from 10 to 15 miles away, along the beaches and causeways around KSC, the liftoff was still quite spectacular). For some, I hung cameras around their necks and got them badges as photographers, assisting someone with a legitimate credential. For others, whatever means I could come up with that would qualify them. The boldest was probably the last. A friend of mine working behind the counter at the NASA Press Center in Cocoa Beach sneaked me a badge bearing the name of a real reporter. The person who got that one wore it in fear for the three days of the launch experience, always afraid the real owner (for whom the Press Center had certainly issued a replacement) would spot his name on the badge and raise a ruckus. But that didn't happen. Almost 3,000 busy, bustling reporters makes for a very large crowd.

The whole world watched as this very ambitious, dangerous journey unfolded, and myself and perhaps a billion others were watching "live" as Neil Armstrong took that first step onto the lunar surface. No prior great adventure had ever been so well documented, or had the avid attention of the entire world as it happened. The first Asians who crossed the land bridge into North America forgot to write down the details of that journey, for their descendants to find later. Columbus stepped ashore in what became the Americas without benefit of camera or recorder. Burton and Speke documented discovering the source of the White Nile in notebooks.

That first three-day mini-convention and prelaunch party was so successful (doubtless the free food, beer, booze and beds helped) that Juanita and I did it again for all the remaining manned Apollo launches. But that's a longer story, for another day.

***Rick Norwood*** says of Rick Norwood, "*Rick Norwood flunked out of M.I.T., and now publishes a comic book, [www.comicsrevue.com](http://www.comicsrevue.com). He reviews movies and television for [www.sfsite.com](http://www.sfsite.com). His day job is teaching math, and he has published fiction in **Analog**, **F&SF**, and other magazines. His scurrilous poem about mathematicians appears in the current issue of **Parody** magazine.*"

Memory is time's fool.

We rode in John Guidry's car all night and part of the next day, John, Don Walsh, Justin Winston, and me. Or not. The only ones I'm sure about are me and John. We stayed at the—oh, I remember the name of that motel as well as I remember my own name. Only I don't.

I got a press pass from my local newspaper, the Franklin (Louisiana) *Banner Tribune* ("Covers the parish like the cane fields.") After I wrote my story for the newspaper I asked Poul Anderson to read it over. He said it was fine. Or was that for a later launch?

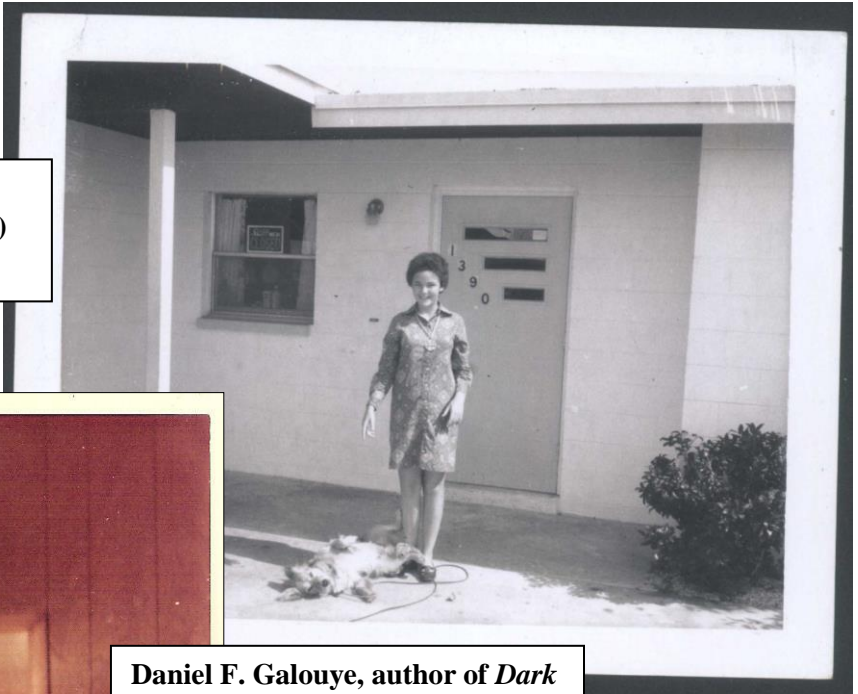
The party at Joe Green's house. He showed us movies with a real projector and screen. Or did he? I don't remember the movies, just the projector. This was a time when you couldn't watch a movie without a projector unless it happened to be on television, and if it was on television, it would be severely censored and interrupted by commercials. Seeing a movie on a big (3 foot square) screen was a big deal. It was a long, long time ago. In those days, nobody had ever walked on the moon. That was about to change.

Heinlein was there. Arthur C. Clarke was there. He wouldn't be "Sir Arthur" for another thirty (forty? fifty?) years. I talked to him about *2001—A Space Odyssey*. I didn't like Heywood Floyd. I thought he was manipulative and phony. Clarke didn't see him that way. Well, in the book he was a different person. In the movie, everybody lies, almost all the time. There are also a large number of murders. Yet, people remember the movie as hopeful and beautiful.

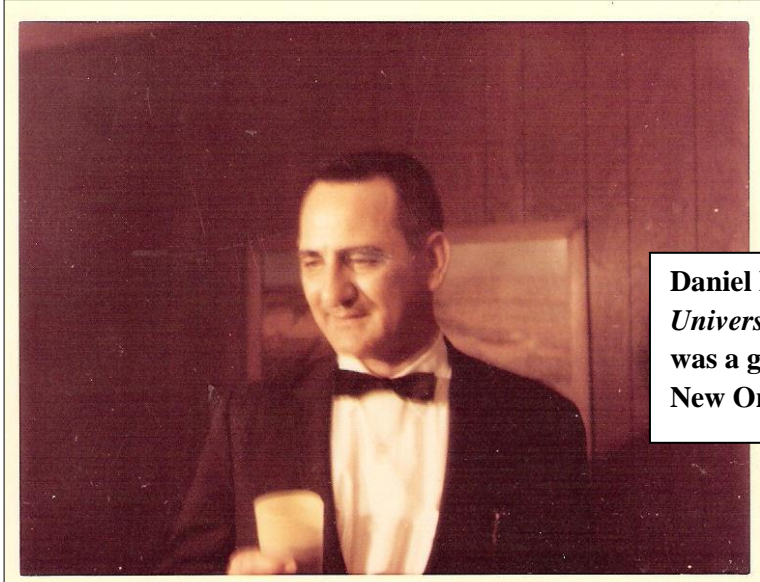
Frank Kelly Freas was there. He drew my picture. And a picture of my first wife. I remember her name as well as I remember my own. But I wasn't married then. I must be confusing two different launch parties.



To right, outside of her family home, *la belle* Rose-Marie (age 14) plays with her dog Sandy.



Daniel F. Galouye, author of *Dark Universe*, *Simulacron-3* and more, was a great and gracious friend to New Orleans fandom.



Left, John Guidry and Dandy Frolich with Arthur Clarke. Above Rick Norwood with Robert Heinlein.





Joe Green had press passes for four people, and there were five of us who wanted them. Don Walsh drew the short straw. Then he talked me out of my pass, so I watched the launch from the visitor's area. But that means my memory of getting my own press pass are about a later launch. Apollo 13? I remember my wife and I in the press area, just three miles from the launch. I remember feeling the heat of the rocket on my face, when it took off.

Movie stars at the airport. Kirk Douglas. Roddy McDowell. But for Apollo 11 we traveled by car, not plane. It was Apollo 13 we flew to see.

I remember a tour of Cape Kennedy. The Vehicle Assembly Building, the largest building ever built, so big there was weather inside. I remember the track the rocket traveled down to the launch pad, at 3 miles per hour. I remember a tour that took us through the swamp to see the Saturn sitting on the pad. Wild pigs. They'll be roast pork tomorrow, said the guide.

I remember the astronauts walking out to the vehicle that would take them to the spacecraft, carrying their life support.

We drove all night, back to New Orleans, and got to John's house in time to watch a grainy black and white picture on John's TV. "This is one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." It didn't make sense. But that's what I remember Neal Armstrong said.

***Frankie McDonald*** is a lifelong friend of the Green family and a BFF of Rose-Marie. She lives in Orlando, where she works as a court reporter, hunts fossils, and creates cool artwork. She visits the Greenhouse often.

When I was eight years old, my Uncle Ted left his extensive collection of books at our house for safekeeping until he settled in. We had them for nearly five years and I read and re-read and re-read them all: Edgar Rice Burroughs' Tarzan series, John Carter and the Warlords of Mars series, various works by Jules Verne and H.G. Wells, *Tom Swift and his Electric Runabout*. I'd always loved fairy tales and used to have a collection of what my mother referred to as "funny books"—the Gold Key fairy tales. She said they weren't really worth the 10 cents as they only had one story in each book. I bought them anyway. I loved fantasy, but I was hooked on science fiction after reading Uncle Ted's collection (hardback editions, 1930's publications) and grieved mightily when he came to reclaim them. That was my introduction to science fiction...the classics as it were. After that, there wasn't a science fiction book in the school library I didn't read.

I met Rosy Green in school year 1966-67. We weren't in the same classroom, but we shared the same recess and the same passion for science fiction. And since I wasn't allowed to stay up past 8:00 p.m., Rosy would narrate in complete detail the previous night's *Star Trek* (the original TV series) episode as we walked round and round the playground. The show wasn't popular among a lot of the local kids then, even though most of our dads worked at Kennedy Space Center (remember, it was re-named Cape Kennedy and then returned to the historical Cape Canaveral with Kennedy Space Center at Cape Canaveral) on the various space programs.

Kids brought things to show-and-tell that I'm sure Secret Service and Homeland Security would flinch at nowadays. I saw my first freeze-dried astronaut food when Norma Wendt brought some in that her dad gave her to show. It was Chicken a la King. It looked like urp in a hard sucked-in plastic bag. Tang was all over the TV as the astronauts' drink of choice—until whichever astronaut that it was made the remark on an open-mike that reverberated around the world that it gave him gas. We saw the evolution of space exploration and the excitement of the Cold War space race with the Russians at the dinner table with our parents and in the frequent rocket launches of the Titans—and the space programs Mercury, Gemini, and finally Apollo. My dad was an engineer with Chrysler Corporation then, responsible for the Saturn 1B rocket that propelled the capsule into space, so I have a real soft spot for the Apollo missions and a tremendous sense of pride that my now 87-year-old dad was a member of the moon mission team.

But I told you all that to tell you this. Rosy and I were fast friends then and still are, nearly 50

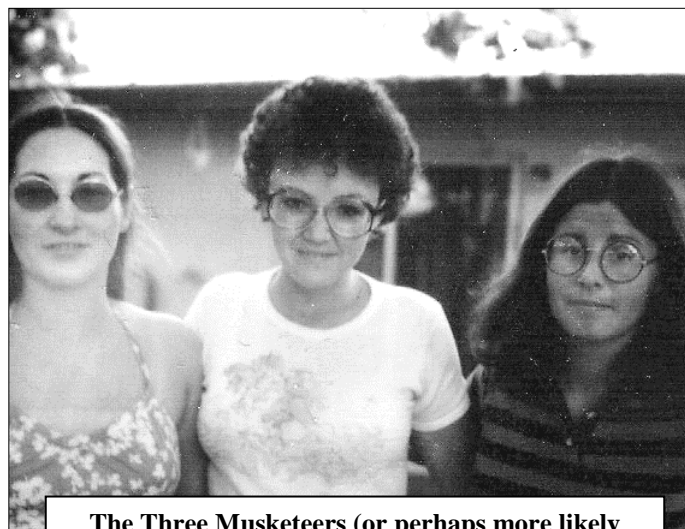
years later. Because we were friends, I was invited to the pre-launch parties at her mom and dad's place. Her dad, Joe Green, a science fiction writer, and mom, Nita, had parties that were the who's-who of science fiction. I specifically remember Roger Zelazny, Poul Anderson, and Arthur C. Clarke at various parties—and my favorite author and a really sterling human being, Robert A. Heinlein, whom I met for the first and only time at the launch party for Apollo 11, the one that put a man on the moon.

Joe likes to twit me still about having the knack for getting the longest conversation times with some of his more notable guests, Heinlein specifically, and at another party, Arthur C. Clarke. Truth of the matter was, I was just in the right place and right time. As I recall, Mr. Heinlein was early to the party and had a number of other events to attend, including local television spots to talk about the reality of space exploration and possible other-planet and lunar colonization. The main crowd of folks hadn't shown yet, so when I was introduced to him in the dining area as his biggest fan—at 14, heady stuff for me—there were few vying for his attention. I said I had read *Stranger in a Strange Land*, but I had a preference among his works for *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* (which paperback he dutifully autographed for me "on behalf of Wyoming").

Mr. Heinlein said his favorite among his many books was one I hadn't read, *Podkayne of Mars*, which he said he tried to write from the perspective of a young girl and felt pretty confident he'd achieved. Now, I don't know after all this time if he said that was his favorite just because I was a teenage girl and in awe or if he really felt a connection to that work beyond his others. I do know that I went out and read the book (and still have a copy) the week after our meeting.

Now that I'm older, I think the things that were most interesting in that work were not the adventure depicted or the somewhat scatter-brained emotive antics of his protagonist, but the very real social issues he touched on that resonate today. He wrote about the parenthood-on-demand mentality of embryonic storage and implantation. He explored the psychological effects of alienation on the children of detached parents and the increasing reliance on technology for nurturing and education. He brushed on the concept we're seeing as a reality in today's society, the epidemic of sociopathic, emotionally sterile children. And I think that's why I preferred Heinlein's works over many authors then and now. Like Ray Bradbury, the technology wasn't the star of the show. It was people in an increasingly sterile, technological world and how they responded—as people. Despite the contentiousness of his characters, political power-grab politics and warfare in his plots, his belief in the innate honor of humanity was foremost. He was a champion of the human spirit. That's what I remember about Heinlein.

I saw the rocket launch the next day. I saw Neil Armstrong walk on the moon, and while I applaud the achievement, I believe there were others there first who didn't leave physical footprints, just an enduring taste for adventure in alien landscapes, and some of them were at a party with me.



**The Three Musketeers (or perhaps more likely Mouseketeers)—BFFs Frankie McDonald, Rosy Green and Darcel Drew, sometime in the mid-'80s**



**So what is going on in this picture?**

- 1. Mr. Heinlein is auctioning off a cigarette?**
- 2. Begging for a light?**
- 3. Asking all present to pledge allegiance to the tobacco company (John Guidry is dubious)?**
- 4. Asking if anyone would mind if he smoked? (Well, *duh.*)**

**Such an incredible evening was naturally tiring for the participants. Fans Don Markstein and Dany Frolich can barely keep their eyes open. Below, John Guidry succumbs to the excitement.**



**And the next day, man left for the Moon.**

***Photos courtesy Rick Norwood & John Guidry***

# CHICON 7 DIARY

by its Writer Guest of Honor,

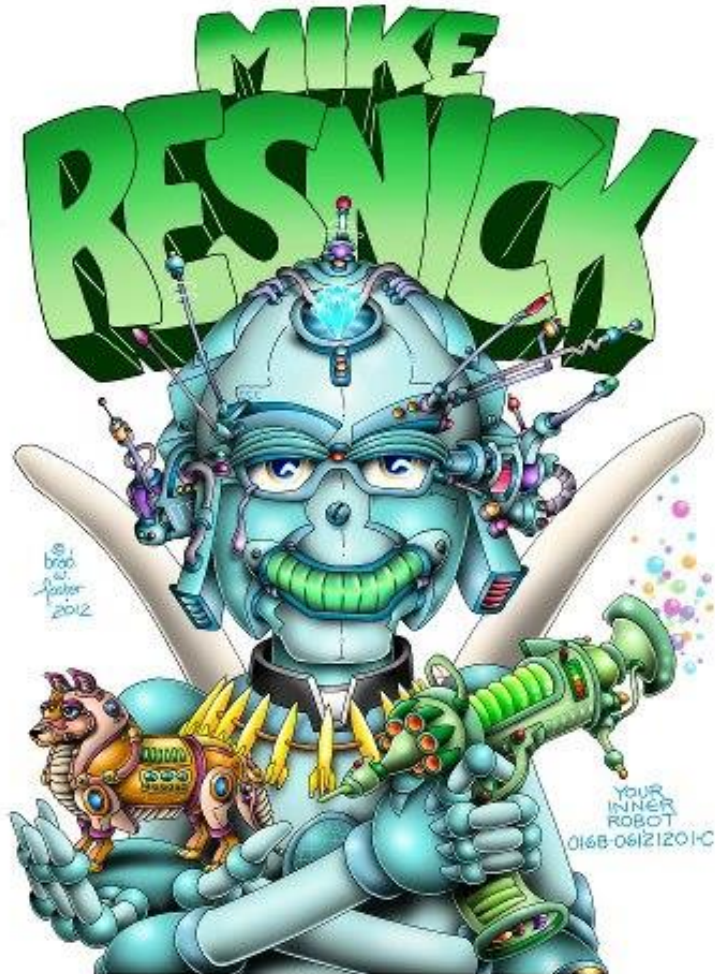
*Sunday, August 26:* We drove up to Chicago from Cincinnati through five separate and distinct rainstorms, and finally arrived in late afternoon. The committee had given us a lovely suite on the 14<sup>th</sup> floor of the Hyatt (and the hotel had added a wonderful gift basket filled with goodies). We were directly (by maybe ten to twenty floors) below all those lovely party suites that were in constant use once the convention started.

We unpacked, went down to the main floor, and took a cab to our favorite Greek restaurant, the Greek Islands. This was the original, on Halsted Street, and little more than half the price of the branch that's about two blocks from the Windycon hotel in the western suburbs. Wonderful meal, as always—mine never varies: saganaki, pastitsio, and dolmades—and then we returned to the hotel, where Carol finished unpacking and I set off to learn my way around the four subterranean levels where all the programming would take place.

*Monday, August 27:* Met my cousin, Bob Hamburg, and his wife Glenda, in the lobby, got our car, and started off on the day's Nostalgia Tour. Bob and I both grew up in Chicago—our fathers were in business together at one time—and we thought we'd like to re-visit our old haunts.

We took Lake Shore Drive north to Devon Avenue, passed through the Rogers Park area where Carol and I first lived when we got married and where Laura was born, then drove by the house Bob grew up in. Next we headed north to the houses Carol and I had owned before moving to Cincinnati. This was quite possibly the last look we'll get at them; the last time we drove past them was 22 years ago.

They renamed a street or two, and it took us a few minutes to find our first house, which was at 3435 Old Mill Road in Highland Park, and since Laura was in the process of buying a house that month, I was flabbergasted by the difference in prices then and now. Our house was in a posh North Shore





suburb—the same one Michael Jordan lived in—on almost two acres, on a private road, and consisted of 7 rooms, a completely finished basement with a wet bar, a balcony, a two-car sunken garage, and all the amenities—and we bought it for \$32,000 back in 1967.

Our other house, the one where we raised most of our 23 champion collies from 1969 to 1976, was on a corner of Adlai Stevenson's old estate in Libertyville, 120 feet long, on five fenced acres. I couldn't see the dog runs—they've built a huge privacy fence around most of it—but I did see that the corral for Laura's horse is still standing.

We drove by a couple of shopping centers and parks, hit Carol's favorite food store (Sunset Foods, the only one for 20 miles in any direction that delivered out in the upscale boonies), and on the way back to the hotel we stopped at a much-touted deli in Skokie called The Bagel, where we'd arranged to meet Joan Bledig, Great blintzes, and truly wonderful chopped liver.

When we got back to the hotel we found that some people were already arriving. The first ones we met were Luigi Petruzzelli—one of my Italian publishers—and his wife Marina, a delightful lady who spoke no English. Finally met Gio Clairval, who I'd recently collaborated with, and a handful of old friends. Carol and I had a snack at The Bistro at 151—the coffee shop—and then went back to the room, she to sleep, me to do the last writing I'd have a chance to do until the con was over.

*Tuesday, August 28:* I met Luigi and Marina, Bob and Glenda, and Gio in the lobby, and we took a couple of cabs to the Field Museum, my favorite natural history museum in the world. Got to pay my respects to the Man-Eaters of Tsavo, Sue the Tyrannosaur, Carl Akeley's battling elephants, Bushman the gorilla, and all the other exhibits, and Gio, who was born in Italy, lived in France, and now resides in Scotland, acted as Marina's translator. We spent about five hours there, then returned to the hotel to greet our just-arrived dinner partners—Janis Ian and her partner Pat; and Lezli Robyn (who had finally gotten her marriage visa and arrived in the States four days earlier, after almost a year of bureaucratic hang-ups) and Jamie Driscoll, her fiancé.

The six of us were joined by Bob and Glenda, and took a pair of cabs to the Greek Islands, where Joan Bledig was waiting for us, and we had another magnificent Greek meal, then all went back to our suite to visit for a few hours.

Sometime around midnight I took Lezli down to the lower levels to show her around, and especially to show her the route to the adjacent Illinois Center, which had perhaps a dozen cheap restaurants. On the way back we saw Gio sitting alone in the bar (which also served late-night snacks), visited with her for awhile, and watched in awe as she polished off the biggest shrimp cocktail I've ever seen.

Lezli left to join Jamie, Gio and I stuck around another hour, I ran into Drew and Yvonne MacDonald (she's the famous Yvonne From Cincinnati, who's been written up in fannish song and story), and finally I went up to the suite to grab ten or twelve winks.

*Wednesday, August 29:* Went down to the hucksters' room—it didn't open officially until Thursday—and signed a bunch of my Guest of Honor book, *Win Some, Lose Some*, as well as a couple of dozen copies of *Stalking the Zombie*. (It was a very strange month, in terms of publishing. Almost every small and medium press I'd ever worked with wanted a book for Chicon 7, and as a result I had 8 new titles out for the convention, the two I just mentioned plus *The Incarceration of Captain Nebula and Other Lost Futures*, *Masters of the Galaxy*, *Resnick Abroad*, *Resnick on the Loose*, *Resnick's Menagerie*, and *With a Little More Help From My Friends*. A 700-page second edition of *Mike Resnick—An Annotated Bibliography and Guide to His Work*, by Adrienne Gormley and Fionna Kelleghan, didn't quite make it to Worldcon, but will be out soon and will certainly be on sale at the San Antonio Worldcon next summer.

After saying hello to all the dealers, I went up to the lobby and hung out for a couple of hours, greeting old friends from the fan and pro communities. Laura, who was doing some last-minute paperwork prior to closing on her new house, showed up in midafternoon, so I escorted her to our suite—she had one of the bedrooms—and then, at 5:00, Laura, Carol and I went downstairs where we met Dave

McCarty, Steven Silver, and the rest of the committee and guests for dinner. They took us to Fulton's on the River, where I had one of the four or five finest meals in my experience: a thick, rich, lobster bisque, the first lobster thermidor I've had since gorging on it for a week on the Kenya Coast some 20 years ago (and this was better), and a large crème brulee for dessert. Got to chat a bit with Toastmaster John Scalzi, Fan Guest of Honor Peggy Rae Sapienza, Agent Guest of Honor Jane Frank, and family and representatives of Artist Guest of Honor Rowena Morrill (who unfortunately was in the hospital during Chicon). A fabulous restaurant, and it's on our must-eat-at list next time we're in or near Chicago's Loop.

We also picked up our badges, and I added a 36<sup>th</sup> little Hugo Nominee pin to my collection. And we got our program books. I plan to cherish mine for a long time. Instead of the usual—one person writing a long appreciation of the Guest of Honor—this program book had five people writing a page or two apiece. Barry Malzberg wrote about my accomplishments as a short story writer; Kris Rusch praised my talents as an editor; Lezli Robyn wrote about my "Writer Children" and all the beginners I've helped; Guy Lillian wrote about me as a fan; and Laura wrote an absolutely hilarious (and, she claims, true) piece about growing up with me as a father. The program book also gave a complete bibliography of all my books, including cover photos and every re-sale of each, and a comprehensive list of all my short fiction. Gotta love any book that does all of that, and runs photos of me with the collies, with a rhino in Africa, with my Hugos, and (of course) with Carol.

Upon returning to the Hyatt I attended Cincinnati fan Bob Hess's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday party (in Yvonne From Cincinnati's room, of course), then hit the Kansas-City-in-2016 bid party, the Boston-in-2020 joke bid party, and a couple of others, and even got some long, serious backrubs from BJ Galler-Smith and Jo van Ekeren. I also ran into Lezli and Jamie, who had a hell of a tourist day: Museum of Science & Industry in the morning, Field Museum in the afternoon, and a Cubs game at Wrigley Field in the evening. She even came back with a ball, something I've never been able to do after maybe 100 trips to Comiskey Park, and another 30 to Cincinnati's Riverfront Stadium. I also ran into George R. R. Martin, Phyllis Eisenstein, and a number of others that I've known since we were all starving writers in Chicago.

And I had Yvonne From Cincinnati's daughter solve a problem. I had invited all my Writer Children—well, those who were attending—to brunch on Sunday. But when I tried to make a reservation at the Bistro at 151, they explained that they didn't take reservations for Sundays, because too many people reserved and then checked out without cancelling. But Yvonne From Cincinnati's daughter is an executive at the Hyatt, so I explained my problem to her, and got a phone message the next morning that I had a guaranteed reservation for 15.

It's nice to know people with clout.

*Thursday, August 30:* This was the official start of the Worldcon, I dragged myself out of bed at 10:30 in the (ugh!) morning, took a quick shower and shave, and went down to the Bistro to have lunch with Leonid Korogodski, the publisher of Silverberry Press, which had just brought out *Resnick's Menagerie*, a collection of 18 of my sf/animal stories (I had no idea I'd written that many; this started out as a little chapbook that kept growing and growing.) We spent a pleasant hour or so, and he later told me that he sold every copy he'd brought to the con, which always warms the cockles of a mercenary writer's heart.

Carol, like me, has been going to cons for 49 years, has seen well over a thousand panels, and didn't feel obligated to watch a bunch more, so while I was doing my performing seal act over the next few days, she and what I shall euphemistically call "the girls" went to the Art Institute, the Aquarium, took the boat ride down the Chicago River, and went shopping. She was always back in time to join me for dinner, and looked a lot fresher than I did as the con wore on.

The first panel of the day—well, of *my* day, was one on the science fiction scene in Europe. Nice broad topic. Only one problem: outside of me, the entire panel consisted of Luigi and two other Italians, charming and knowledgeable about the Italian scene, but limited to that...and while I've sold to something like fifteen or twenty European countries, I knew the audience wasn't there to hear an American's take on it—especially an American with agents in every country he sells, so I cut it short and we only used about 40 of our scheduled 90 minutes.



Next came Opening Ceremonies. The first guest to be interviewed by John Scalzi was Erle Korshak, the man who chaired the first Chicon and second Worldcon ever. To put it in perspective, Erle chaired Chicon I in 1940, 72 years ago!

I was next at bat. I gather the format was like some late-night interview show, but since I don't watch television I'm just guessing. We exchanged some jokes and memories, and then I was followed by the other Guests of Honor or—in Rowena's case—her stand-in. Whole thing took about 90 minutes, didn't drag much, and seemed to please the audience.

I went right from Opening ceremonies to my reading. I drew a nice crowd, not quote SRO but it was a large room. I read what had become Carol's favorite of my humorous stories, featuring her favorite of my characters—Harry the Book, my Damon Runyonesque bookie who operates in a fantasy New York. The story, titled "The Evening Line", will appear in *Rip-Off* (book title subject to change), being published by Audible.com in both audio and print versions, and edited by Gardner Dozois. The conceit is that each story has to begin with a famous line from a public domain classic; I chose the opening line of *Pride and Prejudice*, which has been Carol's favorite novel from the day I met her more than half a century ago. And then, to prove that I always was kinda good, I also read my first award-winning piece of fiction, "The Last Dog", which I wrote and sold 35 years ago. Janis Ian and a few others were crying so hard they had to leave the room, he said with a satisfied smile.

Then it was dinnertime, and my friend and publisher Shahid Mahmud of Arc Manor Books took a bunch of us out to dinner. I've been editing the Stellar Guild line for him, a line that consists of a novella by a superstar combined with a novelette or novella set in the same universe and written by a protégé chosen by the star (not the editor), whose career gets a huge boost when he or she shares the cover with the star. Eric and Lucille Flint were there, as well as Harry, Laura, and Rebecca Turtledove, Steve and Denise Leigh were there, as well as two protégés who will be doing Stellar Guild books with me in the next year—Lezli Robyn (and Jamie), and Janis Ian (and Pat).

Our ride got there a little late and the head table was already filled, but we had a very pleasant dinner sharing a huge wraparound booth with Eleanor Wood (my agent) and her son Justin Bell, plus Nancy Kress and Jack Skillingstead. Before dinner was over I'd signed Nancy to a Stellar Guild contract, where she joins Eric, Harry, me, Kevin Anderson, Mercedes Lackey, Bob Silverberg, and Larry Niven. Very nice food, fine company, and I got to tease Nancy about our forthcoming nude mud-rasslin' match for the entire meal. Then, just before we left, Eleanor handed me a 28-book contract from Audible.com to sign and return to her before the end of the convention. Is it any wonder I enjoyed the meal?

We lingered in the restaurant for a few hours, and got back just in time for me to meet up with my screenplay collaborator, Harry Kloor—the only guy in history to get two PhDs in two different sciences in the same calendar year. (So why is he wasting his time in Hollywood?) We chatted for a few minutes, he informed me that he was producing a graphic novel based on my *Widowmaker* books, then we went down to the bar area for a scheduled meeting with Steve Saffel of Titan Books.

When that broke up, Brad Torgersen and Laurie Tom, two of my Writer Children, spotted me and came over to say hello—and in Brad's case, to return my house key. He was a two-day drive from the con, so I told him to spend the first night at our house, try not to steal my Hugos, leave his car in the driveway, and take the Megabus from Cincinnati to Chicago, then drive back to Cincinnati with Carol, Laura and me. (Laura also took the Megabus. I've heard so much about this thing that one of these days I really must try it out.) Anyway, I'd collaborated with Brad on three stories and Laurie on one during the previous few months, and they were both looking forward to seeing a copy of *With a Little More Help From My Friends*, which contained my collaborations with them, as well as with 19 others, some top pros like Harry and Nancy, some Writer Children like them.

CFG—my home club, the Cincinnati Fantasy Group—always has a hospitality suite at Worldcon, and Chicon was no exception. The SFWA suite was open too, as were bid suites/parties for London in 2014, Orlando in 2015, Spokane in 2015, Kansas City in 2016, and a few others, including a very nice party hosted by FenCon, a Dallas convention that had flown us down there a few years ago.

I returned to our suite for a break at about 3:30 AM, caught up on my e-mail and Facebook messages, realized that it was after 4:00 when I finished, and since I'd gotten up a bit earlier than usual,

decided to go to bed. 4:00 AM is early for me, at home or at a convention, but as it turned out, it was the latest I'd go to bed for the rest of the convention.

*Friday, August 31:* This was the Big Day—Guest of Honor speech day, which (I was told) was the way it finally hits home to you that you have indeed been given the highest honor the field has to offer.

I got up at 10:30 (again!), met with some guy who wanted to interview me for a local paper, made my way down to the lower levels at a quarter to noon, met up with Shahid Mahmud and Karen Haber (Mrs. Silverberg), and waited for Bob to get off his panel with Connie Willis at noon, at which point we raced out the front door and into Shahid's waiting car.



Explanation: Bob and I grew up in Jewish neighborhoods—he in New York, me in Chicago—and became addicted to deli food. But we now live in areas that don't have delis, so every Worldcon we make an appointment to have lunch at the best deli in that particular Worldcon's city. The problem here was we were both very heavily scheduled, and were due back at 1:30 for our next obligations. Shahid got us there—since I'm a native, I directed him—and sure enough, Manny's lived up to its billing. Bob assures me he loved his pastrami sandwich, and I had the best chopped liver I've ever experienced. I don't remember what we had for desert, but we were back in Shahid's car and racing for the Hyatt by 1:20, making it with three minutes to spare.

(I should add that although Shahid is a publisher and publishers always pay, lunch was Bob's treat, and Shahid just lucked out and got a free meal. Back at LACon 4, the 2006 Worldcon in Los Angeles, Bob had driven down from Oakland. The committee had asked him to emcee the Guest of Honor ceremonies, and he begged off, suggesting me. I agreed provided he'd pay for lunch at the deli. Well, the nearest good deli was maybe a dozen miles away, and at the last minute Karen took the car to go shopping, so while Bob paid maybe \$25 for lunch for the pair of us, I paid \$75 for cab fare...and based on that, I insisted that he owed me lunch in Chicago. [I forgot to ask during the intervening years.]

So at 1:30 I sat down in solitary splendor at an autographing table, and opposite me were my daughter and perhaps 20 good friends. The reason: my Guest of Honor book, *Win Some, Lose Some*, contained all 30 of my Hugo-nominated short fiction pieces, winners and losers both—and each story was introduced by a different dignitary within the field, all of them long-time friends.

And for 90 minutes, without a let-up, we autographed copy after copy after copy of that 600-page book. I wanted to get all my "introducers" to inscribe my own copy to me, but we were so busy and the line was so endless that I had to wait until the signing period was over before I could get my copy signed. I was told we signed something like 130 books in 90 minutes...and it was *not* an inexpensive book. A very flattering way to start the day's programming.

Then I went over to Off World Designs, where Doug Klauba, the cover artist for *Stalking the Zombie*, and I spent 45 minutes signing t-shirts bearing reproductions of the cover art (and take my word

for it, *nothing* is harder to sign than t-shirts.) When that was over, I did a 45-minute signing at Larry Smith's table—no belly dancers this year <sob>, for the first time since Chicon 6 in 2000.

Then, at 4:30, BJ Galler-Smith and I climbed onto the stage, and she interviewed me for an hour and a half.

We had dinner with Luigi and Marina Petruzzelli, Gio Clairval, a pair of Luigi's Italian friends, plus Lezli and Jamie. I'll be damned if I can remember what we had, so it clearly was neither superb nor terrible. Then, at 9:00, it was time for my speech. Laura had apologized earlier in the day for missing it, but she had a dinner obligation with her editor/publisher, Betsy Wollheim, who has been publishing her delightful series of comic fantasies (which bear titles like *Disappearing Nightly*, *Dopplegangsters*, *Unsympathetic Magic*, *Vamparazzi*, *Poltergeist*, and the like.) Then I found out that Random House had invited just about every member of SFWA for a four-hour boat ride on Lake Michigan. Then the committee announced that the Moebius Theatre Group (which I fondly remember from when they produced *Warp* and its sequels 40 years ago) would be performing a live play starting at 8:30. I remember mentioning at dinner that at such time as I outnumbered the audience I was calling the speech off.

Turns out that I drew a pretty nice crowd anyway, maybe 400 to 500. I never use a prepared text, I just talk...and Carol had told me that I should do funny reminiscences rather than serious/pedantic commentary, so that's what I did, and—I have it on video disk, thanks to Allen Batson—the audience laughed its collective ass off for 75 minutes, and I even sneaked in a couple of serious (if brief) observations. One of these days, when I finally get a spare evening or two, I'll either post the video on YouTube and my web page, or have someone transcribe it and give it to some fanzines (of course including this one).

Gave a podcast interview back in the suite, then went around the parties—Tor had its usual crowded one—with Luigi, Harry Kloor, Writer Child Brennan Harvey, and a couple of others. I ran into Ruhan Zhao, who's been instrumental in helping me sell to China, and also saw Kay Kenyon, one of my more accomplished Writer Children, with whom I had promised to have a business discussion, so she and I went down to the bar and spoke for an hour. Then it was back to the parties, but around 2:20 I wended my way back to the room, where Carol was happily reading her *Nook*, and climbed into bed, unheard of at prior Worldcons. Part of it was that they worked me very hard at this con (not that I didn't enjoy every minute of it), long days broken only by business meals; but in truth, the other part is that I just can't do as many back-to-back-to-back 20-hour days at 70 as I could at 35 and 40.

*Saturday, September 1:* Another seemingly endless and yet totally delightful day. Woke up at 9:30 AM (double ough with yogurt on it!), took a shower while Carol thoughtfully made some coffee, and then at 10:30 I spent an hour signing *Stalking the Zombie* and the British import, *Masters of the Galaxy*, at Bob Garcia's American Fantasy Press table, then made my way over to the Bistro for lunch with my Chinese friends. There was Ruhan Zhao, and his son Muxing (who is going to become one of my Writer Children; this kid—I think he's still in grammar school—is writing stories that are better than 90% of what I find in the better slush piles.) I also met Wu Yan, who is the head of the biggest science fiction society in China, and I finally met Meizi Wang, the lovely girl who is my translator for the short stories I sell to *SF World*, the Chinese magazine with a circulation of 500,000 per issue. I also gave both Ruhan and Wu Yan a list of all the books I have not yet sold to China, and since I seem to be reasonably popular there, hopefully some good will come of it.

At 1:00 I had a panel on "Magical Musicals". The musical theatre is one of my passions, and the only person in science fiction who I will freely grant knows far more about the subject than I do it Laura Frankos, Harry Turtledove's wife, who has written a wonderful book on it. More to the point, Laura and I have been trading bootleg videos of plays in performance for years, and both have huge collections. The Female Person From Colorado (yclept Connie Willis) was also on the panel, as were Rich Lynch and Leah Zeldes. Lots of fun, and I think Laura and I named a lot of sf and fantasy musicals that most people didn't know existed. (Like what, I hear you ask. Like *Dandelion Wine*, which was so poor it never made it to Broadway; or *Charlie and Algernon*, based on "Flowers for Algernon", which was a flop both in

England and then in America. And a number of successes that most people don't realize are fantasies, like *Assassins* and *Follies*, until you point out the fantastic elements.)

Then came the panel that everyone is still talking about, that's up on You Tube and Facebook and is the most popular panel I ever experienced at a Worldcon—and the only one to receive a 5-minute standing ovation. It was titled “The Secret History of Science Fiction”, the panelists were the current Guest of Honor (me), and four previous Guests of Honor (Bob Silverberg, Joe Haldeman, George R. R. Martin, and Gardner Dozois), and all we did was tell funny (make that *hilarious*) and frequently salacious stories about previous conventions. I think there may have been minimally more stories about the 1968 BayCon than any other, though we covered the peanut butter costume, the skinny dipping, the Male Chauvinist Pig Award, the lime jello, the origin of the Hugo Losers Party, and every other legend that one or more of us experienced. We could have done another three hours without slowing down, but most of us had 4:30 panels to get to.

And at 4:30, I hosted a slide show I had put together for the con, titled “Baby Photos”. I described it—accurately, I think—as photos of beardless and braless young wannabe writers, juxtaposed to photos of the wrinkled, decrepit, incontinent writers we became. 120 photos with my descriptions, and everyone seemed to enjoy it. I still have the CD, so I can do it again at some regional cons.

At 6:00—and you'll notice that again I'd been on the go or onstage since 10:30 in the morning—we had another business dinner, this time with our friends Bill Schafer, Yanni Kuznia and Tim Holt of Subterranean Press. Bill has published four of my books in the past three years, including *The Incarceration of Captain Nebula* for Chicon, and has been running Lucifer Jones stories (my favorite of my characters) three or four times a year for four or five years, and he badgers me into turning out an almost-annual African novella. It was a pleasant meal, and when it was over Carol and I had to attend the masquerade. We'd been told that emcee Jan Howard Finder was going to say some nice things about the costumes we did in the 1970s, and we thought it would be rude not to be there. Just as well we went. The first two rows were reserved for all the Guests of Honor and Special Guests; we were the only two to show up.

I have to say that Worldcon masquerades have changed from the 125 to 150 costumes we had to compete against. There were only 25 costumes, and three of them were in the Children's Division. I think the serious costuming has migrated to DragonCon and ComicCon.

I hit the Baen party, and visited with a number of friends in the SFWA and CFG suites, but again, it was forcibly impressed upon me that I can't get by on 4 hours' sleep a night at a Worldcon the way I used to—one or two nights, sure; but not night after night after night—and again I gave up the ghost at 3:00 AM, which as readers of my Worldcon diaries know has been an aberration prior to 2012.

*Sunday, September 2:* Sunday began with the 11:00 AM brunch I hosted for my Writer Children. We got a totally secluded area of the restaurant. Invited were Lezli Robyn, Kay Kenyon, Brad Torgersen, Brennan Harvey, Laurie Tom, Nick DiChario, Gio Clairval, BJ Galler-Smith, Janis Ian, Toby Buckell, Ron Collins, and Laura (my *real* writer child, who just turned 50 and probably resents being considered a child), plus Carol, of course. Ron went into the emergency room with some bug the night before and didn't make it, but I've spoken to him since and he's doing fine. Anyway, these were all writers I helped, collaborated with (well, except for Laura), bought from, introduced to editors and agents, and “adopted”. There are another ten or eleven who didn't make it to Chicon, but it made more sense to spend a few hundred dollars on the brunch than spending it throwing a party where I wouldn't know two-thirds of the attendees. Everyone else gorged on the huge buffet; I had 6 cups of coffee and tried to wake up.

After the brunch, I went off at 1:30 to a truly dull panel on why pros write for fanzines, or which pros write for fanzines, or which fanzines pros write for, or some such. It featured Andy Porter, Dick Smith, and myself. Bob Silverberg was supposed to be on it too, but he had the brains to be a no-show.

Then at 3:00 I did my “official” autographing session, and found myself signing right next to Jack McDevitt. We have *The Cassandra Project*, a reasonably major collaboration coming out from Ace in November, and it was nice to be able to chat with him while we both signed for seemingly endless lines

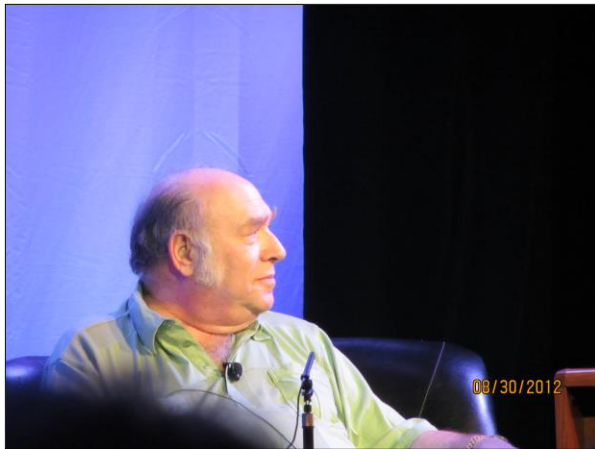
of fans. His line petered out after 83 minutes; mine made it 85, and I teased him mercilessly about that for the final five minutes of the session.

Then I popped over to Shahid's Arc Manor table. He'd reprinted the first three Lucifer Jones books (*Adventures*, *Exploits*, and *Encounters*), as well as the re-titled *Shaggy B.E.M. Stories* (which is now *Bug-Eyed Monsters and Bimbos*), and was selling a bunch of my Farthest Star titles for Ralph Roberts, who had to cancel out at the last minute.

After an hour at Shahid's, I met Carol, Eleanor Wood, her son and his fiancé, and we walked a short block to the Palm restaurant in the Swissotel (spelled right). After Fulton's on the River and The Greek Islands, it was the best meal I'd had in a couple of months: lobster bisque, veal parmesan, and a chocolate pastry. The Hyatt has an upscale restaurant, Stetson's, where a few publishers took us at Chicon 6 back in 2000, but it closed for renovations two days before the con officially started, not the best foresight in the world.

After dinner we went picked up Shahid and Laura and went to the Hugo Reception. Theoretically I could only take one guest for myself and one for Lou Anders (he was stuck with his publisher, Pyr Books, at DragonCon, and I was accepting for him if he won), but that was ridiculous. The Hugo Reception is always filled with the same un-nominated crowd, and this year was no exception. I got permission in advance from the committee to bring my extra guests, but we could have walked right it anyway, just as everyone else was doing.

After a few minutes we were ushered to our reserved seating area, John Scalzi stepped out, and the Hugo ceremony was on. John made a truly fine Toastmaster, and the committee had the brains to get rid of a two-decade-long tradition that slowed the ceremony down and did nothing to enhance it: they



eliminated the guest presenters and let the Toastmaster, who is theoretically chosen for his or her wit, do all the talking and hand out all the awards. Lou lost Best Editor, Long Form, to Laura's editor, Betsy Wollheim; and my story, "The Homecoming", lost to Ken Liu's "The Paper Menagerie". I couldn't be upset about it; Ken is a wonderful young man, and he wrote exactly the story I would have written were I a Chinese-American writing on that particular subject. I think the biggest surprise of the night was that the bestselling novel—not just fantasy novel—of the year came in fifth, though George did get a Hugo in a different category.

John moved the ceremony right along, and while I didn't put a timer on it, it felt like we got through it in a reasonable 90 minutes or so.

I hit the Hugo Losers Party, then went up to George Martin's catered invite-only party, spent some time visiting up with Gardner Dozois and the Female Person From Colorado, stopped by CFG a couple of times, made it to the SFWA suite, and wound up back in our own suite at 1:30. I checked e-mail and Facebook, found I'd developed a second wind from somewhere, and went back to the parties for another couple of hours and enjoyed the hell out of it, and also got three story assignments for upcoming anthologies...but again, I was in bed and asleep before 3:30.

*Monday, September 3:* Last day of the con, and another early (well, for me) day. Got up around 9:30, showered and injected coffee into a vein, then ran a program item that showed DVDs of five short movies that had been made from my stories, mostly by film school students: "Metal Tears" (from "Robots Don't Cry"); "Neutral Ground" (from "Neutral Ground"); "The Faith Machine" (from "Article of Faith"); "His Award-Winning Science Fiction Movie" (from "His Award-Winning Science Fiction Story"); and "Do Not Take the Name of the Lord in Vain" (from *The Branch*). It was the last-named that got the producer-director excommunicated from his church and thrown out of his country (Andorra) for 15 years.

That took from 10:30 to 1:30. Then I had a panel with four of my collaborators on what it was like for them to collaborate with the Guest of Honor. There were Brad Torgersen (3 stories), Lezli Robyn (7 stories), Eric Flint (a story, 3 co-edited anthologies, 3 years co-editing *Jim Baen's Universe*, and a novel under contract but not yet started), and Harry Kloor (a screenplay, and, it turns out, a graphic novel adaptation of my *Widowmaker* novels). It went smoothly enough, especially when I got Eric and Brad talking about collaborations they've done with people other than me, and at 3:00 PM the last panel of the last day was finished.

But *I* wasn't. Carol and I then had to attend closing ceremonies, where I got the distinct impression that Chicago is already bidding again for 2022. We had planned to help Lezli celebrate her birthday at Navy Pier, and Carol—a Ferris wheel junkie—was really looking forward to riding the big one there, but she came down with a mild version of the same bug that had hit Ron Collins and Gio Clairval, and we stayed in the hotel and had room service send up our dinners.

I had three boxes of books to take home, and no room in the trunk what with Laura's and Brad's luggage in addition to ours, so I imposed on fellow Cincinnati Debbie Oakes to carry them home in her car and deliver them to us at the weekly Wednesday CFG dinner in two days.

There wasn't much in the way of parties, but I was too exhausted to visit most of them anyway, so I spent a couple of hours in the bar with BJ and Lezli and anyone else who stopped by (and thank goodness the bar didn't insist that we teetotalers buy drinks!) and another hour at CFG, and I think I was in bed before 1:30.

I really do think my hours were compromised by the exhausting schedule. I'm writing this at 5:30 AM on September 24, and this'll be the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> night in a row I've been writing past 5:00. (Of course, I'm sleeping til midafternoon each day too.) I suppose I'll know for sure next year when I'm back to maybe 3 panels, a reading, a kaffeeklatsch and a signing spread over five days.

*Tuesday, September 4:* Carol, Laura, Brad and I piled into the car. I drove the first 2 ½ hours, to LaFayette, and Brad drove the last 3, to Cincinnati. We dropped Laura off, then went home, where Brad, who does computer support for a living (until the writing gets too lucrative, which we all hope is soon) fixed everything that was wrong with Carol's laptop and transferred all the data and programs from my beat-up XP to my brand-new Dell tower with Windows7 and made it work *mostly* like XP, which is the best system MicroSoft ever made (so of course they continue to "improve" it to the disgust of most users).

And while Carol was unpacking and laundering and puttering, and Brad was computerizing, I had a little time to do some reflecting. I remember our first Worldcon—the 1963 Discon—as vividly as if it occurred just last month. I remember seeing giants like Isaac Asimov handing Hugos out to other giants like Jack Vance and Phil Dick, and I remember wondering, if I worked my tail off and improved my craft for the next 20 or 30 years, if someone, somewhere would let me touch one. As I write these words I can stand up, walk 20 feet, and touch a bunch of them.

I remember that Murray Leinster was the Guest of Honor, and that because of that honor, which had been bestowed only on the tallest of our giants, on people like Heinlein and Campbell and Clarke and Doc Smith and Asimov. (Williamson wouldn't gain that honor for another 14 years, and it would be 23 more years before it would be given to Bradbury), I felt compelled almost to whisper their names in awe.

Well, I was very young and very impressionable. These days young is another union, but I'm still very impressionable, and I'm still in awe of the accomplishments of our field's giants, even though most of them have become good friends. I occasionally get the feeling that there's been a terrible mistake, that of course I didn't really win all those Hugos, and surely they read off the wrong name when they announced that I was to be the Chicon Guest of Honor...but until someone shows up to explain that there have indeed been a series of embarrassing blunders (and probably even *after* that happens), I remain the happiest science fiction writer in the world, I love what I do, I love all the professional and fannish friends I've made, I love my life, I'm proud as hell that I was Chicon's Guest of Honor, and I wish there was a way to thank everyone who has helped to make it possible. I suppose the closest I can come is to keep writing the best stories I can, and I plan to start another one the second I e-mail this diary to Guy Lillian.



*Illustration for the above article by BRAD FOSTER. Photos by RICH LYNCH and JOEL ZAKEM.*  
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## ***EDITORIAL NOTE***

Something I wrote on Facebook: “Began re-re-reading *One Fearful Yellow Eye*, a John D MacDonald Travis McGee novel, while waiting for my car in Dallas this morning. Something about John D makes you suddenly more observant, inquisitive (his word)—and compassionate. You look at people. You wonder about their stories. You eavesdrop. You notice expressions and you extrapolate from them. A girl’s happy smile means she knows she’s loved. A woman talks and talks and her tablemate says nothing. Other people come alive. You do too. Such is the effect of an intuitive writer.” Speaking of John D., my complete paperback collection of his works is precious to me—and fragile. The covers on many of the older books are browning, and some have even snapped off when I tried to open them. His *oeuvre* needs fresh trade paperbacks, like Jim Thompson’s, “Richard Stark”’s and Phil Dick’s.

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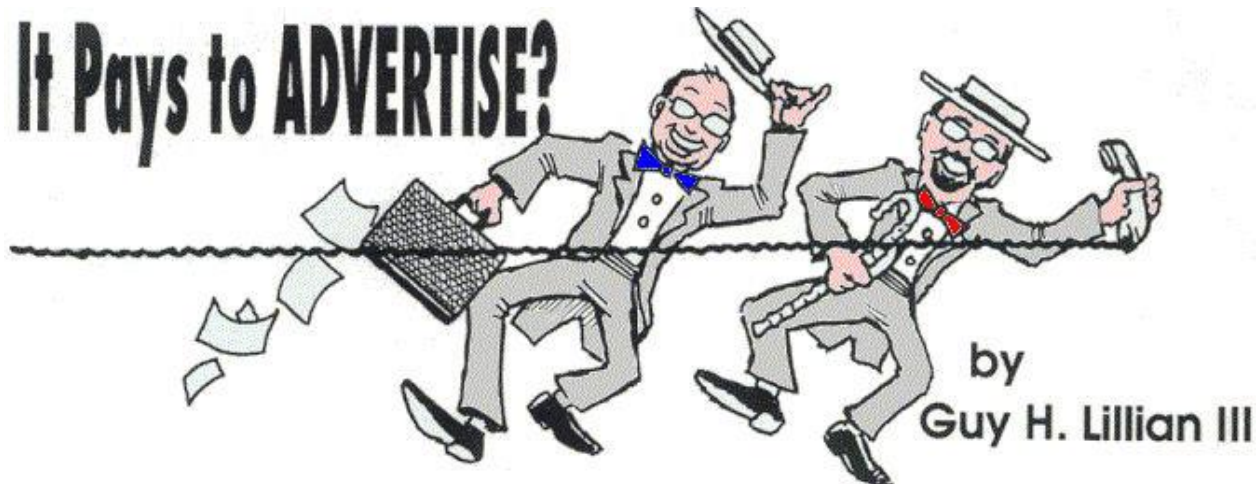
“Then there was the group that believed that all red-headed women were creatures from outer space sent here to intermingle with mankind to cause trouble and destruction.”

“I could give you instances which would seem to prove them right,” Freddy said,

“So could I, Smith.” the doctor said.

**R.A. Lafferty**, *Fourth Mansions*

From the pages of Rich & Nicki Lynch's great *Mimosa* and the antiquity of my preposterous career, the one article Rose-Marie *insisted* run in this *Challenger* ...



Illus by CHARLES WILLIAMS

ENJOY THE **SUGAR BOWL IN NEW ORLEANS ...**

**BUT BRING THIS AD!**

If you get *in* trouble, we can help you *out*!  
If you need a lawyer while in New Orleans, call  
US.

**Guy Lillian \* Dennis Dolbear**  
**Attorneys at Law \* (504)XXX-2362/(504)XXX-**

Let me explain a brouhaha which made my friend Dennis Dolbear and I nationally famous—briefly, I hope—at the end of 1996. It was originally my idea: advertise in the home papers of tourists soon to visit New Orleans, some of whom would be bound to get in trouble on the streets of the Crescent City, and need lawyers.

It only makes sense. People flock to New Orleans for events like the Sugar Bowl and Mardi Gras looking for a Good Time. Such people sometimes take their quest for Fun a bit far, and run afoul of the constabulary. To put it bluntly, they get arrested.

They need lawyers. Strangely enough, I need something too. *Money*. When I was a boy, all life used to begin with play. Now all life begins with *work*, for the paying of bills is the root of all evil. How—to quote *Star Trek*—could the needs of the many (the desperate tourists) be reconciled with the needs of the few (me)?

You *hustle*. Central Lock-Up is the facility where new arrestees are booked and bonded. The hungry lawyer meanders through the door, casting his eye about for civilians with a desperate, deserted set to their countenances. To the trained eye such expressions connote one thing: “*My boyfriend’s been arrested and I don’t know what to do!*”

It happens all the time, of course. Her boyfriend may have done nothing more deadly than imbibe to excess, and/or fail to find proper facilities for the sanitary disposal thereof ... but our constabulary is not known for turning a blind eye to such transgressions. He ends up in handcuffs and she in hysterics. What does she do? Her usual course is to pay a bond at Central Lock-Up—about \$500 for the usual minor malfeasance. The boyfriend is released after a few hours and given a time to appear in Municipal Court. He either pleads Not Guilty on that occasion and receives a trial date, or Guilty and receives part of his bond back, the rest being kept as a fine. (Or blows the whole thing off and skips town, forfeiting the entire bond.)

Or. She can hire *me*. In that case I call Dennis Dolbear, who calls his contact with clout (hereafter known as “Our Man”), who calls the jail and gets the boyfriend *paroled*. This means he is released without bond. The money which would have gone to the bond goes, instead, to *me*. In exchange, he gets a lawyer to stand up for him at his arraignment, get his trial date, and fight the forces of oppression. Actually, since we only dun our clients to the tune of \$250, they save half their money—and get legal representation, to boot. A better bargain, really. The trouble is getting people to realize it. So, step two is invoked: you *advertise*.

This is ethical. There’s nothing wrong with lawyers advertising as long as they adhere to certain standards promulgated by the Bar Association. A lawyer can’t guarantee results, for instance, or outside of a few specific disciplines proclaim himself a “specialist.” There are lawyers who push the envelope and tout themselves like toothpaste, but when I advanced the idea to Dennis that we try to pick up some business from the Sugar Bowl, and he gave his enthusiastic okay, I vowed to cling to the canons and say nothing iniquitous. When I wrote the ad, I called the Louisiana Bar Association to clear the wording. The decree of the Liaison for Lawyer Advertising was abrupt and unequivocal: “Run it!”

Next question: Run it *where*?



I found the names of the student newspapers at the two schools competing in the Sugar Bowl football game, Florida State University and the University of Florida, and called ’em up. I’d missed the deadlines for each school’s final papers of the semester, *but* Tallahassee had another outlet, *The Florida Flambeau*. A nice kid named Carlos assured me that *they* had available space, so I faxed them the above, and they ran it, and *all Hell broke loose*.

The phone *hurled* itself off the hook... but not with clients. With *media*. Apparently advertising in out-of-town newspapers was such a unique and

original idea that my little amateur ad was *news*. The calls came roaring in from Florida radio stations and Florida newspapers. All had similar questions: **Why are you doing this?** “Make money and serve the public.” No use denying the former, and it didn’t hurt to schmooze the shmucks with the latter. **Why didn’t you advertise in Gainesville papers?** As if we were stating that only FSU students ran the risk of getting busted. “Missed the deadline.” **Will you do this again?** “If we make some money, we’ll try it again for Mardi Gras... and *saturate* Southern colleges.”

The tone of all the interviews was also similar, and not good. I sensed *offense*. Part of it was the usual, tedious loathing for our profession: lawyers being slimy shysters, how dare such vermin try to

make money off innocent, pristine, guileless and guiltless college kids? I began to worry a little. That worry cascaded into dizzying panic when the call arrived from WDSU-TV, the local NBC affiliate. *They* wanted an interview.

Dennis arranged for the TV station to sit us down in a downtown office where, presumably, we'd look lawyer-ly. Harried from a busy end-of-the-year work day, and a run of several blocks from the nearest parking spot, I arrived to find him smiling with an exquisite young lady—originally from Dallas, which befitted her look of money—and a cameraman. They sat us down, set us up, and let us talk.

I watched the broadcast through a mesh of fingers, and I must say that Dennis looked good on tape. Me, I appeared—here it comes—thoroughly *fubbo*—fat, ugly, bald, broke and old—though I don't know how anyone could tell that I'm broke just by looking. We *sounded* okay, although I could have garroted Dolbear when the girl asked what crimes we anticipated defending, and he proudly answered, "Public urination."

Then *Sports Illustrated* called. I nearly dropped my teeth—and I don't have false teeth.

The guy asked all the standard questions and got all the standard replies (with a request on the side for more stories about Jimmy Connors, my sports idol). When I scored the issue and scanned the squib in "Sportstalk," I didn't care for its tone; it mentioned Shakespeare's line about "killing all the lawyers" and was headlined "Ill Legal Pitch." Well, *SI* never treated Connors right, either. (My cousin Johnny read it and called from California, pretending to be an arrestee from Florida State. Nice try, chum; I recognized your voice.) But... *Sports Illustrated*! How many *lawyers* who have to scrimp and save to *buy* an issue of *SI* end up *in* it?

It was all too much. Gratefully I fled north for the holidays. Safe at my mother's house in Buffalo, the only fallout was welcome: a call from Southern trufan George Inzer, who had read the national feed after our first radio interview. He said they were calling us "smart lawyers." Now *that* I could handle!

As '96 waned and the Sugar Bowl approached, I returned home. Waiting was a letter from a Florida fan (no return address), its upshot that true Gators and 'Noles aficionados would use their money to *bribe* cops, not pay shysters. Mentally wishing the writer much opportunity to explore this possibility, I set up a strong communications link with Dolbear (that is, I kept my phone by my side) and prepared for New Year's Eve.

The phone *melted*. Call after call came in. Three former clients asked for loans. My neighbor Cindy called twice to tell me what a great time she was having at her boyfriend's sister's party. However, no students, jailed or otherwise, bothered me.

I was feeling pretty glum about the silence, but New Year's Eve fell on Tuesday and the Sugar Bowl itself wasn't until Thursday. We had another night of mad French Quarter revelry to look forward to... with *plenty* more chances for ~~arrests~~ work. Also, the New Year opened with another request for an interview—this time from a *Florida* TV station. I pulled on a sports coat and hung a tie around my neck and met the pleasant sportscaster at the Hyatt Regency. *His* tone I liked. "Which school do you think will have more arrests?" he asked. "Actually," I replied, "I expect the kids from both schools will spend the entire weekend engrossed in *prayer*." Big laugh, big hit.

The local tube claimed there had been only five arrests in the Quarter on New Year's Eve. Hard to believe! True, the city had borrowed police from all over this part of the state and the Vieux Carre was literally crawling with cops. But to me that meant *more* busts, not fewer... so that low figure sounded like public relations bushwah to me. I resolved to forget about the phone and keep a personal eye on Central Lock Up, where arrestees would be brought. Good move.

I was outside the jail at seven o'clock the next morning. Bead-bedecked college kids covered the place, dejected, exhausted, bleary, worried. Without *seeming* to pounce (since Bar Association rules forbid lawyers from approaching potential clients for work—the hungry attorney must stand around, look lawyerish, and wait for the client to bite his lure, \*ahem\*) I spoke to several. Most were washouts—they'd already paid the bond and would face the judge without lawyerly representation. Rotsa ruck. But one sad-faced trio...

Like them, their "downed bro" was a member of the FSU marching band. He had been caught using informal bathroom facilities in and upon the streets of the French Quarter. After his arrest for this "lewd



conduct,” the lad was frisked and lo, a pipeful of marijuana was found. “We can get him out,” I told the kids. “Here’s my card.” Still glum, they taxied off. A couple of hours later, they called. “Here’s our friend’s father’s 800 number,” they said. “He wants you to call him.”

Daddy was an Orlando pharmacist, a solid citizen who, more than anything, wanted his boy to march in the Sugar Bowl. He was understanding of the occasional imbecilities of youth, and smart enough to realize the value of an attorney when you’ve been thrown in jail. He wired the fee to my bank and DD and I rushed to the courthouse in search of a judge. At three o’clock in the afternoon on January 2nd, you can imagine how many magistrates thronged the halls of justice. But we found one, and spilled the sad story of a wayward boy losing the chance of a trombonist’s lifetime... and he made the call.

Dennis and I returned to CLU to wait for the kid’s release. We didn’t have to do this. But I’d



promised Pops that I’d do everything possible to get Junior to the game, which meant, if the need arose, hauling him there from jail. So we sat and sat and sat, and while we sat picked up two other cases. One involved a young lady from Mississippi and her boyfriend, arrested for fighting with a butt-squeezing local. The girl had been thrown down, slugged, tit-grabbed and called filthy names. By the *cop*! No no no *no*. I’d have something to say about that!

The tinkling trombonist was eventually freed, and DD and I putt-putted him to his hotel. He got to toodle his horn in the Big Game and watch his team get porked, 52-20. I

told his story in our second WDSU interview... and gamely autographed an issue of *Sports Illustrated* for another lawyer, who allowed that he, too, might start spending holiday nights hanging around Central Lock Up. Just what we needed: competition, with Mardi Gras just around the bend.

Actually, it turned out to be a *good* Mardi Gras, despite my ambition to make money from it, and despite a week of lou’ring clouds and temperatures fit for chilblains. Carnival, it seems, continues to conquer all.

Not like it used to, of course. Not like the early years, when Carnival was new to me and catching every bead had the success of the season riding on it, and every Rex doubloon was a valued treasure instead of a meaningless disc of anodized aluminum. Or when Dennis’ immortal GrasCon was in swing, and a glut of partying maniacs would descend onto Nawlins, shouts of “*EH-pic!*” echoing, and the call of this town to the prodigal grew stronger and stronger... No, not like those days, for one has since become jaded with the repetitive parades, and the jostling, howling crowds, and the interminable waits, and the god-awful traffic. Now, none of *Our People* visit New Orleans for Mardi Gras (fans come to Jazz Fest, if they come at all), and the krewe that used to coalesce around fandom in this town has drifted along differing (and diverging) paths. Now, Mardi Gras is mostly a bitter reminder of the lost joys of youth... and a way to make extra money grubbing behind the demands of my exalted and squalid profession. Everything has changed with the years, practically none of it for the better.

But still...

What was *good* about Mardi Gras 1996? Well, for one thing, I *did* make some money. Not a lot, not the tons that *could* have been collected, but enough to pay the odd bill or two for the month, which I’m old enough to regard as a triumph.

For Mardi Gras I decided to place an ad in the local fishwrapper. This act was called into question when the ad came out not on the eve of Mardi Gras' big weekend, but at the very start of Carnival, two weeks before. Porked again.

Carnival began. The early parades rolled. The minor krewes held their balls (so to speak). I ignored all. Not until the weekend before Fat Tuesday would the *big* parades hit the asphalt and the cops really get crackin'. Indeed, t'was on the afternoon before Bacchus, among Carnival's biggest and best parades, that I struck what gold there was to be struck.

Outside the gates to CLU a group of tourists stood, confused, upset, concerned, baffled... ripe for plucking. I sashayed up. They blubbered forth wonderful stories. You've heard what women do here for Mardi Gras beads? Men can act with similar foolishness. One lady—very handsome gal in her late forties, wearing a parka with a flag on it—had seen her paramour hauled off by the gendarmes after he *whipped out his schween* in front of Galatoire's, one of the finest restaurants in this (or any other) city. *Nuns* were supping in the front window! She asked Dolbear—whom I quickly summoned—a zillion questions, but finally came up with the loot. The other folks told a more poignant tale.

The elder of the two was named Alison, and the younger was her daughter, although I could barely believe it. Alison possessed the smooth countenance of nubile youth but the bearing of adult care. That morning, on sheerest whim, she had joined her cute daughter and her daughter's boyfriend, and driven down from Biloxi, Mississippi. They'd had a fabulous day carousing in the French Quarter. And then some schmuck had put a move on the daughter in the French Quarter. The boyfriend had objected and naturally, it was him who had ended up behind bars.

In her own words, Alison had brought nothing but cigarettes. No money. No checkbook. No driver's license. No way to rescue anyone from jail. Despair! Despair! Alison was literally shivering with anxiety. ~~Buzz Light year~~ GHLLI to the rescue!

No money? No problem! Smitten to my idiot wits, I first offered to drive Alison—and her daughter, if she *insisted* on coming—home to Biloxi to pick up her checkbook. What's a three-hour jaunt to Mississippi and back on the busiest day of the season? For once saner, Dennis overruled me, and simply assured Alison that she could pay us *later*. The beautiful lady smiled, my heart split like a melon, and off went Dolbear to call Our Man, the elected official who would parole the miscreants out of jail.



He wasn't home.

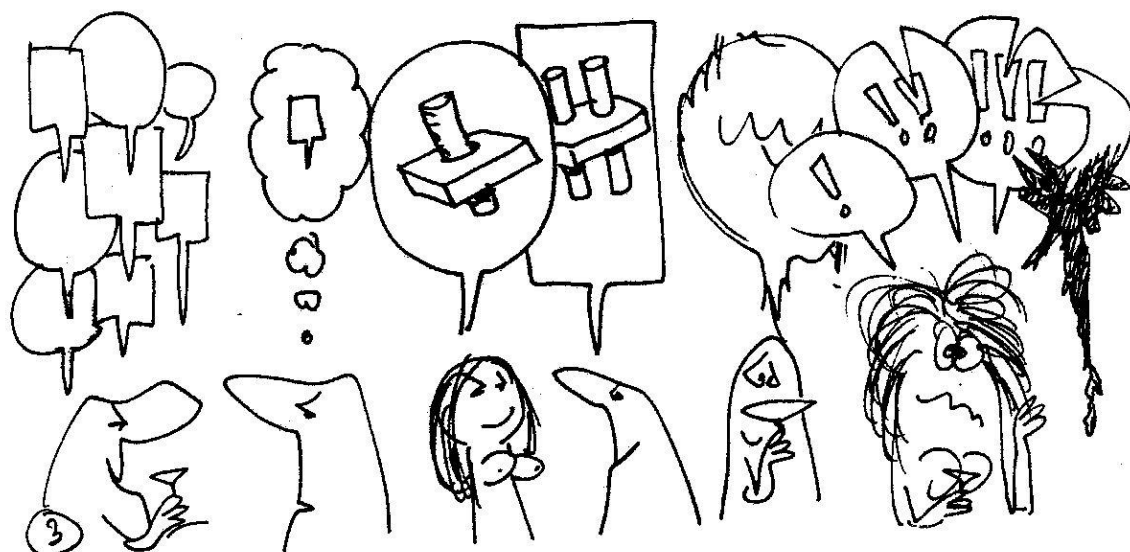
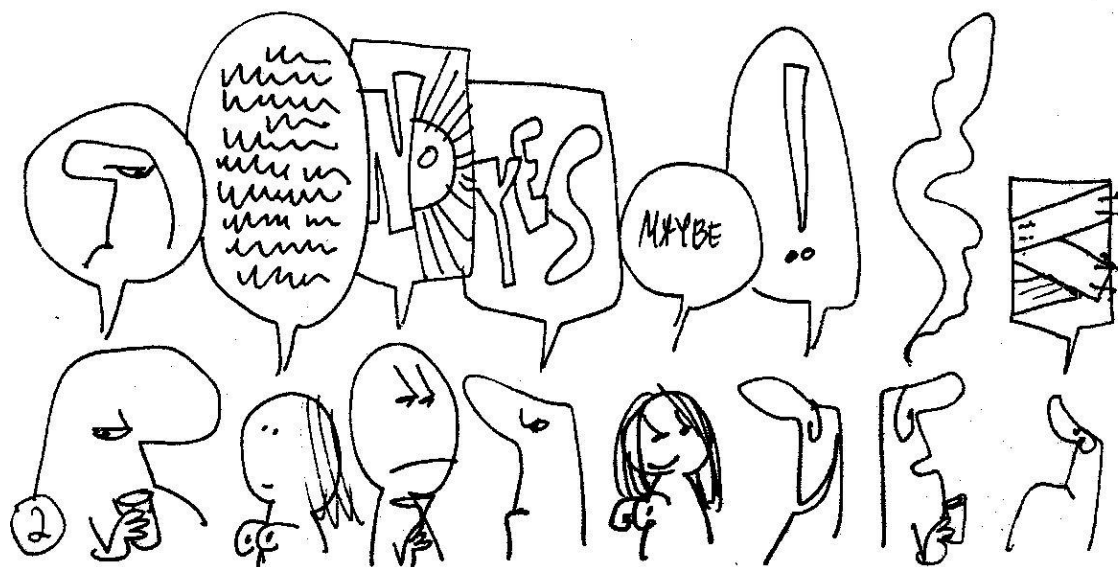
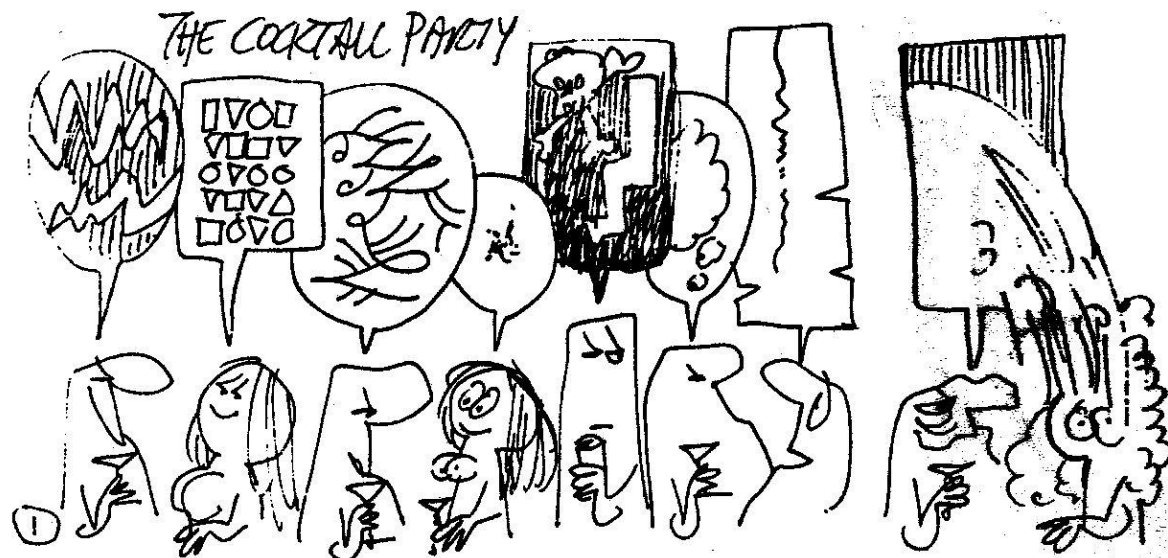
Not to worry, Dennis assured me. Our Man is just out at the Bacchus parade. He'll call his answering machine anytime now, hear DD's entreaties, and free our clients. We went to dinner. DD kept his beeper by his ear. Nothing.

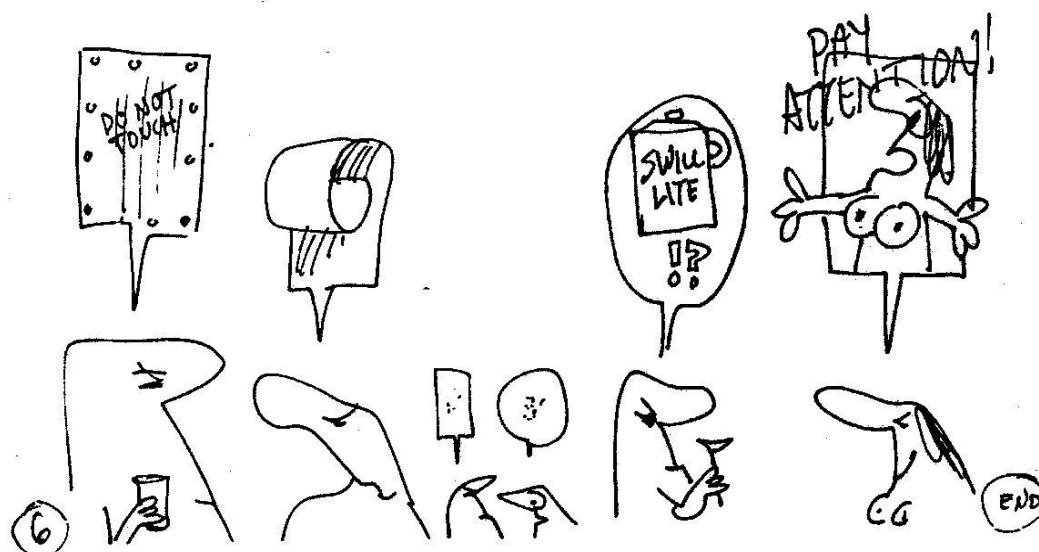
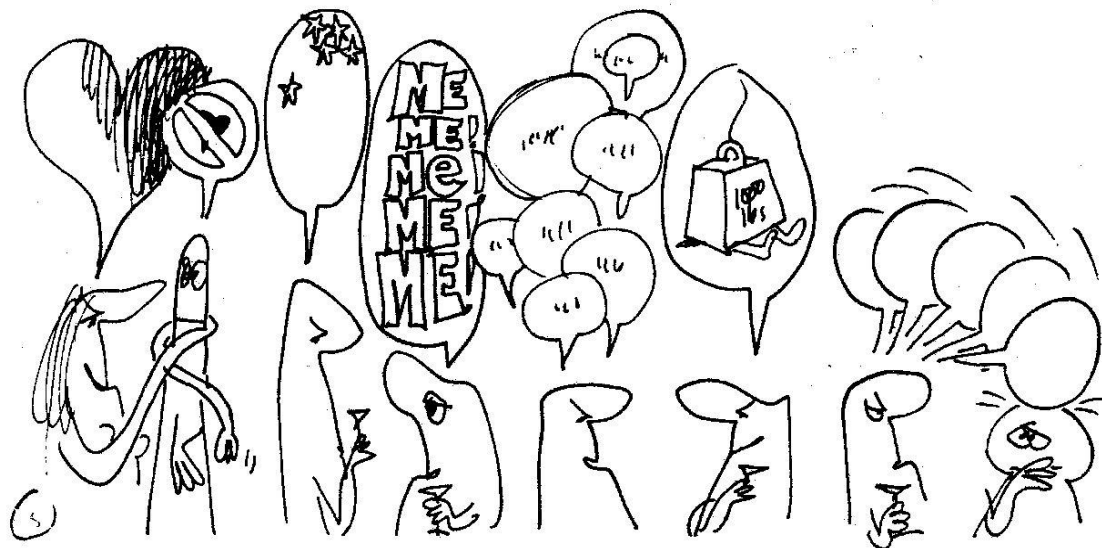
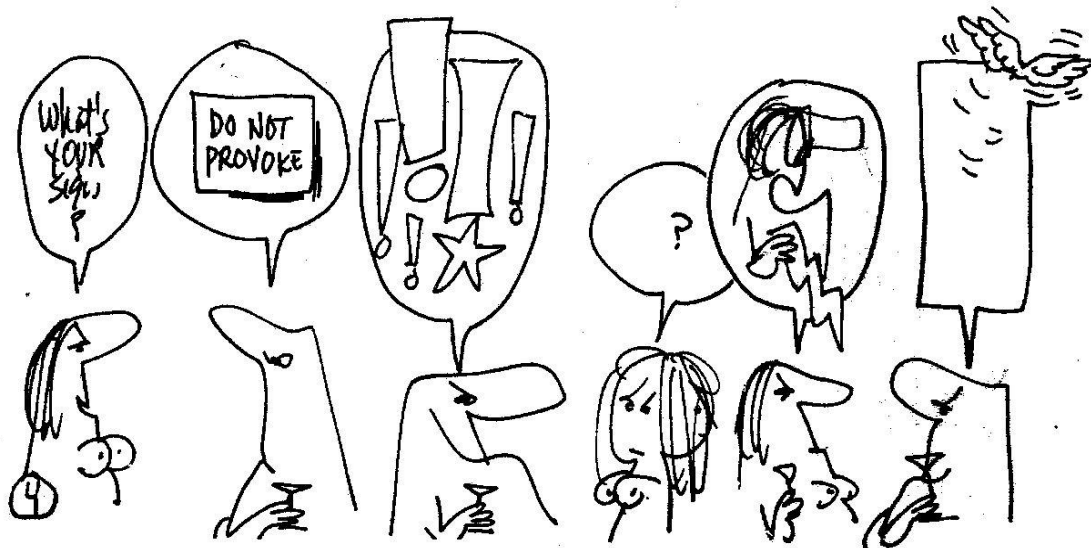
Not to worry, Dennis told me. Our Man is at a party, no doubt, and will call as soon as he gets home. Which will be *any time now*. We stared at the beeper. Nothing. We drove by Our Man's uptown house. It was as dark as the tomb. Had this ever happened before? No.

Now worry, Dennis said.

I did my best to reassure our clients, who were still at Central Lock Up, staring at the door, waiting for their friends to be freed. Undoubtedly our contact is... delayed. Not to worry, I smiled... through clenched teeth. Alison gazed up at me with concern softened by limitless faith. My heart oozed out of my chest and dripped over my shoes. Oh, that she could think me untrue to my word! Dennis called and called. Our Man stayed gone. We called three judges, reaching none. They were also incommunicado.

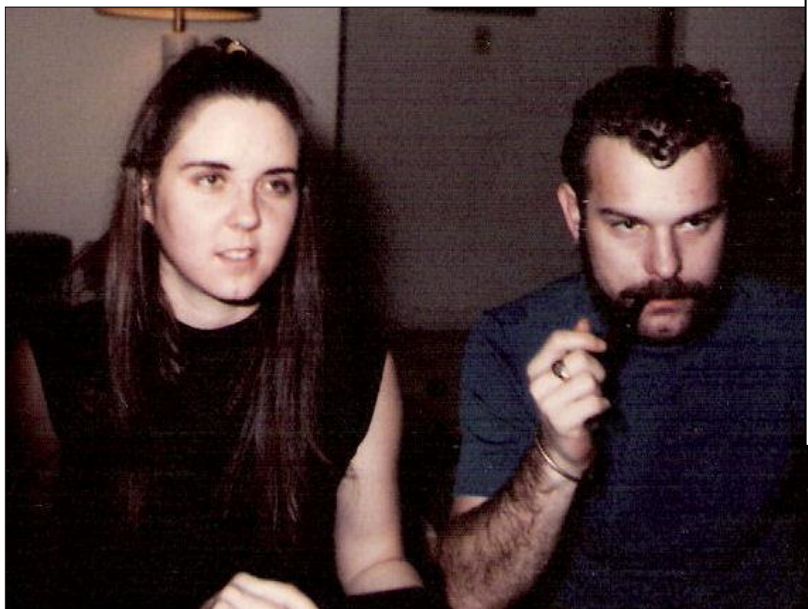
**CONTINUED ON PAGE 41**





WILLIAM  
ROTSLER





## *THE CHALLENGER TRIBUTE*

### **JOE & GAY HALDEMAN**

*By Rosy ... about Joe*

Growing up in fandom has had some strange side-effects. One is

that I often met writers long before I read anything they wrote. Such was the case with Joe Haldeman.

I've known the Haldemans for so long that I don't remember when we first met, but I think it likely was during an Apollo prelaunch party. In other words, in my own home, which is also where I met some of the people you will read about in this issue of *Challenger*.

What impressed me most when I met Joe was his relationship with Gay—and that he could play the guitar. And that he took the time to be nice to a kid at an extraordinary ball. And that he didn't mind me taking his photo. Gay has since said I was a remarkably “mature teenager.” At the time I just loved being included in the conversation—and they were great conversations.

Joe came to more than one Apollo launch, and I saw him subsequently at conventions here and there over the years. Eventually he and Gay moved to Florida, as did Joe's brother, Jay. For many years they have split their time between Florida and Cambridge, and points in between and far away. By plane, train, boat and even one memorable cross-country trip on bikes—and no, I don't mean the kind that takes gasoline.

A few short years after the Apollo launches wrapped up Joe had written the seminal *The Forever War*, and collected a Hugo. The last time I saw him was at Archon 36, where he was the Toastmaster, while Guy was the fan guest of honor. The four of us went out to dinner and had, as usual, a great conversation.

And if you're wondering—yeah, I read him nowadays.

*By Guy ... about Gay*

Something surprised me in 1976 when I finished my first reading of *The Forever War*. I discovered that in addition to being a rollicking SF war tale, it was even more



fundamentally a *love story*. Joe Haldeman's first Hugo- and Nebula-winner not only contained some of the sharpest and most incisive writing about war our genre has produced, it sported one of the happiest and most romantic endings in science fiction. When Mandella found that note from Marygay at the novel's end, I found myself tearing up. That's *tear* as in *boohoo*.

Now that I have come to know Gay Haldeman, I understand the quality Joe has been lucky enough to live with for more than 40 years. Rosy and I learned that anew at last year's Archon, where Joe was toastmaster and I was Fan Guest of Honor. The Haldemans were our frequent companions at dinner, and being great conversationalists, enlivened every moment. Their account of their bike trip across America, when Joe was newly back from Vietnam, needs to be written up in book form (if it hasn't been already), because no tale of those days I've read or lived captures the era so well.

Joe would be the first to aver that he couldn't have done it alone. How fortunate he has been in his company. How lucky for all of us that Gay is around. How happy those moments when, crossing a convention floor, I'll hear "Hi Guy!" "Hey Gay!"

Here's to you and yours, great lady!



#### **"STAND-IN" CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9**

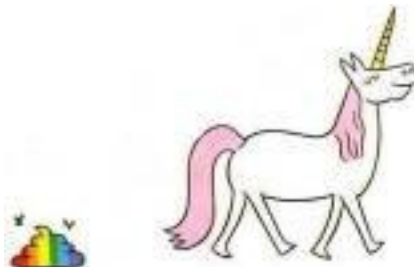
Yet I also was reading Raymond Chandler and John D. Macdonald's Travis McGee novels and thinking about my high school ambitions to write SF. (I put those aside to edit and write for my brother Jim's and my fanzine *Void*, through our undergraduate years.) Jim and I both hit the La Jolla party scene a lot. We met our future wives there. All this came together in that statistical mechanics class and the story wrote itself. I finished it that evening.

I polished it in a few days and sent it in. It won second place; the first place winner nobody ever heard from again. I got two pennies a word—\$20!—and a lifetime subscription to *F&SF*, worth far more of course.

It was my first published story in a prozine and my last fantasy story. I published several more stories of increasing scientific content through graduate school. I got my doctorate in 1967 and was astonished that I won a postdoc appointment with Edward Teller at the Livermore Radiation Lab. My fourth story for *F&SF* was 1969's "Deeper than the Darkness," my first cover story and a Hugo and Nebula nominee. From there I never looked back much.

I reread this story for the first time in decades to write this introduction. It seems okay, not remarkable—and comes from a person much different from who I am now.

*Gregory Benford*





# THE SPY WHO FOKED ME

*Joseph L. Major*

. . . and now this was my last night at the Dreamy Pines and tomorrow I would be off again. It had been a slice of life, not totally unpleasant in spite of the Phanceys, and I had learned the fringes of a job that might stand me in good stead. I looked at my watch. It was nine o'clock, and here was the dreadful WOKO from Albany with its storm bulletin. The Adirondacks would be clear by midnight. I went behind the cafeteria bar, turned on the electric cooker, and put out three eggs and six slices of hickory-smoked bacon. I was hungry.

And then came a loud hammering at the door.

My heart went to my mouth. Who could it possibly be? And then I remembered. The VACANCY sign! I had pulled the switch when the lightning struck and I had forgotten to turn the damned thing off. What an idiot! The banging started up again. Well, I would just have to face it, apologise, and send the people off to Lake George. I went nervously across to the door, unlocked it, and held it on the chain.

There was no porch. The neon VACANCY sign made a red halo in the sheet of rain and glittered redly on the shiny black oilskin and hood of the woman. Behind her was a black sedan. The woman said politely, "Are you Miss Michael?"

"Yes, that's me. But I'm afraid the VACANCY sign's on by mistake. The motel's closed down."

"No kiddin'? The boss-man and I, we're from Mr. Sanguinetti, from his insurance firm? We gotta make an inventory before the stuff gets taken away tomorrow. Can the Jay-man and I come in out of the rain? We can show you our ID inside. It's such a terrible night."

I looked doubtfully from her to the sedan, but I could see little of her face under the oilskin hood. It sounded all right, but I didn't like it. I said nervously, "But the Phanceys, the managers, they didn't say anything about you coming."

"The Jay-man will fix it all up." She turned towards the car. "Mr. Jay! The lady says it's all right!" Then she looked back at me. "Can we come in, please? It's awfully wet out here."

I saw the man getting out of the sedan behind her. He was a large and strong-looking type and I wondered if there was some other relationship between them. I nervously undid the chain and opened the door as he came up.

They pushed in, the woman sliding past me like a dancer, and stood side by side, looking the big room over. "Mr. Jay" sniffed. Strange black-rimmed eyes looked at me out of an unnaturally pale face. "Miss Michael?" he said, his voice light and yet menacing.

He took the door handle from me, slammed the door, locked it, and put up the chain. The woman stripped off her oilskin and threw it over a chair. She was very strong and yet girlish, with innocent blue eyes and two great plaits of fair hair, but a full and lithe figure. She wore red and black slacks and blouse.

Then the man stripped off his oilskin and hood. I recoiled at the sight of him.

"You look nervous," he said. "Is it these scars?"

His mouth had been cut open at the corners at some time, I thought, and the scars had drawn it up into a perpetual sinister smile. He had marked the scars with red, as if to stretch even further his mouth. His face was covered with white makeup, an unnatural paleness made even more pale and unnatural. As if to extend his resemblance to a clown even further, his hair was green, as if he had had a bleach-job go terribly wrong. He was wearing a three-piece suit in of all things purple, with a yellow shirt beneath.

"Would you like to know how I got them?"

"Mr. Jay! I'm hungry!" the woman said. "Can you fix us some eggs? I'll have scrambled."

"And I'll have them addled," Mr. Jay said, and then he laughed, wildly, insanely.

. . . I had been watched every minute of the cooking by one or the other. The woman looked strong enough to break me in half, more of a gymnast than a body-builder, and while she seemed sweet and vapid there was still something extremely threatening about her, as if she were the man's obedient and powerful tool.

He was the one I was worried more about. His scarred face, drawn up into a perpetual smile, was as frightful as it was threatening. He had made me eat a forkful of his eggs and bite into his bacon, drink from his coffee cup, and otherwise test the food.

They had said nothing of why or wherefore they were there. The man kept on looking at the door. Just as they finished there came the sharp sound of the buzzer at the front door, and everyone froze.

Mr. Jay said, "Company! At this time of night! And Cook hasn't a *thing* left!"

The girl said, "Come along, Viv. The Jay-man will answer the door."

"No. I had better answer it."

Mr. Jay laughed again in that madcap way and said, "Always unwanted guests! Here, I'll come with you."

I felt the prod of a gun against my back as I went to the door. Mr. Jay stood behind it as I unhooked the chain and then I swung the door wide open, trying to crush him against the wall behind it, but he proved too strong. Now all depended on the solitary man who stood on the threshold.

At first glance I inwardly groaned—God, it's a gangster! A more normal gangster, anyhow, there was that. He stood there so quiet and controlled and somehow with the same quality of deadliness as the others. And he wore that uniform that the films make one associate with gangsters—a dark-blue, belted raincoat and a soft black hat pulled rather far down. He was good-looking in a dark, rather cruel way and a scar showed whitely down his left cheek. He smiled and suddenly I thought I might be all right.

When he spoke, my heart leaped. He was English! "I'm sorry, I've got a puncture." (An American would have said "a flat".) "And I saw the VACANCY sign. Can I have a room for the night?" Now he looked at me with curiosity, seeing something was wrong.

This was going to be tricky! I might easily get us both killed. I began to say, "I'm sorry, but the motel's closed."

The woman said, in her loud voice, "Mr. Jay! It's James Bond!"

"Why Bond! Whatever are you doing in this neck of the woods? Aren't there some international supervillains to harass? Surely you can't be following little old *me*?" He had stepped out from behind



the door at the woman's call, and now put his free hand against his chest and his scarred face had twisted into the most ingenuous look possible.

"Joker," the Englishman said, coldly. "You."

"And after I kept off those unwanted visitors. I don't think you wanted their business now. Viv, be a lamb and check Mr. Bond in for the night. Don't want him sticking his fingers into my business." He laughed again, more frightening now.

"I'll get my bag."

He moved to go out. I said quickly, "I'll give you a hand." I hurried ahead of him and it took a moment for him to come up with me. I told him out of the corner of my mouth—I was sure one of them had come to the door and was watching us.—"Thank you! And thank God you came! They are worse than gangsters! That Mr. Jay frightens me!"

We came to the car. It was a dark grey two-seater Thunderbird with a soft top in cream, a beautiful thing. I said so. He said shortly that it was hired. He said, "Come round the other side. Just seem to be admiring the car." He leaned down and opened the low door and rummaged inside. He pulled out a small black suitcase, rested it on the ground, and snapped it open. He took something from under the clothes and slipped it into an inside pocket. He fiddled with one side of the case, took some thin black objects out that I took to be cartridge magazines, and stowed them away. Then he snapped the case shut, said "Better have plenty of artillery," banged the door ostentatiously, and stood up. We then went to the back of the car and knelt down to examine the flat tyre. He said, "How about the telephone?"

"It's cut off."

"Give me the cabin next to yours."

"Of course."

"All right. Let's go. And keep close to me whatever they do or say."

"Yes and thank you."

He got up and smiled. "Wait till we're out of this."

We walked back together. Something bothered me about their familiarity and I said, "You called him 'joker'."

"That is all we have to call him by. No one has ever been able to find out his real name. He calls himself 'The Joker'." Bond shifted the gun. "He is one of the biggest murderers in the States, and one of the most grotesque. He would kill you as soon as laugh at you."

I thought of that laugh of his and something inside me trembled. "Why isn't he in gaol? Or hanged?"

"He is utterly mad. The Americans spare mad men."

As I came to the office to get my key I heard the door open. Then that woman—Quinzel, Bond had said her name was—said, "Yes, that's me. But I'm afraid the VACANCY sign's on by mistake. The motel's closed down. Who did you say you were?"

"Sanguinetti. My two associates were supposed to be here."

"Really? You're the first guy here all night. Must be the rain."

I held back. If this gangster Sanguinetti would get rid of them both, I could run and tell Bond and he could deal with the gangster, I hoped.

There was a step and then a gasp. In spite of myself, I stepped forward and looked. The Joker had come out from behind the door and was holding a toy pistol, a comic thing with an absurdly large end. This Sanguinetti was another gangster type, in oilskins, with a dark Italian face that was in a rictus of fear.

"About that little money matter," the Joker said. His perpetual smile now looked even more frightening, an evil clown's leer.

"You ain't done nothing to deserve it."

Then he flinched. The Joker had pulled the trigger of his gun and . . . and a stick shot from the muzzle, with a little banner on it that said "BANG". A child's toy! What could he hope to get from a gangster with a child's toy?

There was a presence behind me. I heard a low voice in my ear, “Don’t worry.” Bond had followed me from his cabin. I felt relieved, safe. The gangsters would take care of each other and then I would be with him, until the police came.

Sanguinetti said, wiping his face in relief, “Hey, Joker, we’re all friends here. I said I would pay ten points off the top and when the cash comes in from Havana I’ll get it to you. I was just kidding,”

“So was I.”

Sanguinetti turned away then to go to his car when the Joker pulled the trigger again. The stick shot out of the muzzle of the toy gun and stuck itself into Sanguinetti’s coat. He looked down at it, made a face and tried to pull it out, and then his body went into a powerful convulsion. He fell to the floor, limp and boneless.

The Joker said, his voice now cold and slow, “Oops. No, I wasn’t.” He dropped the toy pistol.

Bond brushed past me into the office. He had a pistol in his hand now, and he was aiming at the Joker. He had a cold and utterly dedicated look on his face as he said, “This man and I have some unfinished business.”

The Joker raised one hand. He had a thumb-ring on, with a cord leading up under his purple coat. Then he opened the coat with his other hand. There were several Mills bombs there, hanging like grapes, and the cord was attached to their rings. “Uh-uh-uh. Let’s not **blow** this . . . out of all proportion.”

His lady-friend scrambled out the door, over Sanguinetti’s sprawled corpse, and when she was gone he turned and backed towards the door. When he was at its verge he said, “Oh, you. You just couldn’t let me go, could you? This is what happens when an unstoppable force meets an immovable object. You are truly incorruptible, aren’t you? Huh? You won’t kill me out of some misplaced sense of self-righteousness. And I won’t kill you because you’re just too much fun. I think you and I are destined to do this forever. Just like the Bat.” A moment later he was gone into the night and the dark and the rain, and I heard the motor of their car start.



### “IT PAYS TO ADVERTISE?” CONTINUED FROM PAGE 33

I fled home and to bed. Twice during the night the other clients called to bitch about the long wait. I told them all that I knew, and somehow garnered enough sleep to have enough wit about me to know that it was good news when Dennis called at seven o’clock. “It’s done,” he reported. Seems Our Man had indeed been to a party and had indeed taken advantage of the Mardi Gras ambience and had indeed passed out. His first act upon staggering home had been to make our calls for us. Breathing a great sigh of relief, I dashed to CLU and reported same to our weary but comforted clients. In fact, I took Alison and her daughter to breakfast—their first meal in twenty-four hours. I was doubly a hero.

Later, Dennis and I got to meet the felons who had put the ladies through such an ordeal—a chubby, fiftyish, bald-pated fellow and a skinny kid with a pierced ear. You, I told them, are lucky men. Not because they’d spent the night in jail, of course; but because they had such splendid people on their team.

(Think about it. Say *you* were in a strange city and got arrested for an embarrassing offense. Who could *you* call? Who would ride to *your* rescue?)

So: were our experiments in advertising worthwhile? We didn't cull a single *sou* that could be distinctly traced to the advertisements... but we *did* get famous. Eve Ackerman, a fan friend who owns a radio station in Florida, told me that I'm *still* known as "that New Orleans lawyer" to wags in Gainesville. For whatever that's worth, the ad was a triumph.

But I'd trade it in an instant for a kind word from Alison.



From Chicon 7 ,,, Pro Guest of Honor Mike Resnick talks with Joe and Gay Haldeman.



*Famed in fannish legend is the party in Room 770 of the St. Charles Hotel, at the first Nolacon, or Nocon as Roger Sims calls it. He wrote up his version of the party shortly thereafter, and recently revisited and amended his account..*

## SATURDAY NIGHT PARTY IN ROOM 770

ROGER SIMS

*Illos from the original by LEE HOFFMAN  
traced by CHARLIE WILLIAMS*

(Note: the regular typeface is as best as I can read it a faithful repro of what I wrote in a SAPSzine, **Hay is for Horses**, right after I returned home from Nolacon. (Not Nolacon I, because I reject back unnumbered anything but World Wars!) The san serif writing is my comments and thoughts now, as I type from the original. Also I should say that I have not done much in the way of correcting the grammar. However I have corrected most of the misspellings. [And my spellchecker has hopefully caught the rest – Editor.]

The first thing that I need to say is that Nolacon was my second worldcon. So I knew about the ways of fans at worldcons. But I did not know about the party in Frank Dietz's room. I believe that either Rich Ellsberry or Max Keasler were in the room. Frank's room was a single. It may be necessary for em to explain to the younger fans

reading this, just exactly what a single room entailed. In today's world all hotel rooms have either a king-sized bed or two double beds. But in 1951 and for some time a single room had one single bed. A double room had either one double bed or two single beds!

About eleven P.M. on Saturday two things happened in Frank's room: (1) the room became very crowded with fun-loving fans; (2) the House Dick called for the umpteenth time. At this point either Max or Rich suggested that the party move to room 770. Room 770 was separated from the rest of the rooms on the floor by a fire door. Also the room was next to the stair well. This caused the noise to go up or down instead of to the other rooms on the floor. Therefore no one complained which meant that what the house dick did not know could not hurt us.

The hotel detective did not show up at the party even once. I cannot say how many drinks were consumed or even how many showed up but I can say that the next morning when I left the room I found a stack of four trays each holding 24 empty glasses.

I do not believe that I had the nerve to write the following.

Now in my estimation room 770 will attain immortality in fandom, and as you read on you will understand why I make this claim.

The room contained four beds occupied at least part of the time by Richard Ellsberry, Ed Kuss, Max Keebler and myself.

Thursday night all four of us slept in our own beds. Friday I think all of us did so except Ed Kuss who occupied a couch in the lobby because Dale Hart, a Texas fan, not having a room, claimed Ed's bed for his own. He also claimed it Saturday night. How it came about that Ed reclaimed his bed for Sunday night was never discussed. I slept in my bed for three of the four nights that we were booked into the room: Saturday night, Bob Johnson and Frank Dietz shared my bed while I stayed up cutting out very large letters from Xmas wrappings to place on the wall. **DETROIT WANTS YOU.**



Detroit fandom, in the guise of Ed Kuss, Agnus Harook and myself, had planned to throw a bid party Sunday night. Howard DeVore thought that a party would convince the fans in attendance that Detroit was serious about wanting to hold a worldcon and would vote for us. As you all know, while many did feel this way, more did not, and 1952 became Chicon II.

But from about 4 in the morning until about 6, I cut out letters. About the time I finished Frank and Bob woke up and left the room. I decided I had hit the wall and really did not want to attack Sunday's activities without some sleep. As I crawled into bed, Dale also left and about the same time Ed came in. So for at least part of Sunday night all four of us slept in our own beds.



For an update on the original occupants of the room: Ed is dead; Richard and Max have not been heard from for over 40 years; and as for myself I leave it to the reader to make appropriate remarks.

At other times by Bob Johnson and Frank Dietz (my bed), Dale Hart, a fan from Mexico City (Ed's bed), Ed Kuss (Max's bed) and myself and Richard (Richard's bed). I don't know the reason but the House Dick did not bother us here so we had fun. Or at least the sober ones did.

About one we ran out of mix, so someone called up room service and asked them to send up some. When it arrived I paid the hotel boy \$1.60 for four bottles that in my estimation weren't worth sixty cents. Right there and then I said to myself I will not buy anything else from the hotel unless I can't help it. Dietz knew of an all-night drugstore where we could buy some mix, so we started out for it. Frank had left his shoes in his room and did not feel like going down the street without shoes on, but fortunately a number of fans had taken off their shoes so he put on one of their pairs and with his shirttail hanging out and a drink in his hands he accompanied me through the hotel lobby down the main drag and to the drugstore to buy the mix. Although a lot of people thought we were crazy no one said anything to us.



Along about three thirty I decided – because most of the fen had left and because Ed Kuss was asleep (and because there was nothing left to drink except a half bottle of vermouth and nobody there liked vermouth) that the party was over and everybody would leave in a short while – that I would go down to room 335 and watch or participate in a poker game going on there. There were two games in progress, a small one and a large one. Both filled to the gills. So I thought I would watch the big one. The players were Mel Korshack, Fred Brown, Moe Greenberg, and Lee Jacobs. They played a no-limit table stakes game and after watching money pass back and forth across the table for an hour, I thought that I had given the rest of the fen at the party time enough to go home and I went back to my room.

I now believe that Bob Tucker was also one of the players. The big game was a no-limit table stakes game and the small game was a nickel/dime game. It had seven players, so there was not an empty seat. Would I have taken one had there been one? I think so...

Two things happened while I was there. One, someone emptied an ashtray into a wastepaper basket that was directly under a window with a curtain. The ashtray had a cigarette butt that was not quite out. The wastepaper basket had some paper. After a few minutes the burning butt made the paper burn. But fortunately smoke from the basket was discovered before the fire reached the curtain. It was quickly put out by a well-placed glass of water.

The other thing happened during the last hand I watched. Mel Korschack was dealt a pair of aces in a game of five card draw. He kept the aces and a kicker. He drew *another* pair of aces! He was most fortunate to have several other plays in the pot who thought that they had the winning hand. The betting was fast and furious. Needless to say Mel was very happy at the end of the hand! While I do not remember how much was in the pot I do recall that I was impressed at the number of twenties

visible in the middle of the table.

As I walked back to my room I thought to myself how good it would be to go to sleep. Oh what a dreamer I was. I opened the door and the smell almost asphyxiated me, and the smoke almost blinded me. After the first sting of smoke cleared from my eyes a most terrible sight met them. Over in a corner was Ed Walters laying in a drunken stupor, with a mattress and box spring on top of him. I walked over and pulled the box spring and mattress off of him and pulled him to his feet. He rewarded me for my efforts by trying to choke me to death. I felt he didn't want me to help so instead of trying I tried to help myself from being killed.

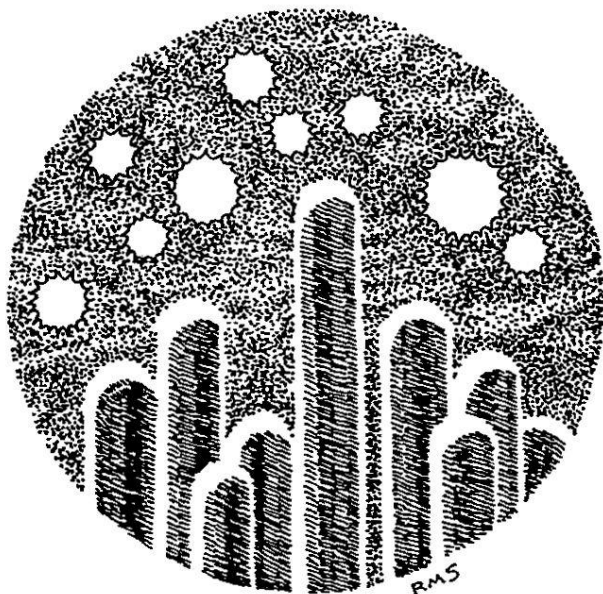
In his defense he (a) was out of his gourd with strong drink and (b) did not squeeze too hard.

While I was gone there had been a parade in the room. The beds had been pushed together and placed directly in the path of the parade. The fen present [*led, it is said, by Terry Carr*] had marched around the room [*stomping over the mattresses*] singing and yelling at the top of their lungs until Walters had fallen on the floor and the bed was pushed on top of him.

About this time I decided to go to the bathroom. As I opened the door I nearly fainted dead away. In order for you to fully understand the sight that I saw I will have to go back to Frank Dietz' room. While we were there I personally saw one fan drink a glass of half water and half vermouth, followed by a glass full of *creme de mint*, followed by a scotch and soda. When he was drinking the *creme de mint* I told him he would be sick before the night was over. He shook his head. Well, to make long story short he did. In the bathroom of 770.

For some reason or another he didn't use the throne, maybe because it was too low. Instead he used the washbowl, and naturally stopped it up. This would not have been too bad had it not been for the fact that the faucets leaked. When I left 770 at 3:30 the bowl was half full and didn't look like it was going to overflow. My God how wrong can a guy be? At 4:30, when I came back, water was rolling off the bathroom floor onto the rug in the bedroom. I grabbed a glass and started bailing into the tub. [*Sickening account of unplugging the sink excluded*] Next I grabbed all the towels in the room (enough for four people) and mopped up the water on the floor, wringing the towels out three times in the process.

Thus I coped with a major crisis!



I don't know how you felt about Nocon -- the name I originally used -- but speaking for myself "Nocon" expresses exactly what I think of it. The only part that I thought was any good was the "smoke-filled rooms" and these were bigger and better than I have ever experienced. Gee, don't fans have fun!!

(This from a neo who at the time had been to one MidWesCon and one worldcon. What an expert!)

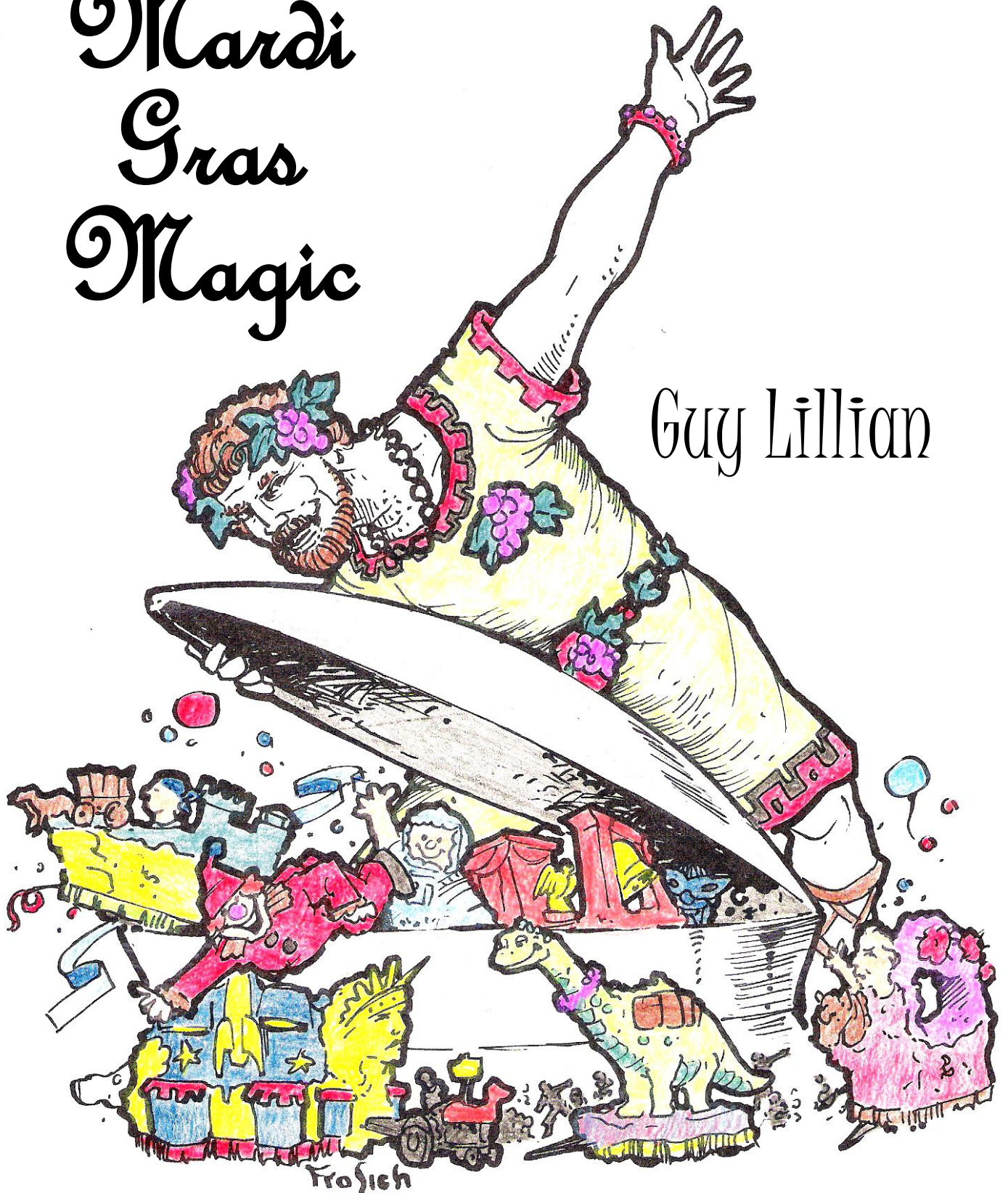


*Editor's note: Readers interested in the party in room 770 are encouraged to check out the accounts thereof in Let the Good Times Roll, the Nolacon II souvenir book, edited by ... modesty prohibits.*



Mardi  
Gras  
Magic

# Guy Lillian



47

**PROCLAMATION**

BY THE **KING OF THE CARNIVAL**

**EDICT 1978**

**GREETING:**  
The Lord High Chamberlain of His Majesty's household announces that the King will pay his annual visit to his beloved Capital City of

**NEW ORLEANS** on the **GREAT FETE DAY OF MARDI GRAS**  
the 7th day of February 1978

The festivities and Pageants arranged for his Majesty's reception will surpass in joyousness and splendor the most brilliant attainments of his glorious past.

It is ordained that good weather shall prevail, and the City of Flowers in its Festive array promises abundant pleasure to all within her gates.

A hearty welcome is extended to all loyal subjects to participate with his Royal household in the fullness of this Season of Joy.

BY THE **KING HIMSELF: REX**

*Don Murch*  
Lafayette, La. Chamberlain

RECEIVED IN HISTORIC NEW ORLEANS COLLECTION

King of Carnival's royal Mardi Gras proclamation



*As everyone knows, Easter* falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox. 46 days earlier is Ash Wednesday. The day before that is just Tuesday. Unless ...

Unless you're in Mobile Alabama, or Austin Texas, or anywhere in Louisiana, or most assuredly and especially, *New Orleans* ... Then, it's something else altogether. It's *Fat Tuesday*. It's ***Mardi Gras***.

Wikipedia says that Mardi Gras was first celebrated in New Orleans in 1699, that its oldest krewe—or Carnival club—is Comus, founded in 1857, and that it's been a legal state holiday in Louisiana since 1875. History records, and I remember, a divisive police strike during Carnival season in 1979 (Mardi Gras went on anyway), and a city ordinance a year or two later which sought to forcibly integrate all the parade organizations (it was declared unconstitutional). All these are interesting dates and facts.

But for me, the important dates and facts are the Fat Tuesdays I experienced myself. They swirl together into a Pollackesque portrait of a city and a soul ...

There was the Carnival when, still a bachelor, I escorted a beautiful lady fan to the Alhambra Ball, on the invitation of krewe members John Guidry and Justin Winston. Sporting a full-tailed tux for the only time in my life, I got to sit in the balcony of NOLA's Municipal Auditorium and watch Justin and John fulfill their lifelong ambition to make utter nits out of themselves in public.

There were the Grascons hosted by Dennis Dolbear, when my first wife and I joined the maniacs from Knoxville for "The Week of Living Dangerously," highlighted by a clogged drain at Dolbear's house and a raid on the courtroom of Dennis' boss, a judge.

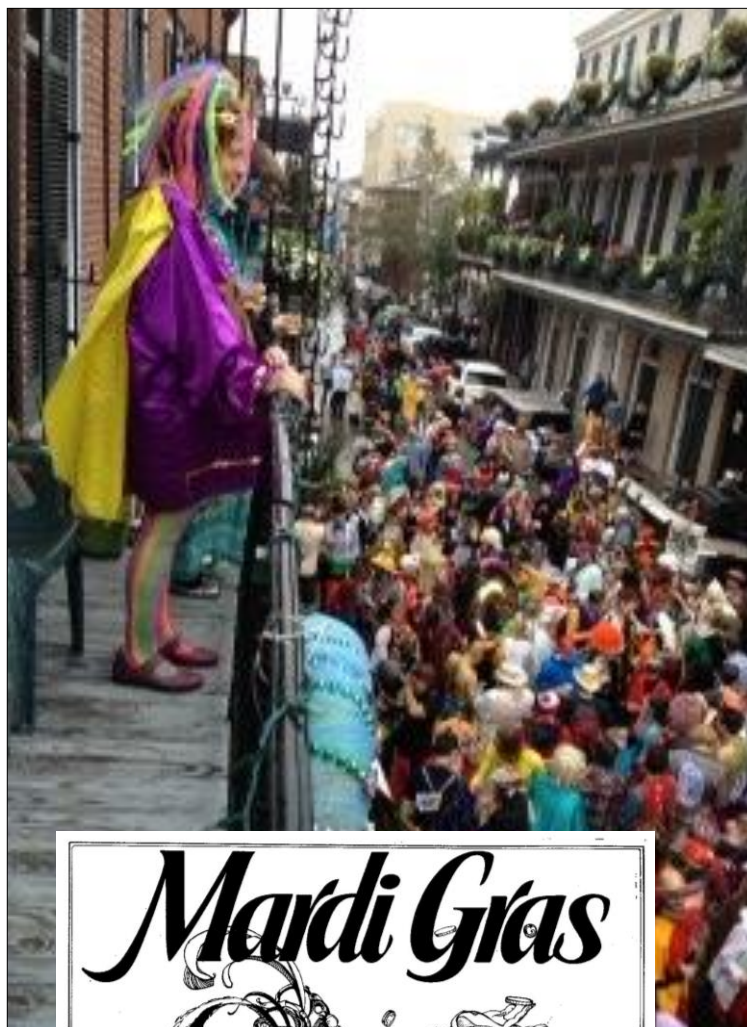
Our visitors mean a lot. There was the Carnival when Drew and Kathy Sanders came down, and we went to see Comus, the oldest krewe, and its magical late-night parade. Walking Kathy around the Vieux Carre was magical in itself.

I remember Rosy's first Mardi Gras, where I lost my wallet but she got interviewed about hanging chads on TV. We've hit every Carnival Day since our engagement in 2000 but one—when my surgery was too fresh to allow it.

(Of course, there was the Fat Tuesday when I sprained my ankle and stumbled around the French Quarter like a drunk,







the Mardi Gras when a wiseass lawyer's shenanigans in Drug Court made me literally sick, and the Carnival when a crazy cop jumped me and other innocent parade-goers and I finked him out on local TV, but we'll forget about those ...)

So okay. When should one come to Mardi Gras? The weekend before. On Saturday and Sunday you'll see the hugest krewes parade: Endymion and Bacchus, both of which boast celebrity kings and riders. Reigning as Bacchus, for instance, have been Danny Kaye, Bob Hope, Jackie Gleason, Henry Winkler (a *great* king!), John LaRoquette (a native!), Charlton Heston, Kirk Douglas, Dom DeLuise, William Shatner, Ed McMahon ...the list goes on and on. My favorite celeb rode Endymion, and threw me a set of pink beads I treasure yet: *Cheryl Ladd*.

On Carnival Day you should be downtown early, park in a municipal lot (\$\$\$) and join us for sugar-swathed beignets at Café du Monde. (In Metairie, go to The Morning Call.) Head for Canal Street to catch the

immortal Zulu (and a golden coconut) and, of course, Rex, most traditional yet most elegant parade on Mardi Gras Day. Shout good wishes to the King; he's a billionaire, but this is still a high moment in his life. Afterwards, the truck floats roll, ordinary schnooks like thee and me riding home-decorated trailers. The plastic goodies rain down like ... well, like rain.

Retreat into the French Quarter. Groove on the cosplay, because nowhere else is it as creative, as universal, as grotesque, as risqué, as joyous. Find Rosy and me at Pat O'Brien's famous bar, and have a hurricane. (We served hurricanes—and "cyclones"—in Australia as DUFF delegates.) Join us on a fan friend's balcony

Artist JULIE KAHN's annual posters, example at left, are a Mardi Gras tradition. The lady is simply great.

(see above} and watch the panorama pass. But don't stay there! Get thee out to the street, and join that parade! It gets better as the night comes on! Why, there was that Mardi Gras in the 1990s when ...  
\*Ahem\* Sorry. Married man now.

Yes, it ends at midnight. Comus—whose identity is never revealed—and Rex and their collegiate queens make the Grand March about the Municipal Auditorium, gesture once more with their be-zirconed scepters (Comus carries a cup) and the Captain of Rex brings the curtains closed. The instant his hands meet, Mardi Gras is over. In the Quarter, the local constabulary makes its own Grand March up Bourbon Street, advising besotted revelers in the gentlest manner possible that the day is done and the streets are to be ceded to the street-washers. Sincere advice: go to bed and skip this part. Live to party another day.

Because Mardi Gras *will* return.

*Everybody's party*, from the poorest project kid scuffling on the street for a doubloon to the billionaire philanthropist sporting a phony beard whom everybody calls King, from the balcony boob shows to the neighborhood street parties to the Meeting of the Krewe at midnight ... Mardi Gras is for *everybody*.  
*Laissez les bons temps roulez!*



Were Orleanians proud when our Saints triumphed in Super Bowl XIV in 2010? What do you think?





**DANY FROLICH** got his start doing zine art for New Orleans fan editors. Now he evokes the spirit of the giant **ENDYMION** krewe, above, and sees his soulful **BACCHUSAURUS** hailed as the greatest float in Carnival. Note the flag! *Mardi GRAS! U.S.A.!*



Rain or shine, revelers love their Mardi Gras parades, where cheap plastic beads and worthless aluminum coins thrown by float riders assume the preciousness of diamonds and gold! Left, a dedicated parade-goer braves the elements in pursuit of booty.





**Masquing in the French Quarter on Mardi Gras Day is one of New Orleans' greatest delights. The toothy, leggy filly to left is a lawyer I knew from criminal court. Above right, Dr. Martina Klicperova makes the acquaintance of a masked strongman.**







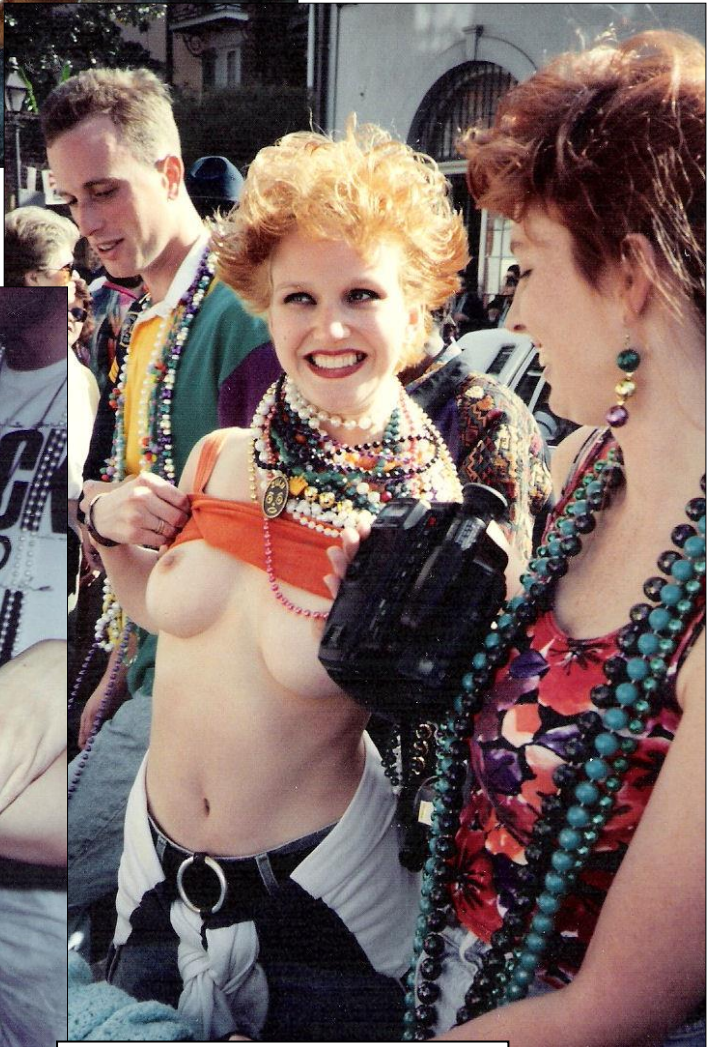
Left—She sold her soul for rock'n'roll! Below—Daffy sports a boa. Below that—yhos with a spacey spacegirl.





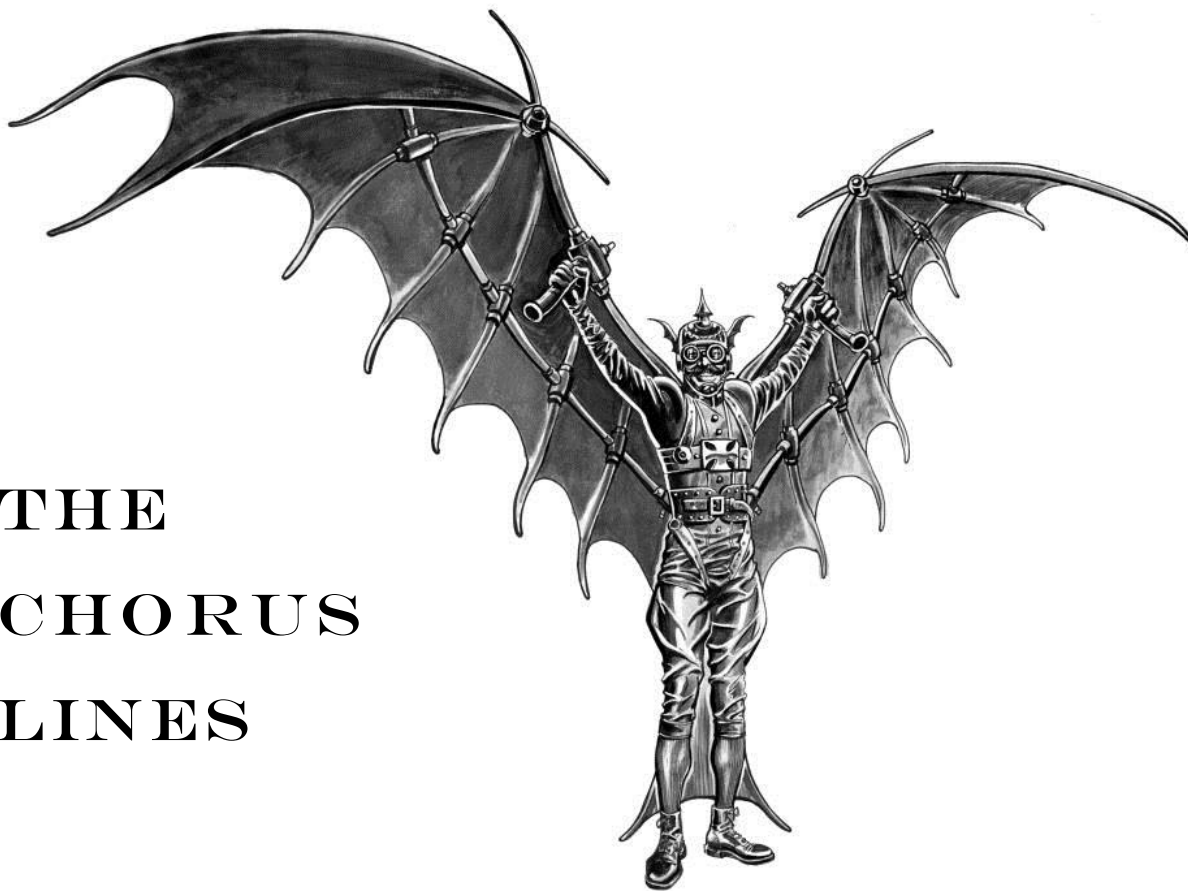


But let us not forget that Mardi Gras is a *religious* holiday, when all citizens, great and small, scour their souls of sin and temptation and contemplate the mysteries of Heaven and Hell. Its official colors are purple for Justice, green for Faith, gold for Power. And *pink and darker pink*, for never mind what!



March 4, 2014.  
February 17, 2015.  
February 9, 2016.  
And so on.  
*Where else would you rather be?*

# THE CHORUS LINES



M

**Murray Moore**

**murrayamoore@gmail.com**

You say that John Purcell and Greg Benford **wrote** better articles than you in *Challenger* 35. Guy, you are the star of your fanzine. My only complaint about your writing is that it does not fill more pages. If I was still publishing a genzine, I would want a Guy Lillian article. I am not publishing a genzine, of course, indeed I am struggling constantly to read and LOC the paper fanzines given to me and mailed to me. I miss out on the fine fanzines published only on-line but I owe my time first to faneds who spend money on me, those faneds who treat me to a paper fanzine, similar to buying me a drink at a convention. Not that anyone offers to buy me a drink at conventions ...

*You just earned one from me.*

Alan White's account of his vasectomy failed to impress me. I read it carefully. Alan had one vasectomy operation. I had two vasectomy operations.

Maybe doctor number 1 should have paid more attention and chattered less about a recent Canadian Football League game. Not only after operation number one was I not sterile, I was infected. I had no idea that testicles could swell to the size of oranges. Not that I tried, but I could have bounced pennies off my scrotum.

*But let's not forget that Canadian coins are **lighter** than American money. **WHY ARE YOU TELLING ME THIS?***

**John Nielsen Hall**

**"A damp corner of Wiltshire, England"**

As far as I know, this is the first time I have seen *Challenger*, and I'm very impressed. Some good stuff in your ish ...

I particularly liked Greg Benford's article, with which I suppose I mostly agree. I'm resistant to the idea that the sexual strategies of male and female are always identical- sexuality and indeed, Life, are much more complicated than that. But perhaps Greg isn't saying that they are, merely that the strategies will always be in conflict, whatever they are.

Taral Wayne's regnal history has some errors in it. William IV was the second son of George III (the last king America ever had) and was on the throne between George IV and Victoria. The king he thinks was William IV, reigning after Henry VIII and before Mary was Edward VI, the son of Henry VIII and Jane Seymour. Edward V was one of the princes in the Tower, probably done away with by his uncle Richard III. It seems a bit harsh to describe his reign as not memorable—he never had a reign at all! And moreover, being a Plantagenet, like all his warring ilk, he was dead before North America was officially discovered in 1492, so why Taral's recitation of English monarchs bears on him at all, I cannot fathom.

Then there's the bit about Charles I's getting his head chopped "touching off" another civil war. Firstly, all the civil wars previous to the one Charles I was involved in were dynastic struggles between claimants to the throne, which is why in England we don't define those as Civil Wars, though I appreciate many may object to such hair-splitting. The English Civil War, to give it its proper name, involved the King versus the English Parliament. So far from the execution of Charles I "touching off" this conflict, it was, in effect, the culmination of it. It should also be noted that despite the fact that Charles I was king of both England and Scotland, Scotland did not raise a finger to help him and its parliament successfully manoeuvred to keep Scotland out of the whole business, until their chief General, General Monk later Lord Albermarle, tired of the chaos that ensued after Cromwell's death, and marched on London, hastening the restoration of the monarchy and the reign of Charles II.

The overthrow of James II and the accession of William III cannot be described as a Civil War, since despite the movements of fleets and armies, barely a shot was fired, and James II, a royal idiot who appeared incapable of the political savvy of his late elder brother, just bottled it and pissed off to France. I could go on, but perhaps it's best to summarise Taral's article as being just a bit jaundiced and erroneous and in the end, not much to do with royal weddings or even his non-existent relationship with the Royal family. Do we, or Canadians or Australians or Fijians or New Zealanders or {fill in here the next most obscure country you can think of who has Elizabeth II as head of state} need them? No, of course not. But the fact is, the alternative is way worse. The alternative is a head of state who is a Politician. And after all, you wouldn't catch a President jumping out of a helicopter to open the Olympics, now would you?

*Elect me and find out.*

What a treat to see poetry in a fanzine. I thought the Obligatory Poetry Section in my own *Motorway Dreamer* was its last outpost. Having said that, Michael Estabrook didn't connect with me much. But still, beggars can't be choosers.

Sorry to hear about your diverticulitis, Chief. As someone who has lost count of the many surgical interventions that have been necessary to keep me sitting here banging at this keyboard, of course I have sympathy for a surgery neo such as yourself. Trust me, the second and all subsequent will be every bit as ghastly as the first one ever was, but you will grow more resigned to it. It's called growing old, or so I am told. Thanks again for the excellent fanzine

**Joseph T. Major**  
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**Louisville, KY 40204-2040**  
**jtmajor@iglou.com**

About ten years ago, during one of my many colonoscopies, one of the technicians asked me when I had had surgery. I said, "I haven't had surgery." After reading your description, I feel extremely fortunate that so far that I haven't (still).

Aside from my father-in-law, the hospital cases I've had to deal with have not involved surgery. Surgery at least manages to be final, unlike Lisa's always needing more tests, or Grant's continuing problem in adjusting to living with a stroke.



“Like Lionel Barrymore in *It’s a Wonderful Life*” ... and in spite of its having flooded TV due to a copyright lapse, people still won’t get it. Lionel Barrymore had two simultaneous problems, income tax and walking. So he was given a number of roles that required him to sit down (e.g., Dr. Gillespie in the *Dr. Kildare* movies—this was long before Richard Chamberlain). He would pick up his paycheck every week and then hand almost all of it back. Very sad. However, he was better off than his brother.

*And what role won Lionel his Oscar? A lawyer.*

I believe that the only asymmetrical element of the Taj Majal is the crypt of Shah Jahan. As Benford points out, he had originally aspired to have a copy in black on the other side of the river, along with bridge connecting the two. I suppose there’s even another medical connection there: Aurangzeb had Shah Jahan declared incompetent after he fell ill (and in customary Mughal procedure, after killing all his brothers in a civil war) and confined in the Agra Fort.

In the registration-is-personal sphere, there is a Canadian example: Canada’s prime fanzine fan, Dale Speirs, editor/publisher of *Opuntia*, has the license plate OPUNTIA.

Does Fred Lerner’s vast collection of works on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder include the publications on how to fake it? There are a number of these, intended for the would-be pension hunter, relying on the vagueness of definitions and the willingness of therapists to be helpful and err on the side of help. Which does poorly for those who really have the problem.

In a recent strip, the characters in the comic strip *Everything’s Relative* had a discussion of whether or not Superman and Batman were Jewish (Strip #306): “They incorporated a red *talit* into his costume but left off the *tzitzit*, so I understand your doubts.”

<http://www.jewishcartoon.com>.

Darrell Schweitzer says of William IV “he did not reproduce.” Now that would be a surprise to historian and travel writer John Julius Norwich, who happens to be descended from the Sailor King. Similarly, H. G. Wells’ father would have had another job, since he worked for a descendant of William. (And a descendant of that boss, William Sidney, V.C., eventually inherited the baronetcy that was held by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley’s father-in-law and son, but that’s another story.)

Writers get too assigned these days, which is why L. Sprague de Camp could write historical novels, but “H. N. Turteltaub” had to do so because Harry Turtledove wrote SF&F. Or consider a couple of mundane writers I read, Frank G. Slaughter and Richard Powell. Powell wrote mysteries and also “mainstream” novels. (*The Philadelphians*, made into *The Young Philadelphians* starring Paul Newman, is one of the more striking ones; then there was *Don Quixote, U.S.A.* which had the misfortune to fall into the hands of Woody Allen.) Slaughter wrote historicals, thrillers, Christian fiction, and medical fiction—with a good bit of overlap. One of his last works, *Devil’s Gambit*, adds horror/fantasy to the mix! So the rigidity Darrell describes is as he says a little more recent. If Gordy Dickson had started writing the John Hawkwood books earlier, he might have made his toehold.

Nowadays, it’s the other way around with what they call “slipstreaming.”

**Jerry A. Kaufman**

**JAkaufman@aol.com**

Overall, this was a good issue, even though there were too many colon-related articles. Too bad no one had knee replacements or something. (Or did I misremember?)

Greg Benford has gotten a lot of mileage out of “Mozart on Morphine.” I think Suzle and I were the first to publish it, in *Mainstream* #12, dated December 25, 1987. (We added Greg’s name and the year he wrote it, 1986, at the end.) I know he used it as the basis of a short story, but I don’t know exactly when or where that was published—I really should look it up and read the story at some point. It’s held up extremely well.

I’ve re-read some of James White’s Hospital Station stories in recent years, and found I still enjoyed them, though not enough to obsessively seek them all out. I do wish that Bill Wright’s comments on the books were longer and more detailed.

Martin Morse Wooster makes the Potter theme park attractive. I’ve read all the books in American editions and seen all the movies, some several times. I have a mild hankering to read the books

again, but in British editions this time—I'm sure I can parse any British terms the US editions replaced. It's not very likely I'll ever be in Orlando, though, so chances are excellent I'll never get to see the Wizarding World myself.

*I recommend it, especially when followed  
by a tumbler of butterbeer.*

Mike Resnick's epistolary article is the most head-smacking of the issue. My problems of a similar nature—well, they were several magnitudes less convoluted or difficult to resolve, so can hardly say they were similar. The worst was when my mother moved from her independent living apartment to the assisted living facility next door. The social worker there told me that when my mother's money ran out, she would need to apply to Medicaid. But she said we should wait to apply until that money was gone, because Medicaid wouldn't look at or approve the application until it happened.



Boy, was she wrong. Mom had to move again, to a nursing home about the time the money was nearly gone, which of course was even more expensive than the assisted living apartment. The folks at Medicaid told me I should have applied several months ahead, because of the time it took to process the application. So I paid for the first month at the nursing home myself, hoping that Medicaid would be approved and I wouldn't have to borrow money for further months.

As it happened, my mother was closer to the end than we knew. She died between a week and two weeks after moving in, just before her 90th birthday. We had a great visit with her only days before, looking at old family photos and eating ice cream in the home's dining room.

I'm glad you wrote about the [Joe Kubert] back cover, because I wondered why you published a page of (skilled) doodles. I'm not a comics fan, so did not recognize the style. Knowing more about what I was looking at made the doodles more enjoyable.

**Andrew Porter**  
**aporter55@gmail.com**

Several times tears came to my eyes while reading this issue—particularly during your editorial.

*Jeez, Andy, was my writing that bad?*

I was also much moved by Greg Benford's "Mozart on Morphine," which I can only describe as harrowing. You're going along, trying to live your life, and your body has other ideas.

I think the broad theme of this issue is that you have plans, or not, about how your life is going, and we are, alas, little bags of blood and tissue and bone, and if you drop us wrong we tend to burst or break, which is not good. And while we try to remain calm, when we're sick or ill or injured, our mind is subject to all the stress and illogic that the sickness pumps through our bodies.

To quote *Things to Come*, one of my favorite films, "We are such little things. Little ... animals."

I'm very fortunate in that my cancer manifested itself clearly at an early stage—my liver bile duct was blocked by a growth, and my liver bile was going into my bloodstream and being excreted through my skin, so every morning I woke with what looked like sand in my bed. I was diagnosed over the phone by my doctor, who told me to go to the Long Island College Hospital (in a nearby area of Brooklyn, about 10 streets from where I live; I walked there) ER and tell them that I had obstructive jaundice.

Which is exactly what I had.



A few days later, I had an ERCP, in which they thread a tube down through your mouth and by ways obscure and devious, it ends up in your liver bile duct, where they take pictures—I have the full color images to prove this medical procedure took place—and, in my case, snip a hole in the obstruction, which both allowed the bile to flow again, and provided a snippet of flesh for biopsy, where it was proved to be cancerous. Fortunately, it was caught in time, was very small, and had barely spread.

Still later, I saw a surgeon in his office at LICH, which had an enormous water stain spreading down the wall next to his desk. I was Not Impressed. Did I *\*really\** want to have my operation in this hospital, where they apparently couldn't repair the walls and perhaps it wasn't the best place to have what would likely be an extremely complicated and lengthy surgery?

The immediate and overwhelming opinion came to me: No.

Fortunately, another fan who lives five blocks away—and whose mother had been treated at Memorial Sloan Kettering Hospital for Cancer Care (MSKCC) on Manhattan's Upper East Side—suggested I check with MSKCC about doing my operation. LICH has a horrible reputation—it has since changed ownership twice, nearly going bankrupt in the process—whereas MSKCC has a great reputation and is world-famous, and is a short cab ride away.

Which, to make a long story much shorter, is exactly what I did.

The operation—Google “Whipple Procedure”—by Dr. Ronald DeMatteo and his team of wonderful wizards, was on January 19th, 2007. This was followed by 10 days in hospital followed by another 6 days in hospital due to complications which resulted in my losing 18 pounds in 6 days, going down to a skeletal 180 pounds, and then 5 months of chemotherapy, which ended late in August 2007. So I had a very good reason for not going to the Japanese worldcon.

Instead, I celebrated by going to the UK, attending the British Fantasy Convention in Nottingham, followed by a period of touristy stuff in Scarborough and Yorkshire, NE England. I visited Castle Howard, where *Brideshead Revisited* was filmed, and rode the North York Moors [steam] Railway, picked blackberries by the side of the road, and lost a few Pounds Sterling playing the slot machines of Scarborough.

And on December 13th, 2012, I had an annual follow-up check-up, where my brilliant oncologist and all-around nice Irish lady, Dr. Eileen O'Reilly, graduate of Dublin's Trinity College and cancer researcher extraordinary, gave me another clean bill of health.

I have very minor complications, handled by a few cents a day worth of over-the-counter medication. And I can go up to any physician in the world and say, “I had a Whipple,” and watch their eyes widen in wonder.

In the light of so many wonderful people dying from this scourge—think Susan Palermo and Danny Lieberman here in NYC for just two recent examples—I have been extraordinarily fortunate.

I hope you continue to be the same.

*Thanks for the outstanding story!*

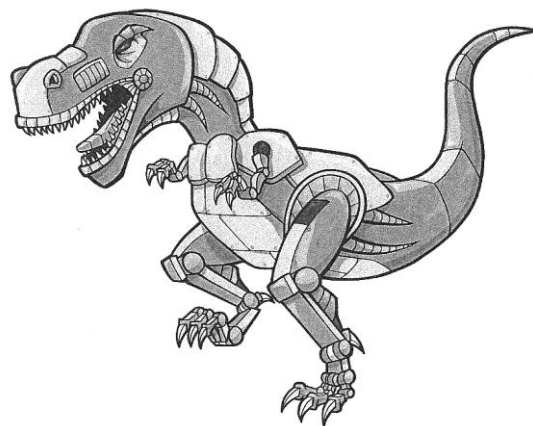
**Kent McDaniel**

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*Challenger #35* was quite an issue, from Alan White's stunning front cover to the evocative sketch on the back and all points in between. Everyone's horror stories from the medical front made the works of Lovecraft and King look pale indeed. Be well, all. May you live long and prosper. May we all.

Bill Wright's survey of the works of James White made me want to read them. I remember hearing about him here or there, but I've never read him, and Wright's piece definitely excited my curiosity. I was going to begin by searching for *Monsters and Medics*, but Dorothy, my wife, downloaded the *Beginning Operations* omnibus, which she's currently reading. Based on her description of the novels, I'd say that some enterprising TV producer should make a series from them, and set it in the Star Trek universe. *Star Trek: Sector General*, I think people would go for it; it's just a different enuf twist to give the old franchise one last hurrah. Dorothy also said, by the way, that the Sector General novels had something very much like a holodeck in them, and she wondered if Roddenberry had read them.

“The Wizarding World of Harry Potter” by Martin Morse Wooster was a good report on what sounds like a phenomenal attraction. I doubt very much that I’ll be coughing up \$85.00 any time soon for a trip to Universal Orlando. I don’t like crowds that much. It does sound like an awe-inspiring place, though. I had no idea that the park constituted such a large percent of Universal’s earnings. Wow, that’s nuts. Finally, as to Wooster’s expectation that Potter Mania will continue to fade, I don’t know. In their own way, the Harry Potter books and movies have been as great a British Invasion as The Beatles were and may well evince the same sort of staying power. A Potter fandom has emerged already, and well do we know that such subcultures tend to take on a life of their own. I’d guess that Universal’s going to be able to milk that cash cow for several more decades.



*The Harry Potter ride(s) and village at Universal is worth almost any amount of trouble, but we won’t be going back till the crowds you mention have lessened. 2½ hours in line—insane! In the meantime, you can sorta take the ride on YouTube.*

Enjoyed your comments on Batman, his creator, and what Batman means to you, if not the grim context from which they emerged. Other high points of the issue for me included “The *Challenger* Tribute,” “Rosy’s Photo Album,” and “Golden Apples of the Sun.” All in all, a fantastic issue. Keep cranking out ones like this, and this *will be the year*. I think *you know what I mean*. :o)

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Well, Guy, what can I say? “The Medical Issue” definitely delivers on its promise. Lots of content about medical issues, ranging from near death to very ill to vasectomy to dealing with medical insurance. Yes, indeed. So much material to read and digest. Which presents the obvious problem: where the heck do I start?

*Mentioning **digestion** is a good place to start, since we both wrote about gut surgery in the issue.*

For me, I think I’ll start with my contribution, “By the Numbers.” I know that when I sent it to you for this issue, Guy, I mentioned that it first appeared in the late Dave Locke’s fanzine *Time And Again* #4 (July 2008). Frankly, I’m surprised you didn’t mention that in your editorial since normally you are very good at that sort of thing. If anything, here is giving credit where credit is due. And besides, thank you for reprinting it.

Your own medical disaster story is something else, too! Man, I am very, very glad you made it through, Guy. What I am wondering is if you found writing about that experience as therapeutic as my re-telling. This is actually the main thought that crossed my mind while reading this issue: the reason(s) for why people feel the need to talk about their assorted medical emergencies, be they heart attacks, surviving a car crash, internal bleeding, surgical removal of hemorrhoids, getting a vasectomy, or even dealing with insurance companies following surgical procedures and dealing with co-payments, and so on and so forth. I think this is because these are shared experiences: events in our separate lives that connect us. The modern day version of warriors comparing battle scars around campfires. I mean, think of it: there we are—you, Greg Benford, and myself—sitting on a panel, or in a hotel convention party somewhere, and we’re opening our shirts to reveal our surgery scars. Based on what I read in this issue, I think Greg might just have the biggest scar.

Of course, I must comment about Alan White’s delightful cover art. I do not remember any of my nurses looking like that; certainly Valerie’s nurses during her recent hospital stay resembled this nurse from hell. Fun cover, definitely. Alan is one of those fan artists who really should get on the Fan Artist

Hugo ballot one of these years. Now he has a new fanzine out, too: *Orpheum #1* was posted to [efanzines.com](http://efanzines.com) at the beginning of this week. And it looks great.

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Thanks for sending along the latest issue of *Challenger*. Nice cover, the kind of thing that used to be seen on the posters for splatter movies in the 1970s. Eager, possibly demented nurse armed with a horse needle ready to reach out and stab the viewer surely conjures up many of the inherent feelings of blind fear a lot of us have about hospitals.

I have to say the entire theme of the issue, illness/medicine/hospitals, is more than a bit off-putting. This embodies one of the things I really hate; people discussing their medical problems in mind numbing detail. It reminds me of Aunt Hattie droning on, boring everybody to tears with her endless prating about all her medical issues, real or imagined, aided and abetted by her friend Rose who tries to top Hattie with details of her own gory and embarrassing medical problems, also related in never ending detail.

This kind of boring topic printed in the pages of a fanzine is just going to encourage those readers who bother to response to try and one-up the writers by relating their own horrible experiences with assorted hideous diseases and terrifying hospital visits. Gosh, what a gross out letter column we can look forward to. You'll pardon me if I skip over the letter column next issue, should there actually be one. I suspect that a lot of people will decide to skip sending along a LOC this time. At least those who didn't, for example, throw the fanzine against the wall in disgust or nausea after reading some of the articles about horrible hospital disasters and near death experiences your contributors related this issue.

However, I am made of sterner stuff. It did take me a few days to get thru the issue. The tales of misery and woe, most with sort of, kinda, in a way, happy endings was tuff going, but I made it. I am also not going to try and relate any of my own unfortunate medical experiences. I know how lame that stuff sounds to people not directly involved in the situation.

I will note a couple of points tho. The comment about the nurse assigned to Shave the Patient brought back memories of my knee replacement surgery, where a male nurse who looked like a linebacker for a professional football team was assigned to shave the knee area to be operated on. It struck me as incredibly funny. What was this guy's job description anyway? Hair Shaver For Hire; proficient in electric razor, professional results guaranteed. The same guy was there a few years later when I had to have the other knee replaced and I almost asked him if this was all he did at the hospital, but I didn't. Instead I got a case of the giggles that lasted about five minutes and caused a couple of female nurses to check in to see if something was wrong.

I enjoyed the short article on the Hospital Station stories James White wrote. The master list of related stories was nice to see. I wonder why there was a delay between 1979 and 1983 in getting back to the series? I think Bill Wright might have mentioned that most of those stories have been reprinted for the US market, primarily by Ballantine/Del Rey paperbacks. Many are still in print and used copies abound at very affordable prices thru [alibris.com](http://alibris.com) or [amazon.com](http://amazon.com). I am reminded again of how much I enjoyed James White as an inventive science fiction writer, one of the best at creating unusual situations and then delivering clever solutions to the problems. I miss skilled authors who could deliver that kind of story complete with polished writing as well.

I've never been to the Universal Orlando theme park, or any other theme park. I think the enjoyment of these places depends primarily on how involved you might be with the films that are tied in with the rides and attractions. Having enthusiastic young children along would probably also be a big plus.

*One of the reasons I loved Disneyland the first few times I went there in the early '50s was because I'd seen it on the TV show. Like I'm fond of relating, the park was so new my first time there that*

*they were still working on the Dumbo ride and the Jungle Boat Cruise was a tour through piles of sand.  
They hadn't installed a single plastic tree!*

I think from Martin Wooster's article here and from other comments I have read thru the years that there is a major difference in focus between Disney and Universal. Altho Disney has its share of rides and attractions directly tied in to their movie releases, their primary biz is providing unique attractions that stand alone and are interesting/exciting in a timeless fashion, without being directly related to any movie product.

Universal on the other hand seems to base almost all of their existence on direct linkage to their own characters and movie franchisees. The Harry Potter sections are now wildly popular, but as Wooster notes, the phenom is going to fade as the movies are replaced in the current consciousness of young people by newer and different cinema attractions.

My suspicion is that this means that Universal has to invest a lot more money on a much more regular basis than Disney does for its theme park. On the other hand, the profits must be considerable. Spending one billion dollars, twenty percent of NBC-Universal's total cash flow, to buy out the remaining minority stockholders in the Universal Orlando company demonstrates this better than anything. Clearly they are banking on the continued gratuitous hedonism of the American public, and I don't think they are mistaken in that judgment.

Wow! Poems about medical problems—the worst of all worlds! I am one of those people to whom poetry of any kind is meaningless. I don't get it, any of it, and most certainly I am not going to try to “get it” with poems about illness and medical problems.

I have to agree that Caligula was one of the most misunderstood of the Roman Emperors. Or at least one of the most maligned, in an imperial history full of its share of noticeably incompetent rulers. In addition to never having been given any real responsibility that might have prepared him for becoming emperor, he was thrust into the role as the last surviving male of a family Emperor Tiberius essentially wiped out in intra-nobility feuding.

All the surviving records show he was quite capable during his first two years in the office and was well regarded by almost everyone. Then he apparently had a bout of “brain fever” that almost killed him, and only afterward do the bad reports about his reign come forth. One wonders what the “brain fever” might have actually been.

The problem is that there are few surviving records, and most of the reports we do have are revisionist histories created later by people who wanted Caligula discredited. The fact that he was the first Roman Emperor to be assassinated does not speak well for his reputation. However the apparent original thrust was an attempt to return Rome to a Republic after Caligula clearly overstepped his legal and popular boundaries by trying to strip the Senate of most of its power and consolidating more and more power to himself, more power than he could properly administer, in fact.

It could be interesting to speculate what might have happened if the Republic had been restored as the conspirators originally planned. However the Praetorian Guard named Claudius as the emperor, and even tho he himself had originally expressed strong Republican sympathies, he seems to have carried on the same consolidation of power into the hands of the Emperor that Caligula started. The fact that Caligula quickly spent almost all the vast fortune Tiberius had left to him also did nothing to help his public reputation



So, Caligula gets a lot of bad press. Maybe it was all true, altho it seems unlikely to me. It might also be recalled that Caligula constructed many worthwhile buildings for Rome, providing a huge boost to the economy while creating many new and necessary structures, and developed the construction of two new aqueducts for the city. He also expanded the empire without creating any long term military feuds along the way.

At this late date it seems unlikely that any new revelations about him will come forth, and at this point history has not been kind to his reputation.

The *Dark Knight* massacre in Colorado is especially disturbing to those of us who are Batman comic book fans. I think it will be impossible to get James Holmes off with an insanity defense. I'm not sure he should be allowed that questionable luxury. He clearly pre-planned the entire episode, including booby-trapping his apartment and may have wanted to die during the event. People who commit these kinds of atrocities and are also suicidal might be presumed to be automatically insane, but increasingly the public is less enthusiastic about granting mass murderers the solace of this defense, justified or not.



I don't know if a verdict of "Guilty, but Insane" would be allowed in Colorado, but if so that would be his best change, being confined to an institution for the criminally insane for the rest of his natural life. But I suspect the jury is going to render a simple "Guilty," with a sentence of death due to enormity of the crime. In that case he will get his wish for death, just not the way he had originally planned it.

On a related subject I find it interesting that almost nobody has ever had anything good to say about Batman creator Bob Kane. Except that he was an apparently handsome man for most of his life. Even people who felt compelled to say something nice about him seem to be restrained and praising with more than faint damns. Oh well, in this case the creation certainly outshines its creator.

*I felt sorry for Kane. He had a fine career but never got over the immortal character he had a hand—ha—in creating (for let's not forget the contribution of the first Bat-scripiter, Bill Finger). Contrast his generally negative press with the way comics fans looked on C.C. Beck.*

Nice tribute to Joe Kubert. I'm

sure I will not be the only person to note your incorrect phrasing when you mentioned his sons Adam and Andy. Kubert has more than two children, and more than two sons, so the proper wording should have been "two of his sons, Adam and Andy, carry on his work."

I enjoyed a lot of Joe Kubert's artwork, but I felt that the Russ Manning *Tarzan* was superior to the Kubert work. Also in my opinion the work of both these fine artists was overshadowed by company decisions to adapt the novels to the comic book page instead of creating brand new stories built around the Tarzan character. In the past new original stories sold a ton of *Tarzan* comics for Dell/Gold Key and the sales only slipped badly when the decision was made to convert the original novels to comic form.



Yeah, the circulation luster for Gold Key was dimmed in the middle 1960s compared to the glory years of the 1950s, but the sales really began to fall when the direct adaptations started up. I felt DC compounded the error by continuing that policy instead of generating brand new material set in a contemporary time frame. Russ Manning went on to do the *Tarzan* daily and Sunday comic strip for a few more years and did the art for some original stories that were very successful overseas, eventually being reprinted by (I think) Dark Horse for the US market.

Great Kubert doodle page for the back cover. He was a guy who not only knew how to draw, but apparently was able to do it with ease and speed, very useful talents in the high pressure world of comic books. We keep losing the great ones. It's difficult for me to imagine there ever being anybody that could come close to replacing him.

This was a mixed issue Guy. I think the moral here is to never get sick, and if you do get sick, to never go to a hospital. You ran some articles by survivors, but the situations they describe so vividly clearly imply that a great number of other people in similar situations did not survive, possibly because of inferior, indifferent or plain incompetent treatment by so-called health professionals. Given all that it might be better to just die at home. It would seem to involve less suffering and at least you would die in familiar surroundings.

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Thank you so much for a paper copy of *Challenger*, the 35<sup>th</sup> issue. The Medical Issue is something I've had to deal with lately, and we are most of us at the age where we have to deal with it, whether precautionary or emergency. I love the Alan White cover ... Typhoid Mary looks ready to do her thing to an unsuspecting patient. Maybe she's Bloody Mary, seeing the colour scheme on her uniform? She's the perfect intro to the issue.

That's quite a tale of pain and suffering and gore. To lose 30 pounds the way you did, that's a diet I wouldn't recommend. We have friends who have lost part of their intestinal tract through cancer or car accident, a horrible situation either way. I will hereby admit that I had my 50+ colonoscopy about a month ago, and I passed with flying colours, but will have to keep an eye out for problems along the way.

With my training as a journalist, I like newszines like *File 770* and *Ansible*, yet, Mike Glycer and Dave Langford can't be happy with their well-stocked obituary files most issues. I can tell I am getting older because some close friends are dying. Yvonne and I both miss our old friend Mike Glicksohn, and Bob Sabella is still mentioned here and there in zines.

I try to keep in mind that all my grandparents lived to ripe, old and healthy ages, from their 70s to 90s. However, my mother died this past June of colon cancer, so that revelation roused me out of my complacency, and got me to the doctor's office for the afore-mentioned colonoscopy. Her cause of death is why I will be having regular visits to my new doctor. Weight, exercise, blood pressure, so much to remember and monitor, and perhaps worry about.

Yvonne is the huge Harry Potter fan here. She really wants to go to the Orlando Harry Potter theme park, and we will probably go if we can't do the London Worldcon. She's got all the books and movies and associated publications, and has some homemade school robes, seeing she's the seamstress/tailor around here. We've been to the big touring HP display, and we each have t-shirts from the International Quidditch Association, and yes, it does exist, and they have their World Cup each year. The funny thing is, Yvonne got me the boxes set of Rowling's first four HP books, and I liked them, and then she read them, and got hooked. And, I splurged a little and bought her the big HP Wizard's Box, and we are expecting delivery sometime this week. Early Christmas for Yvonne!

I used to be afraid to contact an old girlfriend, but time (and an understanding wife I've been married to for nearly 30 years) helps to allay those fears. I check from time to time to see if she is on Facebook, or if she is Google-able ... nope. However, I can talk to old friends who knew her, they are on Facebook, and I asked about her recently. They've lost track as well. Her last known status was that she

was still on the west coast, and quite single ... just as I expected she would be. She played with my emotions on occasion, and after she dumped me by phone (how brave), she did the same with just about every boyfriend she had after that.

Not only do I have to monitor my own health, but I will help Yvonne monitor her own. She hits her personal diamond jubilee this year (60), and we will be having a grand party at a local convention, SFCOntario 3. She is 6½ years my senior, and her own health problems have always dwarfed mine, and she's now close to being a senior citizen. Where'd the time go? Chris Garcia will be the Fan GoH at this convention, so the party should be a great time. We've got to get going on the invitations and party flyers.

That's one of the many reasons we went to L.A.con IV ... we wanted to say goodbye and thank you to Ray Bradbury, and we did. For many of the fine authors we've had the privilege to meet, sometimes thank you is all you can say. Once again, thank you, Ray. Your stories shall always stay on our bookshelves, with honour.

I imagine you are still recuperating. Get better, and see you with the next issue.

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I notice that *Challenger* #35 is The Medical Issue. That isn't my favorite issue. It isn't even close. In fact, I really don't like talk about medical stuff. The older I get the less I like it, and I never much liked it even as a kid.

I had a grandmother who was "dying soon" for about forty years. Her only topics of conversation were her own ailments, the ailments of everybody she knew, and all the people she knew who had died lately. I dreaded being around that woman and vowed not to be like her when I grew older. Some years ago, I realized I had managed to forget what she looked like. I wasn't expecting that, since she died when I was in my twenties.

I saw a movie titled *The Story Lady* in which an elderly woman has to live with her daughter and son-in-law. She's bored, so she goes to a senior citizens luncheon meeting. The guest speaker for the luncheon was speaking on the topic "Colostomy a Blessing in Disguise." Needless to say, she doesn't go to any more of those meetings. While it is probably unfair, I've always suspected that senior citizens gatherings were something like that. I've never considered attending a senior citizens gathering to find out. I have utterly no interest in old people. I hang out with the people I've always hung out with and can't see any reason for doing anything else.

I did read far enough to find out you were Profoundly Anemic. Wow! I've been anemic three different times in the last few years, but I think I was only routinely anemic. My problem came from following instructions. I avoided the foods they told me to avoid and ate a lot of entrée salads. After a while, I felt lower than a snake's bellybutton. Popping iron pills made me feel better. After going through the process three times, I became more moderate on the healthy diet idea. I feel much better for it.

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With all due respect to Martin, I don't need to be told which Potter character talks to you in the loo ... all I'll say is that she moans. Either that or it hisses and its look kills you, and I suspect that Universal studios value a customer's money too much to do away with them this casually.

Another trivial observation I made while paging through the recent issue of *Challenger* is that I have never seen that cover on an edition of *Hospital Station* before. The painting didn't look so much like a space hospital as the Stanley Cup in orbit. It even seemed to have the team player's names engraved around the circumference of each "step."

The reason the Stanley Cup looks like that, of course, is that they run out of space for engraving after several years, and have to add an even bigger extension for new Playoff winners. The Cup is not actually a three stage rocket.

Speaking of anecdotes about the Royal Family that Alexis deplores I left out, I recently refreshed my memory with Donald Spoto's excellent, *The Decline and Fall of the House of Windsor*. One of the most poignant anecdotes concerns the death of George V (1910—1936). He was bed-ridden, comatose, and clearly slipping away, but he just wouldn't go in a timely fashion. So, acting under the instructions of the family, George's doctor injected his king with a lethal dose of morphine and cocaine. The family came in and watched the Royal breathing slow and finally stops. The timing wasn't casual, however. It was thought vital that his Majesty pass away in the early morning hours, so that the news could be broken first in the *Times* and other morning papers. It would simply not do to have the news of a Monarch's death appear first in the vulgar afternoon papers ... like a common horse race or burglary.

Did you know that Edward VIII was sterile and that Wally Simpson might have been a hermaphrodite? The Duke of Kent, George VI's younger brother, regularly dated Noel Coward, frequenting gay bars in full make-up. Once, when a clumsy steward spilled milk on Edward VII, he remarked, "Sir, I am not a Strawberry!" Prince Charles, for all his failings, is the first Royal to ever earn a college degree. That should make Alexis a little happier.

There is actually one serious bit of trivia that might have created a fascinating alternate history. When Queen Victoria ascended to the throne of England, she lost the title to the Electorate of Hanover. This was due to the medieval Salic Law that in much of Europe forbade a woman from occupying a throne. The title that had belonged to the George I, II, III, IV and William IV, passed to the nearest male relative, instead. Suppose, however, that the Salic Law had been repealed before 1837, and Victoria had retained her claim to the Electorate of Hanover. How would history have played out when Bismarck united the German states under the Prussian crown?

I doubt very much that the Iron Duke would have been content to leave a British possession, one of the largest German states, right smack dab in the middle of the First Reich! Odds are high that there would have been an Anglo-Prussian War in the 1860s or 70s, whose outcome would have been unpredictable. My money would have been on the Germans. But, whether Prussia won or lost, Europe would have been very different from the Europe we know today.

Darrell ... I probably just goofed when it came to William IV and Edward VI—nothing odd about it. It's easy with all those eponymously named monarchs to mix up the Georges and Williams and Edwards, the VIs and IVs, and so on. I did it just a handful of lines ago, while writing about George V's boys, Edward VIII and George VI (whose actual name was Albert). Fortunately, this time I caught it before handing it over to Guy to print.

I had forgotten about Francis II abolishing the Holy Roman Empire in 1806. But one can still cavil by saying the Roman Empire survived in the Tsar, or Czar of Russia, whose title descends from Caesar. "Never a Third Rome Shall Be," and all that. For that matter, the Kaiser was also a Caesar of sorts. Whether or not you count those, both hold outs were swept from history in 1917 and 1918. We are finally rid of that dad-blasted Roman Empire! Oh, wait... what about *Romania*, which means "Rome?"

Lloyd's Penney ... I mean *Penny* ... was a nice find. Depending on the condition, he may have gotten a bargain. I've found some Ha'pennies and Farthings from around 1805 for under a dollar. Also for around a buck, a couple of French Sous from 1793—during the brief time when Citizen Bourbon had his head on both the new Republic's coins and on his shoulders. As long as they're worn, coins going back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century are not hard to find for very reasonable prices. With the rise of modern money economies, old methods of hammering blanks by hand were replaced with mechanized striking, and the amount of coinage in circulation increased by orders of magnitude.

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Since I wrote "Best Before October 2011," quite a lot of water has passed through the colostomy bag... figuratively speaking. Although I've written elsewhere about my experiences since acquiring a new and

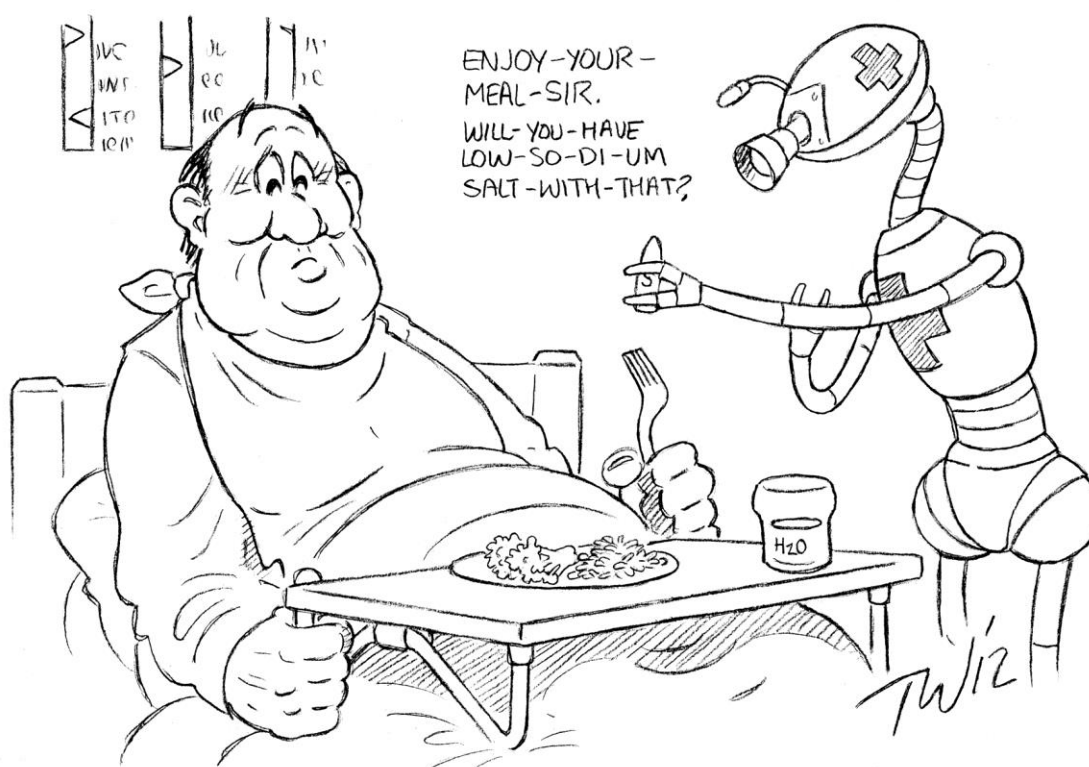
infinitely superior general practitioner, I thought it might not be a bad idea to update my article in *Challenger*.

My new G.P. is Dr. Fung and he is almost too good—he books me for more appointments than I can easily remember. I've had blood work done, had X-rays taken of my hips, consulted a dietician, been re-tested for Myasthenia and finally had that CAT scan I was supposed to have had in 2009.

The good news is that there's nothing wrong with my Thalamus. No enlargement and tumor. I have Myasthenia Gravis for no good reason at all, other than God or Luck is sometimes Unkind.

I've been prescribed a drug called Pyridostigmine (or Mestinon) that mitigates my condition sufficient to live with. It keeps my tongue straight and my right eye open... most of the way, most of the time. It isn't a cure, though, or even complete remission.

My back and hips show a small amount of arthritic development, but nothing to be concerned about.



On the other side of the ledger, the pain in my right leg continued to grow until it prevented all but snatches of sleep. Lying down, getting up or turning over caused more pain in my hip and lower back than ever before. I was best in a sitting position, but even while upright it was impossible to sleep for nearly three days. Even hobbling around the apartment was growing difficult.

On the basis of seemingly trivial symptoms, Dr. Fung opined that I was suffering from Neuropathy. This means nothing more than “nerve pain,” and indeed there is often no apparent cause. It is sometimes associated with diabetes, but I didn't have diabetes. Perhaps stress related to walking with Myasthenia was causing it. In any case, there was another drug that was frequently effective dealing with mindless, stupid pain in the lower extremities, called Gabapentin. Whatever the cause, the new prescription seems to have done the trick. I still have minor back or hip pains after a night in bed and walking any distance is still difficult, but the worst of it ended too sweet once I started taking two of the little red and yellow caps a day.



Less good news follows. Although I'm clear of diabetes, I have been warned to manage my blood sugar better by cutting carbs. Hard to do, since bread and pasta is about the cheapest thing in the world to fill your stomach on. Green veggies and fresh fruit are all very well to prescribe the patient, but fruit can be costly and I've never been fond of anything that is green and grows in manure. I've managed to put garden salad into my diet on a regular basis, though, and can manage fruit occasionally.

Also less good, I still can only walk about 100 feet and then desperately need to sit and rest. I've been experimenting with both a cane and rollator as aids, but have not found them to be the answer I'm seeking.

The cane just doesn't cut it. Incidentally, it's an adjustable aluminum model my mother used before her death, which I kept as a memento. People have advised me to use it to support both my right and my left leg, causing no end of confusion. The Doctor says use it with my strong leg. But I suspect that he's thinking "therapy." Make my weak leg work harder and keep excess stress off the strong one. But if I do as he says, my weak leg gives out almost immediately. It simply won't take my weight for very long. Walking with the cane supporting the weak leg hardly works any better, though. The cane swings back with my leg and the leg shoots forward faster than the cane can follow, so the cane only takes weight from my leg with every other step. Even that might be a help, except it only seems to take the weight for a short part of the step. In the end, I tire just about as fast with the cane as without it. I honestly think it's no help at all.

The rollator was a lucky break. I stopped to talk with a man using one, and he had an older model he offered me to try out. Leaning over it like a grocery cart, I could scoot for whole blocks at a normal walking speed. But Dr. Fung said I mustn't do it. Again with the "therapy!" If I walk bent over, he said, I'll grow stiff that way and be unable to straighten up. I have to walk upright as though nothing were wrong, and use my arms to support my weight in that position.

Needless to say, my arms wore out inside of a block, and my back ached from the effort of walking while upright.

The rollator has other disadvantages as well. For one thing, it's about 27 inches wide and barely fits through some doorways, and is a tight fit in most store aisles. It's hard to get up and down curbs or over the doorstep of most shops. It takes up an enormous amount of room in elevators and is totally impractical to carry into a streetcar or bus. If I can't use it and public transit together, what good is a rollator?

Further chipping away at the rollator's charms are handgrips that slip, brakes that are worn out and don't work and a design that folds but will not remain folded unless lying flat on the ground. Where in 550 square feet of space am I supposed to store it? At present it's in the bathtub.

I've begun looking at new models online. Unfortunately, I can't ask for government assistance until my Disability tribunal has been held... in February next year. Still, they cost only about \$100 or \$150, so something may turn up. I just worry that after spending money on a new, lighter, more compact, model—in full working condition—it may still not be the answer.

The hard facts are that there may be little that *support* can do for me. It isn't a question of support anymore, but *endurance*. I can walk as well as the next man... for 50 to 100 feet and then I tire out. My legs become rubber bands and my back grows sore, just as though I had finished a leg of a French bicycle race. There may be nothing to be done about this, short of a powered lower-body exoskeleton. Even if they made these, they'd be military technology and cost \$87,200 each leg.

This sucks in more ways than I want to bore you with by listing.



*A SFPA brother, musician and published novelist (Jimmy Stu Lives!), Kent carries our party theme in a whole new direction ...*

# WANG DANG DOODLE

*Kent McDaniel*

*Tonight we need no rest. We really gonna pitch a mess  
We gonna kick out all the windows  
We gonna knock down all the doors  
We gonna pitch a wang dang doodle all night long.*

Willie Dixon, "Wang Dang Doodle"

Joe glanced at Robert and Lori feeding crickets to the tarantula in the dry aquarium. Lori, who was nineteen, had given it to Robert for his twenty-fifth birthday; then and there he'd decided he'd never leave her. Now their idea of a hot date was getting high, throwing it live crickets, and making mad love afterward

Joe could only look at the tarantula in side-long glances. In the diagonal corner from it, by the window, he played Allman Brothers riffs on his Les Paul, while an in-coming train across the street rattled the windows. Robert and Lori knelt before the short bookcase on which the aquarium rested, tossing in crickets and giggling. The bugs' doom enthralled Robert, but slim blond Lori kept glancing back and wondering why Joe couldn't look at the tarantula. At last, leaving half the crickets in the paper carton, she and Robert made for the bedroom.

Joe played another five minutes and put the guitar in its case. On the spur of the moment, he picked it up, left, walked down the hallway and stairs, and out into a sweltering evening, crossed the street, and climbed the stairs to the Oak Park el station. He entered a waiting train and took a seat. A guy in a security guard uniform came in, sat down, and started reading the Sun-Times. Reagan's picture was on the front. Six months the creep had been in, and already the vibes had nose-dived.

The train lurched ahead. Joe leaned forward, guitar case between his legs, headed up north to B.L.U.E.S. on Halsted, unsure why. Restless and bored, he was going to the blues jam, a dumb move: a) You played for free. b) In a blues club, a white musician wasn't the real thing. c) Bars sucked.

In the train's window, his reflection glimmered over the storefronts and apartments below. Collar-length dark hair parted in the middle, wire-rim glasses, long nose, beard—his features were there but never quite in focus.

Forty minutes later he strolled toward a black door, a white sign above it with blue letters that read "B.L.U.E.S." He ambled in; on stage in back, a grizzled brown drummer lead a band of young white guys, who strained to make every lick authentic. He was improvising lyrics about how sweet it was when his woman took out her

false teeth. A few people sat at the bar, one couple at a table. Hip Truestone was at the bar, too, with his Derby hat, shaved head, gold chains, and his guitar. Hip's band played B.L.U.E.S. and Kingston Mines, and Hip sang ok, but his guitar licks were flashy and easy.

The house band finished their set, and a guy behind the bar set up the jam. The drummer and the bass player stayed, and a glassy-eyed girl—a cross between Vampirella and a zombie—got on piano. Joe plugged into a Super-Reverb. Hip Truestone plugged into the other amp, and hit a lick. Not thinking about it, Joe called it back. Frowning, Hip tipped back his derby and hit another lick. Joe had missed Hip's frown—he was so horny he'd been checking out zombie/Vampirella girl. Absently he called the lick back. Hip scowled, swayed his head, making his gold chains swirl, and ran off a longer lick, which Joe called back and then glanced up. Hip was glaring at him. Joe glanced away—and gaped.

At the bar, Johnny Littlejohn grinned at him, Johnny Littlejohn, whose voice was on the cusp of baritone and tenor, and whose guitar licks said something, went somewhere, always. Joe had both of his albums.

Hip Truestone called out, “‘High Heel Sneakers’ in E.” After a couple verses, the girl on piano soloed once through the progression, then Joe took one time through, felt good and took a second time through. Hip jumped in and took two times through, and they wrapped it up with a verse and crescendo ending. People applauded, but Hip looked like he had bleeding hemorrhoids.

The guy behind the bar sidled up to the stage, which stood high as the bar and abutted it. He whispered to Joe, “You need to turn down.”

Joe stared at the guy, who added, “You’re drowning Hip out.”

Joe nodded, backed up to the drummer, and whispered, “Am I too loud?”

The drummer pushed up his glasses and shook his head, so Joe only pretended to turn down. The barman walked back down the bar. Hip called out, “Wang Dang Doodle” and started the riff. They jammed it out, zombie-girl, Joe, and Hip all taking solos, and when the song ended, the barman bustled up. “Okay, time for a new crew.”

Weird: people always got at least three songs. Joe and the pianist got off the stage, but Hip stayed on. Another guitar player and a guy on

harp took the stage. Hip said, “Hey, let’s get that piano player back up here.”

Joe felt stunned; he’d been kicked out of the jam—the only one removed. He headed for the door. As he passed Johnny Littlejohn, the bluesman tapped Joe’s arm, and Joe stopped. Cigarette in one hand, Johnny wore a purple sports coat and black shirt and pants. He smiled. “Sounded good.”

“Guess I was too loud, though.”

“You was too something.” Johnny chuckled. He touched Joe’s arm. “Friend of mine, Ben Austin, needs a guitar player. Gimme your number, I’ll have him call you.”

Joe scrawled his number inside a book of matches. As he handed it to Johnny, he blurted, “You were the first real bluesman I ever heard. My first time in Chicago.”

Johnny grinned. “I’ll give your number to Ben.”

Feeling like strutting, Joe headed for the el. It was only nine-thirty, but he started work at six A.M., a trade-checker on the Chicago Board of Options Exchange, and he had to get up in time to do yoga and meditate.

As the train clattered down the tracks, he wondered if Ben Austin would call. People in clubs always talked big, but why would Johnny Littlejohn bullshit him? On the other hand, if Ben Austin did call, would that be good? Joe had come to Chicago to get out of music.

Before coming, he’d played music fulltime seven years, working out of Carbondale, downstate. When he’d begun, he wasn’t smoking dope, having quit. By the time he decided to stop gigging, he smoked all day. His days were about music and partying, but his Transcendental Meditation teachers said dope interfered with meditation and the spiritual evolution it allowed, which would culminate in Cosmic Consciousness: a state of perfect peace, fulfillment, health, prosperity, and happiness.

Joe believed in TM, so he tried to stay off dope, but couldn’t. It silenced his inner critic. He decided it was accept doing dope or quit gigging. At thirty maybe he was getting too old anyway. Having written fiction sporadically since age thirteen, he decided to get a day job, and go back to writing, at night.

Jobs in southern Illinois being scarce, he left. From way downstate, he’d never lived in a

city, and he'd never worked a day job longer than a few months. Four days after he got to Chicago, he was doing data entry at the Chicago Board of Options Exchange (CBOE). He got an apartment in Oak Park and wrote but felt alone and nagged by self-doubt. He stopped doing dope for a while but was smoking again and drinking. This spring he'd moved in with Robert, who he'd met at the CBOE; Robert smoked dope, snorted coke, drank, and had been known to bang up smack.

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Next morning, after he finished yoga and meditation in the living room—just him and the tarantula—Joe went out to the kitchen, where Robert sat having his usual breakfast: a Camel straight and black coffee. He had collar-length hair parted on the side, which when washed was light brown. Since that happened maybe three times a month, it usually looked as it did now: dark and lank. He had brown eyes, a long face, straight nose, and faint acne scars. Lean and muscular, at five-eight, he was almost a head shorter than Joe.

Joe got a bowl of Wheaties and joined Robert, who shook back his hair. "Hey, man."

"Hey. I jammed at B.L.U.E.S. last night."

Robert nodded.

"I might have a gig."

"Who with?"

"Guy called Ben Austin."

Robert drew back. "I've seen his name on album credits. Bass. Alligator Records."

"Really? Guess he's got a band too."

"Very, cool. Outstanding." Robert cocked his head. "Hey, man, Lori thinks you don't like the tarantula."

"I had a bad dream about spiders once." Joe shrugged. "But I'm ok with it. Long as it stays put."

"Yeah, well." Robert took his cup to the sink, turned and grinned, holding up his hands like claws. "It's our baby." He dropped his hands and grinned wider. As he headed out, he said, "I'm almost out of dope: keep your eyes open, okay?"

At the table, Joe thought about his spider dream, which had actually been more of a vision. When he'd first learned meditation in '72, whenever he began the process, his field of vision would grow vast, charged with throbbing

incandescence and/or lighter, flowing shades that scintillated. And he began to find that whenever he closed his eyes, it might happen—resting his eyes from reading, playing guitar, making love. And even when his eyes were open he began to feel stoned, almost tripping. The TM teachers said that his nervous system was releasing accumulated stress, probably from drug experiences, and this was a side effect. To smooth things out, they recommended that he stay active and do breathing exercises and yoga before his meditation.

It all helped, but Spring break of '72 he visited his sister in Naperville, where he lay around all day and began to feel stoned. One afternoon in the basement, he laid on his back, eyes shut, listening to It's A Beautiful Day's "Wasted Union Blues." His field of vision grew vast, and the darkness began to sparkle and pulse with shimmering streamers of purple and dark pink. In the middle, a small spider appeared, and as Joe remembered Castaneda's suggestion that hallucinations might be real, his stomach lurched, and the spider swelled, filling his field of vision. He sat bolt upright, eyes wide, heart pounding. A sense of dread gripped him for weeks, and left him with a fear of spiders. So, yeah, he was uncomfortable with the tarantula.

He looked at his wristwatch, and pushed his chair from the table; he had to get to work.

At Shearson's stock options clearing office that morning, he and the other five trade-checkers had only ninety out-trades to divide, trades where Shearson's side failed match the other firm's side. Joe resolved his on the trading floor before the 9:00 opening. He did his paperwork and headed home around noon, unlike Robert, who worked for Ridgeway Options and remained on the floor till three.

The one good thing about trade-checking was Joe got home early. He had a B.A., and though it was in history, if he played things smart, he could end up a stock-broker. But he saw stock-brokers in the bars around LaSalle Street, and they all looked miserable. So whoopee-shit. Of course, his parents were delighted he had a steady job now, especially in investments. He'd discovered, however, that it was mind-numbing, and trade-checkers got laid a lot less than musicians: he hadn't had sex in months.



At home, he climbed the stairs. His door was on the left, but he went right, to the apartment across the hall. Like Robert, he was low on pot, and maybe Ralph could help. He grew magic mushrooms, glass jars of them filling a set of shelves in his living room, and might well have a pot connection.

Joe knocked on the door, its chipped paint somewhere between gray and green. Wearing white t-shirt and jeans, Ralph answered, Joe's height and emaciated, with frizzy blond hair. They walked to the living room, where Joe found Victor from next door sitting on the floor. Wearing t-shirt, jeans, and blue bandana headband, Victor soaked up the sunlight pouring through the windows. Maybe twenty, he was short, had lank blond hair and a beer belly. He lived with his girlfriend Helen, who stood about four inches taller than he did and outweighed him by seventy pounds.

Joe sat in a stuffed chair beside the stereo, and Ralph lounged on a sofa.

"You're the guitar player," Victor said. "Hey, man, you ought to come for our fireworks." Fourth of July was a couple weeks away.

Ralph said, "Victor brought back this huge stash of fireworks from Indiana."

Victor grinned. "You should see 'em, man. It's, like, this pile of bright *colors*."

Ralph rolled his eyes.

Victor beamed. "We're gonna shoot 'em off in my buddy's back yard. You should come. Do some 'shrooms."

"Maybe." Joe tried to sound sincere. "Speaking of dope, you know where I can cop any pot?" He glanced at Ralph, who shook his head, then Victor.

Victor's shoulders drooped. "No, man. I been out a week." He smiled dreamily. "When I cop some, I'm gonna do a whole damn spliff."

Joe stared. "A spliff?"

Victor's head bobbed. "Yeah, them Jamaicans roll up some paper like a ice cream cone. Stick in a quarter ounce, maybe more. Smoke the whole fuckin' thing. That's what I'm gonna do."

Joe left. As he walked in his apartment, the phone rang, and he picked up in the living room.

"Yeah," a voice drawled. "This Ben Austin. You the guit-ar picker?"

"Yep."

"The one gave his number to Johnny Littlejohn?"

"Yeah. He said you were looking for a guitarist."

"Uh huh, I do a jam up at On Broadway, Tuesday nights." There was a rhythm, almost a melody to his words. "I need a guit-ar picker for the gig. You play the blues?"

Joe hesitated. "I've heard a lot of blues in Chicago. Most the

blues I know, I learned off The Allman Brothers." He played southern rock and rockabilly.

"But you can plaaay, right?"

"I can play."

"Alright then. You be there tomorrow night?" He gave Joe directions and told him to be there at eight. "The gig pay twenty-five cent."

The next night around seven, Les Paul in one hand, Fender amp in the other, Joe trudged up the stairs to the el platform. He boarded and sat down, guitar between his legs, amp on the next seat. Downtown he transferred, and lugged his gear over to the Howard line. On the Northside, he dragged the stuff a couple blocks to On Broadway.

The club was large, the ceiling high, and there was a long bar. Then there were tables, a sound man's booth along the wall, dance floor, and wide stage. Joe sat down on its edge, and in a couple minutes, a stocky man, forty-something, strolled in carrying a guitar case. Maybe five-eighths, with freckled tan skin, he wore a denim cap,



leather vest, and glasses with purple lenses. He sauntered up. "You Joe?" He stuck out his hand. "Ben Austin."

Joe and Ben strolled out to a gray Dodge van and got Ben's red Custom bass amp with two fifteens. In the next ten minutes, a piano player brought in a Fender Rhodes, and a drummer lugged in his kit. Right before they started, Ben whispered to Joe, "Don't worry 'bout the songs' changes, man. We got that covered on piano. When I sing a line, you just call it back on *guit*-ar. Then when it's time, take your solo." Sounded easy enough.

Maybe forty people were scattered around, seven or eight with guitars. Ben counted off "Kansas City," and they played the intro. "I'm going to Kansas City," Ben sang. Joe hit two quick notes. Ben sang, "Kansas City here I come." Joe called the phrase back, the groove like a freight train. Ben turned his head toward Joe, the corners of his lips lifted. They went through two verses and a break, and then Joe soloed, feeling like he rode a roller coaster. After him, the pianist soloed, and Joe started playing a boogie rhythm: Dada Dada Dada Dada. Ben looked at Joe like Joe had just cut a vile fart, wiped the look from his face, strolled over, and said in Joe's ear, "Play chords." He nodded and smiled, walking backwards from Joe, dancing almost.

After that, they did "The Thrill Is Gone" and "Next Time You See Me," both of which Joe knew. Then Ben counted off "Sweet Home Chicago." Everybody else hit it, but Joe froze: there was a catchy guitar riff at the start that he didn't know. Ben was starting to grimace, so Joe just started playing some standard rock and roll licks.

Ben's face relaxed. He could live with what Joe was playing, but why had Joe stood there like a chump? After the song, the crowd clapped, including Johnny Littlejohn, who sat near the stage, with his guitar. Ben launched into "Why I Sing The Blues." Everybody fell in with the groove, Joe playing in unison with the bass riff. Ben glowered at him and mouthed, "Chords." Feeling stupid, Joe switched to seventh chords. Ben shrugged; he thought Joe needed to get more funky with it, but chords beat doubling the bass part.

The song ended to applause, and Ben smiled. "We gonna bring up a friend of ours: *Mr.*

*Johnny Littlejohn!*" Cheers greeted Johnny as he took the stage. During Johnny's first solo, Joe started to add a little riff between chords to his rhythm. Johnny stopped, inclined his right side toward Joe in a semi-bow, and extended his palm, meaning take it away. Joe shook his head, and Johnny continued, with Joe leaving out the riff.

After their set, Joe hung around while the jammers came up. At the end of the night, Ben offered Joe a ride home. Turned out, Ben lived a couple blocks south of Oak Park. As they pulled off the Eisenhower, he said, "You play pretty good, man. Got stuff to learn 'bout the blues, but you can play."

Joe grinned. "You watch. I'm gonna get better and better."

Once he was home, Joe felt too keyed up to go right to sleep and had to get up at four, so decided to do without sleep. Around six Robert came in the kitchen, where Joe drank coffee.

He drew back. "You didn't sleep?"

"Man, if I'd gone to sleep, I couldn't have got back up."

Work was okay at first, but by noon, Joe felt disoriented; when he got home that afternoon he slept till morning.

Next day, he bought B. B. King's *Greatest Hits*, Magic Sam's *West Side Soul*, and *Ice Pickin'* by Albert Collins, from all of which he began to cop licks, hours on end. Friday afternoon in the living room, Robert played the chords to "Sweet Home Chicago" on guitar, while Joe tried to fit in Magic Sam's licks. After five minutes, Robert stopped and laughed, shaking his fingers. He plopped down on the couch and lifted a beer from the scarred coffee table. Off to his left, the tarantula shambled about the aquarium.

"Sounds like you're making progress."

Robert grinned.

Joe lifted a can of Bud from his amp and sat down on the amp. The tarantula continued to prowl the dry aquarium; Joe looked away from it. "I'm spending a lot of time on it. I don't know..."

"What's wrong with playing guitar?"

"It's just that I decided to quit gigging, and write fiction. I haven't written a word since that night at B.L.U.E.S."

"Maybe you're gathering material."

"But it's not just the time: I quit playing because it's too tied up with dope and drinking for me."

Robert scoffed. "News flash: You still drink and do dope anyway."

"At least now I don't smoke soon as I get up. I don't drink seven or eight beers every day."

Robert looked at the ceiling.

"Besides, I'm too old to make it as a musician."

Robert held up his hands. "You're thirty-two. Why take this shit so serious?"

Joe leaned forward. "I want to accomplish *something*."

Robert almost sneered. "You got a chance to play with a good band. Do it." He lit a Camel. "Hey, check this out: Lou's gonna be a floor-broker for Bear Stearns."

Lou was floor manager for Ridgeway Options, the small firm for which Robert worked. A disco type, sometimes he smoked dope with Robert after work. Basically he did the same job as Robert, trade-checking and phone-clerking, but also supervised Robert and the two runners the firm employed. He got more pay and wore a floor manager badge. He answered only to Bill, Ridgeway's Harvard-educated floor-broker, who was in his sixties.

"I think Bill's gonna give me Lou's job," Robert said, "and I'll be hiring my replacement." He almost smiled: The idea of a floor manager's badge pleased him as much as a raise.

Joe asked, "For sure?"

"I should know in a couple weeks."

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Tuesday evening after the Fourth of July, Joe stood outside his place, guitar and amp on the sidewalk, when Victor bounced up.

"Hey," he said, "going out?"

"Yeah," Joe said, "I got a gig with a blues band." He added, "Hey, sorry I missed the fireworks thing"

"Oh." Victor clapped his shoulder. "We had to hold off on it. We're gonna do it Sunday. You can still come, man."

Ben rolled up in his Van, and Joe grabbed his gear. Victor saw Ben and said, "Oh! A real blues band!"

Joe nodded.

That night at On Broadway, he played worse. He was tensing up, trying so hard to fit in his new licks that his play was stilted, and he

missed half his licks. To make things worse, Big Twist was there. Twist was from Carbondale, and after twenty years playing there, had brought his band up to Chicago. Now he had a record out on Alligator, played the big clubs, and toured nationwide. Joe had known him in Carbondale, lived with some of his band. After Twist left town, whenever he came back, he'd stop by wherever Joe and his brother were playing and sit in.

After Joe's set with Ben, Twist pulled Joe into a bear hug. "Joe Stevens!" He turned Joe loose. "Up in the city!" Twist was big: six foot, two hundred seventy-five pounds, and he always wore a suit, tie, and Stetson hat.

When Twist got up to jam, he insisted Joe play, but Joe was still straining. As he limped through his solo on their second song, "Bright Lights Big City," Twist stalked up to him and bellowed, "Aw, man you ain't playin' shit!" He let his arms hang at his side and glared. After the song, Twist snorted, "Man, that's it." He climbed off the stage, and Joe unplugged his guitar and jumped off stage, too. He and Twist talked no more.

On the way home in Ben's van, Joe slouched. "Man, I sucked."

Ben didn't deny it; he knew Joe was trying too hard. But what could he do? "Hey, man, you got to relax, that's all."

Joe went to work without sleeping, came home and slept fourteen hours. The day after that at work, he scored two ounces of pot and called Ridgeway Options. The voice on the phone, which Joe thought was Lou's, said Robert was out. So Joe said, "This is Joe. Tell Robert I got his ounce."

The voice asked, "Of what?"

"Pot."

After work he went to Trade Inn with some friends. Around five he got back to his place, buzzed; he joined Robert and Lori sat in the small kitchen. Lori stared at him, deadpan, and Robert glared. Joe froze.

"You, fucking, moron," Robert said. "That was Bill you talked to."

Joe gaped.

"Yeah." Robert flushed. "I came back, and Bill said,"—he made his voice hearty and well-modulated— "'Oh, Robert, good news: Joe called; he's got your ounce of pot.'"

"I thought it was Lou."

"Maybe you shoulda checked." Robert glared at the table, Lori looking back and forth between them.

Joe leaned back against the wall. "This mean you don't get the floor-manager job?"

Robert shrugged.

"You still want the pot?"

"Why not? How much did you give for it?"

It'd been forty dollars an ounce, but Joe said, "Aw, forget it, man. It's on me. I'm really sorry." He handed over the ounce.

He went to his bedroom and looked for something to read. He glanced at his manuscripts on the dresser, then at the unfinished one on the metal typing table but felt no interest. Robert's bookcase in the living room held a trove of science-fiction—Asimov, Clark, Heinlein, Niven, Pohl, Vance, Zelazny—but Joe shied from getting that close to the tarantula. To his eye, its aquarium always looked precariously perched, sticking out three inches past the bookcase's edge.

From a bookcase beside his closet, he pulled out *Tortilla Flat* and lay rereading it. After a while, Robert and Lori left. Joe slunk to the kitchen and made a ham sandwich, feeling rotten. Junior year of high school, Robert had dropped out to hitch-hike the country. After a couple years, he returned, claimed to be a high school graduate, and ended up at Ridgeway. His brothers and sisters had decent jobs, and a couple were college grads. The floor manager thing meant a lot to him.

Next day, after work, Joe dumped a fourth of his pot out on his dresser, hoping Victor would buy the rest; Robert's not paying him might leave him a little short till payday. Victor was delighted to buy the pot. ("Fuckin' A, man!") Joe went out for a six pack and stopped by a bait shop for a little white box of crickets—another peace offering. When Robert and Lori rolled in about four, Joe was playing guitar in the living room. Robert grabbed one of the Buds, came in with Lori and rolled a joint, which they passed around.

After a few minutes, Joe said, "Hey, I picked up some crickets for..." He pointed his thumb at the tarantula.

Robert glanced at Lori. "Tell you what, man. You feed her the crickets, and all is forgiven." His face was impassive, but Lori broke into a grin.

"Me?" Joe pointed to himself.

"Yeah." Robert nodded. "I don't think you've ever had the pleasure."

Lori's eyes gleamed.

Joe went into the kitchen, where he'd left the crickets, and ambled back, trying to look nonchalant, moving as if in slow motion toward the hairy black beast. Robert and Lori stared. Stoned, but every muscle in his body tense, Joe reached in the box, pinched a cricket between his thumb and finger and lowered his hand into the aquarium.

Lori screamed, "Look out! It's jumping!"

Joe leaped away, his forearm hitting the aquarium, which toppled and shattered on the floor. The tarantula scuttled into the room. Now Lori screamed for real. With one backward hop, Joe was on the couch, then leaped to the arm and then the top of the couch, where he repeated, "Oh fuck, oh fuck, oh, fuck, oh, fuck..."

Robert grabbed his guitar by the neck, its body down. Lori was backing into the hallway, and as the thing scurried toward her, whimpered. She kept backing up, till she reached the apartment door and leaped out into the hall, the creature following. She screamed for Robert, and he ran into the kitchen. Joe peeked around the corner as Robert dashed from the kitchen with a cardboard box. Reluctantly Joe followed out into the hall, where Lori was yelling, and the tarantula scurried in drunken circles.

Robert pointed at Joe, "Go get the broom! I'll put the box in front—you sweep him in."

Joe yelled, "Just stick the box over him."

The door to Victor and Helen's opened, and there stood Helen, "Buffalo Soldiers" blasting on her stereo, reefer smoke hanging in the air. She growled, "What's going—"

The tarantula shuffled into the room, one of its hairy legs brushing her bare foot. She glanced down, howled, and charged for the door. She forgot to turn sideways and wedged herself in, screaming.

Joe ran over, squeezed his hands past her waist, and tugged at her back. Inside, Victor spied the tarantula almost at his feet and yelped, jumping over it and tossing up a lit spliff. Like a jet bulldozer, he bolted for the door and crashed into Helen, who popped out and smashed Joe into the wall.

As he gasped for air, she turned to Victor. "Are you all right, baby doll?" Then as an afterthought, she called: "Where's the spliff?"

The spliff was on the back of the tarantula, where it had landed, and the crazed arachnid scuttled into the fireworks in the corner and clambered up the pile.

Outside, in the hall, a frenzy of explosions jolted them, as roman candles and bottle rockets screamed up from the pile, and M-80's and cherry bombs blasted like cannons. It lasted several minutes, and before it stopped, the sheet over the couch and the lace curtains burst into flames, as fragments of tarantula littered the room.

Lori cried, "Fire!" and ran for the stairs. Joe raced back for his guitar and amp, and by the

time he got back, Victor and Helen were watching Ralph from next door lug a fire extinguisher into their place. Robert was running up with a fire extinguisher from the far end of the hall, Lori watching from the stairs. Robert and Ralph got the flames out, but the bottle rockets and roman candles had blasted chunks from the plaster and blown out the windows. The couch was totaled too, the apartment choked with smoke. They'd managed to douse the flames quickly, and no one called the fire department, a minor miracle in itself.

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Helen and Victor ended up crashing on Joe and Robert's living room floor; repairing their place was going to take a while.

After the next jam, which went better, on the way home Joe told Ben about the fire and about his conflict between writing and music. "You think grabbing my amp and guitar means I resolved things? I left all my stories on my dresser."

"Maybe it just mean, you chose the amp and guitar that day." Ben shrugged.

Joe frowned.

Ben glanced his way. "Maybe a month from now, it happen, you grab the stories."

"But it'd be better if I just did one or the other, wouldn't it?"

Ben glanced his way again and looked back at the road. "Prob'ly be better if you could walk on water, too."

Joe thought about it and grinned. "Right."



## Jimmy Stu Lives!

a review

*Sheila Strickland*

*Jimmy Stu Lives!* by Kent McDaniel starts with a pastor who has lost his faith after losing his wife but is trying to continue to lead his church. He has the advantage and disadvantage of being surrounded by people who believe in him and trust him. In his despair, the Reverend James Stuart Sloan tells his congregation God wants him to be cryogenically frozen so he can continue to do God's work in the future. When he is brought back; the world needs him, but not in the way he might have thought. The United States is divided into different zones, one of which is run by the Church of the Living Lord, the successor to his own church. The people who bring him back want someone to save them from the tyranny of the church; Jimmy Stu just wants to figure out this world. I didn't miss the irony of a man who has lost his faith being acclaimed as a savior; or the theme of the reluctant hero. Jimmy Stu may not be the type of messiah his rescuers were looking for; but he does a pretty good job of rescuing his new world.

