

CHALLENGER #37

WINTER 2013-2014

GUY & ROSE-MARIE LILLIAN
1390 HOLLY AVENUE, MERRITT ISLAND FL 32529
318/218-2345
GHLIII@YAHOO.COM

COVER BY RON SANDERS

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The location and depth of the Challenger Deep are

11°22.4'N 142°35.5'E and 10,920 m (35,827 ft) ±10 m (33 ft).[3]



HEROES:

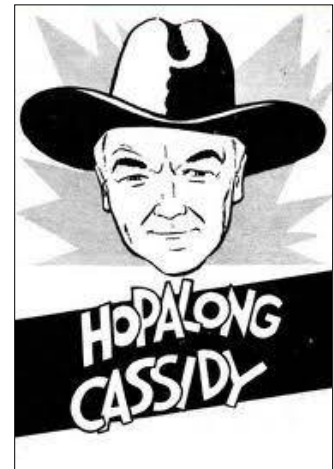
“IN NEW ORLEANS, WE CALL’EM PO’BOYS”

GHLIII

Until we packed them away for our move to Florida, most of my most beloved objects in this world rode a shelf in my office. In addition to Tony and Suzy, babyhood toys, and a bust of a man’s head I molded in fourth grade (it resembles a Hammer Frankenstein) there were two items of tarnished metal. One was a piggy bank containing coins from foreign countries (plus a 1943 American “Standing Liberty” half-dollar) and an arrowhead my father found as a boy. The other piece was a dented cup in which the etched initials G H L could be barely discerned. (I forget if it was my “baby cup” or my dad’s, and it upsets me that no one lives who could tell me.) Inside this cup I kept a tiny leather sheath, my childhood teethmarks still dug into it and its stitches almost gone, enwrapping an equally tiny pearl-handled knife. My mother bought me that knife, undoubtedly in anticipation of my future career as Jack the Ripper.

Also inside that cup was a tiny watch on a well-worn leather band. My parents must have bought it for me when I was 3 or 4. The watch face bears the tiny image of the fella depicted above: Hopalong Cassidy, the great cowboy star of the ’30s and ’40s and the early years of television. On the back of the casing is an etching so small my aging eyes can barely read it: *Good luck from Hoppy*. I wore that watch as a kid, of course, but also at Berkeley during the street battle era. When the Blue Meanies attacked and the tear gas began blooming, I wanted Hoppy with me. After all, before People’s Park and the upheavals of the ’60s – before Davy Crockett, before Robin Hood, even before Superman – Hopalong Cassidy was my *hero*.

Let me save you a trip to Wikipedia and provide some data about this paragon of the past. Hopalong Cassidy was created in 1904 by the pulp writer Clarence Mulford. Originally he was a tough-talking, hard-boozing brute. When the first Hoppy movie came to be made in 1935, star William Boyd saw more promise to the character, and changed him from Mulford’s roughneck into his own personal idea of a hero. In that film and 65 others Boyd’s Hoppy drank nothing stronger than sarsaparilla, let the bad guys throw the first punch, and never messed with women (his sidekicks had *that* trouble). The movies were an enormous hit, so much so that Mulford rewrote his books to reflect Boyd’s cleaner-cut vision of the character. In 1944 Boyd bought all rights to Hoppy for the then-incredible sum of \$325,000, gambling that such a role model would never become passé. And he may well have been thinking of the new media just raising its ugly head ... television.



Boyd was right. NBC bought the idea – and the series. *Hopalong Cassidy* was the first western ever to appear on network TV. They presented cut-down versions of the movies, and then original scripts, and Hoppy went through the roof. Louis L’amour wrote four novels based on him. The merchandising – like my watch – made Boyd filthy rich. *Time* took note (→), acknowledging how Hopalong had become Captain Americana for a generation of burgeoning Boomers. You can watch some shows on YouTube.

But what I remember best about Hoppy’s TV show is something I can’t find on YouTube. After the last bad guy was safely kayoed – Hopalong Cassidy never *killed* anyone! God forbid! – Boyd came on and gave you a face-to-face “talkin’ to.” These were sober, solemn monologues about behaving yourself well. (One such lecture told us never to call a policeman a “cop.” That was disrespectful. I remembered that at Berkeley, when the police would have *paid* to be called cops.) Those talks always made me feel a little ashamed, because I dreaded even the idea of letting Hoppy down.

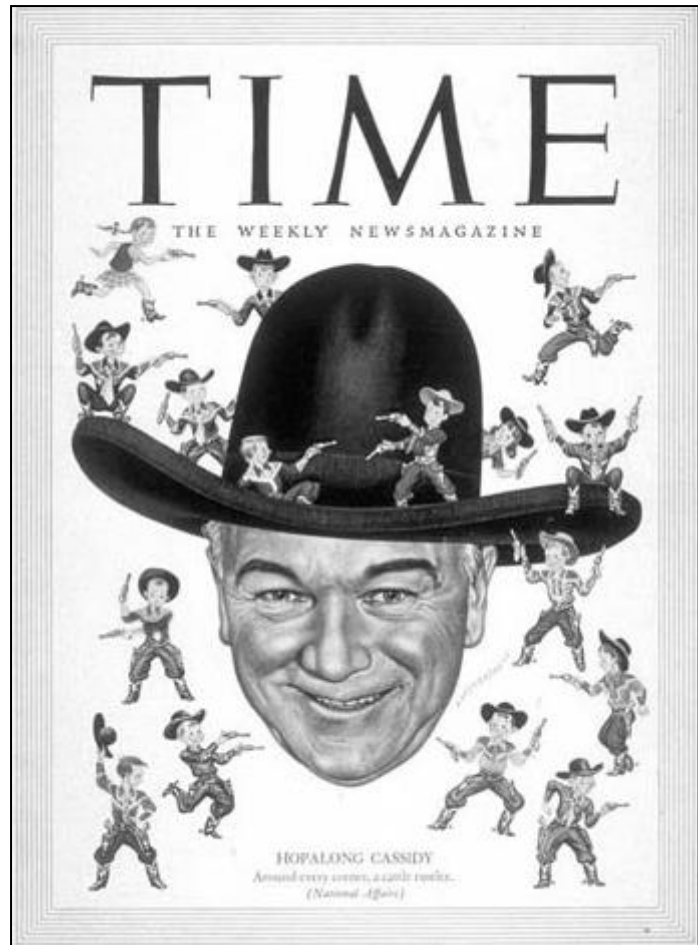
Because, you see, it wasn’t for aesthetics or to cement his resemblance to Eisenhower that Hopalong Cassidy had white hair. To us lads of the day, he was an ideal *grandfather* figure, fond of us and proud of us – but who expected a lot of us. And we didn’t want to disappoint him, since nothing meant more than his approval.

A hero, after all, is someone who motivates you by example to do the right thing. Davy Crockett not only fought Indians and river pirates, he died at the Alamo (what a trauma – and what a sneaky life lesson – to learn that from Disney as an 8-year-old!) His death, we learned, was for a noble purpose. Robin Hood thwarted the Sheriff of Nottingham – but only to return their stolen birthright to the Saxon poor. Superman ... well, truth, justice and the American way. Maybe that’s why I wore my Hopalong Cassidy watch while inhaling tear gas at Berkeley – I wanted to meet the challenge like Hoppy would.

Heroes – people you admire, and want to emulate. Here in this *Challenger*, we do a few of them homage.

Challenger has yammered on about heroes throughout its 20 years of publication. In issues past I’ve written about many of my own – Alfred Bester, Ray Lafferty, Jimmy Connors (anybody else read his memoir, *The Outsider*, last year? Pretty good!), and always, forever Julius Schwartz. This time I asked my contributors to hail their own heroes, and so we’re graced by Greg Benford, Mike Resnick, Jeff Copeland, Chris Barkley and Curt Phillips, reminiscing about people who’ve been heroes to them. Several articles are reprinted from issues past; I’m grateful for the authors’ permission to run them again.

Binker Hughes, Taral Wayne, David Williams and John Neilsen Hall may not talk about heroes, but such sharp wit is always welcome in these pages. Mike Ward – an associate from my earliest fannish days with the SF Bay Area’s Little Men – throws us grammatical verse, and I’m pleased to announce the return of another poet, the excellent and familiar Mike Estabrook. You’ll also find a poem by a lady called “Rocky,” written of and by and on the streets.



Also welcome is our cover artist, the prolific and creative **Ron Sanders**, who writes of himself:

Ron Sanders is an L.A.-based author, poet, and illustrator working across the board. His works tend to lean heavily on the human condition, generally with a cynical edge, and with a high sense of drama. He feels self-promotion is nothing more than compensation, and hopes his works can stand or fall on their own merit. To that end, there's plenty to read and ponder on his website at <http://ronsandersatwork.com>.

A special and deeply felt shout of thanks to Charlie Williams, whose art enriches our interior pages in several spots. Of course, I'm here too, and to compensate for that failing, so is *la belle* Rose-Marie.

One item in this issue requires special mention, and that is "The Chorus Lines", our lettercol. It's *pitiful*. I guess you can lead a fan to a fanzine, but you cannot make him LOC. Our thanks to the great buds and letterhacks who *did* respond, but one has to wonder: is the paucity of commentary and/or response a sign that *Chall* has run its route? I can't tell. *Chall* came very close to winning another Hugo nomination last year. Had blogs been excluded – as I believe WSFS rules demand! – both our zine and Steven Silver's *Askancee Argentus* would've made the ballot. (And a genuine fanzine like *Banana Wings* or *Journey Planet* or Silver's publication would have won.)

So are we a dead zine walking, or not?

All we can do is keep on keepin' on, so yes, *Challenger* #38 *will* be out in 2014. Its theme: THE FUTURE. Attack it as you will. We publish by Moonday – my birthday, July 20.

This editorial, and this issue, are being completed at my mother-in-law's condo in West Palm Beach, Florida. Rosy and I are living here for the time being. (The address you read atop our contents page is Rosy's father's; we have every intention of settling close to there after some serious medical and legal matters are taken care of here. All written correspondence and contributions → there, please.)

I felt little angst leaving Shreveport, even though I liked our house and lot and street; the house and lot and street were attractive, but the city was not, and when both of our jobs dried up, we had little compunction against pulling up our stakes and heading here. But I miss Louisiana, especially its main town. New Orleans is a state of mind – a crazy one, to be sure, but one that has always enriched and enlivened existence. I'm addicted to the Easy; every other time I've tried to leave it, I've come limping back.

For Rosy's sake, I hope that doesn't happen this time. This all-but-lifelong Floridian gave 12 years of her life to Louisiana for my sake, and I need to at least try to pay her forward. Also, it does indeed help that while the rest of America froze solid this winter (my brother lives just north of Buffalo – you can imagine) Floridians old and new shivered when the temps touched 70 degrees F.

Anyway, though money is tight, we still fantasize about the London Worldcon. Although *la belle*, a onetime DUFF delegate, loves downunder, and we are ardent supporters of New Zealand's bid for the 2020 Worldcon, she insists that our next overseas trip be eastbound. I wouldn't mind that. There are only three items on my Bucket List, and two lie in that direction: to stand before the *Mona Lisa* (even though many who have say I'd be better off studying her on-line) and to dance like a fool among the cantilevered rocks of Stonehenge. But the money ... well. 99% chance of no Worldcon in 2014.

Though Worldcon is very doubtful, we shall *possibly* see you at DeepSouthCon in Bristol, Tenn., (May 16-18) and CONtraflow in Metairie LA (October 3-5), and maybe a Florida con or two. And in these pages, and on eFanzines, as well.



WAUSEON, OHIO - “THE TOWN YOU’LL TAKE TO HEART” SAYING GOODBYE TO LYNN HICKMAN

Curt Phillips

Art by JOE MAYHEW

Ohio is as flat as a landing strip and in places it seems to roll on and on forever. Cornfields stretch everywhere. On the drive from where you get off I-75 at Bowling Green to the outskirts of Wauseon itself, corn seems to fill the entire world. On my way I passed hundreds of farmers on huge tractors patiently working their fields, mile after mile after mile. Eventually a town loomed up in the midst of all that corn. A bright little sign on the side of the road read: “Welcome to Wauseon, Ohio -- The town you’ll take to heart”. And in truth, driving into Wauseon did feel something like driving into my own home town because this was where Lynn had lived, and he had told me about this little oasis in the cornbelt for years.

I had put off this trip for a long time. Just after Lynn’s death in October 1996 Roger Sims had told me that Lynn’s fanzine collection had been left to me and that I should contact Carolyn about it soon. I wouldn’t admit this to myself for a long time, but the fact is that I was deliberately putting off that phone call because I was putting off dealing with the fact that my friend had died. I had seen Lynn the previous February at the Pulpcon in Asheville, NC and we talked and joked and carried on just like always and when we parted at the end of the convention we said, “So long, see you at the next one.”

We didn’t say goodbye then, and I didn’t want to say it now. But of course, you can only put the truth off for so long and now here I was on a beautiful spring day pulling into Wauseon to pick up my inheritance and to say goodbye.

It was at a science fiction convention that Lynn and I first met. A Chattacon, I think – sometime in the early ’80s. We were introduced by a mutual friend who was recruiting us both into an amateur press association called Myriad and we soon discovered that we had a mutual fondness for pulp



magazines, old fanzines, and “traditional” science fiction fandom. A few years later when Lynn founded PEAPS – the Pulp Era Amateur Press Society – he knew that I’d want to be one of the charter members and invited me to join.

Lynn and I became good friends, the kind of friends that you find in fandom once in a while – if you’re very lucky. I was about two full generations his junior, but no hint of a generation gap ever hindered that friendship, mostly – I think – because we largely approached life in the same way and were generally the same kind of science fiction fan. He seemed like a big brother to me and largely without even thinking about it, I looked to his career in fandom as an example of a good one to follow.

During that 12-hour drive from Abingdon to Wauseon I had a lot of time to think and remember. Little things kept coming to mind, like the time I gave Lynn an old detective pulp at a convention and in trade he later mailed me a very browned and brittle copy of the November 1930 *Wonder Stories* magazine. It was obviously worthless as a collector’s item but the accompanying note raised its value from worthless to priceless. This was the very first pulp that Lynn had ever owned. He’d bought it used for a nickel back during the Depression when a nickel could buy you lunch and he’d hung on to it all these years. He knew it wasn’t worth anything in that condition, but it was special to him because it was his first pulp ... and he wanted me to have it. I wouldn’t trade it for anything at all. Then there was the time that Lynn was the Fan Guest of Honor at ConCave – a wonderful convention near Mammoth Cave in Kentucky. It was decided to “roast” Lynn at the banquet and I got the job of putting that together. I worked like a fiend getting material from Bloch, Tucker, Dean Grennell, and lots of other big-name fans who knew Lynn way back when.

Naturally I thought I had him backed into a corner since everyone knows that at a roast, the roastee is supposed to try to mount a rebuttal and I figured that I’d made things pretty hot for Lynn. The moment came when some response from the man of the hour was required. I sat down and looked at Lynn with an expression that said, “OK, get out of this one if you can.”

Lynn cleared his throat, and the audience leaned forward to catch the opening salvo. Then his face broke into a huge grin as he said, “Well that was fun. I’m kinda thirsty now and there’s cold beer in the consuite, so follow me.” Then – pausing only long enough to throw a wink at me – he marched the entire audience out of the room leaving me to marvel at just how easily he had wiggled out of it. Lynn was one of those guys who always had something up his sleeve when he needed it.

He visited us once here in Abingdon while on his way back home from visiting relatives in North Carolina. Couldn’t get him to stay the night but he had supper with us and sat for a while talking pulps and fandom with me. Then after a last cup of coffee he jumped back in his car and drove straight home. After that he invited me to come up to Wauseon and visit. I always seemed to be too busy to plan that trip but he’d mention it again every now and then. After he renovated a storage building in his backyard into a “slan shack” to store his collection he called to invite me up again. I promised that I would ... someday.

Then late that summer I heard that Lynn was sick. Not wanting to bother his family I called Lynn’s closest friends Roger and Pat Sims and found out from them just how bad the situation was. It was the worst, and the doctors had given Lynn about two months to live. I don’t recall what I said to Roger after that but I think he could tell that I was pretty shaken up.

Shortly after that I called the Hickman home and talked to Lynn’s wife, Carolyn. She told me that Lynn was very weak but he could talk on the phone for a moment. She put him on and it was obvious that it was very difficult for him to talk at all. He sounded awfully tired and his breathing was labored. I tried to keep the conversation light but I wasn’t fooling either of us. I asked if he thought it would be possible for me to come up and visit him that weekend. He said, “No, I don’t have the strength just now. Maybe next week would be better.” So I told him I’d call back in a few days and wished him the best. Four days later I came home from work and discovered Roger Sims’ message on my phone. “Curt, I have news about Lynn and it’s pretty grim ...”

If you’ve never been there, you wouldn’t really believe how pretty a town Wauseon Ohio is. Small but sprawling, old but graceful, it’s a town where the folks just want to live and enjoy life. It’s very much a farming town and it’s what you think of when you hear the words, “small town America”. It has wide, tree-lined streets and the cleanest downtown courthouse you’ve ever seen. On my way in I had to

stop at the courthouse and be a tourist for a moment. Down here in Virginia courthouses just naturally have monuments to the Confederate dead of that locality and we all grow up taking it pretty much for granted.

Wauseon has a courthouse with a huge monument to the local Union veterans. It was the first time I'd ever seen that and I had to stop and go over and read the names inscribed on the base. An awful lot of Ohio boys from that county had gone off to the war. Some of the regiments I recognized as having been at the battle at Ft. Donnelson in western Tennessee, a place I know well. A couple of years ago I marched in a reenactment of Grant's march from Ft. Henry to Ft. Donnelson and walked the, same swampy paths that many of these Ohio boys did. Other regiments on that monument were at the terrible battle at Stone's River where the Union dead covered the battlefield so thickly that in places you couldn't walk without stepping on them.

Some of those boys may have grown up there in Wauseon. Had I made it to town a year earlier, Lynn and I would have walked by that courthouse and he could have told me all about it.

413 Ottokree Street looks like a nice, average house. I don't know what I was expecting, but it seemed not much different from those around it. In fact I went to the wrong house at first and the neighbors had to point me in the right direction. Then I knocked on the door and Lynn's son Mark invited me inside and ... something unusual happened. Bear with me. I'll try to write this as simply as I can. In spite of having read a lot of science fiction and supernatural fiction, I do not have the slightest interest or belief in ghosts or the supernatural. And although I do have my private beliefs about matters of religion I am not what you would describe as a religious man. However I have long been able to sense people around me, by which I mean if I walk into a room and someone else is in the next room I can tell it somehow.

I don't know why this is so, it just is and I've never really thought about it. I used to think that everybody could do it. Different people have different knacks and among mine are that when I shoot a gun I always hit what I aim at, no matter where I am I can always tell which way is true North, and I can always tell where people are around me. When I walked into Lynn's house, my knack told me, "Hey, Lynn's here." In fact, he seemed to be standing up between the couch and a chair directly in front of a large plant that I later learned was the plant that I'd had sent to his funeral. I didn't see anything unusual, it just felt like he was there and he wanted me to know that he was glad that I'd finally come up to visit.

I know what you're thinking. You're not thinking that I'm nuts, necessarily; you're thinking that I'm just making this up to have something exciting to tell. You're thinking that I'm spinning this wild ghost story and some of you are starting to think that it's maybe in kind of poor taste to be using the occasion of Lynn's death to invent a ghost story, and you're certainly not going to believe a word of this. I don't blame you. When I think about it rationally I don't believe it either. I honestly don't believe in that which I can't see or touch, but I'm stating to you that when I walked into Lynn's living room that evening the certainty that he was standing there in the corner hit me and if I had closed my eyes I'd have sworn that he really was there. I'm not asking you to believe anything except that his presence in that house was as real to me as was Mark's or Carolyn's. I don't intend to try to explain it. I'm just reporting what I experienced there, and you can make what you will of it. I hesitated for a long time to write about this, but since I believe (as we say in these parts) with my hand to God that all this is true, then for the purpose of reading this article you might as well accept it on that basis.

And if you want to know the rest of it, he seemed to be very happy – delighted, in fact – and he stayed in the living room for some reason that I can't imagine. Mark took me all over the house a bit later and we went out back to the slant shack (which is where I would have expected to notice something if anywhere), upstairs and in the garage. No matter where I was, my "senses" told me that Lynn was in the living room, and was very happy. During my visit he only moved once and I'll get to that in a bit.

Carolyn was at work when I arrived but Mark welcomed me in and we sat and talked a while. We had previously talked on the phone about SF books and pulps and Mark wanted to pick my brains a bit for advice about selling some of the books that he'd inherited. He's not into SF himself and hasn't been a SF dealer before but he's worked a lot with sports cards and knows the basics about that sort of business. He's just unfamiliar with the SF market and that was where I came in. We talked about the various

specialty SF dealers and Pulpcon and the auctions there, and I described the way that I sell SF books at conventions. Mark had already sorted a lot of the material and much of it was pretty good stuff. The condition was usually good with a few items having been damaged in storage and some of it soiled or dusty. I showed him some of the ways I use to clean books. Lynn's collection of hardback SF had some very nice items and mostly seemed to have been bought new and packed away.

Some of these were later sold at Pulpcon that year. Lynn's pulp collection was much better. Most of it was upstairs in a hallway that had been turned into library and it's condition was better than average. I saw a lot of hero pulps, a good bit of SF, large stacks of air pulps and a few westerns. I've often said that you can tell a lot about a fellow by looking at his collection. Lynn's collection told me a few things that I hadn't known before. It seems that he reviewed SF for a while in the early '60s or at least was able to get on several publishers' lists for review copies (most likely because he published *The Pulp Era* at the time.)

Although he read mostly SF he also read mysteries too, and particularly liked Frank Gruber, Harold Q. Masur, and Mike Resnick's stories. He was something of a technophile and loved to work with his computer and had a really nice desktop publishing outfit. Most of his mimeograph stuff had been removed before I got there, but there was still a lot of it around. (I later found that Howard DeVore had collected some of it for First Fandom.) There was a large box of overrun sheets from his last issue of the *Pulp Era*. Mark gave those to me and when I get a chance I'll assemble as many of those as I can and distribute them at Pulpcon.)

There were hundreds of extra copies of Lynn's other fanzines – mostly his apazines from FLAP, KAPA, Myriad, and others. I didn't see much pulp related stuff. I know he used to enclose one or two of his zines from other apas whenever he wrote me so I assume he habitually ran off a lot of extras for that purpose. Out back in the garden Lynn had converted an old garden shed into a comfortable little retreat that he called his slan shack. I was interested to note that Carolyn and Mark – who aren't SF fans themselves and didn't know where the name came from – nonetheless still called that building “the slan shack” in casual conversation. Carolyn had found a paperback of *Slan* by A.E. Van Vogt and wondered to me if there was a connection so I explained about it.

Of course, I imagine that Lynn was thinking of the first slan shack at Al Ashley's place in Michigan during WWII since it was made famous in the fanzines of the day. Pulp fans today know that the true Sian Shack is behind the house at 413 Ottokee in Wauseon. Lynn had moved some of his best stuff out there and much of it was there during my visit. He'd asked me up to see his impressive collection of pulp cover art, and I'm glad that I got to see some of it in its natural setting. The Frank R. Pauls were sold before Lynn's death, but I did see most of the ones that he talked about over the years in PEAPS. The Walter Baumhoffer cover from *Adventure*, the R.G. Jones cover from *Fantastic Adventures*, the Ed Cartier and the Hubert Rogers from *Astounding*. There was a Lawrence Stevens painting that had been found in a pile of rags when they first started cleaning up and a Virgil Finlay drawing that was found in a box of old fanzine art. There was a faded pencil drawing on very brown paper that I recognized as a Jerome Rozen – but only because I saw Lynn buy it at a Pulpcon auction years ago. For me, the best of the batch was the cover printing that illustrated the first issue of *Imagination* – a painting by Hannes Bok. Incredible. I wish Ned Brooks could see it. The impact of the original is stunning. Serious buyers were already talking to Mark about those paintings and they were about to be moved to more secure facilities after I left. There was also a file of old fanzine art, much of it by Terry Jeeves, that Carolyn passed on to me for use in my fanzines. I was also given some original Plato Jones artwork. That's one of the names that Lynn used back in the '50s for his own fanzine art. Some fine artwork there.

Prior to my visit Carolyn and Mark had sorted out much of Lynn's papers and boxed up most of the fanzines. These awaited me in the living room and I moved them out to the truck that night. I was also given his fannish correspondence files which contain letters from numerous pro writers and big name fans of the past. There also seems to be some early First Fandom material which is to be expected since Lynn was a founding member of that organization. All this will be carefully sorted and preserved for the future and I'll try to find good uses for it in the coming years.

Carolyn put me up in the guest room and I slept fine that night. No ghosts, no dreams, and I awoke feeling refreshed. I took Carolyn to lunch at a little place in town that has great cherry pie and I got

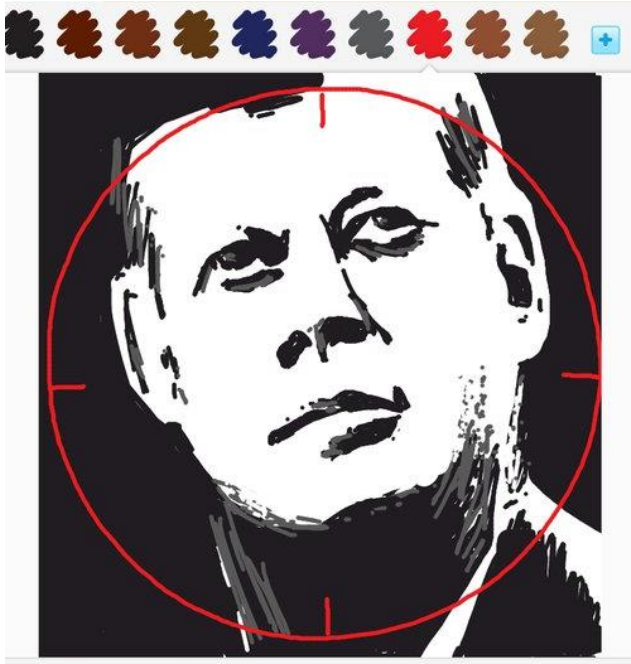
to hear about how she and Lynn first met. She may not have been a SF fan but Carolyn did go to a lot of conventions with Lynn and she kept her eyes open. She long ago met Tucker, Bloch, and Grennell; knew the teenaged Harlan Ellison, and has wonderful stories about Midwestern fandom clear back to the '50s. Later that morning at my request we drove over to nearby Napoleon Ohio.

That's where Lynn grew up and that's where he's buried in a family plot next to his mother and right across from his brother who was an 8th Air Force fighter pilot and who was shot down over Holland in 1944. The death of his brother to whom Lynn was very close may explain some of Lynn's fascination with flying and the air pulps. It's a beautiful gravesite, about the prettiest I've ever seen. The stonecutter was just putting Lynn's dates on the stone while we were there. Carolyn mentioned that she was thinking of having some sort of symbol put over Lynn's name. "Maybe a First Fandom insignia," I blurted out, without thinking. "Yes," she said. "That's what I was thinking of." We visited there for a while and then went on back to Wauseon where I said my good-byes and left.

Well, not quite that simply. I mentioned earlier when I was describing how I'd "felt" Lynn's presence in the house all during my visit and he'd not moved from that corner of the living room except for once. I was standing in the doorway about to leave when I turned around to take a last look over at that corner. Suddenly that "feeling", or "presence" or whatever it was, came over to the doorway where I was. I mean I actually sensed it move across the room to the doorway. I didn't hear anything, I didn't see anything, but I had an odd feeling sort of like *deja vu*. For just a moment I couldn't think of anything except the very last moment I'd seen Lynn in Asheville over a year ago when he'd raised his hand in farewell and called "So long Curt, see you next time."

Yeah, I know - the unbelievable stuff again. What I know is that when I walked out that door, my grief for my friend's death was over. I still miss Lynn, and will for as long as I live but somehow I had said the goodbye that I needed to say. I stopped back by the cemetery on the way home. The stonecutter had finished and gone away. I didn't "sense" anything there, nor did I expect to. But just in case I said, very quietly, "So long Lynn. See you next time, pal." Then I went home.





ANOTHER JFK CONSPIRACY OPTION

Binker Glock Hughes

JFK conspiracy theorists have been weeping in their beer since the recent forensic research that seems to make it a one-gunman scenario – but Weep No More. There's an option for a real beauty of a conspiracy theory that has just come to my attention, due to an interview with the author (researcher) of a book called *End of Days* about the moment-by-moment events of the day JFK was assassinated.

Kennedy's brain is NOT buried with him. That's right. Robert Kennedy had it removed and had it in his possession for a while. The writer (whose name I forget, alas) theorizes that it was to prevent analysis that would show various diseases JFK had, some of which were early and long-term enough that they could have compromised his political career. After a time in RFK's possession, it ended up in a steel box in a locked file at the Secret Service (or maybe FBI or CIA – all details are in the book, I gather), together with some other artifacts.

Kennedy's brain was stolen. Halloween night ('75?), it and the associated JFK artifacts all disappeared from that locked file cabinet/cupboard/whatever. As conspiracy-theory raw material, though, it gets better.

Edmund Morris, whose article led to calling the Kennedy era "Camelot", told the writer that Jackie was the one who introduced, and insisted on, that analogy, even leaning over his shoulder when he was calling in his story to make sure the "one brief shining moment" and "Camelot" images were featured. His editor heard her and commented on it. What do we know about King Arthur? That he was the "once *and future*" King of Britain. Since cloning was on the scientific horizon then, though not yet possible, *there's* a conspiracy for you!

By the time the brain and artifacts were stolen, cloning was even closer to possibility. There would have been plenty of DNA in the brain for countless tries, once cloning became possible and viable, so those who wanted JFK back could keep trying until they had a child who not only looked the part, but assimilated the training in JFK's background and behavior – as well as being able to be brought up-to-date with the changes the intervening decades have brought. Then, at some strategic moment, the clone could turn up.

Just to take a showy example, what if he walked up and blew out the "eternal flame" at the 50th anniversary commemoration at the gravesite? Whether then, or at some other time, "JFK" – at a suitably young age – could "return from the grave to save our nation" and win by a landslide. His handlers would remain behind the scenes, but pull the strings. How's *that* for a conspiracy for you?

I leave it up to your fertile imaginations to work out the details of who benefits, who could arrange it, how it was all worked out, and the many failures before they got their “once and future President” (he was still in his first term) ready for primetime; but that’s child’s play to a good conspiracy theorist. You can even return to your earlier conspiracy theories to say Oswald and Ruby were following someone’s instructions to remove JFK, both dying soon after playing their parts in the drama. So rejoice, ye dismayed conspiracy theorists – this option is even juicier than the ones that are now thought outmoded. Enjoy!



TWO POEMS

FORGIVING US STILL

a bunch of motorcyclists
ride up quiet on their smoking
hogs. I stop window-shopping
In Provincetown sightseeing when

to have a look, the butter
crunch ice cream dripping
down the sugar cone into
the palm of my hand.
Older motorcyclists:
cigarettes smoldering from dark
bearded faces, long gray hair,
protruding beer bellies, faded
tattoos. They have women
with them, hard looking women
in shiny black hip boots,
tangled blonde hair, peace
sign earrings and love beads too,
like in the 60s.

But nobody’s worried
as they park their bikes
with a clatter and dismount
because the lettering on
their jackets reads:

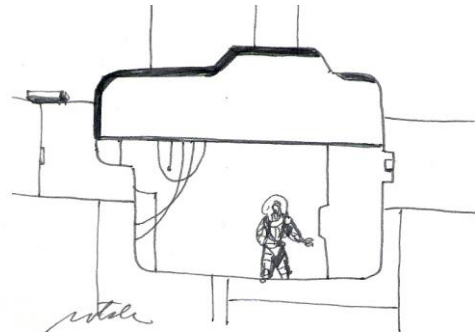
VIETNAM VETS

And somehow we feel safe then,
certain, solemn, because
they’re bigger than life, noble,
for they’ve been to hell and
returned to tell us about it
and live among us,
forgiving us still.

Mike Estabrook

Helicopter

Jimmy drives us to the club in his
battered Ford pickup suddenly a giant
khaki Chopper appears circling
banking stiff blades churning the hot
June air as it swoops down over
the trees, stopping, hovering right
above us: thank God this isn’t Nam,
I say, voicing what I know is
thundering through Jimmy’s
frantic mind (smoky scenes
of bleeding broken bodies; bullets,
rockets whizzing all around)
but it doesn’t matter what I say,
he must pull over, wipe the sweat
from his face, and wait for his hands
to stop shaking before driving on.



There is no such thing as cosmic coincidence.

The NewFUTURIANS

David B. Williams

After its premiere in 2007, *The Big Bang Theory* quickly became one of the top sitcoms on network TV. As a student of fanhistory, I immediately began thinking of the four lead characters as the New Futurians.

There are many similarities between the BB Gang of Four and the New York City Futurians who stirred up fandom in the late '30s and early '40s. Like the guys on TBBT, the original Futurians were a core group of young fans who shared a residence. These cenobites attracted a close circle of occasional roommates, non-resident Futurians, and a wider circle of social affiliates.

The head counts are identical at four. According to Frederik Pohl, "Among the Futurians . . . The People Who Decided were Don Wollheim, John Michel, Bob Lowndes, and I. We called ourselves 'the Quadrumvirate,' and we lived in and among each other's lives almost inextricably."

"We lived in and among each other's lives almost inextricably" certainly applies to Leonard, Sheldon, Howard, and Raj. Driven by the exigencies of half-hour TV, they do almost everything together.



In addition to the core Quadrumvirate, prime Futurians included Cyril Kornbluth, Dick Wilson, Dave Kyle, James Blish, Judy Merrill, Larry Shaw, and Damon Knight (who didn't arrive until 1941), and several other fans no longer remembered.

Isaac Asimov attended

the charter meeting of the broader Futurian Society and paid his dues, so he has to be counted as an official Futurian.

Unlike the BB guys, the Futurians didn't stick to one address but inhabited a series of shared domiciles: Futurian House, the Ivory Tower, Futurian Embassy, Prime Base, Futurian Fortress. The list of cohabitants varied as different Futurians moved in and out or, when things got crowded, the group divided and established colony slant shacks nearby.

The original Futurians were dedicated SF fans. Like the BB boys, they knew all the classic genre stories and characters. They could talk the talk, but at a time before blockbuster SF movies, TV shows, or video gaming, the talk came from the printed pages of fantastic literature. Their rooms were cluttered with SF magazines. The place of today's computers and printers was occupied by typewriters and duplicating equipment for fanzine production.

In that pre-TV era, they also devoted a lot of their time to playing games, but in the absence of electronics, these were often word games and other mental contests invented by the Futurians themselves. Like the BB guys, they all possessed high intelligence.

The two groups also share an interest in science. Like many early SF fans, the Futurians were science geeks, but strictly at the amateur level (Asimov and Blish did earn degrees in science). Most were

members of the International Scientific Association, with Wollheim serving as ISA treasurer and Pohl as editor of the official journal. The BB guys are all professional scientists.

One other similarity involves women. The Futurians attracted a number of femmefans, extraordinary for that time: Judy Merril (later Pohl), Virginia Kidd (later Blish), Elsie Balter (later Wollheim). The BB crew includes Penny, Priya, Bernadette, and Amy, each of whom has been amorously linked to one of the guys.

But, while the Futurians and the BB guys resemble each other as science geeks, gamers, and brainiacs, there are also differences.

Age is one difference. Part of the comic premise of TBBT is that these are grown men still obsessed with adolescent pastimes; “boys trapped in men’s bodies” as an exasperated Priya once put it.

The original Futurians were all much younger. When they rented their first house, only one of them was old enough to sign the lease. Later, when they leased an apartment and the older front man wasn’t available, they had to resort to deception.

Another difference is employment. All the BB guys have good university jobs (well, Raj seems to be working on projects that are grant-supported; you postdocs and research associates know how that works). In the middle of the Great Depression, few of the original Futurians had good jobs or even enjoyed regular employment. Wages were low (Pohl’s first full-time job paid ten dollars per week), and poverty ruled.

The boom in SF prozines that began around 1940 created editorial positions that Futurians such as Wollheim, Pohl, and Lowndes could fill, but compensation was modest even by Depression standards. Most of the Futurians were also breaking in as new writers, and when some of them became editors, they bought stories from each other. But with second-tier prozines paying only half a cent per word or less, these earnings were meager.

One striking difference is TBBT’s total lack of political consciousness. There’s not a clue to indicate that these guys have any political preferences, or that they even vote. In contrast, the Futurians were sizzling with radical politics. Like many Depression-era idealists, they were strongly leftist. Several attended meetings of the Young Communist League, and Michel went so far as to join the Party.

The Futurians relished injecting their politics into fannish affairs, roiling the proceedings of the third eastern convention in Philadelphia and demolishing the Greater New York chapter of the Science Fiction League.

And finally, there is one big difference that makes all the difference to me. The BB guys are not science fiction fans in the classic meaning of the term. They are comics fans, gamers, and media fans. They don’t read SF or mention any classic or contemporary SF writers. They are eager to track down and meet Stan Lee, but not any of the Los Angeles area’s big-name SF writers.

In the age of Mass Fandom, when migrants from media, comics, and gaming make up the majority of convention attendees, the BB guys must be considered fans of a sort. But they don’t publish or read fanzines. They look forward with eager anticipation to ComicCon each year, not World SF Con. They don’t attend LASFS meetings. They cannot claim any direct descent from the pioneers who organized SF fandom in the 1930s. They lack any heritage from the golden age of fanzines in the 1950s.

The Futurians were SF fans through and through. They published and wrote for fanzines, they attended all the Science Fiction League club meetings in the New York City area, and they were prominent at all the early conventions. Many went on to careers in professional SF. The BB guys are Ph.D. scientists (well, three of them are). They are unlikely to change careers and become comics writers or video game designers.

World War II scattered Futurian manpower. Ironically, after fighting so stridently against alleged fascism in fandom, some Futurians got the chance to fight real fascism on the European battlefields. Kornbluth was decorated for combat in the Battle of the Bulge, when he may have acquired the heart

condition that killed him in 1958. Blish served as an army lab technician. Kyle was in the Armored Corps. Pohl served as an Army Air Force weatherman in Italy.

The Futurians regrouped as the war came to a close, long enough to found the Vanguard Amateur Press Association in 1945. But they were older now. Many remained engaged with fandom, but their former concerns and commitments no longer burned so fiercely.

Much of their energy was diverted into serious SF careers. Wollheim edited some pioneer SF anthologies, then became the influential editor at Ace Books and later added the role of publisher at his own imprint, DAW Books. Lowndes continued working as a magazine editor and as SF editor at Avalon Books.

Pohl became a leading agent and continued writing solo and in collaboration with Kornbluth. He returned to editing with the Star Science Fiction series of original paperback anthologies in the 1950s and won Hugos as the editor at *Galaxy* and *If* in the 1960s.

Then Pohl concentrated on writing and became a highly regarded SF novelist, continuing to publish new work beyond his 90th birthday (and winning the fan-writing Hugo in 2010 for his blog posts, many of which recalled the old days and his Futurian comrades).

In addition to his collaborations with Pohl, Kornbluth published more than 50 short stories and several solo novels before his early death at age 34, just as he was picked to fill the editor's chair at *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*.

Blish became a Hugo-winning writer and kept his oar in fannish waters as the reviewer known as William Atheling Jr. His critical reviews, first published in fanzines, were collected in *The Issue at Hand*.

Knight also attained fame as a reviewer in fanzines, eventually collecting his essays in the Hugo-winning volume *In Search of Wonder*. In the professional arena, he began as a mediocre artist, continued as an above-average writer, and finally became renowned as the editor of original SF anthologies.

Michel's story didn't end as happily. Judith Merrill described Michel as one of the most talented Futurians, but "there was some real lack of confidence, or self-direction, or something, that just kept him from going anywhere."

In 1949, the Communists asked Michel to leave the Party because of poor attendance. He also dropped out of fandom, moved away from NYC, and cut ties with all his old friends. For the next twenty years, he earned a meager living by freelance writing – continuity for comics, newspaper pieces, children's books, and several erotic novels.

His life gradually devolved into a miasma of alcoholism and mental disorders that required commitment to psychiatric hospitals and electroshock therapy. In 1969, his body was found face-down in a stream, drowned in water only knee-deep.

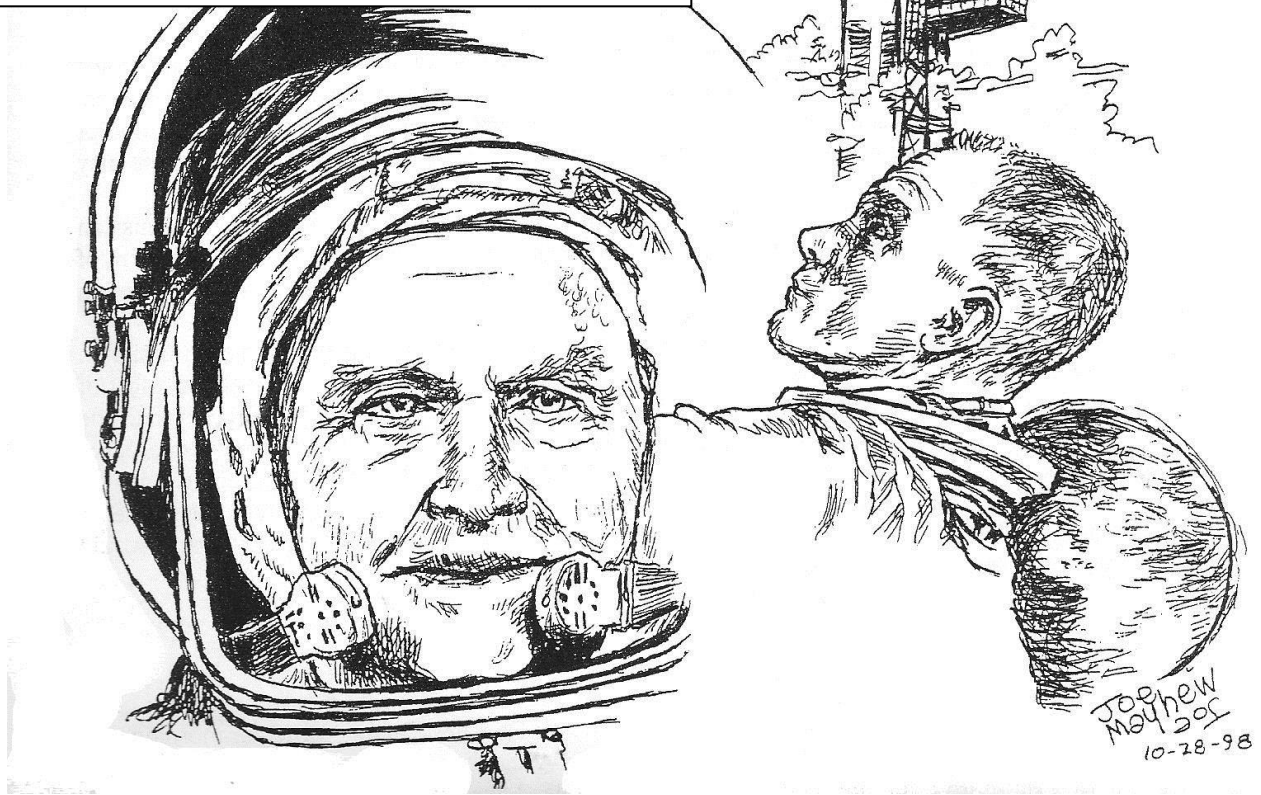
The Big Bang Theory is a TV sitcom, so its future history and conclusion should be predictable. But for how many more years can these aging characters convincingly continue spending Wednesday nights playing Halo, standing in line for movie openings, and dressing up as superhero characters?

Will Raj ever get a steady girl? Will Sheldon and Amy ever do the dirty deed? Will we ever see Howard's mom? Will the final episode earn stratospheric ratings with Leonard and Penny's wedding? Stay tuned; the rest is yet to come.



heroes:

JOHN GLENN



Chris Barkley

On Tuesday, 20 Feb. 1962, I was a five year old attending one of the newly minted Head Start schooling programs at Hoffman Public Elementary in Cincinnati, Ohio. I do not look back upon most those days fondly; I did not work well with others, was often the last to get to the crayons, cars and trains and other toys. As a consequence, I was spanked or disciplined in one manner or another by exasperated teachers almost every day.

On this particular winter's day however, things were a little bit different. I remember a huge black and white television set being wheeled into the room on a tall cart and several groups of children from surrounding rooms were brought in to sit in front of it. Since we were the smallest, we sat right up front underneath the big screen. The image on the screen was etched into my mind forever; it showed what looked to me like a big thermos with smoke pouring off on the side at several competing angles. Our teacher, a woman whose name I don't remember, got up in front of the assembled children and told us that the man inside the tiny capsule on top of this rocket just might be launched today. The kids had been disappointed before; several times we had gathered before and nothing had happened.

As she turned up the volume on the TV coverage (god, could it have been the immortal voice of NBC's Frank McGee that I remember?), the kids in the room settled down to await the launch. We may have been small, but we knew, on pure instinct, that this was important. At one time or another we had all seen rockets blow up on the launching pad on the news ... And besides, there may be a cartoon on afterwards.

Later in the morning, it happened. All the children counted down with the mission controller, eight, seven, six ... on five a plume of real smoke and real fire erupted from the bottom of the rocket, as it was held clamped in place as the engines powered up ... two, one and we screamed in delight as Friendship Seven cleared the gantry and roared into the sky. We all followed the missile on the screen as it quickly streaked out of sight. The teacher then turned off the TV. I groaned. Most of the kids were ready for lunch or playtime. I told the teacher I wanted to see more of the rocket. The teacher patiently explained that TV time was over. When my complaints became more vociferous, I was spanked and sent to the corner, keeping my bad behavior streak alive at 107 consecutive days. I was sent home with a sore bottom but I was also convinced that I, too, would become an astronaut just like John Glenn and ride a rocket into space. Little did I know that our paths would diverge effectively a mere two years later.

I remember that it was a warm spring day. Since we lived a few blocks away, my older sister, Gwen Anne, and I walked to our school, St. Francis De Sales. On this particular morning, our route was to walk two blocks south from 3137 Fairfield Ave., where we lived with our grandmother, Hattie (MaMa), turn right onto a one way street, De Sales Lane for one block, turn left to go south on Cleinview Avenue, up a small hill towards the next street, Fernwood, a short street that led straight to the school playground.

Being the oldest two of four (soon to be six) children, we didn't talk very much to each other. Most of the time we just tolerated each other's presence, like all siblings. When we reached the top of the hill and turned onto Fernwood, I could see the kids, all boys, playing whiffle ball, not more than 100 yards away. Thinking that I could get in some quality playing time in before school, I took off running full tilt towards the game in progress.

I barely remember my sister screaming at me at the top of her lungs to stop ... because in my eagerness to get to that whiffle ball game, I had forgotten that there was one more street to cross the schoolyard, Hackberry Avenue. I flew, unheeding across the southbound lane safely, straight into the path of Frank Allison, who was driving a white Ford station wagon for the local Burger Beer distributor, on his way to work. I was very fortunate that Mr. Allison was driving at the posted speed limit of 20 mph; if he were not, the impact would have killed me instantly.

Instead, I bounced off of his grill and onto the street. No bones were broken but my left eye sustained serious damage. I was taken to Jewish Hospital and operated on immediately. I was out of the hospital in a week. I sported a not very cool looking eye patch for the rest of the spring and was the poster boy for what happened to children who did not look both ways before crossing the street. The city painted a crosswalk at the point where I was hit.

Sometimes I go back to that spot and reminisce ... if I hadn't been hit, would I have become an Air Force or Navy pilot? Could I have cracked into the elite astronaut training corps? I'd like to think so. God, I'd like to think so ...

My obsession with science, science fiction and other wonders of my early childhood go back to John Glenn and his flight on Friendship 7. I don't remember the earlier Mercury flights of Alan Shepard or Gus Grissom, it was John Glenn, first American to orbit the Earth, a Marine from Ohio no less, was the one I wanted to emulate the most. Even after the accident, my enthusiasm grew. I followed every launching of any rocket on television, even to the point of feigning illness or outright playing hooky from school to do so. I was slightly disappointed when John Glenn left the space program after the Mercury project ended. There were new heroes to follow, Gene Cernan, Jim Lovell and another guy from Wapakoneta, Ohio, Neil Armstrong.

By the time 1966 rolled around, my eyesight had deteriorated to the point to that I was wearing glasses. That summer, my cousin Michael from Dayton gave me a comic book, *Justice League of America* #47; part one of a two part story. He had only the first part so I had to go hunting for part two. For about two years. This event and the adventures that followed (chronicled elsewhere) led me down a path to SF fandom 10 years later. At the same time, Project Gemini had given way to Project Apollo, the

last step to man landing on the moon. It was an exciting time to be alive. I worried about the Vietnam War that I saw each evening on the news but my main concerns were watching tons of TV, finding money for comics and reading all sorts of material about science and space travel.

I became such an expert at school, that I earned nicknames like “Moon Man” and “Space Head”. I remember being angry at their taunts but soon I recognize that they were jealous of my thirst for knowledge about things that they could not begin to comprehend or even fantasize about. I remember one incident in particular that was typical of the attitude of most of my classmates. One spring morning during recess, I wandered too close to a boy who was carelessly swinging his bat while he waited to bat next. The bat hit me in the back of the head and down I went. I never lost consciousness and was not crying, just dazed and stunned by what had just happened. A group of kids gathered around me and several rolled me onto my back. I opened my eyes and saw that beyond the faces looking down, up in the clear blue sky was the moon, crystal clear, just about or nearly into its first quarter. One boy, I think it might have been a kid named Tim Grogan, looked up at what I was staring at and got an idea.

“I know a way we can tell if he’s OK,” I remember him saying. He picked me up by the shoulders, leaned in close to my face and asked, “How far is it to the Moon?”

“About 240,000 miles,” I answered almost automatically; geez, every kid should know ...

At that point, Tim Grogan, master physician, dropped me and my head hit the asphalt again! As I sat there trying to recover from this second blow, rose from his position and announced, “See? He’s OK ...”

The crowd broke up as a teacher came wandering over to find out what the hell was going on. The boys yelled at me to get outta the way as the teacher helped me up, they wanted to finish the game before the end of recess...

I take pride in the fact that John Glenn and I are from Ohio. I voted for him in every Senate election even though I have very strong Libertarian beliefs and he is somewhat liberal Democrat. I knew instinctively that any political decision he made, any vote on the floor of the United States’ Senate, would be the same as my own. For the most part, I think my judgment of him has been correct. John Glenn would have made an excellent President. Somehow, his 1984 campaign never quite got on track. It was thought that the 1983 movie adaptation of Tom Wolfe’s *The Right Stuff* might give him an edge of the other Democratic candidates. It was my impression that Ed Harris’ portrayal of him, as being somewhat gung ho, arrogant and ambitious and somewhat calculating, did not serve him well.

I have never met Mr. Glenn, nor do I know that he is that way in real life. I’d like to think not. And now at age 77, he’s going back in to space. I love it. I am proud and utterly and deliriously happy for him. When he rises into the sky for the second time, I’ll feel as though a piece of myself, the state of Ohio, of America itself, will be going with him. And who knows; maybe somewhere down the line, there will be a place on a shuttle for a myopic, middle aged, slightly overweight SF writer.

Godspeed, John Glenn, and happy landings.



13-15 September 1998 Cincinnati, Ohio



You
Only
Joke
Twice

Joseph T. Major

... *Blofeld paused.* He said softly, "I have one of the greatest brains in the world, Mister Bond. Have you anything to say in reply? As the Americans say, 'It had better be good.'"

Bond took another cigarette and lit it. He said composedly, "I stick to the truth, Blofeld. If anything happens to me, you, and probably the woman as an accessory, will be dead by Christmas."

"All right, Mister Bond. But I am so sure of my facts that I am now going to kill you with my own hands and dispose of your body without more ado. On reflection, I would rather do it myself than have it done slowly by the guards. You have been a thorn in my flesh for too long. The account I have to settle with you is a personal one. Have you ever heard the Japanese expression 'kiri sute gomen'?"

Bond groaned. "Spare me the Lafcadio Hearn, Blofeld!"

"It dates from the time of the samurai. It means literally 'killing and going away.' If a low person hindered the samurai's passage along the road or failed to show him proper respect, the samurai was within his rights to lop off the man's head. I regard myself as a latter-day samurai. My fine sword has not yet been blooded. Yours will be an admirable head to cut its teeth on." He turned to Irma Bunt. "You agree, mein Liebchen?"

The square wardress face looked up from its petit point. "But of course, lieber Ernst. What you decide is always correct. But be careful. This animal is dangerous."

“You forget, mein Liebchen. Since last January he has ceased to be an animal. By a simple stroke of surgery on the woman he loved, I reduced him to human dimensions.”

The dominant, horrific figure stood away from the mantelpiece and took up his sword.

“Let me show you.”

Bond dropped his lighted cigarette and left it to smolder on the carpet. His whole body tensed. He said, “I suppose you know you’re both mad as hatters.”

The crash of a shotgun being fired cut off the response Blofeld must have been generating. Then an all too familiar voice fell on Bond’s semi-deafened ears: “And what’s wrong with that? It’s done wonders for me!”

The Joker! The grotesque American criminal had somehow come to Japan, in Bond’s trail, or even on his own. But how did he get in? What was his intent?

“What are you doing in my establishment?” Blofeld said, coldly.

“Tryouts.” He came into view on one side of Bond, who risked a glance at him. He too had gone native, apparently, and was wearing a purple kimono embroidered with laughing Buddhas, revealing his unnaturally pale skin.

“Liebchen, have the Americans sent an assassin of their own?” Bunt was understandably wary of the gun.

“See how successful you are? You took Britain’s white knight and brought him down to our level! It wasn’t hard. You see, madness, as you know is like gravity! All it takes is a little push! All it takes is one bad day to reduce the sanest man to lunacy. That’s how far the world is from where I am, one bad day.” He laughed again, that uncontrollable, sinister laugh. “You can’t go blaming *me* for that unfortunate incident on the highway. You know I wouldn’t have done it *that* way. It wasn’t *funny*.”

They seemed transfixed by him, never noticing that he was edging closer to Irma Bunt. That would distract them. Closer, closer, and then Bond would take out Blofeld. He held himself steady in spite of the pounding in his head and watched.

“Do you want to know how I got these scars?” The Joker indicated his contorted face. “One night, after hours, I was inspecting a chemical plant. There’s always a need for the better whoopee cushion. Then, while on a catwalk, I got distracted. A bat got in my face. One misstep, whoops, splosh, yahh! And here I am!

“As for your place . . .” He shook his head. “Far too expensive. Far too complicated. I do know a young lady who might like your garden, but the rest of it — just too much for the likes of me. No. I’m a man of simple tastes. I enjoy dynamite, and gunpowder, and . . . gasoline! And you know the thing they have in common? They’re cheap!”

He could almost touch Irma Bunt. Bond tensed his muscles, carefully, seeing how Blofeld was confused, intent on the intruder.

“Just like how I came here, on the cheap. Shipped in a container marked “sushi”. For my encore, I plan to be shipped with a load of coal to Newcastle, so I can drop in on this man’s boss. It should be amusing!” And he laughed again.

“You are no better than Mister Bond here; a common thug, not even of the sort wielded by dolts in high places. You perform your chaotic ventures for no reason whatsoever, not even the mundane and



ordinary gain of vulgar profit. You are no more than a thing of the ground, a monster like the creation of Frankenstein.” Blofeld shifted his hands on the sword.

“I’m not. No, I’m not. See, I’m not a monster. I’m just ahead of the curve.” He ran a hand through his verdigris hair, then shook one finger at Blofeld. “Look, listen. I know why you choose to have this little recreational facility out in the middle of the country, with advertisements for it in the back pages of the newspapers between the pictures of slimy tentacled things fondling girls in sailor suits, and above it a balloon with a big banner hanging from it saying SEE BLOFELD AND DIE. I know why you’re afraid to stay in your clever little office building in Paris.” He paused again. “Bond. You see,



Bond here has shown the world your true colors, unfortunately.”

“E-NOUGH!” Blofeld shouted. He had cracked. “Irma, take him out!”

“Very poor choice of words.”

But Bond had launched himself at Blofeld. Who staggered back, hit by the shotgun itself, thrown at him. No weapons. Hand to hand! Bond made a dive for Blofeld’s neck and got both hands to it. For a moment the two sweating faces were almost up against each other. Blofeld had dropped the sword when he had been hit and was fumbling for it. Bond pressed with his thumbs, and pressed and pressed and pressed and felt Blofeld’s fingers and nails now tearing at his face, trying to reach his eyes. Bond whispered through his gritted teeth,

“Die, Blofeld! Die!” And suddenly the tongue was out and the eyes rolled upwards and the body slipped down to the ground. But Bond followed it and knelt, his hands cramped round the powerful neck, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, in the terrible grip of blood lust.

Bond slowly came to himself. The golden dragon’s head on the black silk kimono spat flame at him. He unclasped his aching hands from round the neck and, not looking again at the purple face, got to his feet. He staggered. God, how his head hurt! What remained to be done?

“Now I believe whatever doesn’t kill you, simply makes you . . . *stranger!*”

He wasn’t alone. The thought may have come to him too late. The blood pounding through his head, Bond turned. Irma Bunt lay sprawled on the floor, her face locked in that eerie clownish rictus that the Joker’s poison produced. The tip of his shoe was in his vision, with a knife protruding from it. Bond tried to remember where he had seen that before. Rosa Klebb! The SMERSH assassin had had shoes like that. The polished shoes were incongruous against the Japanese dress, but the Joker was an assembly of incongruous images.

His scarred gaze was now directed towards Bond. “So, stranger, wouldn’t you like to ride in a beautiful balloon? I’m going to need a minute or two alone.”

. . . And so the days ran into weeks and the police came again and again from Fukuoka, and the official called Tanaka came from Tokyo and later a huge man who said he was from Australia arrived and he was the most difficult of all for Kissy to shake off. But the face of *shiran-kao* remained of stone and the island of Kuro kept its secret. James Bond’s body gradually mended and Kissy took him out for walks at night. They also went for an occasional swim in the cove, where they played with David and she told him all the history of the Ama and expertly parried all his questions about the world outside the island.

Then the *oni* came. The Shinto priest saw it first, a fierce figure with a sinister grinning face, gliding through the night. It saw the priest and laughed, mockingly, and he withdrew to his shrine and meditated over the meaning of what he had seen.

“There are no *oni*,” the doctor said when he heard of the sighting. “The priest saw a bird, or a wisp of the fog.”

“Winter is coming, and we must mend our nets,” Kissy’s father said. “Do not trouble Tado with talk of this *oni*, for he must recover.”

The doctor and the priest agreed. And Kissy said nothing of the *oni*.

The next day, the woman from America came. She said she was a doctor who studied the mind, and she wished to write about the people of the island, while her friend, who was a doctor who studied plants, looked at the gardens that had been at the Castle of Death. This worried Kissy very much, for the plants there had been chosen to make people sick, and harm them, and even kill them.

She gave Kissy money to be her translator, and her parents more money for a futon in a corner of a room in their house. In the days, she went around the village with Kissy, asking many questions about their thoughts and beliefs and ways. At night, Kissy left her to write of her days, and went up to the cave where James Bond was.

On the fifth day, when she arrived there, he was troubled. “What is wrong, love?” Kissy said as she put down the food she had brought for them.

“The foreign woman. She . . . there is something familiar, something I know of her. Why is she not wearing black and red?”

Kissy could not understand why he thought of that, but in her heart she knew fear. This was his past, the past she had sought to protect him from. She felt very small and very helpless. There was a rustle behind her. Slowly she turned and gasped. The *oni* was there in the mouth of the cave, its terrifying scarred mouth limned in red as though with fresh blood, gaping in a perpetual smile. Black-ringed eyes bored into her soul. Then it opened that terrifying mouth and spoke:

“Don’t get up, Bond. Just an old friend, coming to say hello. Why, you know your boss said you were dead. Wrote you a very nice obituary. I’ve been dead once already, it’s been very liberating. You should think of it as therapy!”





Gregory Benford
LEAPING THE ABYSS

*Stephen Hawking on black holes, unified field theory,
and Marilyn Monroe.*

Gregory Benford

Illustration by Charles Williams

*Article reprinted from **Challenger** no. 16*

Stephen Hawking seemed slightly worse, as always. It is a miracle that he has clung to life for over 20 years with Lou Gehrig's disease. Each time I see him I feel that this will be the last, that he cannot hold on to such a thin thread for much longer.

Hawking turned 63 in January, 2005. Over the course of his brilliant career, he has worked out many of the basics of black hole physics, including, most strikingly, his prediction that black holes aren't entirely black. Instead, if they have masses equivalent to a mountain's, they radiate particles of all kinds. Smaller holes would disappear in a fizz of radiation – a signature that astronomers have searched for but so far not found.

The enormous success of Hawking's 1988 book, *A Brief History of Time*, has made him a curious kind of cultural icon. He wonders how many of the starlets and rock stars who mentioned the book on talk shows actually read it.

With his latest book, *The Universe in a Nutshell* (Bantam), he aims to remedy the situation with a plethora of friendly illustrations to help readers decipher such complex topics as superstring theory and the nature of time. The trick is translating equations into sentences, no mean feat. The pictures help enormously, though purists deplore them as oversimplified. I feel that any device is justified to span such an abyss of incomprehension.

When I entered Stephen's office at the University of Cambridge, his staff was wary of me, plainly suspecting I was a "civilian" harboring a crank theory of the universe. But I'd called beforehand, and then his secretary recognized me from years past. (I am an astrophysicist and have known Stephen since the 1970s.) When I entered the familiar office his shrunken form lolled in his motorized chair as he stared out, rendered goggle-eyed by his thick glasses – but a strong spirit animated all he said.

Hawking lost his vocal cords years ago, to an emergency tracheotomy. His gnarled, feeble hands could not hold a pen. For a while after the operation he was completely cut off from the world, an unsettling parallel to those mathematical observers who plunge into black holes, their signals to the outside red-shifted and slowed by gravity's grip to dim, whispering oblivion.

A Silicon Valley firm came to the rescue. Engineers devised tailored, user friendly software and a special keyboard for Hawking. Now his frail hand moved across it with crablike speed. The software is deft, and he could build sentences quickly. I watched him flit through the menu of often-used words on his liquid crystal display, which hung before him in his wheelchair. The invention has been such a success that the Silicon Valley folk now supply units to similarly afflicted people worldwide.

"Please excuse my American accent," the speaker mounted behind the wheelchair said with a California inflection. He coded this entire remark with two keystrokes.

Although I had been here before, I was again struck that a man who had suffered such an agonizing physical decline had on his walls several large posters of a person very nearly his opposite: Marilyn Monroe. I mentioned her, and Stephen responded instantly, tapping one-handed on his keyboard, so that soon his transduced voice replied, "Yes, she's wonderful. Cosmological. I wanted to put a picture of her in my latest book, as a celestial object." I remarked that to me the book was like a French Impressionist painting of a cow, meant to give a glancing essence, not the real, smelly animal. Few would care to savor the details. Stephen took off from this to discuss some ideas currently booting around the physics community about the origin of the universe, the moment just after the Big Bang.

Stephen's great politeness paradoxically made me ill at ease; I was acutely aware of the many

demands on his time, and, after all, I had just stopped by to talk shop.

“For years my early work with Roger Penrose seemed to be a disaster for science,” Stephen said. “It showed that the universe must have begun with a singularity, if Einstein’s general theory of relativity is correct. That appeared to indicate that science could not predict how the universe would begin. The laws would break down at the point of singularity, of infinite density.” Mathematics cannot handle physical quantities like density that literally go to infinity. Indeed, the history of 20th century physics was in large measure about how to avoid the infinities that crop up in particle theory and cosmology. The idea of point particles is convenient but leads to profound, puzzling troubles.

I recalled that I had spoken to Stephen about mathematical methods of getting around this problem one evening at a party in King’s College. There were analogies to methods in elementary quantum mechanics, methods he was trying to carry over into this surrealistic terrain.

“It now appears that the way the universe began can indeed be determined, using imaginary time,” Stephen said. We discussed this a bit. Stephen had been using a mathematical device in which time is replaced, as a notational convenience, by something called imaginary time. This changes the nature of the equations, so he could use some ideas from the tiny quantum world. In the new equations, a kind of tunneling occurs in which the universe, before the Big Bang, has many different ways to pass through the singularity. With imaginary time, one can calculate the chances for a given tunneling path into our early universe after the beginning of time as we know it.

“Sure, the equations can be interpreted that way,” I argued, “but it’s really a trick, isn’t it?”

Stephen said, “Yes, but perhaps an insightful trick.”

“We don’t have a truly deep understanding of time,” I replied, “so replacing real time with imaginary time doesn’t mean much to us.”

“Imaginary time is a new dimension, at right angles to ordinary, real time,” Stephen explained. “Along this axis, if the universe satisfies the ‘no boundary’ condition, we can do our calculations. This condition says that the universe has no singularities or boundaries in the imaginary direction of time. With the ‘no boundary’ condition, there will be no beginning or end to imaginary time, just as there is no beginning or end to a path on the surface of the Earth.”

“If the path goes all the way around the Earth,” I said. “But of course, we don’t know that in imaginary time there won’t be a boundary.”

“My intuition says there will be no blocking in that special coordinate, so our calculations make sense.”

“Sense is just the problem, isn’t it? Imaginary time is just a mathematical convenience.” I shrugged in exasperation at the span between cool mathematical spaces and the immediacy of the raw world; this is a common tension in doing physics. “It’s unrelated to how we feel time. The seconds sliding by. Birth and death.”

“True. Our minds work in real time, which begins at the Big Bang and will end, if there is a Big Crunch—which seems unlikely, now, from the latest data showing accelerating expansion. Consciousness would come to an end at a singularity.”

“Not a great consolation,” I said.

He grinned. “No, but I like the ‘no boundary’ condition. It seems to imply that the universe will be in a state of high order at one end of real time but will be disordered at the other end of time, so that disorder increases in one direction of time. We define this to be the direction of increasing time. When we record something in our memory, the disorder of the universe will increase. This explains why we remember events only in what we call the past, and not in the future.”

“Remember what you predicted in 1980 about final theories like this?” I chided him.

“I suggested we might find a complete unified theory by the end of the century.” Stephen made the transponder laugh dryly. “OK, I was wrong. At that time, the best candidate seemed to be $N=8$ supergravity. Now it appears that this theory may be an approximation to a more fundamental theory, of superstrings. I was a bit optimistic to hope that we would have solved the problem by the end of the century. But I still think there’s a 50-50 chance that we will find a complete unified theory in the next 20 years.”

“I’ve always suspected that the structure never ends as we look to smaller and smaller scales – and neither will the theories,” I offered.

“It is possible that there is no ultimate theory of physics at all. Instead, we will keep on discovering new layers of structure. But it seems that physics gets simpler, and more unified, the smaller the scale on which we look. There is an ultimate length scale, the Planck length, below which space-time may just not be defined. So I think there will be a limit to the number of layers of structure, and there will be some ultimate theory, which we will discover if we are smart enough.”

“Does it seem likely that we are smart enough?” I asked.

Another grin. “You will have to get your faith elsewhere.”

“I can’t keep up with the torrent of work on superstrings.” Mathematical physics is like music, which a young and zesty spirit can best seize and use, as did Mozart.

“I try,” he said modestly.

We began discussing recent work on “baby universes” – bubbles in space-time. To us large creatures, space-time is like the sea seen from an ocean liner, smooth and serene. Up close, though, on tiny scales, it’s waves and bubbles. At extremely fine scales, pockets and bubbles of space-time can form at random, sputtering into being, then dissolving. Arcane details of particle physics suggest that sometimes – rarely, but inevitably – these bubbles could grow into a full-fledged universe.

This might have happened a lot at the instant just immediately after the Big Bang. Indeed, some properties of our universe may have been created by the space-time foam that roiled through those infinitesimally split seconds. Studying this possibility uses the “wormhole calculus,” which samples the myriad possible frothing bubbles (and their connections, called wormholes).

Averaging over this foam in a mathematical sense, smoothing its properties a bit, Hawking and others have tried to find out whether a final, rather benign universe like ours was an inevitable outcome of that early turbulence. The jury isn’t in on this point, and it may be out forever – the calculations are tough, guided by intuition rather than facts. Deciding whether they meaningfully predict anything is a matter of taste. This recalls Oscar Wilde’s aphorism that in matters of great import, style is always more important than substance.

If this picture of the first split second is remotely right, much depends on the energy content of the foam. The energy to blow up these bubbles would be countered by an opposite, negative energy, which comes from the gravitational attraction of all the matter in the bubble. If the outward pressure just balances the inward attraction (a pressure, really) of the mass, then you could get a universe much like ours: rather mild, with space-time not suffering any severe curvature – what astronomers call “flat.” This seems to be so on such relatively tiny scales as our solar system, and flatness prevails even on the size range of our galaxy. Indeed, flatness holds on immense scales, as far as we can yet see.

It turns out that such bubbles could even form right now. An entirely separate space-time could pop into existence in your living room, say. It would start unimaginably small, then balloon to the size of a cantaloupe – but not before your very eyes, because, for quite fundamental reasons, you couldn’t see it.

“They don’t form in space, of course,” Stephen said. “It doesn’t mean anything to ask where in space these things occur.” They don’t take up room in our universe but rather are their own universes, expanding into spaces that did not exist before.

“They’re cut off from us after we make them,” I said. “No relics, no fossil?”

“I do not think there could be.”

“Like an ungrateful child who doesn’t write home.” When talking about immensities, I sometimes grasp for something human.

“It would not form in our space, but rather as another space-time.”

We discussed for a while some speculations about this that I had put into two novels, *Cosm* and *Timescape*. I had used Cambridge and the British scientific style in *Timescape*, published in 1980, before these ideas became current. I had arrived at them in part from some wide-ranging talks I had enjoyed with Stephen – all suitably disguised in the books, of course. Such enclosed space-times I had termed “onion universes,” since in principle they could have further locked-away space-times inside them, and so on. It is an odd sensation when a guess turns out to have some substance – as much as anything as gossamer as

these ideas can be said to be substantial.

"So they form and go," I mused. "Vanish. Between us and these other universes lies absolute nothingness, in the exact sense – no space or time, no matter, no energy."

"There can be no way to reach them," his flat voice said. "The gulf between us and them is unbridgeable. It is beyond physics because it is truly nothing, not physical at all."

The mechanical laugh resounded. Stephen likes the tug of the philosophical, and he seemed amused by the notion that universes are simply one of those things that happen from time to time.

His nurse appeared for a bit of physical cleanup, and I left him. Inert confinement to a wheelchair exacts a demeaning toll on one's dignity, but he showed no reaction to the daily round of being cared for by another in the most intimate way. Perhaps for him, it even helps the mind to slip free of the world's rub.

I sat in the common room outside his office, having tea and talking to some of his post-doctoral students. They were working on similarly wild ideas and were quick, witty, and keenly observant as they sipped their strong, dark Ceylonese tea. A sharp crew, perhaps a bit jealous of Stephen's time. They were no doubt wondering who this guy was, nobody they had ever heard of, a Californian with an accent tainted by Southern nuances, somebody who worked in astrophysics and plasma physics – which, in our age of remorseless specialization, is a province quite remote from theirs. I didn't explain; after all, I really had no formal reason to be there, except that Stephen and I were friends.

Stephen's secretary quietly came out and asked if I would join Stephen for dinner at Caius College. I had intended to eat in my favorite Indian restaurant, where the chicken vindaloo is a purging experience, and then simply rove the walks of Cambridge alone, because I love the atmosphere – but I instantly assented. Dinner at college high table is one of the legendary experiences of England. I could remember keenly each one I had attended; the repartee is sharper than the cutlery.

We made our way through the cool, atmospheric turns of the colleges, the worn wood and gray stones reflecting the piping of voices and squeaks of rusty bicycles. In misty twilight, student shouts echoing, Stephen's wheelchair jouncing over cobbled streets. He insisted on steering it himself, though his nurse hovered rather nervously. It had never occurred to me just how much of a strain on everyone there can be in round-the-clock care. A few people drifted along behind us, just watching him. "Take no notice," his mechanical voice said. "Many of them come here just to stare at me."

We wound among the ancient stone and manicured gardens, into Caius College. Students entering the dining hall made an eager rumpus. Stephen took the elevator, and I ascended the creaking stairs. The faculty entered after the students, me following with the nurse.

The high table is literally so. They carefully placed Stephen with his back to the long, broad tables of undergraduates. I soon realized that this is because watching him eat, with virtually no lip control, is not appetizing. He follows a set diet that requires no chewing. His nurse must chop up his food and spoon-feed him.

The dinner was noisy, with the year's new undergraduates staring at the famous Hawking's back. Stephen carried on a matter-of-fact, steady flow of conversation through his keyboard.

He had concerns about the physicists' Holy Grail, a unified theory of everything. Even if we could thrash our way through a thicket of mathematics to glimpse its outlines, it might not be specific enough – that is, we would still have a range of choices. Physics could end up dithering over arcane points, undecided, perhaps far from our particular primate experience. Here is where aesthetics might enter.

"If such a theory is not unique," he said, "one would have to appeal to some outside principle, which one might call God."

I frowned. "Not as the Creator, but as a referee?"

"He would decide which theory was more than just a set of equations, but described a universe that actually exists."

"This one."

"Or maybe all possible theories describe universes that exist!" he said with glee. "It is unclear what it means to say that something exists. In questions like, 'Does there exist a man with two left feet in Cambridge?', one can answer this by examining every man in Cambridge. But there is no way that one

can decide if a universe exists, if one is not inside it.”

“The space-time Catch-22.”

“So it is not easy to see what meaning can be given to the question, ‘Why does the universe exist?’ But it is a question that one can’t help asking.”

As usual, the ability to pose a question simply and clearly in no way implied a similar answer – or that an answer even existed.

After the dining hall, high table moved to the senior common room upstairs. We relaxed along a long, polished table in comfortable padded chairs, enjoying the traditional crisp walnuts and ancient aromatic port, Cuban cigars, and arch conversation, occasionally skewered by a witty interjection from Stephen.

Someone mentioned American physicist Stephen Weinberg’s statement, in *The First Three Minutes*, that the more we comprehend the universe, the more meaningless it seems. Stephen doesn’t agree, and neither do I, but he has a better reason. “I think it is not meaningful in the first place to say that the universe is pointless, or that it is designed for some purpose.”

I asked, “No meaning, then, to the pursuit of meaning?”

“To do that would require one to stand outside the universe, which is not possible.”

Again the image of the gulf between the observer and the object of study. “Still,” I persisted, “there is amazing structure we can see from inside.”

“The overwhelming impression is of order. The more we discover about the universe, the more we find that it is governed by rational laws. If one liked, one could say that this order was the work of God. Einstein thought so.”

One of the college fellows asked, “Rational faith?”

Stephen tapped quickly. “We shouldn’t be surprised that conditions in the universe are suitable for life, but this is not evidence that the universe was designed to allow for life. We could call order by the name of God, but it would be an impersonal God. There’s not much personal about the laws of physics.”

Walnuts eaten, port drunk, cigars smoked, it was time to go. When we left, Stephen guided his wheelchair through the shadowy reaches of the college, indulging my curiosity about a time-honored undergraduate sport: climbing Cambridge.

At night, young men sometimes scramble among the upper reaches of the steepled old buildings, scaling the most difficult points. They risk their necks for the glory of it. Quite out of bounds, of course. Part of the thrill is eluding the proctors who scan the rooftops late at night, listening for the scrape of heels. There is even a booklet about roof climbing, describing its triumphs and centuries-long history.

Stephen took me to a passageway I had been through many times, a shortcut to the Cam River between high, peaked buildings of undergraduate rooms. He said that it was one of the tough events, jumping across that and then scaling a steep, often slick roof beyond.

The passage looked to be about three meters across. I couldn’t imagine leaping that gap from the slate-dark roofs. And at night, too. “All that distance?” I asked. My voice echoed in the fog.

“Yes,” he said.

“Anybody ever miss?”

“Yes.”

“Injured?”

“Yes.”

“Killed?”

His eyes twinkled and he gave us a broad smile. “Yes.” These Cambridge sorts have the real stuff, all right.

In the cool night Stephen recalled some of his favorite science fiction stories. He rarely read any fiction other than science fiction past the age of 12, he said. “It’s really the only fiction that is realistic about our true position in the universe as a whole.”

And how much stranger the universe was turning out than even those writers had imagined. Even when they discussed the next billion years, they could not guess the odd theories that would spring up within the next generation of physicists. Now there are speculations that our universe might have 11

dimensions, all told, all but three of space and one of time rolled up to tiny sizes. Will this change cosmology? So far, nobody knows. But the ideas are fun in and of themselves.

A week after my evening at Cambridge, I got from Stephen's secretary a transcript of all his remarks. I have used it here to reproduce his style of conversation. Printed out on his wheelchair computer, his sole link with us, the lines seem to come from a great distance. Across an abyss.

Portraying the flinty faces of science – daunting complexity twinned with numbing wonder – demands both craft and art. Some of us paint with fiction. Stephen paints with his impressionistic views of vast, cool mathematical landscapes. To knit together our fraying times, to span the cultural abyss, demands all these approaches – and more, if we can but invent them.

Continued on page 68 ...

THE CHALLENGER TRIBUTE: DONNA AMOS

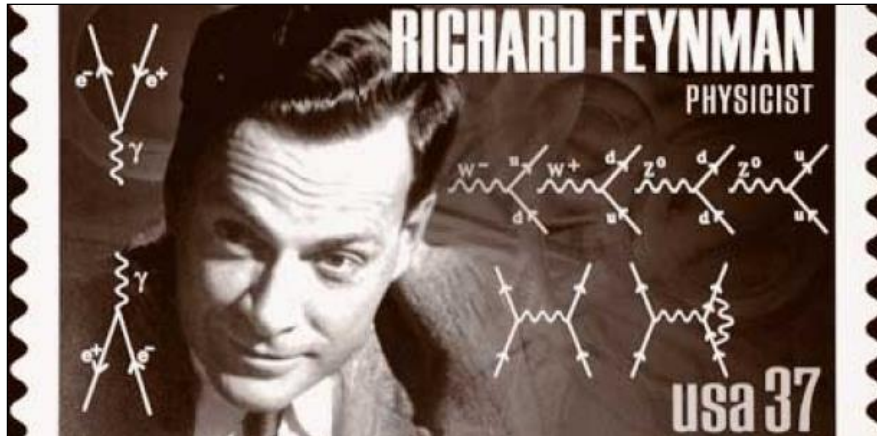


How gracious she was, our friend Donna Amos, hosting New Orleans fans at Academy Awards telecasts – tolerating our whoops of joy when *Ed Wood* and *Silence of the Lambs* won Oscars and feeding us sumptuous repasts with humor and kindness. Likewise, at Mardis Gras, when she and husband Ken opened up their French Quarter house for their footsore friends. “Friend” describes her, but only begins to.

HEROES:

RICHARD FEYNMAN

Jeff Copeland



Imagine a medium-size classroom. A tall, thin man with long gray hair walks to the front, looking over a couple of dozen freshmen. Only freshmen: upperclassmen are specifically excluded from this class. It's a class that doesn't have grades, doesn't have credit, doesn't appear on public schedule of the university. The class is

called "Physics X," and the professor is a bongo-playing, Nobel-prize-winning genius who has continued to cultivate a Bronx accent even though he's decades removed from Far Rockaway.

This is Richard Feynman's way of keeping in touch with younger students and how he practices explaining things, something he is very, very, very good at. He hosts an informal seminar late every Monday afternoon, and the floor is open to any question or he discusses something that he's working on that week. Some days he talks about mundane issues like reflections in a mirror, or odd ones, like cones of light escaping from supernovas.

On this particular day Feynman is fairly vibrating with excitement, because he's had two phone calls in rapid succession from a research group at Stanford and another at Brookhaven, each saying they've discovered of a new heavy meson. It's the same particle. The Stanford team called it psi, and the Brookhaven team called it J, but the important thing was that the appearance of the psion (as it's also come to be called), confirmed the existence of a fourth type of quark, fleshing out Murray Gell-Mann's periodic table of elementary particles. Feynman explains to this small group why the particle is important, how the teams found it, why this is all very cool. It occurs to none of us to doubt his sincerity or knowledge: We were unaware of C.P. Snow's quip about Feynman, "It was as though Groucho Marx was suddenly standing in for a great scientist."

I met him a decade after he won the Nobel Prize, 25 years after his ground-breaking work on quantum mechanics, 30 years after he helped build the atomic bomb at Los Alamos. I was too young to have been in the lecture hall fifteen years earlier when Feynman gave his classic Lectures on Physics to the core physics course required of all freshmen and sophomores at Caltech. But they remained the texts for the course. These were brilliant, deep explanations of how physics works, discussing at a very deep level mechanics, special relativity, electricity and magnetism, and quantum mechanics. Mind you, this was at a time when quantum mechanics was not something normally taught to undergraduates, but reserved for advanced grad students.

In the very first lecture, Feynman shows his broad passion and broad interests and broad view in an aside that's recorded in a footnote:

How I'm rushing into this! How much each sentence in this brief story contains. "The stars are made of the same stuff as the earth." I usually pick one small topic like this to give a lecture on. Poets say science takes away from the beauty of the stars – mere globs of gas atoms. Nothing is "mere." I too can see the stars on a desert night, and feel them. But do I see less or more? The vastness of the heavens stretches my imagination – stuck on this carousel my little eye can catch one-million-year-old light. A vast pattern – of which I am a part – perhaps my stuff was belched from some forgotten star, as one is belching there. Or see them with the greater eye of Palomar, rushing all apart from some common starting point, when they were perhaps all together. What is the pattern, or the meaning, or the why? It does not do harm to the mystery to know a little about it. For far more marvelous is the truth than any artists of the past imagined! Why do the poets of the present not speak of it? What men are poets who can speak of Jupiter if he were like a man, but if he is an immense spinning sphere of methane and ammonia must be silent?

It's that broad view that amazes me about Feynman. For me he was an early model of intellectual curiosity. He was interested in absolutely everything. He took drawing lessons and became quite good. He played the bongos. He drummed and danced with a samba band at Carnival during his sabbaticals in Brazil. He cracked safes at Los Alamos for amusement. He loved his first wife, Arline with deep passion and mourned for years when she died of tuberculosis months before the atom bomb test at Trinity. He spent afternoons at an infamous topless bar in Pasadena, working on physics on paper placemats and drinking soda.

He gained larger fame by clearly showing that the *Challenger* explosion was a result of low temperatures making the O-rings in the solid boosters brittle. This was not an original discovery on his part: it was fed to him by sources within NASA and the Air Force. However, it was his simple demonstration – with a C clamp and a glass of ice water – that was a classic example of Feynman as teacher.

His other favorite role was also on display to the *Challenger* commission: Feynman the iconoclast. He refused to whitewash his conclusions; rather he wanted to hold NASA organizationally accountable for the accident. It was his appendix to the commission report that discussed the differences in the information he got from NASA line employees and NASA managers. He concluded it with a classic Feynman statement: "For a successful technology, reality must take precedence over public relations, for nature cannot be fooled."

I recently discovered that our library had CDs of the original lectures, recorded as he gave them. I settled back to listen to him, in 1961, explain gravitation and planetary motion. As the familiar New York accent swept over me, I was transported back to a small classroom in Pasadena and was able to have another visit with one of the most brilliant minds I've known.

□ □ □

Good references for learning more about the man:

Genius: The Life and Science of Richard Feynman, by James Gleick is the definitive biography. *Feynman*, a graphic novel written by Jim Ottaviani with art by Leland Myrick, which completely nails his personality.

Surely You're Joking, Mr Feynman: Adventures of a Curious Character, is Feynman's oral history, co-written with Ralph Leighton, son of his long-time colleague Robert Leighton. It was followed by a second volume, *What Do You Care What Other People Think*.

Mike Ward was a member of the Bay Area Little Men, the SF club that welcomed me to fandom in my neo years. That'll teach 'em to be so generous!

APO'STROPHE!

Michael Ward

The discussion started with the ritual denigration of the Grocer's Apo'strophe, as in "Banana's 57 cents each." Since the discussion of the misuse of the Apo'strophe seems to refuse to go away, I have written a s'onnet as invocation to the greater goods of punctiliation in an attempt to bury the corpse before it makes too much more noise. This is one form of the S'onnet; there are many.

Apo'strophe!

O Punctuation! In our words conceived

Doth run the course's of our twisty thought;

In Prudence's sake, for all that we believed,

We've raised our spirits, but it's' come to naught.

Among! our earthly pleasure's dearly bought,

No Talent help's pre'serve us in our needs,

But! Saving Graces, as the Be'st are taught,

Re'spect's ourselves in homely words and deeds.

Come S'pirit! Come and soothe our ravaged care's;

No Buz's of honeybee's to pollens seeds;

No Editor, to fix our When's and Where's,

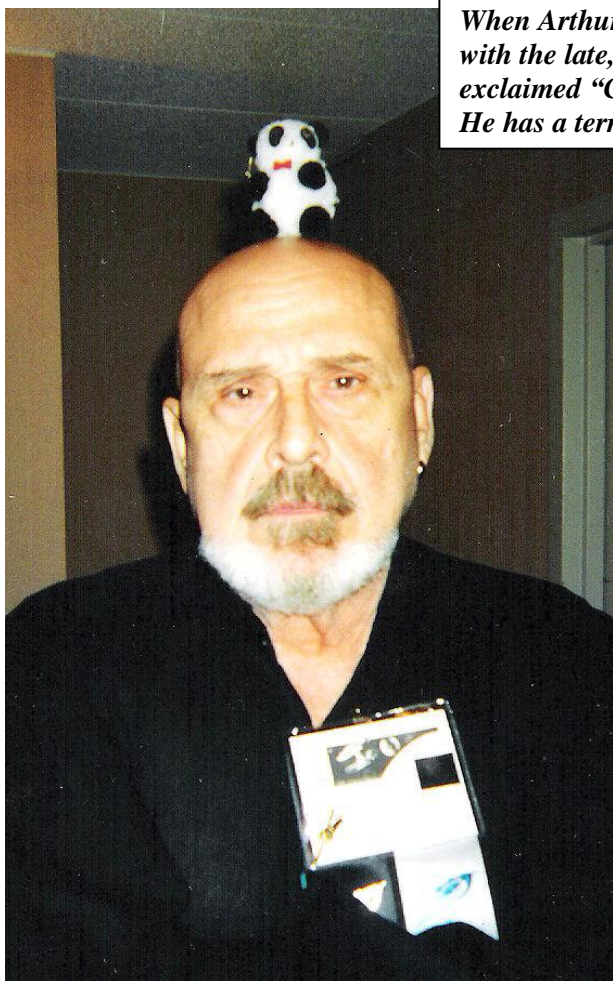
And no one but Ourselve's to spite our Creeds.

And I besought me Fowler, on the shelf;

But he just said, "Apostrophize yourself."

MIB

**THE GREAT
AND
POWERFUL**



When Arthur Hlavaty saw this picture of Mib with the late, great Hank Reinhardt, he exclaimed “Get Mib to a doctor right away! He has a terrible growth on his ass!”

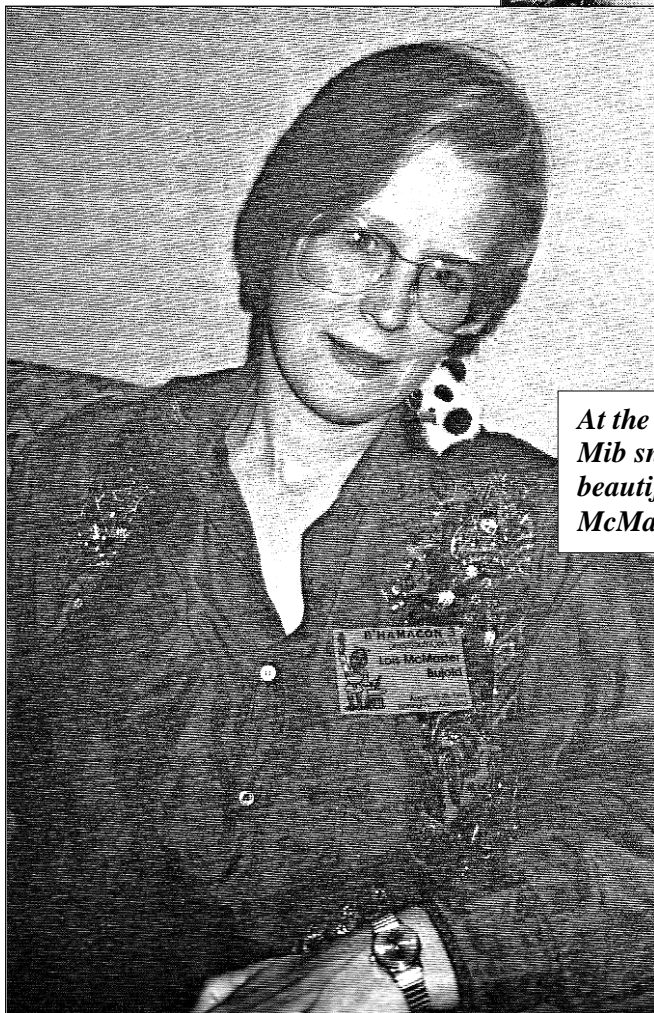
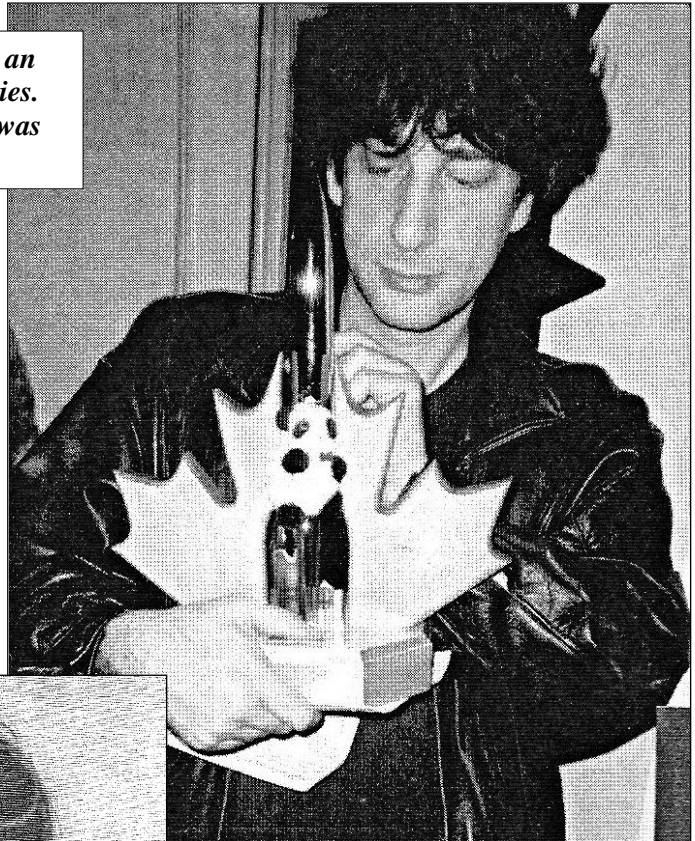
Our hero Mib came into my life whilst I wandered a shopping mall near Niagara Falls in 1979. I had been busting buns buying gifts for my new wife, Beth, but even after securing a decent print of her favorite painting – *Starry Night* – thought her haul lacked a certain ... whimsy. I entered a generic gift shoppe in search of same and found myself before a display of handmade Christmas ornaments: little round pandas with red bow ties. One perplexed-looking fellow hung suspended above his brothers, and siren-like, called to me. I think his song went, “Hey, I’m only \$1.79! Get me outta here!”

Beth was delighted with “the Bear,” whom she immediately named “Miboleto,” or “Mib” for short. She let me keep him when we went our separate ways, and for the last 25 years he has dogged my every step. Though he lost an eye in the depths of Carlsbad Caverns, he has persevered, even achieved a certain fame in fandom. Through all, he has displayed the same bewildered *élan*, which is why we number him among our heroes, for who would not want to exhibit similar cool under any and all circumstances? And wear a red bow tie.



Apolitical and regrettably uninformed in American history, Mib did not know whether this was a Union or a Confederate cannon at Gettysburg.

Mib attended Torcon III and, as you see, was an enthusiastic participant in the Hugo ceremonies. His claim to Neil Gaiman's award, however, was in vain.



At the 1994 DeepSouthCon in Birmingham, Mib snuggles up to the convention's beautiful Pro Guest of Honor, Lois McMaster Bujold.

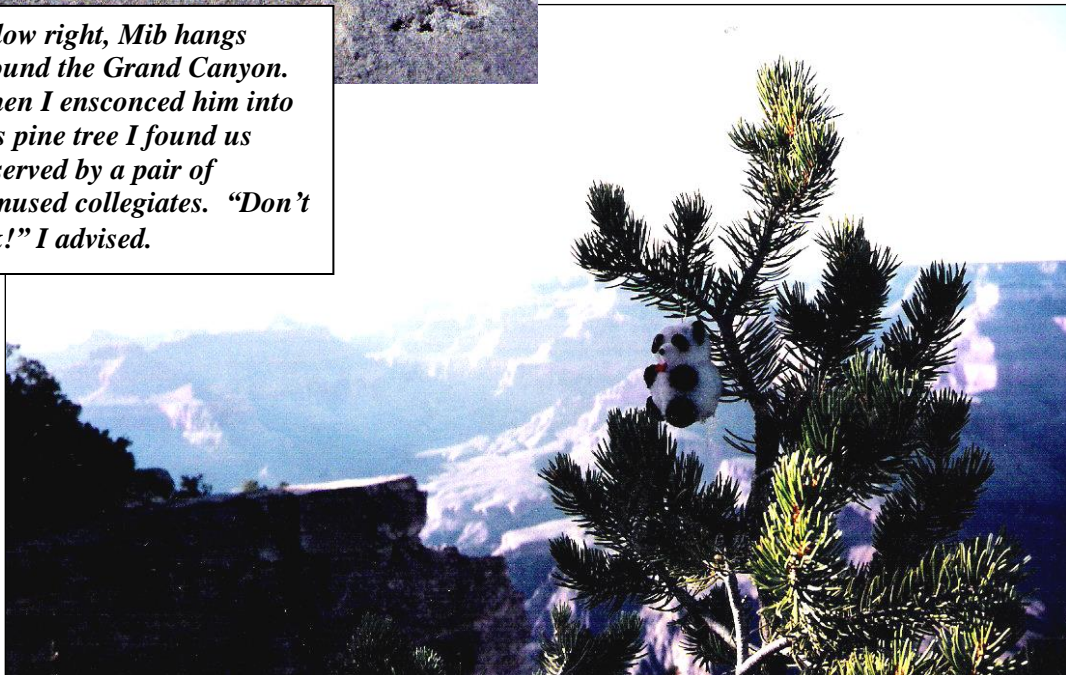
MIB DAZZLES
SFDOM'S
GREATS



Don't be fooled by the dark sky and the icy whiteness of the ground; this is Death Valley at noon, and it is not snow but salt on which Mib sits. Below, the bear and the Arch on a visit to St. Louis.



Below right, Mib hangs around the Grand Canyon. When I ensconced him into this pine tree I found us observed by a pair of bemused collegiates. "Don't ask!" I advised.



MIB DOWN UNDER

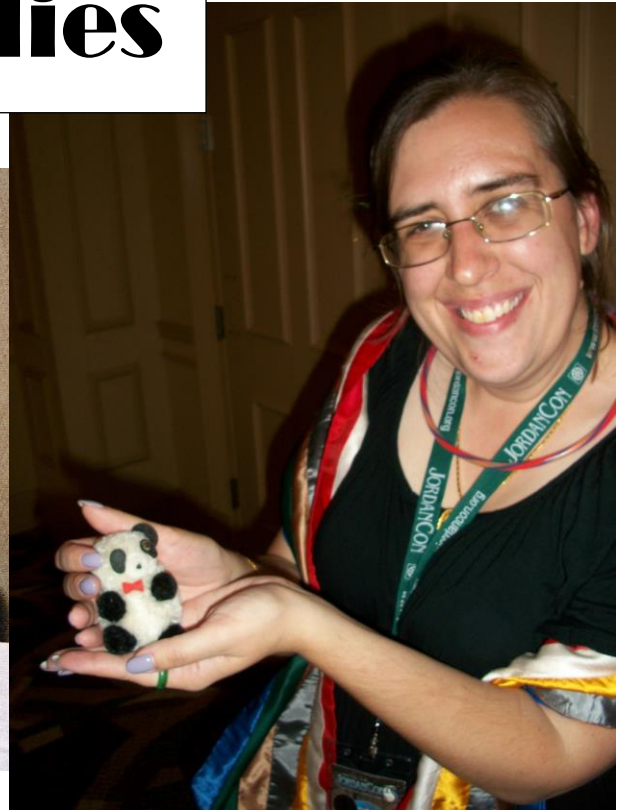


Two great achievements of modern man, Mib and the Sydney Opera House. The Opera House is huge. Mib is not.



Mib was a grand companion and chaperone on our two trips to Australia. Above, he joins me on the Great Barrier Reef; to left, he wins the heart of the great Figgy on the banks of Melbourne's Yarra River.

MIB & the Ladies



A handsome bucko like Mib can be expected to knock'em dead wherever he goes. Here he enraptures Erin Brayman (above left), Southern Fandom Confederation President Jennifer Liang (above) and a stunning redheaded cosplayer at Archon (below).



*Mike notes that this piece originally appeared in John Betancourt's **Adventure Tales** #1.*

ERB: THE MAN WHO HELD THE HERO'S HORSE

Mike Resnick

There have been a lot of theories advanced as to why Edgar Rice Burroughs remains a popular author more than 90 years after he first broke into print, when dozens of Pulitzer and Nobel winners (and a few Hugo winners as well) can't be found this side of Bookfinder.com.

A lot of people credit his imagination, and yes, it certainly worked overtime, coming up with Tarzan, Barsoom, Amtor, Pellucidar, Caspak, Poloda, and the rest.

Others point to his break-neck pacing. You follow Tarzan until he's unarmed and facing a ferocious man-eater at chapter's end, then cut to Jane until she's one grope away from a Fate Worse Than Death at the end of the next chapter, then back to Tarzan, and so forth. Works pretty well.

A few point to his remarkable facility at creating languages. And truly, what *would* you call an elephant except Tantor? What could a snake possibly be other than Hista? What better name for an ape-king that half-barks and half-growls his language than Kerchak? Yes, he was damned good at languages.

But there's another aspect to Burroughs that lends enormous verisimilitude, especially to his younger readers, and it's an aspect that has been addressed only once before, by the late Burroughs scholar (and Royal Canadian Mountie) John F. Roy – and that is the interesting fact that ERB wrote himself into almost all his greatest adventures.

When I first discovered *A Princess of Mars* at age 8, I *knew* the story was true. I mean, hell, Burroughs was writing about his own uncle, the man who had entrusted him with the manuscript of his adventures on that distant and wondrous planet. Wasn't that proof enough that Barsoom existed?

Well, if you were young and impressionable, it *was* proof enough—but even if you weren't, it was a very effective and informal way of getting you into the story.

And while ERB was not a trained writer, at a gut level he knew it worked. He might not have known what “distancing mechanism” or “stream of consciousness” meant, but he sure as hell knew how to lasso a reader and pull him along, and his favorite and most effective gimmick was to tell you how he himself had been thrust into the company of this book's hero.

So here he was, the nephew of John Carter, gentleman of Virginia and Warlord of Mars, explaining how he had come upon this remarkable manuscript, how he had watched his uncle standing outside at night reaching out his arms to Mars, how he had followed instructions and buried him in a well-ventilated coffin that could only be opened from the inside, and only now understood the meaning of it all.

And it didn't stop with the one book. He meets John Carter again and is given the manuscripts to *The Gods of Mars* and *The Warlord of Mars*. Some years later he meets Ulysses Paxton (a/k/a Vad Varo) by proxy when John Carter delivers Paxton's long letter (i.e., *The Master Mind of Mars*) to him, and he is



visited by John Carter at least twice more. It is made clear that ERB is now an old man (as indeed he was), while the Warlord remains the thirtyish fighting man he has always been.

But ERB's interaction with his characters wasn't limited to Barsoom.

For example, he knows the man who knows the man who knows Tarzan—or some permutation of that. The very first line in his most famous book, *Tarzan of the Apes*, is: "I had this story from one who had no business to tell it to me, or to any other." A Burroughs scholar would probably conclude that the "one" was Paul d'Arnot, but it makes no difference. The point is that here is ERB, inserting himself in the beginning of the story again to lend some degree of authenticity.

Did he ever meet Tarzan? He never says so explicitly, but he *did* meet Barney Custer, hero of *The Eternal Lover*, and his sister, and based on the internal evidence of the book, the only place ERB could possibly have met them was on Lord Greystoke's vast African estate.

It was while vacationing in Greenland that ERB came across the manuscript that became *The Land That Time Forgot*. (Yes, he was pretty sharp at finding saleable manuscripts.)

Burroughs gets around. *At the Earth's Core* finds him in the Sahara, where he stumbles upon David Innes, who in turn had stumbled upon the hidden world of Pellucidar and felt compelled to spend the night telling ERB his story. A reader in Algiers summons him back a few years later, where he is reintroduced to David Innes, who once again pours out his story, which was published as *Pellucidar*.

After moving to California, who should ERB's next-door neighbor turn out to be but the brilliant young scientist Jason Gridley, creator of the remarkable Gridley Wave, by means of which Burroughs received still more tales of that mysterious world at the center of the hollow Earth. (And Gridley himself later went to Pellucidar, which means that ERB rubbed shoulders with still another hero.)

Burroughs even wrote his company's secretary, Ralph Rothmond (who was later fired, more than a decade after ERB's death, for carelessly allowing a number of copyrights to lapse) into one of the books. Rothmond introduces ERB to young, handsome, blond, heroic Carson Napier, the Wrong-Way Corrigan of space, who takes off for Mars and somehow winds up on Venus. Napier remains in telepathic contact with Burroughs long enough to dictate *Pirates of Venus* and three-plus sequels.

There was just something about ERB that made heroes seek him out and tell him their strange stories, always on the condition that he not publish the tale until they were dead, or if he couldn't wait that long, to at least change their names. The last to find him and unload on him was Julian V, who narrated the tale of *The Moon Maid*.

ERB never met the author of *Beyond the Farthest Star* – after all, that would have been quite a voyage—but of all the people in the universe, the author was, perhaps unsurprisingly by this time, drawn to Burroughs, and mystically compelled ERB's typewriter to produce the story one night in Hawaii while ERB watched in awe.

The interesting thing is that though he associated with Tarzan and John Carter and David Innes and Carson Napier and many others, ERB never once performed an exciting or heroic deed in any of the books, and *that* lends a little verisimilitude too. These are extraordinary men, these heroes, and neither ERB nor you nor I can begin to match their skills or heroism, so it makes much more sense for him to tell us about it and for us to read and appreciate it. Fighting lions or green men or allosaurs is for heroes; reading about it is for the rest of us mortals.

And maybe that's why we loved and identified with Edgar Rice Burroughs. He didn't lop off heads with his longsword, or bellow the victory cry of the bull ape over the corpse of an enemy, or make his way to the center of the Earth. But he seemed to know the remarkable men who *did* do those things, and, by golly, he got to hold the hero's horse.

Most of us would have traded places with him in a New York—or Barsoomian—minute.





HERSELF

Guy Lillian

Illo by CHARLIE WILLIAMS

On the day Lillian Hellman died, June 30, 1984, a New Orleans newspaper carried the Garden District address where she had lived as a child. I drove there. During Hellman's childhood it had been a rather elegant home. Now, instead of curtains, a quilt hung behind its windows – the walls needed paint – out front, massive oaks brutally thrust their roots through broken sidewalks. A young couple crouched by the curb, washing a hooded motorcycle with a garden hose. The slim young woman crimped the hose in one hand to control the flow, as the young man studiously swept water over the anodized blue surface and the painting of Elvis – the Vegas Elvis, in his white sequined suit – embossed on the hood. The girl sighed wearily.

How are you on irony, Miss Hellman?

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times ... It was early 1971, the true beginning of a new decade, and the end of the sixties. The previous year had seen Nixon invade Cambodia and uniformed thugs murder four students at Kent State. My generation had risen in revolt ... and collapsed in resignation, summer lassitude, and defeat.

That January, I was a senior at the University of California, Berkeley, the center of the universe, harboring the insane artistic ambitions of youth. In my insouciance I thought that I could write, and turned my academic attentions there.

The creative writing teacher at Cal was a spunky little fellow named Jackson Burgess, author of a novel called *Pillar of Cloud*, and possessed of the wildest moustache I have ever seen. He was an outstanding instructor. His first assignment to his charges was to write a limerick, and I, in the foolhardiness of youth, composed one starring ... him.

**There was a professor named Jackson,
Who wanted some limerick action.
"If not double rhyme,
It's not worth your time,
And won't meet with my satisfaction."**

For some reason Burgess didn't drive me from his class; in fact, he opened our next meeting with my epic verse. Limericks, though, weren't my major project for his classes; instead I made my first attempt at a novel, a berserk quasi-fantasy set in Louisiana, about ... you know, I haven't thought about this in decades, and I can see why ... *a cyclopean monster from the swamps who becomes a hitman for a gay French Quarter gangster, whose three live-in boyfriends – Huey, Dewey and Louie – call him "Uncle Donald."* I called this crazed opus *Unoc*.

I had a hundred pages or so of m.s. written for Burgess' class when he came to us with a propitious announcement. *Lillian Hellman* was coming to Berkeley to teach a special seminar in creative writing. We were invited to submit samples of our work. I almost chickened out, but swallowed my Adam's apple and passed along what I had. Great my excitement when I found I'd made the cut.

So who was this Lillian Hellman that we should be mindful of her? I'll insult my readers' intelligence and provide a little bit of biography. Hellman was born in New Orleans in 1905, and raised there and in New York. A student briefly in Bonn in the late '20s, she had a moment's flirtation with fascism which instead made her conscious of her Jewishness. She met the love of her life, Dashiell Hammett, when she was a reader for MGM. Moved and inspired by an 1810 incident in Scotland, she wrote a play – *The Children's Hour*, a stunning and, for its era, revolutionary study of gay guilt. It was an enormous success. Hellman wrote the screenplay for the first film version, *These Three*, and though she was forced by the censors to remove all references to lesbianism, she still liked the movie better than William Wyler's 1962 version. (Told me so herself.)

The Children's Hour made her a hot property out in Hollywood, where she wrote the screenplay to *Dead End* and, true to the era, fell into Communism. Though she called herself a "most casual

member” of the party (she never formally joined), she rode its rolls from ’38 until 1940, at which time her maverick nature caused her to “drift away.” She said she saw Stalin as the best steward for what she called “a united front against fascism,” which she saw as the ultimate evil. Half of one six dozen of the other, it was an association that would long bedevil her.

Red or not, Hellman’s literary work soared in popularity. She wrote *The Little Foxes* around this time, and *Watch on the Rhine*, which won an Oscar for the play’s star, Paul Lukas, when it was made into a film. (He beat out Bogie in *Casablanca*!) She co-hosted – with Hemingway – an anti-fascist dinner to raise funds for Russian relief, and wrote a terrible movie called *The North Star*, which meant to hail the USSR’s resistance to the Nazi invasion but was gutted by idiotic musical numbers. (Dana Andrews could not sing.)

After the war, she wrote *Another Part of the Forest*, considered her best play, and was elected to the National Institute of Arts & Letters. But post-war, politics was never far from Hellman or the arts as a whole. In ’47 she refused to sign a loyalty oath, and denounced the gutless filmmakers who did. In ’51, around the time of *The Autumn Garden*, she began her celebrated run-in with HUAC, the House Un-American Activities Committee, infuriating them by refusing to testify about any suspected Commies other than herself. Apparently she blew the wingers away in the ensuing media battle. Indeed, in the early fifties she was offered the plum job of writing the theatrical version of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, but felt too pessimistic for the task. The playwrights she recommended in her stead won a Pulitzer Prize, an honor that always escaped Hellman. (She didn’t lack for honors, however; in 1962 she won election to the American Academy of Arts & Letters.)

She wrote a film called *The Chase*, and in 1977, the year of *Julia*, presented an Oscar. She turned to writing memoirs. And she began conducting writing seminars at universities about the country.

All of which led up to the moment when I walked into the classroom in UC’s Dwinelle Hall (designed by two architects who never met), and met her. She was a tiny woman who looked up at me with eyes sagging from their sockets. Those eyes had seen much. She was smoking a Marlboro. I introduced myself and she said, “Your last name’s the same as my first name. *Isn’t it?*”

“Yes m’am,” I squeaked.

Let me digress another moment to talk about some of my classmates. All came from Burgess’ novel-writing course. There were two guys named Roth. One was a Vietnam veteran who was writing a realistic novel about the war, the other was penning a detective story in a comic, *Catch-22* style. There was a good-looking bucko with a Suthun ack-suh-ent named Howard. There was a pretty, diminutive, sex-addled girl named Penny, whom Burgess had once described as “meaner than cat piss,” but whom I found charming, if rather obvious. Nine hippies and Lillian Hellman. In early February, our seminar met for the first time.

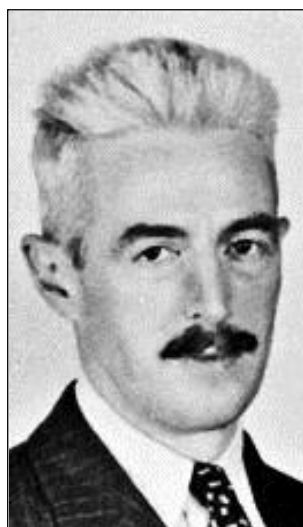
At that first class meeting Hellman gave her fundamental advice to new writers. It was extraordinarily simple. *Learn to steal*. The writer lives in a world without rules, so forget the commandment about theft. *Steal everything*. All incidents, all facts, all stories. It *all* belongs to the writer, and was the best way, she said, to get “out of ourselves” as young writers. To bring this lesson home, she gave us the one assignment for the seminar: read and *rewrite* Herman Melville’s “Bartleby the Scrivener”. We were to take Melville’s classic and make it our own. Come back next week, said the teacher, with your ideas.

I am addressing literate citizens, who I’m sure are aware that Herman Melville wrote more than just *Moby Dick*. He wrote *Billy Budd* and *Typee* and some wonderful short stories, among them “Bartleby”. I shall save you yet another journey to the wilds of Wikipedia and describe it. The story deals with an attorney who hires a scrivener, or document copier. The man lapses into a peculiar psychosis. He will not leave the office, even when fired. Eventually he is hauled off by the authorities. The attorney has compassion for Bartleby and attempts to help him, but finds his lunacy impenetrable, and his efforts worthless. Such, he finds, is the human condition, and the story ends, “Alas, Bartleby! Alas, humanity!”

I left class for Barrington Hall, the co-op “dorm” where I lived. Life held distractions – Tom Hayden, late of the Chicago 8 and prior to his marriage to Jane Fonda, came over that night and spent three and a half hours talking over local politics. Apollo 14 landed, and Alan Shepard and Edgar Mitchell walked on the Moon. (Once again, I rather pompously but quite truthfully wrote in my diary, “men inhabit a world at peace.” Too bad it wasn’t *this* world.)

I read “Bartleby” and came up with a contemporary take on the story: a photo store owner with artistic ambitions, whose Bartleby is a darkroom assistant who locks himself in the lab and refuses to leave. I would call it “Fumes”. On February 9 our seminar gathered again.

It was, shall we say, an interesting class. To quote my diary, “The Hellman class rocked and rolled with her reaction to our Bartleby ideas.” It “seemed as if we could say nothing right.” For instance, she didn’t like my hiding Bartleby in the back room of the photo shop, nor a classmate’s idea of doing a play in which the character never appears. Hellman seemed to focus on Penny; perhaps she identified with her. She asked her one of her direct questions: “Does it make you uncomfortable to write about men? *Does* it?” Later, we saw this as a warning shot across our vulnerable romantic’s bows.



In memory, it seems we never worked everything out – simply ran out of classtime. I noted one anecdote, a story about Hammett – and this name she just tossed out: William Faulkner. “Hammett and I were talkin’ to Faulkner ...” (We just gawped. Oh, *stop* it! we wanted to shout. Just ... *stop* it!) After they got drunk Faulkner and Hammett would argue about writing. Faulkner would say, “I wrote my first novel for money and therefore it’s no good.” And Hammett would say “No, you’re a Writer, and because you are a Writer you always write as well as you can.” And Faulkner would say, “No, I wrote my first novel for money and therefore it’s no good.” And Hammett would say “No, you’re a Writer, and because you are a Writer you always write as well as you can.” And Faulkner would say ... Etc. “If you knew how many nights I fell asleep listening to that argument ...” Jesus!

We got the message. Being a writer was a Calling.

So we went to our various homes, and wrote. As I said before, there were plenty of distractions. I had a co-op zine to finish. My first SFPA mailing appeared. (This *Challenger* runs in my 261st.) The infamous Sylmar earthquake cut loose, dropping a bookshelf onto the sweet blonde head of a girl I admired. After a raucous house meeting, Barrington Hall booted a pushy crasher – i.e., street bum – out of the building. A redheaded lady friend found acceptance to medical school. The trials began of deputies charged with police brutality after the 1969 People’s Park war. A Laotian incursion by Nixon’s order led to a minor campus riot – during which a friend found himself depicted on the local newspaper’s front page taking a swing at a cop. He fled town in a panic. My composition of “Fumes” was stumped by a “lost” word, one mislaid in the trash-packed basement that was my brain: the term for shaking a film developing tank to be rid of bubbles stuck to the celluloid – *agitation*. Agitated myself, I turned “Fumes” in a day late.

The class meeting we all anticipated eagerly, and dreaded like death, came upon us. Several of us met Hellman at another building before class and walked her to Dwinelle Hall. She was quite upset by the Laotian invasion. “We’ve got to *stop* those people,” she said as we walked, mostly to herself.

Hellman had had multiple copies of each of our stories printed up. We read several and discussed them. Afterwards, Hellman would take one last look at her copy of the story ... then tear it in two. You could feel a horrified shudder ripple through the class.

Not every story was a success, and not all the rending asunder was done to paper. For instance, Penny. The girl seemed ill when she arrived for class, and things did not improve. The big revelation about her Bartleby character came when his boss caught him masturbating. Hellman would have none of it, and she showed no mercy. “Sex isn’t literature,” she bellowed. Penny collapsed into tears. Hellman just smiled. No mercy. “It seemed a tirade by a mean old woman,” I wrote – but the mercilessness of the Writer’s vocation, after all, was the lesson.

We didn't discuss "Fumes", nor many other efforts – I remember she loved Howard's story, but then we suspected she had a crush on him. I can't find my story, or the page of criticism she wrote, but on thinking about it now, I'm not sure I *got* Melville. Perhaps I was too young to truly absorb the nihilistic despair at the heart of the story, the lawyer's inability to affect Bartleby nor stir his fate, the contrast of his efforts with the scrivener's insistent withdrawal from the world. If I had to guess, now, I'd say "Fumes" missed its mark. But *Hellman liked it*. She called it well-written and had, she said, only technical worries about it – and she thought that the narrator cursed too much.

Here are some lines from p. 4456 of my diary, which I wrote that night. To quote her, "The writing racket is made for the tough people. It's a hot oven so your skin is mean or you're out. There ain't no rules. That's hard. It's a lonely life. If you can't take a life without rules you ain't a Writer."

She added an observation that stunned me. She was worried that our generation was getting *tired*. She felt it was far too early for us to succumb to exhaustion. Looking back, I can see why we may well have seemed winded – frightened away from trying to change America by the fusillades at Kent State and Jackson, discouraged by the rock-like obtuseness of our parents' generation, willing to *give up* – and lapse into the comfort of our privileged lives. I fear that she may have been right.

Anyway, our class came to an end. Hellman said we'd been a better class than Harvard's, which pleased me greatly – I've always been jealous of the Ivy League. As we stood to leave, I said words I'd been rehearsing: "Thank you, Miss Hellman."

Penny threw a party for our class, and teacher, the next Friday. It capped a remarkable Berkeleyan day. Tom Hayden returned to Barrington Hall to talk about an upcoming city-wide vote insisting on community-resident police. The measure didn't pass; someone came up with an integration-based argument that blunted its appeal. But it certainly made one feel spectacularly revolutionary to leave Tom Hayden to see Lillian Hellman.

The party was on Berkeley's west side; I walked there. Hellman took a taxi from her apartment in San Francisco – it must have cost fifteen dollars; we were astonished that she would spend such a princely sum. She wore her What-Becomes-a-Legend Blackgama mink. I'd like to report that we met the coat with fervid environmentalist condemnation and tore it from her back, but ... no. The girls went berserk. They'd never even seen one before, and caressed its pelt like it was ... well, a mink coat. Penny let her kid nap atop it. While I watched him sleep, Hellman watched me. "You'd make a great father," she said. Heap on the regrets; we'll never know.

I talked to her about the film of *Watch on the Rhine*, and Paul Lukas, little realizing that she and everyone else connected with the production loathed the man (as I learned later, from *An Unfinished Woman*). Someone offered Hellman a hit off a joint, and to my astonishment, she took it – and coughed so heartily that I was afraid for a moment that I'd be present at a headline.

Hellman told us another story, this one concerning her days as a girl-about-Manhattan, when she was a slush pile reader for a publishing company – it had to be Boni & Liveright. I didn't buy it – the story was too marvelous – but of course said nothing. One evening, as she was getting ready to leave, her boss tossed a manuscript onto her desk. It had just arrived from Paris – or is that a spoiler? He told her to read it that night. Groaning with resentment, she took the packet home.

She said she didn't bother to open the book until she was already in bed and, if I knew Hellman, half-soused. Expecting to dump the m.s. within a page or two, as with most unsolicited submissions, she began.

She read it through to the end – twice.

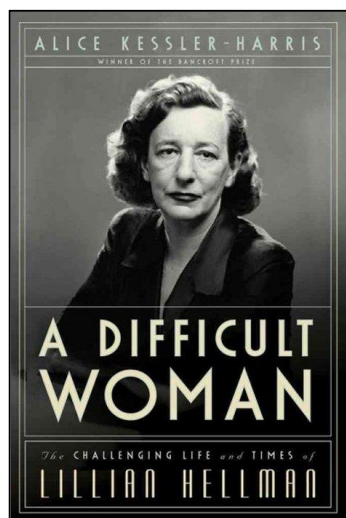
Hellman claimed that she got out of bed, pulled on whatever was lying around, and toting the manuscript, rushed into the street. She claimed that she rushed to her boss' brownstone and pounded on his door. When the stupefied editor answered, she said she all but babbled at him about the book she'd just read. He ordered her away and slammed the door. She said she didn't go home because she couldn't go home; she was so excited that she wandered the city streets until dawn.

That next morning she went into her boss' office and again, thrust the manuscript at him. He eyed her like she was insane. And then *he* read the manuscript. Twice. It was *In Our Time*.

In Our Time was Ernest Hemingway's first book, and one of his best. It's a collection of Nick Adams stories – not including “The Killers”, an unfortunate lack – taking Hemingway's *roman a clef* through World War I into his separate peace – it's where the phrase comes from – and the return to nature which bespoke his recovery. The book's last words echo with pride and simplicity and power: *Like all Greeks he wanted to come to America.* And here sat Lillian Hellman, who read it first.

Did she *really*? Who knows? Who cares? The tale *might* have been true – God knows it stunned the flower children gawping at their teacher from about the room.

To each of us, as she left, Hellman said “Good to meet you.” She paused as she faced Howard, no doubt tempted to heap on some luv; I was jealous. Penny saw her to the door, and I overheard her sad private apology, “I'm sorry I failed.” Hellman smiled and scoffed and talked to her for a few private moments. I didn't eavesdrop, but Penny was both smiling and crying when she came back to us.



I never saw Lillian Hellman in person again. I wrote to her requesting a recommendation to the North Carolina writing program. She gave me one, and I got in. Hellman's note recalled our class. “Tell Penny to name her next kid after me.”

As I say, I went to UNC=Greensboro and obtained my Masters of Fine Arts degree under the tutelage of another of my heroes, Fred Chappell, one-time fan and later, a two-time winner of the World Fantasy Award. (Fred's memorial for Lynn Hickman appeared in my NASFiC program book.) I followed Hellman's celebrated – and somewhat silly – lawsuit against Mary McCarthy and Dick Cavett, and went to see Jane Fonda's skillful interpretation of the great woman in *Julia*. All during the film I kept wondering at the baffling congruencies of life which led me to leave a meeting with one of Hanoi Jane's future exes to make a party in honor of one of her best roles. And giggling, *sotto voce*, “I know her. I *know* her.”

The writing of fiction eluded me. Realizing perhaps too deeply the depthless stupidity of *Unoc* and the torpidity of my subsequent projects, I fell into an unending swoon of doubt. It wasn't simply my lack of ability – I like to say that I have no talent and I have a Masters of Fine Arts to prove it – but that Hellman was right: it's tough to live in a world without rules. So I sought a life founded in rules. My miasma was relieved not by my imagination, but by the real world: law school. (I was not alone in this: I don't know his reasons, but Howard also took the legal route. He's an attorney in D.C.) I became a public defender and, for as long as possible, engaged the world that way. In many ways it has been a rich and satisfying life. But I was and I remain haunted.

It isn't Hellman herself who haunts me; I remember her with affection. And this thing which resounds in memory is hardly negative. Like People's Park, it's one of those aspects of my Berkeley years that I can call forth whenever I forget who I am. But I also feel a responsibility, a *debt*, and not just to Hellman: a debt I have not repaid and fear I never will. It sits atop my bucket list – something I *must* do while there is still an “I” to do it.

Terrible with names, Lillian Hellman wrote a line or two about each of the members of her seminar and the work we'd submitted. That first class, I looked over her shoulder and read what this grand dame of American letters, intimate of Hemingway, Faulkner and Hammett had said ... about *me*.

“Guy Lillian.

“Bayou country, and a man with one eye in asylum.

“Good.”



John Neilsen Hall

“A damp corner of Wiltshire, England”

Johnsila32@gmail.com

Regarding Challenger #36 ... I particularly enjoyed “It Pays to Advertise”. That’s the kind of story I like, and makes me kind of envious of the exciting professional life you lead. [*Led.*] If I hadn’t spent so much time being a stoner in L.A. and had applied myself, who knows but I could have been a lawyer.

Stoners can be nicer.

But applying myself is not something that I have ever been able to do for very long, and so I wound up as an accountant. Which has not been without its compensations – in my time, I have acted for some famous names, done some good work, some “interesting” work and some work I’d rather forget all about. I will have run my own practice for 29 years this year, and while it never did actually make me rich, I have at least kept putting food on the table and gas in the tank week by week, so I reason I haven’t done too terribly. I once wrote up one of my exploits from before I started the business for a fanzine – Graham Charnock’s *Bye Bye Johnny* – but on the assumption that so obscure a publication has never come your way, I am attaching the article for your edification and delight – well, that may be overstating the case more than somewhat, but maybe you will enjoy it.

I did indeed, and believe my readers will enjoy its reprint in this very issue. Thanks to you and Graham for the okay.

Advertising always gave me a load of trouble. I would maybe get one decent long term client out of every six responses- the other five were either people who had mistaken me for some variant on Harry Potter or wanted me to do something they wouldn’t have to pay for – occasionally, I did do something, and indeed they didn’t pay for it!. So I try not to do it any longer – advertising that is - though I do have something running on Google that should come up if you put the right search term in from a UK IP address, which doesn’t bear fruit very often, but just occasionally. From your story, I gather that you don’t focus on clients being long term, just being in a hole you can dig them out of- or do you have some regulars?

Sorry to read of your continuing health related vicissitudes. I hope things will improve so you don’t need a walker (rollator – that’s so American!). I’m with your physician on those – once you start having to use one, you will never be free of it.

Enjoyed the Mardi Gras article. I really must get myself to N.O. and sample it myself one of these days, before I get too old- there certainly looks like there are a lot of things to see! Thanks for another great ish, Guy.

Joe Major

1409 Christy Avenue

Louisville, KY 40204-2040

jtmajor@iglou.com

“Why are Alan White, Charlie Williams, Kurt Erichsen, and Taral not tripping over Hugos?” They don’t have websites that provide them with a living.

If all else failed Chris Garcia’s “Wild Party” could have someone who was invited each time, saw the goings-on, and left to go home, bake cookies for the neighbor kids, and pick up on the three books she was reading at the time. Though once she had had the reputation of being the wildest, most undressed, performer of them all. In the ’20s she would have been a vamp, the ’50s, a Mysterious Woman, the ’80s,

The CHORUS LINES

a Wild Thing, and in the “ohs,” an actual vampire. But she was passé, and saw through the emptiness of it all. She could even be the narrator!

Based on Theodosia Burr Goodman, died Mrs. Charles Brabin, but in between Theda Bara.

What I would have done, of course, was to have a movie about a shy, but passionate down below, librarian, flirting with the regular patron who slyly mocks the pretensions of the world, when not going through his fifth book of the day, and the crusty old library trustee who thinks they would do well together, but is too sour and world-worn to openly do it. Played by Bara, Groucho Marx, and W. C. Fields — who could between shots talk about what they had been reading lately.

Nowadays actors have graduate degrees, and are less literate.

It’s a good thing Greg Benford chose the position he did. Me, if asked to carry the weight of the world on my shoulders, I would shrug and stop the motor.

Frankie McDonald might want to know that the story that Poddy’s uncle tells her is based on something Heinlein wrote about his last wife. Whereas the wife in *Farnham’s Freehold* is uncomfortably close to Heinlein’s previous wife.

Repulsive book.

But in some ways, Clark (the real protagonist of *Podkayne of Mars*) is a sociopathic, emotionally sterile child with detached parents. The book ends with him trying to get over it.

Terrific book.

“Chicon 7 Diary”: Ah, but did Mike Resnick see any of his relatives there? We took my cousin Dana and her family to the con, and Dana was utterly enthralled with it. We had a good time too, and were dreadfully sorry the Chicon 8 planning meeting was on the hoax track.

I’m glad Bwana had a good time at the parties. And that he could get into the “Secret History of Science Fiction” panel, but then he had a chair reserved. I think there were more people there than there had been at ChiCon in 1962. How times change.

RiverCon in Louisville used to have more than 25 costumes in its masquerade. I think now costumers are coming up through costuming cons and then the big time. Our local Dragon*Con lovers boast of the huge parades of costumed people through downtown Atlanta.

Note that Canada is not issuing any more new pennies. So Murray Moore will have to risk heavier coins against his ... *er* ... retainer?

One tiny correction to John Nielsen Hall. William IV was the third son of George III. The one in between was Frederick, Duke of York, the “Grand Old Duke of York” of the song. However, those who knew him called him “The Soldier’s Friend” for his efforts at reform and organization of the British Army.

The Novel That the Literary Elite Assured Us Would Survive in 1954 (my birth year) was Daphne Du Maurier’s *Mary Anne*, a moving recounting of the life of her ancestress, Mary Anne Clarke, the Duke of York’s mistress. (And the one who got him temporarily sacked, for her selling army commissions, a procedure he was trying to get rid of.) As for this work by some professor at Oxbridge or Camford or whatever that Limey school was, named “Tollers” or something like that, who cares, it’ll be on remainder tables within a year.

My father-in-law had a Whipple Procedure in 2011. He drove himself to the hospital. The next morning he wasn’t talking. He doesn’t talk to anyone until he finishes his morning crossword puzzle, and why should a little matter like six hours of surgery the day before make any difference? He’s still doing well, as of this writing.

As for Gaius called “Little Boot” (Caligula): *Novissime contrectandae pecuniae cupidine incensus, saepe super immensas aureorum acervos patentissimo diffusos loco et nudis pedibus spatiat et toto corpore aliquamdiu volutas est.* DE VITA CAESARIS, Liber IV C. Caligula, capitulo LVII, C. Suetonius Tranquillus scripsit [“Finally, seized with a mania for feeling the touch of money, he would often pour out huge piles of gold pieces in some open place, walk over them barefooted, and wallow in them for a long time with his whole body.” (Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars*, Book IV Gaius Caesar Caligula, Chapter XLII)] So he had his Scrooge McDuck moments.

Taral: And people said that Edward VIII had left the British throne to sign on as third mate on an American tramp.

Ooch!

Milt Stevens
6325 Keystone St.
Simi Valley, CA 93063
miltstevens@earthlink.net

Challenger #36 looks like the party issue. Bill Rotsler's "Cocktail Party" is a great summary of that sort of party. By that sort of party, I mean a party where people stay more or less vertical and sort of continue talking. Ideally, nobody passes out, but there is no requirement on making sense. There are other types of parties. I particularly liked the guy who was beating another fellow over the head with a long series of dialogue balloons. I've run into that sort a few times.

The party in room 770 that Roger Sims describes sounds like a party of the very young. Anything worth doing is worth overdoing and you need excess for success. Or something like that. I went to parties like that when I was in high school. Thinking back on it, it's a wonder so many people survive their own youth. With a little time, most folks begin to appreciate moderation.

Unfortunately, not all people are fans. Some people can't have a good time without passing out. Some people can't have a good time without getting in a fight. Fans are not hostile drunks, and that's a good thing. I remember a comment in a British fanzine from a hotel rep that fans drank like the rugby club but fought like the chess club.

American culture has changed quite a bit in the last fifty years. Drinking is much less tolerated than it was when I was in college. It's something about health, or morality, or maybe both. Drugs aren't quite in the same situation. I honestly suspect more people would be against drugs if the government wasn't against them.

There used to be a lot of parties in local fandom, usually two or three a week. I think they were supposed to be fun initially. However, as local fandom became more complicated, parties gradually turned into business meetings. If you weren't involved in the business end of fandom, there wasn't much reason to attend local fan parties. As far as I know, fan parties are few and far between in Southern California these days.

Then there are parties at cons. Terry Pratchett once observed there were no cool con parties. There were either room gatherings in sardine mode or a few people sitting on a bed talking. Personally, I prefer sitting on a bed talking, but those are just my tastes.

Best parties at Worldcon: the Hugo Nominees' reception before the ceremony, the Hugo Losers' party after the ceremony, and the Worldcon Chairmen's soiree. We'll miss all this year: drat!



I ran a terrible copy of this photo in *Challenger* no. 35, as part of its tribute to Dr. Janet Davis Lyons. She was simply Janet Davis, and all of 17, when I took it. The young man in the Manhunter costume is John Ellis, and they'd never so much as met when I asked to photograph them at the 1974 DeepSouthCon. They fell into this brilliant pose. Janet's now a physician, John a movie producer, and I thank him for this much better copy of one of the best pictures I've ever taken.

Martin Morse Wooster
P.O. Box 8093
Silver Spring, Maryland 20907

Many thanks for *Challenger* #36. I always enjoy Mike Resnick's Worldcon reports, and I hope he will continue to write them for you. [*That goes triple for "Triple Guy."*] I don't go to many Worldcon panels, but I did indeed sit through "The Secret History of Science Fiction," which was a lot of fun. The room was packed and I was barely able to find a seat. I have a grumpy right knee that gets grumpier and grumpier if it doesn't stretch out. Resnick and his associates were so entertaining that I didn't mind the numerous complaints my right knee was sending me. I enjoyed all the stories, particularly about the 1968 Baycon, which seems to be a panel where, if the attendees weren't numbed by Philip Jose Farmer's 2½ hour Hugo banquet speech, they had a choice of inhaling the fragrant buzz of all the pot inside or braving the tear gas outside.

I also second Resnick's praise of John Scalzi as Hugo Toastmaster. Scalzi was very funny and very good at keeping the proceedings moving smoothly. He didn't do the event in 90 minutes, but I'm pretty sure the Hugos were over in two hours, which is quite an achievement given that there are too many Hugos.

I agree – there are twice as many Hugo categories as we need. But WSFS' panacea for recognizing new outlets for fanac is to throw chrome at them – with new Hugo categories. We'd better get used to our annual case of prickly heat.

I've never been to a Mardi Gras, but I've seen about 20 Mummers parades in Philadelphia on New Year's Day. They're not what they once were, because the most complicated floats (the Fancy Brigades) are no longer part of the parade. You have to go to the Philadelphia Convention Center and pay money to watch them. My guess is also that you can get more festive when it's 75 degrees in Louisiana than when it's 40 degrees in Philadelphia. (For example, when it's 40, no one takes off their clothes!) Still, it's a good time watching the Mummers go crazy with beads, baubles, and silly walks. As a bonus, many of the Mummers' floats are SF or fantasy related in some way.

*I remember one Fat Tuesday when the mercury rose no higher than seven—that's **seven** degrees – but the French Quarter was as wild and hilarious as always. Mardi Gras is insane – thank heaven.*

Bob Jennings says that Universal thrives on "gratuitous hedonism" among park lovers. I think Disney and Universal offer two different kinds of experiences. Disney is pretty much a unified whole. I know I'm manipulated when I'm there, and I know that the Mouse clamps his pointy little teeth on my credit card when I'm in his park and won't let go. But Disney rightfully prides itself on customer service, and I have a good time on the rides and buying schwag. (My Mickey Mouse colander, for example, has been put to very good use.) Universal is more uneven. Harry Potter is a better attraction than anything Disney has, and I am looking forward to going to Moe's Tavern in the Simpsons section and having a Flaming Moe. But Universal has a lot of stodge and very old rides. That's why it's the second-best amusement park—even with Harry Potter.

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

Many thanks for another big hunk o' zine, *Challenger* 36. Well, the file is bigger, anyway... I can tell by the nearly-nekkid lady on the cover that Alan White is responsible.

*As is John Purcell, who originally published it on Askance. *YIH* I'm furious with myself!*

These days, it is tough to stay positive about life, given the horror of today's headlines, political insanity and difficulties with health as we age. More and more, when we are busy with fanac, we might need more and more time to recharge the creative batteries. A while ago, I took about two weeks off from writing, and I just let the zines pile up. There was some guilt over that, but relaxing gave me enough time to get over it. I know that if I do that too often, there will be the good chance I might not want to return to writing LOCs, but I'm too used to this habit.

Parties! We have thrown our share. We've doled out more bottles and cans of beer and soda than I can count, and we have created mountains out of full cases and then the empties. We ran many of the parties for the Toronto in 2003 Worldcon bid ... and then we were disposed of, and then we joined LA in 2006. We assisted with their final bid parties in Toronto, coincidentally. Local conventions have also benefited from the fact we've had station wagons for many years, and we've been willing to run the show.

It has never been so easy to contact people as it is today, with the use of the Internet and e-mail, plus the advent of social media, and other technology like Skype. I can chat nonchalantly with friends in Australia by voice or by e-mail. The Disney song gets truer by the day. I have not been to any NASA facilities ... Yvonne has been to several International Space Development Conferences (I've been to one) where she was able to see things like the USS *Enterprise* shuttle and a Concorde close up at the Smithsonian. The ISDC is international in name only, but Yvonne and I may have been the only ones there to make it merit that word. At one ISDC Yvonne attended, she was refused entry to one exhibit the attendees were taken to because she is a foreign national. Having non-Americans there was, as one person put it, quaint.

Reminders of past Worldcons are great fun, to see what happened there, yet, there's a feeling of regret that I wasn't able to go. Chicon 7 was just down the highway, yet we've stood firm to save for going to London. It looks more and more likely every day, and we will be there, as long as nothing catastrophic happens.

Advertising your law practice seems to be okay where you are, and the Buffalo TV stations are full of lawyers' ads offering your help in car crashes, taking your former employer to court, suing over suspect medications, and the list goes on. In Ontario, I am not sure what the line on advertising is...I'd have to check with the Law Society of Upper Canada.

I remember Joe and Gay Haldeman well, and I hope there will be the opportunity to see them again. Last time we did have the opportunity to party with them was at the home of the late Mike Glicksohn here in Toronto. We were all enjoying eggs Benedict for breakfast, courtesy of Dave Yoder, and we were trying to shake the fatigue from the previous night, and the conversation got onto cars. At one point, Yvonne said to Joe, "Hey Dad, can I borrow the car?" "Sure!" said Joe, and tossed Yvonne his car keys. "Where is the car, anyway?" "Fort Worth!"

The party in Room 770 ... still fannish legend. One local hotel, now unfortunately torn down, had a room 770, and I wanted to get the room and stage a helluva party...never got the chance. While the hotel was in the opening stages of being torn down, local fannish friends made some dangerous middle-of-the-night excursions into the structure to salvage whatever memories of the hotel they could get their hands on. I asked for anything to do with room 770, especially the room number marker, but no such luck. We know the connection, but few others do.

I've been to New Orleans for the Worldcon, but have never been able to return, and I doubt I ever will, but we do still have the beads and coins given to us at Nolacon II. I wish there was another NO bid, just the same as I wish there was another Boston bid... both great places to be, and time has changed their fandoms.

*But there is another New Orleans bid – for 2018! **Challenger** supports it enthusiastically!*

The locol ... not to worry, Murray Moore, I will not be asking any sensitive questions of you next time I see you.

Yes, we're getting old ... so many LOCs about surgeries and other procedures to keep us humming. I have been lucky to have what few surgeries I have had, but in literally a few days now, I will be undergoing another eye operation, this time to remove a cataract, and have a replacement installed. Rotate the irises every 50,000 glances, etc. Shouldn't be a problem, but still, the usual nervousness.

Gotta agree with everyone on Alan White's artwork ... he should be on the Hugo ballot, and when I can nominate, I nominate him. We guested together at Loscon 39 in LA this past November, and the con kept us pretty busy, so there wasn't more time to talk.

My LOC ... the big Wizard's Box has hidden compartments galore, plus special publications and items, and all the movies on DVD/BluRay. A neat thing to have, and she looks forward to going to Florida for the HP stuff there. Read the other day that Disney is going to build another Wizarding World

in L.A. We had a great time with Chris Garcia and crew at SFContario 3, and at the fourth iteration, we will be taking a dealer's table, hawking our assorted steampunk goods.

Richard Brandt

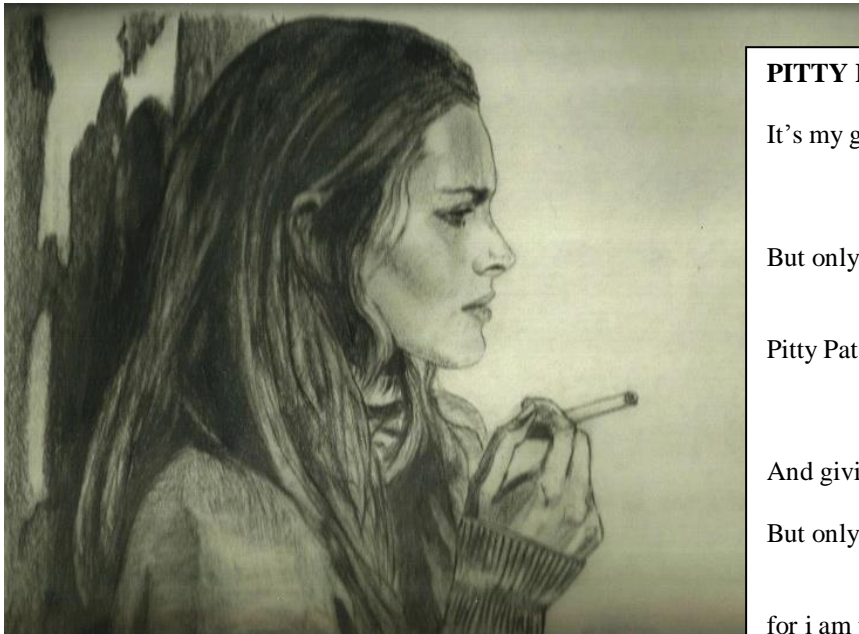
Rsbrandt44@hotmail.com

To refresh Jerry Kaufman's memory: Greg Benford's "Mozart on Morphine" reappeared as a short story in *F&SF*. As I recall, all he did was to tack a brief paragraph onto the end which just barely made it a work of fiction. Since he had effectively re-sold it as a professional work, I've always been grateful that he allowed the original to be reprinted in *Fanthology* '87.

R. Laurraine Tutihasi

laurraine@mac.com

I shall have to buy Murray Moore a drink the next time I see him. [*From us both.*]



PITTY PAT

It's my game
for i am the master
you are king

But only for the moment
do i allow you to believe ...

Pitty Pat, one, two, three.
it's my game
i learned it young,
telling sweet, sweet lies,
And giving you alibis.

But only for the moment
do i allow you to believe ...
that i am your fantasy.
for i am the master
you are king.

Pitty Pat, one, two, three.
as i am on my knees
pretending i am eager to please
But only for the moment
do i allow you to believe ...
As you lay your money down for me.

for i am the Master
and you were king.

Rocky

STARTLING ACCOUNTANCY STORIES!

NUMBER ONE –
THE MYSTERY OF THE REAL OWNER

John Nielsen-Hall

You would be foolish to believe this story, but it may be that is just so fantastic, it has to be true – perhaps....

It must have seemed like a great idea when Stuart Jones's barrister put it to him. I don't know, I wasn't there. But I imagine it would have been at the "con" he must have had with his brief before his trial at Knightsbridge Crown Court. A "con" might be an accurate description of what actually happens, at least in regard to the fee invoice that comes later, but actually the term is short for Conference. In this case it would have been a conference about how to defend Stuart against the grave charge of Living off Immoral Earnings.

Some weeks before, poor Stuart had been arrested by the Vice squad. That in itself bespeaks either poor management or poor luck. "The Vice" was for nigh on thirty years one of the most corrupt departments of the Metropolitan Police, and I rather thought that Stuart could not have been paying them enough. I mean, if you own a substantial property in Shepherds Market, Mayfair and you let the place at a very high net rent to some very nice ladies who do a lot of entertaining, it is, broadly, worth your while to stump up the required bung to the officers of the law. You might think you would be better off paying protection money to some cold eyed East End villain with a dry sense of humour, but other departments of New Scotland Yard had seen to it that by 1980, gentlemen such as that were in sharp decline, like most other areas of the British economy, and sadly, the market in protection was effectively a monopoly run by the protectors of the law abiding public. So Stuart should really have made the best of a bad job and paid them. But plainly, he didn't or he wouldn't have been so pressed as to listen to his barrister's loony idea, that day.

That idea was a cast iron defence against the charge. Stuart could not "live off" earnings, be they immoral or otherwise, arising from his ownership of this property in Shepherds Market, because Stuart could show that the income from the house was only a piffling part of his income as a whole. After all, he owned a flat in Gloucester Place, a small house on the Suffolk coast, a hotel on the Costa Brava, and another hotel in Barcelona, and that, with the addition of the house in Shepherds Market, was only the real estate in his

portfolio. There were shares in a lot of respectable public companies, shares in some less well-known companies that appeared to run bookshops and publish magazines, a thriving portfolio of private loans (though these would, sadly, prove to be less than thriving later on) not to mention a large Daimler saloon and a small Ford for Stuart's wife. There was, therefore, a lot of income, and none of it fell under the heading "immoral" as far as the present case was concerned. It was simply unfortunate that due to the vagaries of the Landlord and Tenant laws obtaining at that time, poor Stuart had not been able to get shot of his tenants in the Shepherds Market house, and he certainly wasn't responsible for whatever it was that police alleged they had been up to.

It was therefore a sunny day in Knightsbridge, when Stuart stood in the dock to answer the charges brought against him, and, less than an hour and a half later, found himself strolling to lunch at a little Bistro nearby, free as the proverbial bird, case dismissed. There was only one small problem, and to Stuart, it was so small a problem, it hadn't really registered when the barrister had mentioned it. It was that his defence team had been obliged to disclose to "the other side", which was a convenient euphemism for the Crown in the guise of the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, all the evidence about to be adduced to the judge about the extent of Stuart's income and investments. What Stuart had not grasped was that this disclosure took the form of copy documents, lots of them. And copies of these copies would find their way to Her Majesty's Board of Inland Revenue.

So it was that a couple of months later Stuart was sitting in the office of my boss. Well actually, one of my bosses. There were three partners in the firm I worked for, and we called each of them by their initials. Engee was the partner to whom Stuart had repaired in his hour of need. Engee was a sixty-ish Jewish Chartered Accountant. He was the senior partner, and therefore commanded a large office, which he contrived to clutter up with a lot of heavy boardroom furniture, framed antique Admiralty charts and a Grandfather Clock which ticked like the tramp of doom and gonged the hours so loudly it could be heard right through the sixth floor office suite the firm occupied near Piccadilly Circus. At the back of this museum Engee sat behind a huge solid mahogany desk that made him look even shorter than his five foot five frame might otherwise have suggested. A bank of three phones nestling to his left was reflected in the high polish of the desk. He had hearing aids in both ears (hence, perhaps, the sheer auditory power of the clock) and had great difficulty in answering those phones. Usually he had to turn one of the hearing aids down in order to mute the howl of feedback that resulted when he put the phone to his ear, while the caller tried to make sense of what was going on. Stuart had already found that out, and as a consequence was actually relieved to be taking up the high priced time of Engee in person, if only because he could now explain his problems without interruption.

Engee was no slouch at tax. His tax avoidance schemes were so technically advanced, only the very discerning could differentiate between them and outright tax evasion. But Stuart's problems were made more complicated by the fact that he had previously submitted Tax Returns with the word "None" written in most of the boxes. This used to be a popular pastime among United Kingdom taxpayers until the mid-nineties, when the system changed to one of "Self-Assessment". In those days, you could put more or less put what you liked on the Tax Return. It hardly mattered because if the Revenue didn't believe you, they entered their own figure anyway, and it was up to you to disprove it. In Stuart's case, however, they had believed him and now they knew from his day in court that they had been unwise to do so, and they now felt a little foolish, as a consequence. Nothing would now satisfy them than the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth(though it was my experience that truth was in the mind of the beholder of it) and they had raised estimated assessments to tax, interest on that tax and penalties going back over ten years. Stuart had thirty days to pay around £150,000. How much simpler his life would have been were he to have done so.

In those days, you could appeal against such assessments, but pending the resolution of said appeals, the tax was payable anyway. Well, you could get the Revenue to "stand over" the tax pending that resolution,

but in this case, they were going to want at least some of what they had demanded and that right soon. Actually how little could be paid at that juncture, and how soon re-drafted and verified Tax Returns could be produced was my area of expertise and so I came and sat at the huge board room table opposite Stuart, under Engee's benign gaze (this was largely because he couldn't hear a word I said in what he claimed was my very deep voice). Over some hours I obtained an outline of what I had to do get the tax appeals decided in as low figures as possible, and based on that recommended a figure which Stuart would have to find right away to gain a breathing space while all the work etc. was done. I thought at least £37,500 would be due, and I wasn't nailing any part of my colours to that, largely because Stuart had not kept any records of his property income, which we now knew, was even more extensive than his barrister had ascertained, and I was only basing that figure on Stuart's fervent assurances that he was paying a lot of interest on various borrowings which he would ordinarily be able to charge against the income.

In the weeks and months that followed, I found hard evidence of income and outgoings, even in respect of the "legit" investments, very difficult to obtain. Stuart kept referring me to his "wife" – though actually, he wasn't married. The lady to whom he wasn't married had left her native Manila many years before and was long haired, full bodied and reminiscent of both Imelda Marcos and Sophia Loren merged into one handsome package. She got most men's attention without having to try too hard, but she was, while unfailingly polite and sympathetic, implacable in her boldly stated determination that Stuart should pay nothing to the Revenue.

"Why should he? "She would ask, rhetorically. "He cannot owe tax when he earns nothing."

This was a truth she was utterly convinced of and it was useless to attempt to reason with her. Instead, I would attempt to convince her that we had to prove he earned nothing, and that meant evidence would have to be produced, though she felt that she need only tell them so, and they should believe her. It was very insulting to her that she should not be taken at her word, she told me.

She had balls, though. Stuart had not paid the £37,500 I had recommended and such was the painfully slow progress in getting submissions in, bailiffs were now regular visitors to the flat in Gloucester Place. They were no match for her. They were neither paid nor were they able to exercise any order or warrants they brought with them- because Stuart was never in, she was not Stuart's wife, and she knew nothing whatever about it. Moreover, the few submissions I had been able to effect, were not really helping the "he owes nothing" cause. Each one had been signed by Stuart in Engee's office to the accompaniment of much protest and hand wringing, and I would inevitably hear from "the wife" when he had got home and reported back, who, due to the usual impossibility of her speaking to Engee through the howls of feedback, would let off steam by giving me a lecture once again about the injustice of taxing a man with no money.

Actually, I was beginning to believe that Stuart Jones really did have no money. Despite County Court judgments, petitions for bankruptcy, winding up orders against his companies (didn't I mention those? well they sort of surfaced mysteriously somewhere along the way) not a penny had yet been paid to Her Majesty. Oh, *we* were getting paid. In cash, by "the wife." I found myself wondering who really did own the properties and investments that had surfaced in the run up to Stuart's trial, now some two-and-a-half years previously. I had this intuition that it might be "the wife." This conviction was reinforced when the property in Shepherds Market that had featured in the trial started to figure in my work.

As with much else, there were no records or books, so I was going to draft up some accounts based on what was said to be the case and then attempt to "sell" them to the Revenue on the basis that this was the best they were going to get. The testimony I would use for the income side of the sheet would be that of the tenants themselves. So I appeared one morning (it would not, I reasoned, be much use to come any later in the day) at the house armed with ID and a clipboard and pen.

I knocked on the door of each room I came to, and if I was so fortunate as to gain admittance, I went into a prepared spiel about how we were working for Mr Jones and just needed to carry out some research. That was my first mistake. Plainly, the first young lady I spoke with (actually, she wasn't that young) had never met Mr Jones. She had met Mrs. Jones. She paid her rent to Mrs. Jones. My second mistake was in assuming she paid a regular fixed amount in rent.

"Oh no" she said, "It varies".

Plainly this was going to be more complicated than I thought. By the time I was admitted to a dimly lit suite of rooms by a tall statuesque lady bearing some resemblance to Morticia Addams, dressed as she was in a long black evening dress at eleven in the morning, I knew I was on a loser. When I got back to the office, I met Engee coming up in the lift. I told him what I had been doing.

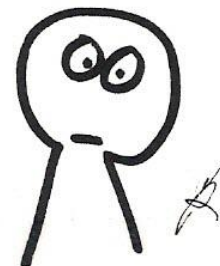
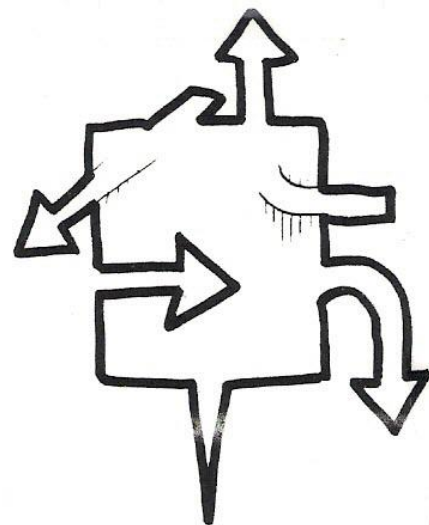
"There really are tarts in that building" I said, the reality of it just coming home to me. I never saw him laugh so much. He had tears running down his face as we got out on our floor.

My next move was to have a meeting with Mrs. Jones. It took a while (Dear Reader, you should assume there was still more delay, more sunny days and rainy ones, momentous events in national and international politics, great records going up and down the charts, and lashings of sex drugs and rock and roll for me and the world generally all going on during the years months weeks and days that pass as this tale unfolds) but finally I was admitted to the Gloucester Place apartment and we sat down to discuss what I knew and also what I suspected.

"Dear John," she said, after I had addressed her as Mrs. Jones, as I usually did, "You must call me Candy. My real name is Candidad, but everybody calls me Candy."

Everybody, I noted, had not included me until that moment. But we were sitting next to each other on a big sofa, and her perfume and physique were making an impression upon me, and the jelly that does duty for my brain was liquefying. I wanted to diplomatically let her know that I knew that John really did earn nothing. I would leave unspoken the corollary thought I had which was that he was kept by her, and right at that moment, I envied him. But instead I had let her take charge of the conversation and what she wanted to tell me was that she would much prefer it if the rental accounts for the Shepherds Market property were wholly fictional.

"I can tell you have lots of imagination" she said, leaning back and making sure that I admired the sheerness of the satin-like top she had on, and how at that angle, her generous roundedness became so much more generous, to a point that mere words were inadequate for accurate description. My trousers having become unaccountably tight, I found myself agreeing with every word she said. Indeed, she must have hypnotized me, or something, because I went away and did something very stupid.



CONFUSED

The penalties for inventing accounts – indeed for inventing anything on which a client’s tax assessment might rely- range from the sack and professional disgrace through to arrest and imprisonment. Nevertheless, that’s what I did. I made up years of rental accounts on that property, and as fictional accounts went, they were accurate in every detail. They did not attempt to show that there was nothing but loss, ruin and endless trouble in owning the property, but they did show that returns were very modest and swamped by the financing costs. “Good work” Engee said, with an expression of complete surprise on his face when he saw them.

Why did I do it? Was I so sick of Stuart Jones’s work that I wanted an end to it? Well, if that had been the reason, it wouldn’t have worked out. There were a great many more dramas to come. The Fraud Squad took revenge for their colleague’s earlier humiliation, and arrested Stuart again, this time on complex charges having to do with his lending activities. Despite all our accumulated professional expertise there was nothing much we could do about that, but Engee made no bones about visiting his client while he was doing his time, and reported back that Stuart was very much enjoying cooking the Christmas lunch in the kitchens at the open prison in Norfolk where he came to reside. While he was there, the fraud squad paid us all a visit, but fortunately Candy had highly placed sources and she was able to tip Engee off. There followed a tense but hilarious Friday afternoon in which all manner of paperwork having to do with Stuart Jones, his companies and investments was unceremoniously crated and boxed up and shipped out of the office sharpish into a waiting queue of black cabs, to be temporarily stored in various members of staff lofts and basements. As we did this we kept an index of what documents we might have, and might produce on sight of a court order, but what we wished to avoid was having to surrender everything en-masse on the authority of a “fishing permit” variety of search warrant. In entering up this index, I carefully made a note of the working papers for my rental accounts, but, astonishing works of fiction as only I knew them to be, took care to “lose” them, out of a convenient fire escape door. They may well have made convenient bedding for some of Piccadilly Circus’s pigeons for a long time thereafter. As it happened they were never called for, and no one, as far as I know, ever noticed their absence.

The Fraud Squad heavies turned up, but without a warrant. Engee entertained them with some fine Madeira in his museum, and the rest of us knocked off for the weekend. Shortly after that, I had a meeting with my adversary at the Tax Office, who by various mystic signals, signs and portents indicated he was raising the white flag, and that the Revenue would be accepting all the accounts and returns by then submitted. The final bill before costs interest and penalties would be within a couple of hundred quid of the £37,500 figure that I had arrived at so long before. Some little time after that a passing bailiff at Gloucester Place hit the jackpot.

So it was that I called on Candy, on the pretext of handing back some bank statements and books, but effectively to say goodbye. She was a little lonely, I thought. Stuart was still in prison, and she would no longer have the near daily entertainment of arguing with so many official knockers at the door. She was very gracious, as we sat once again side by side on the sofa.

“You are an accountant” she said “and I know that you know there is still a debt outstanding”. She started to unpin her long lustrously black hair and I made bold to fumble with some of her buttons. I found that there were, as I had previously surmised, some considerable assets to be taken account of, and I duly did so, but I wrote off the major part of the debt. Well, as I said, she had balls.

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SURVIVOR

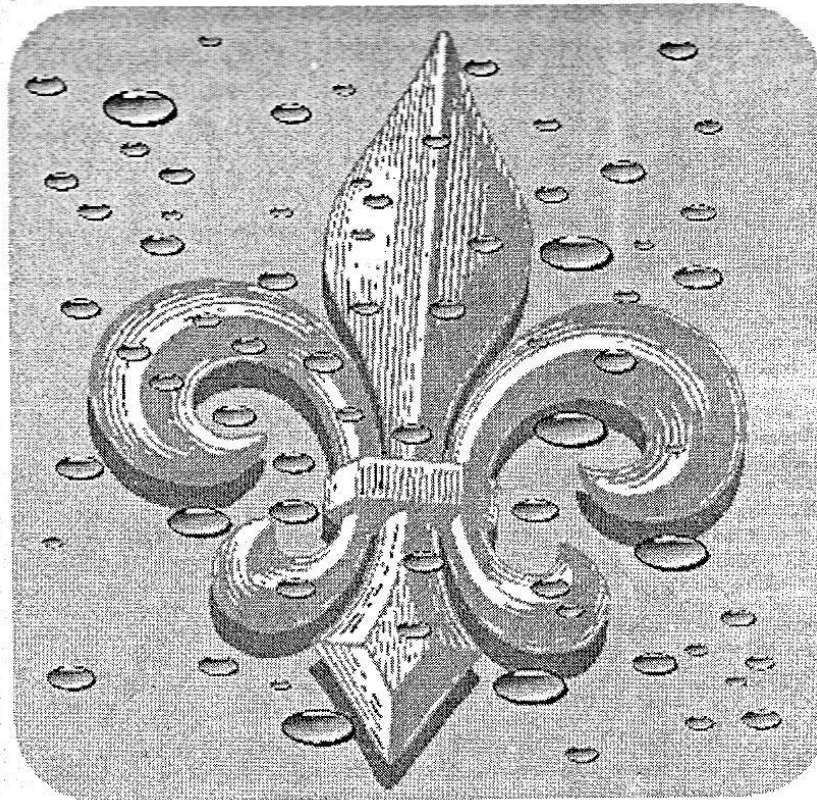
DENNIS DOLBEAR

Illustrations by
CHARLIE WILLIAMS

Overture.

The rain lashed your face like a cat-o'-nine-tails. The wind was enough to break off large branches and even the smaller trees like they were matchsticks. The combined effect was *fury*.

And that wasn't the leading lady, only her handmaidens. If I had only known at that time — when the above conditions were occurring — I'd have had time to be afraid.



Ordeal by Water

Katrina made her entrance in suitable diva fashion. She broke the doors of my house *out of their frames*. The pressure of the water was so great that even though the locks and eals held, the frame couldn't, and the water poured in in a flood tide.

I grabbed the hand of my mother — 84, and by no means well — and led her outside. This wasn't just a matter of fighting the in-rushing water, although that was a problem. The difficulty was something I'd never heard discussed in all the talk of "what to do in a flood": the fact that everything in your house — furniture, appliances, tables, bookcases, beds, even your refrigerator and freezer — *floats*. And that is a danger, because tall items, like the refrigerator and the

china cabinets, fall over, perhaps on you, crushing everything beneath. And when the water has risen a little more, it becomes a potentially-deadly maze of floating hulks that shift and bob treacherously with any current — including the wake of your body wading by.

But there wasn't much time to think of that. We had only minutes, *seconds*, to act. There were only two choices left — risk the fury of the storm outside or go for the attic.

I overrode my mother's choice and we went outside, past the crashing ruin of my house, as china cabinets and other furniture upended, spilling their contents of decades of family treasures,

decorative objects and worthless tchotchkes into the water. There was reason. We'd been through hurricane Betsy, so long ago, and I'd heard, and had nightmares about, folks drowning, being trapped like rats in the rising water, in the very attics of their homes. The water was rising so fast – there was no indication it could not go higher than the roof – and so fast that to break out of the attic would have been impossible. We went outside and took our chances.

Our first refuge was under the front porch overhang, reasonably sheltered from the storm, standing on a ladder. That didn't last very long. The water was soon rising about our shoulders, and showed no sign of slowing.

We took the only refuge left. We went into the water – now over 9 feet deep – and clung to the gutters above us, in a 125 mile-per-hour wind and swift flood. (My mother is nothing if not tough.) After a short while I moved to a tree outside, with flexible branches that I could crouch in. From this spot, I could relieve the stress on the gutter – already starting to bend – and be in a position to save my mother if she should let go – which she almost did several times and did, once – I dived beneath the water and pulled her, with strength I got from who knows where. But she held, and I held, and we endured about two or maybe three hours in the full wrath of Katrina. I will never forget this, not as long as I live, and mere words seem inadequate to describe the storm's power – and how small, how vulnerable it made you feel.

But after a few hours, the wind abated, and – could it be – the water actually started to drop. I checked again, mentally marking the water height against the bricks – yes, yes! It was dropping! We might not die after all! Our danger had passed. (Optimist. If only I knew...)

After a time, I paddled over from the tree and got my mother – still hanging on for dear life (for once, not a figure of speech) and moved back under the overhang of the porch, where we once again stood on the ladder. The wind – still fierce – nearly froze our wet bodies. After a while, when I was certain that the flood had really crested, we were actually able to move past the front door back into our drowned house with our ruined possessions, and gain access to the attic. Drowning was no longer our immediate problem.

It would soon be replaced by others.

Ordeal by Heat

Up in the attic, without power, it was as dark as the lowest pit of Hell and almost as hot. But something else it was: dry, and for that we were grateful. As the afternoon wore on – this was about six – I heard a sound I first greeted as the sweetest in the world: a chopper's whirlybird *whup whup whup* ... passing near overhead. Wonderful! We'd be saved! I went outside again, leaving my mother in the attic, making my way through the up-upper chest high water in the house, and made it outside to the ladder. As choppers went by, I waved, but none stopped, although one seemed to hover for a few minutes at the intersection of the next street, New Castle. Hopeful sign – surely they'd be back. As night fell – and I could, for once, see stars above the darkened city – I was hopeful. Tomorrow, tomorrow, we'd be airlifted out of this place, or, as the water would surely fall further as they turned on the pumps, walk out.

I climbed into the stifling attic, crawled over to a vacant space on the boards, and fell into a blessed sleep from sheer exhaustion.

Day of Despair

I awoke – who knows how many hours later, time as we usually reckon it having ceased to exist – with a ray of light coming through the housing of the attic exhaust fan. I dragged myself over to the stairwell opening and gazed down, hoping that there would be only a small amount of water left.

I was wrong, the water hadn't fallen an inch – as verified by the scumline forming on my wallpaper – from last night. That was a very bad sign, for it meant that the pumps were not in

operation, and that the drop in the water level from yesterday was simply due to the wind's abatement.

My first task was to get us some water and if possible, food. Food was secondary, I knew you could last for days without it, but water—clean water, there was too much of the other kind—was a different matter. Fortunately, I located a floating foam ice chest with a bag of ice inside and, joy, some frozen fruit salad I had the idea of taking out the night before. We had water, and food. I got it up the stairs to my mother and proceeded to work my way to the front door...

I moved through the shifting maze of our furniture—the giant TV that was my mother's main entertainment floating tube down like a colossal iceberg—pushing aside stereos, couches, credenzas and who knows what else, moving through scummy, foul water and a house with a subtle but growing fetid odor, and emerged—

—into a scene of, well, beauty. The sheet of water stretched out over the neighborhood and was utterly still, undisturbed by even a ripple from the breeze, which was nonexistent. The beautiful southern sun, a fountain of gold, poured through the remaining trees, and the entire surface of the water, like a mirror, reflected the trees, and the sun, and the sky, and the clouds, and the houses....

...the houses? Right; which brought me around—this was the drowned world, eerily quiet as I'd never heard my neighborhood before, without even the distant whoosh of the I-10. Nothing. It was the bizarre, and beautiful, and sinister, calm after the storm...

I felt utterly alone, but I called: "ANYBODY OUT THERE?!" And, thank God; got answers. "Yeah, over here!" "Where?" "Here! I can see you ... we're over on Barchester Street!" And another party answered from the house on New Castle that the helicopter had hovered over yesterday. We all called out, confirmed how many—two on Barchester, two on Coventry (us) five on New Castle and—all swore that if rescued, they'd make sure the rescuers knew about us too. It made me feel better they'd have to get somebody now, all we had to do was wait.

And wait, and wait, and yell and wave towels and anything else at the numerous passing helicopters. I knew why so many passed overhead; our house isn't far from the Lakefront airport, and that is the location of the Louisiana Air National Guard base—which is where the copters would refuel.

But surely someone would come for us, so, I spent the day on the ladder, trying to attract attention, or moving through the increasingly foul water either to check on my mother—she was holding up fairly well, considering—and scouting as much of the neighborhood as I could. We were surely almost alone, and every house had damage—doors and windows blown in, all flooded, everything ruined.

And so the day progressed, without knowledge of actual time, until—glory be! A helicopter was hovering over New Castle! Were they ...? YES! They were hovering to pick up the family there! We'd soon be saved! *Thank God.* I called to my mother that this was it, be ready to move when I called to her. The rescue was fascinating to watch, as the helicopter hovered and circled and hoisted the New Castle family up, and when they were finished, they...

... *roared off and left us.* Left us in a silence and a heat and a stench that was in every way more oppressive than before.

But oh, joy, they returned about an hour later, surely, they were returning to...

...no. They picked up a family a few streets down. And later, another, and then another, and each time they would circle, and I'd wave and yell and curse and nothing, nothing would happen. And this went on until dark

If we thought it was hot on Monday night, Tuesday night was almost unbearable, because Katrina had at least cooled things off for Monday. Tuesday—the attic was like spending the night in a sauna, bathed in your own sweat, and in the utter darkness, so profound it was equivalent to utter blindness. My mother was still game, still holding up with the defiant courage that has been the hallmark of her life, but there is only so much the willing, but aged and somewhat sick flesh and spirit

can do. She was reaching that limit rapidly, I could see that. I finally drifted off to sleep, without rest, after deciding what we would try on the morrow.

Swim for your life

We had to escape this watery hell, this prison where you could either be in the stifling attic and risk heat prostration, or in the water, in which you would surely risk hypothermia, if not much worse. The water, stagnant, was becoming the toxic soup that was always feared, as the rotting vegetation mixed with an array of chemicals from houses, boats, etc., to float on the top of the murky green water, I quickly acquired a coating of motor oil when I swam through a slick floating in my hallway.

We had to make a run for it, because if we waited, and help did not come today, I feared my mother would be too weak to escape on Thursday. Today had to be the day. We came from our sweat box refuge into a morning of dazzling and eerie beauty like before. I left my mother to stand on the ladder and try to attract the attention of the helicopters – fat chance – while I scouted out a plan of escape.

It was daunting. My street was tough enough, but when I rounded the corner and saw the broad watery expanse of what was New Castle Drive stretching on for blocks, and blocks, I realized that it was going to be tough enough on me and my mother, even clinging to a board, definitely would not make it. But there had to be something. And as I was going, my eye caught sight of a thing that was to have some importance and so – but, as my mind is wont, it filed it away for future reference.

I tried almost anything I could to get my mother something that she could float on which I could tow her to safety. And nothing worked. One table merely sank, a door floating well enough on its own, sank under even my mother's almost-negligible weight. Nothing. At that point, tired, I told my mother to keep an eye out, and went over to visit the boys on Barchester. I moved through the deep water of the street itself with a foam float in front of me, keeping my face out of the dangerous water, trying to paddle with one arm.

My Barchester neighbor was on his roof, with a large white flag he'd improvised from a sheet and a long broom handle. I greeted him. "Any luck?"

"Nah. They keep passing by."

"Same here ... and my mother's sick, I'm getting desperate."

"Well, we tried to launch my neighbor's boat," he commented sourly, gesturing at a hull barely visible beneath the murk. "Sank right off ... must've had a hole in it somewhere."

At that point, the bit of information I referred to earlier – filed away in the subconscious – kicked in.

"I know where there's another boat!"

My neighbor looked me right in the eye. "Lead us to it!"

And so we started off, me leading on my foam board, my neighbor's brother following in a life jacket, and my neighbor using some giant foam cylinder as support. We didn't have too far to go, just around the corner, and there we found out whatever neighbor owned the boat, he'd neglected to lock the boat itself. So we proceeded to borrow the watercraft, with the aid of one of the brother's clasp knife. He, by the way, is an ex-Marine. As he pointed out to me (not sarcastically, but ...) all this wasn't such a big thing when you train in the Carolina swamps.

After a bit we had a boat, but not motor powered – the big Evenrude was key-locked. No matter though – we could pole it through the streets, Venetian-style. (I made a point of singing "O Sole Mio".)

Even if the boat was a problem – it took considerable force to move such a heavy craft – one thing was important: two lifejackets, one of which I fastened on my mother's back. It's hard to describe, but the act gave me great relief, since it greatly decreased her risk of drowning. And soon enough, the Barchester neighbors had retrieved some of their goods and came poling their boat up our

street. The Marine brought the craft almost to the ladder, we transferred my mother to the boat ("Hold tight, mama, I've got you," the Marine said) and the next thing we were poling/pushing/towing the boat down New Castle towards the lake and higher ground.

And it was while we were paused, transferring boats and passengers, that one of those random incidents that mean so much occurred. At that point, since it was the intersection of two large streets, we had an unobstructed view to the south. And while we were working, the ex-Marine suddenly shouted "Look there!" and pointed directly to the south: a large jet with distinctive blue and white markings was flying low over the city. *"That's Air Force One!"*

Thank God! George Bush, I cursed you before, but now I bless you. The Federal cavalry is here and things will soon be OK.

And then I realized....

The main airport is to the west of us, and the jet is proceeding east. He's not coming here. The son of a bitch is *just flying by....*

*...and now, George Bush, I curse you again, and if I had known, at the-time, that it took a disaster of this magnitude to get you to cut short your vacation by even one day, and while I and my mother, and thousands of my fellow Orleanians were sweating, thirsting, starving, dying, up in our attics, you were **playing guitar** – a fiddle would have been more appropriate – on your ranch, I'd have cursed you worse than ever, you loathsome excuse ...*

Pardon. But to paraphrase that great American, Michael Corleone, this isn't business. It's *personal*.

As I pushed, I saw something curious in the water, pulled it out – a pool cue, and expensive, if I am any judge – and threw it in the boat. Not much, but when your total possessions consist of a pair of eyeglasses, a pair of boxer briefs, a scrub shirt, and a cheap pair of Wal-Mart



shoes, the acquisition of that pool cue probably tripled my net worth, maybe.

My mother sat in the bow, impassive, erect, like a Czarina going into exile (the simile is not that far-fetched) along with the Barchester dog; A problem was that this boat, too, took on water, and after a while we split the task three ways: one person pulls on a rope in the water, one pushes from behind, and one bails. We made slow, but steady progress. And lo and behold what do we see a few blocks down but – another boat! And so ensued another lengthy delay, which we needed, because pulling these things through the water is exhausting work. We “borrowed” the new boat, transferred our cargo onto the newer, smaller, and lighter craft, and proceeded towards the lake and high ground.

We made it eventually to Wales Street, which marks a crest of a sort of ridge. The ground is much higher there, and the water was shallower, about waist high, and we could walk without much difficulty. At this point our companions took leave to investigate – you guessed it – *another* boat. So I simply looped the rope around my chest in a harness, put my shoulders forwards, and head down, and did my best imitation of a canal boat mule, pulling the skiff, my mother, and the dog.

And arriving at last at Down man and Hayne, where glory be, there was dry ground – well, damp and muddy, but no standing water. And there I saw something that indicated to me the true scope of the problem people, walking on the levee – the same levee Katrina had over-topped – walking out of the flooded neighborhoods, coming, in twos and threes. I thought we were the only abandoned ones – it seems there were many. We staggered over to the shade of a tree, and collapsed.

And as a sign that our luck – beginning with the boats was keeping strong: someone had left an ice chest with food and drinks – particularly several “energy drinks” under the tree for other wanderers. We helped ourselves, and never was food or drink so sweet.

I realized that I couldn't rest long – this was no place to recover. And I had another obstacle that confronted me: the “pick-up” point, other refugees indicated, was under the Hayne overpass. But to get to it, you had to climb, a railroad levee, very steep and coated with sharp stones and I'd lost my shoes on the way.

But it had to be done. I didn't want to die here, in the heat and the mud after escaping from our watery prison. And so telling my mother to stay put (she could never make it up that hill) I attacked it with the determination of Hillary assaulting Everest.

And it was nearly as tough. If I hadn't had the pool cue as support, I'd not have made it. But every two steps I slid back, cutting open feet, hands, and knees each time, till I was bloody. I finally surmounted the trestle, the cue breaking in two with the last effort. It was only about 50 yards from there to the underpass, but in my exhausted condition – no food and little water for days – it seemed like miles. But I made it at last, and begged the officer there to help my mother. He was a good'un; he radioed for help, and a skiff brought her under the trestle and to me, and our reunion was heartfelt. I thought for a while there she'd not be able to make it across. But her infirmity – age and her recently-healed pelvis – were to work to our aid. Being sick, she and I got prior evacuation, along with some other elderly and sick – to the nearby campus of the University of New Orleans. While we waited for the medical van; we talked with our fellow refugees, and got the same story over and over again: heard the copters, none stopped, decided to make a run for it. Our story, and had we known it at the time, the story of thousands more.

The medivan showed up, and we piled in – one man, wheel-chair ridden, who'd been evacuated by boat after being stuck in his second story apartment for days was lifted into the van by brute strength. And so the van slowly pulled off, leaving our neighbors behind, and we drove off to an uncertain future. We felt that the worst was over. In a sense it was, but our concurrent sense that we were out of danger, or through with suffering, was utterly incorrect.

Evacuee

I kept hoping for some sort of quiet refuge – cots, maybe, cheese sandwiches, some medical attention. Maybe UNO would provide it.

Fat chance. It was all the chaos – and the litter – of the last hours of a Jazz Festival. Hundreds of people baking in the heat, garbage everywhere, and the roar of helicopters taking off and landing. And we were close to exhaustion.

But once again, our luck held, and we encountered another angel – that is, a person who gives help “unlooked-for” as Tolkien puts it. And this was the most unlikely, a tattooed biker who looked like he would have been more at home in a bar fight than doing rescue work. But looks oft deceive ...

... and after I was referred to him, and mentioned my mother was sick, he took particular attention to us, and got us food – Lunchables, but hey, he tried – some China-made slippers, and most importantly, a reference to a Red Cross nurse handling the evacuation. She quickly triaged my mother and determined she should receive priority evacuation, along with “only one family member” – no problem, there was only me. We waited for the next helicopter, hopefully to take us to safety – no one was saying just where we were going. My mother went on one copter – some panic as we were separated again – but another angel, Bryan Johnson of the Texas Air National Guard, saw to it I was on the next Blackhawk out.

The roar was deafening, but I could still sense the gasps as we lifted over the city and everyone saw, for the first time, the scope of the devastation. Almost the entire city was under water. It might as well have been hit by a nuclear weapon. What would be left of our lives? But there was no time to worry about that more immediate issues were at hand.

The Blackhawk landed at a spot I knew well, the intersection of I-10 and Causeway Boulevard, near the house in which I grew up and co-incidentally, the site of my first auto accident, so long ago in that summer before college. But now it wasn't the tidily kept expanse of green; now it was a crowded, seething mass of hungry, hot, frustrated humanity, for which the only term appropriate could be

Refugee

This was out of the third world. No food, little water, no toilet facilities, no sleeping arrangements other than the baking hot asphalt... but there was medical attention, and my mother's condition allowed us into the critical triage area. There, her various problems – borderline diabetes, her breast cancer, her recently healed pelvis, got her some attention, and it was only then, and only as an afterthought, that I asked them to look at my toe. I had cut it earlier when, I'm not sure, and it had been down in that cesspool that was New Orleans East for all day. It was somewhat swollen, and was starting to hurt. I showed it to the nurse attending my mother. And when she looked at it, I knew I had a problem.

She called over another assistant. “Infection's spreading fast,” she said. “Any more antibiotics?”

“No – out hours ago. None expected until tomorrow,” he replied.

She looked at me gravely. “This infection's bad – it's spreading past the toe. We have no antibiotics. All we can do is give you this” she handed me a small plastic pail “and put your foot in a bath of hydrogen peroxide. When you get where you're going, have it looked at immediately. You're probably going to lose that big toe, but maybe they can save the foot.”

Oh, *God!* But again, there wasn't time to dwell on stuff like that. We had to get out of here. And again, my mother's appearance – which seems to cause the most unlikely people to want to help her – worked in her, if not our, favor. A doctor, seeing her advanced exhaustion – and some sort of infection that caused pus to leak from her eyes – put her on the next bus, a special medical transport, to Baton Rouge, where the Pete Maravich Center had been converted into a medical facility. The doctor promised that I'd be on the next bus there. As it pulled off, I felt anxiety – separated again – but also some relief. She was going to be taken care of. I could, for a little while, worry about myself and my condition. I went over to a pile of cardboard box lids and sat down, back against a

truck, too exhausted either to move or to sleep, but merely watched the maelstrom of activity around me: buses, ambulances, pulling up, loading, departing, trucks, helicopters, roaring in, taking off, and the seething mass of humanity on the other side of the road, awaiting evacuation as well.

"You look wiped out!" said a voice from next to me. African-American dude, rangy, tall. I agreed.

"Had it tough?" I gave a brief rundown. He, too, had to walk from his neighborhood, but the water wasn't so bad there. And then, came a moment I'll always treasure. "Want some cold water?" I nodded, trying to rise when he just said, "You lie still. Watch my pack." He disappeared and returned a few minutes later with some bottles of very cold spring water, which I accepted with the same eagerness that Ben-Hur accepted the drink of water from Christ at Bethlehem. I think I not so much drank but *inhaled* the first bottle. And one lesson: the best things in life are the simplest. I never enjoyed champagne so much as that drink.

And maybe I got a quarter hour of sleep. But after a few hours some more buses arrived, and, hearing that they were going to the Maravich Center, got in the line, and boarded.

I sat down in my underwear and scrub shirt in the freezing bus, my foot still in the peroxide pail. I tried to make the best of it, and soon a very nice woman sat down next to me. She was a fellow evacuee, who had been at the Superdome. She'd volunteered for the Red Cross, and got priority evacuation when – and this was ominous – it was determined that the safety of the Red Cross workers could "no longer be guaranteed," the first inkling I had of the hell that the Superdome was soon going to become. But that was not yet, and we chatted amiably. We traded stories of my confinement and escape, and of her Superdome experiences. The experience, she said, of panic gripping thirty-thousand sum-odd people when the roof started to strip away was indescribable.

And even she was an angel; she shared her blanket with me on the trip. Warm and dry, I managed to doze off again, if fitfully. I awoke some time later, the bus still rolling on in the dark. "Not in Baton Rouge yet?" I murmured. She sleepily replied. "Our destination's changed. We're going to the CajunDome in Lafayette. B.R. is full up."

I snapped awake. "What!? My mother's in Baton Rouge! She needs me! Stop! I need to get off!" But they told me to sit down, and I reflected for a minute. If buses were available, I could get back to B.R., and my mother was surely in good hands. I'd proceed on to Lafayette and make my next move from there.

We arrived at the USL Cajundome, the basketball arena, now a refugee center, when it was still dark. It was so early in fact, that there were no services available. I had no blankets, no mats, no food, no nothing. I managed to find a military MRE – vegetarian manicotti – and ate it without the formality of heating. Then, worn out and pretty much at the end of my rope, I collapsed for an hour or so on the cement floor. What the morrow would bring, I had not the energy to care.

Refuge

The next morning, I arose, stiff as a board from lying on the concrete, filthy, hungry, but for the moment at least, out of immediate danger. But now to see to my own health.

My high blood pressure got me admitted to see a physician when they arrived at 8 a.m. First, the foot, and the news was very good. There obviously had been infection, but it seemed on the mend; he didn't think I was going to part company with my big toe, much less my foot. The pressure was high, but he was able to provide me with substitutes for my usual meds, thus taking care of that problem.

Now to try to get out of here and back to Baton Rouge. All this trouble would have been avoided if I'd brought my driver's license – I could've gone to a Bank One, withdrawn money, and rented a car. But this was going to call for more finesse.

Before that, I met an old acquaintance from New Orleans, Ronny Ricard, ex-bail bondsman and current operator of rehab facilities in N.O. Like everyone else, the rich and the poor, he was now

at the mercy of the system.

What was so good about this, was that Ronnie took me under his wing and allowed me to feel human again. He's a natural-born hustler, and that's what was needed in this situation. He got me some cosmetics, and I was able – oh, blessed gift – to take a *shower*, managing to wash off the accumulated filth/toxins/cooties of the last few days and walk like a decent member of society again. I also managed to latch onto some clean boxers, although I still had the same dirty scrub shirt. I went into the main arena of the Cajundome, large, strewn with mattresses and my fellow ex-Orleanians, and strangely quiet because noise was absorbed by the ceiling space. And there, my first hot meal – beef stew – in days. And another angel, who let me use her cell phone to contact close friends, the Lillians, in Shreveport. I tried to arrange for some wired funds. That failed, due to some problem with Western Union, but Guy and Rose said that they'd try to drive down to rescue me tomorrow. Thank God, I said, the angels are working overtime. But before Guy and Rosy could even leave, there was to be another intervention.

Since I'd seen him, Ronnie had been working hard on my behalf. He had gotten pillows, blankets, and the *piece de resistance*, an inflatable mattress. In the Cajundome, this was luxury, and I was actually able to get some real sleep. That air mattress was a pleasure worthy of Sybaris.

Rescue

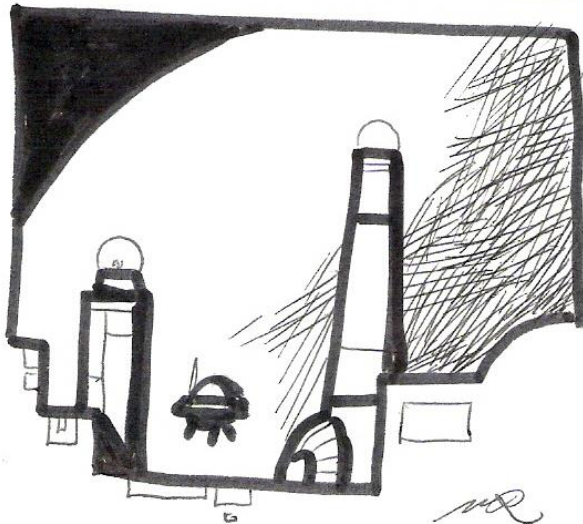
One thing I have to say. If you're going to be a refugee, be one in the Cajun country. No cheese sandwiches here. Cajun chili for dinner on Thursday, and turkey-rice dressing, jambalaya, and red beans and rice for lunch on Friday. And it was on Friday that fate took an unexpected turn. I was sitting down, plotting what had to be done if Guy and Rosy came for me – mostly, get to Baton Rouge to find mom, wherever she might be, when Ronnie came running back with a paper, which I still have and will treasure all my days. **DENNIS DOLBEAR**, it read in caps, and had the message: mom was safe in Baton Rouge, and was trying to find me. Thank God! It even listed phone numbers. We couldn't get through right away, but this was a solid piece of information, now we had something to go on. Things were really looking up. Ronnie said that he'd just been walking downstairs when he saw a young man holding the sign. He told him that he knew me, was staying with me, and would give me the message. The young man said he had to leave, but would relay my whereabouts to others.

And sure enough, more angels arrived, this in the form of a lovely young woman named Regan Hall and her brother, Pike. I almost asked him if he was related to the famous Pike Hall, justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court. I didn't, thinking the question absurd. (As it turns out, he's his grandson.)

They informed me that they were here to rescue me. I asked if Ronnie could come along – it

was a debt of honor – and they, wonderfully, agreed. We piled into their SUV and pulled away from the CajunDome. Saved. *Saved. Saved.*

On the way, Regan filled me in: she was pre-med at LSU, and had been volunteering at the Maravich Center. What she'd seen there definitely tested her resolve to be a doctor, but also toughened her, too: not many pre meds have a familiarity with the "black tag" room, that repository of definitely terminal patients who are not long for this world. It appeared she'd handled it well – this young woman was very tough in the fibre. But she'd also convinced her



mother – an RN at Our Lady of the Lake Hospital – to volunteer, and there they’d met my mother, and taken pity upon her to the extent of actually *taking her home with them*, and making her welcome as if a member of the family. Of all of our angels, I hold these dearest, with a gratitude that is profound and a debt never repayable. And on top of that, Mollie, the mother, sent Regan and Pike to Lafayette with orders: *don’t come back without Dennis*. No problem there.

And so a few hours after leaving Lafayette, and two and a half days after lying on the asphalt in misery at I-10 and Causeway, I was sitting in the lovely Regan home in clean clothes provided by neighbors, familiar suburban setting, kitchen smells, comfortable couch, sunlight slanting through the windows. One of the two seemed a dream – but which one? Did I have a nightmare, or was I dreaming now, and would any moment awake on the asphalt – or worse, in that black, stifling attic?

They were both true, though, and that just adds to the dreamlike, unreal quality of my life since Katrina entered it. In time, we met Mollie, Regan and Pike’s lovely mother, and Toni, *her* mother, a wonderful combination of traditional granny and matriarch. Their open, unforced generosity and humanity reduced me to blubbering sentiment. We spent one night there, eating well – pizza – and resting. The next day, we made contact with my mother’s younger sister Marilyn, who was visiting my cousin Cindy in Georgia. They invited us to stay with them – we agreed, and Cindy and her husband Donnie, in yet another angelic move, drove all night from Georgia to pick us up.

This I know: despite everything: the storm, the nights in the attic, the risky escape, the suffering as a refugee: we were almost insanely lucky. We could have been in the Superdome, or worse, the Convention Center, where just about every horror except cannibalism occurred, or – more likely, simply dead in that attic. For that, we have many people – like the Halls, or that nameless biker, or the two guys from Barchester Street – to thank, but also maybe I gained something, I think. Because if you had described what I did over the last few days, before the hurricane, I’d not have believed it; but under stress, and difficult situations, maybe something I had in me, heretofore unknown, came out. Surely now I feel I have some right to life other than as a gift from my parents. I’m not a hero, far from it. But maybe, after all of this, I’m a little bit more of a man.



Benford / Hawking ... continued from page 30

Stephen has faced daunting physical constrictions with a renewed attack on the large issues, on great sweeps of space and time. Daily he struggles without much fuss against the narrowing that is perhaps the worst element of infirmity. I recalled him rapt with Marilyn, still deeply engaged with life, holding firmly against tides of entropy.

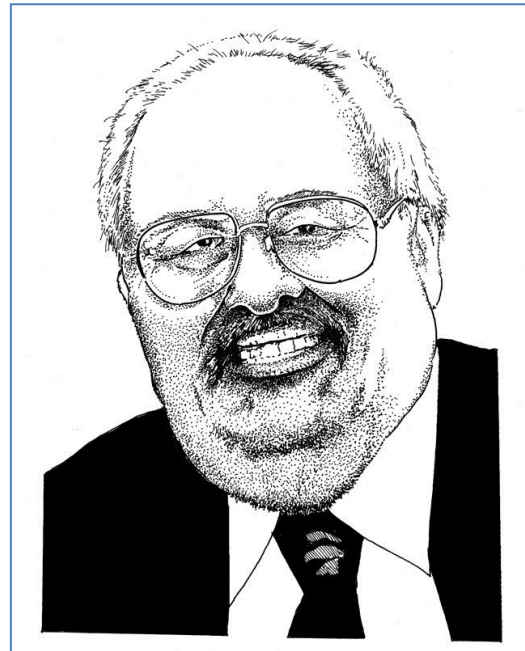
I had learned a good deal from those few days, I realized, and most of it was not at all about cosmology.



HEROES: DENNIS DOLBEAR

My friend Dennis Dolbear – with whom I founded *Challenger* more than twenty *gack!* years ago – passed from this planet on June 17, 2013.

DD had been a part of the New Orleans fan krewe and a close personal friend since 1969. We shared too many memories to even try to catalogue. Meals, DeepSouthCons, meals, GrasCons (his four-day Mardi Gras parties), meals, talks, meals, projects, meals, SFPA, the apa for which we were both Official Editor ... too many anecdotes, stories, misadventures – and meals. (It wasn't for nothing that DD weighed 360 pounds on his death.) Always there was fandom. Dennis loved the fannish community. More than anything else, this brilliant but solitary guy welcomed – craved – intelligent conversation and repartee. With fans, I'm proud to say, he found it. It's not hyperbole: we Orleanian and Southern fans spent our lives with Dennis. From Jump Street, our stories intertwined.



And if I can say so, DD's fan pals were the *good* part of his story. Much of his final illness was sullied by family contention and greed. Not so with us. Dennis' fan friends made it clear that the creepy and the greedy may have fought over Dennis' property, but they couldn't have his memory. It wasn't just New Orleans locals. After the bad news went out, good words came in. Good people – our people, fandom – chimed in with great memories, fond thoughts, and high signs for a good man. Even the one guy who insisted on recalling Dolbear's terrible experience with Nolacon II did so to hail Dennis' hard-won humor on the subject.

For me, these positive thoughts helped refocus my head from the many hassles of his demise, and banish the hasslers into the shadows. Light came in, in memory form: DD struggling beside Dave Ryan to fix his clogged plumbing during a Grascon ... excitedly talking history with Fred van Hartesveldt ... grinning in the back of the room when I won my Rebel Award ... gesticulating in borrowed robes from a judge's bench to entertain his pals, freezing in terror when he thought that judge had caught him ... intruding nervily – with yhos – on Dennis Hopper when the icon made a movie at the New Orleans courthouse ... alongside Cindy Snowden and sharing with the wonderful Martina Klicperova New Orleans, his home, his life, the city that Care forgot.

Dennis Dolbear, for all his frailties and for all the fooforaw accompanying his passing, was a much-beloved fella, a boon friend to me and to you and to all of us. That is not a bad bottom line. My first wife Beth summed up the dude pretty darn well: “He was *some piece of work*.”

You've just read Dennis' personal tale of Hurricane Katrina, reprinted from *Challenger* no. 25. It's Dolbear at his best. Not a hero? *His* opinion. Catch you later, DD.



SASQUAN ALERT

After Rose-Marie and I finished editing the progress reports and program book for Chicon 7, we swore, “Never again!” Which explains why I signed up on Publications Chair for **Sasquan**, the 2015 World Science Fiction Convention, in Spokane.

I am in search of experienced fan editors who would be interested in working with me and the con committee by editing the following.

Progress Reports (these need to be in a format that can also be posted to the website). We have a penciled-in commitment from one able editor for the first issue, but of course, there will be more. I’d like to have a different fan-ed take on each, working with Fan Guest and Cover Artist Brad Foster (that’s his work above), but with their own individual touches.

The **Restaurant Guide** undoubtedly should be handled by a local, someone who loves both food and fanzines. Does such a creature exist?

The **Pocket Program** will be the publication most often consulted during the con, and will require the quickest and most accurate fan hand. Expect grief.

The convention **Newsletter** will run twice a day. I’m looking for energy, clarity, whimsy, and Pulitzer-level journalism.

The **Program Book** I will probably reserve for Rosy (design) and myself (general editing). Between us we’ve done three Worldcon souvenir tomes and one for a NASFiC – so I dare suggest we’re qualified.

And of course, we’ll need proofreaders – every correction found will be made! – ad salespeople – and a local liaison with the printer. *Help!*

MORE MIB



Mib has made many friends among his fellow fannish icons. To left, he joins Rosy’s Neville sailing a schooner built by Rosy’s stepfather, Harold Rothbard. Below, he hobnobs with Steve & Suzanne Hughes’ traveling companion, Bear Bear.

24 Hours

In the Mind of Taral Wayne

These micro-essays represent trains of thought from a single 24-hour day. I did, however, spend several days assembling the original texts from e-mail, FaceBook and FurAffinity, then revising them for publication. I only wish I thought in articulate, polished prose, instead of gibberish!



I turned 61 last Fall. I'd been waiting for the day for some time now, and for a special reason.

When I turned 40, one of my friends asked if I felt strange about it, but I didn't. 40 was just the year after 39, and I had no reason to feel anything except still young. I said they should ask me again when I was 50.

When 50 came around, I didn't feel as different as I had expected. I was no longer *young*. Neither was I *old*. But a page *had* turned.

60, though. Wo-oah! *Old* people are sixty. Am I *old*, now? Sure, I have issues with my health and there are things I can't do as well as I used to. But my mind seems as sharp as ever... better even. I can understand books and issues now that once would have bored or puzzled me.

But 60 is still a landmark because the day I celebrate my 21,915th day on this planet will make me older than my mother was when she died. *That* is something to think long and deeply about this October 12th. Strictly speaking, I'm already older than my mother was, because she didn't actually reach the 60th year of her life, but died about three months and a-couple-of-weeks before her birthday.

More sobering still, I'm the oldest male in my family. There is only one older aunt, who married my maternal uncle and has an aortic aneurysm that could pop like a gum bubble any moment. I could easily become the oldest member of the whole family before I finish this sentence...

Yet I remember clearly how I felt when I was 10, and could hardly believe that someday in the remote future I would be 20.

Everyone talks about the Government, but nobody does the *right thing* about it.

People who have any sense that the government is accountable to *them*, not the other way around, are quite rightfully critical of their governments. It's what keeps the buggers honest.

I would venture to say, however, that many Americans often seem to go beyond simply holding government to its promises and expecting to be let down. Many seem to renounce the very *idea* of government, as though it *could* do nothing but oppress. Lincoln's ideal of "Government *of* the people, *by* the people and *for* the people" might as well never have been spoken. But if *no* government is desirable, then surely democracy, monarchy and totalitarianism are more or less the same? Is submission to the collective debate on common issues nothing but an intolerable intrusion into individual autonomy? Apparently many in the right wing believe so. To them, there is no cooperative action, no community of interest – no "we," just "me."

Those with a more intellectual turn of mind – but the same limited identification with the other human beings they live among – speak of “starving the beast.” Yet it’s the same mindset. “My responsibility only goes as far as the end of my fist – your broken nose and contusions are your affair.” The only good government is no government. Democracy is only another name for oppression of the common man by pointy-headed bureaucrats and bleeding-heart liberals. Get rid of them!

Slash budgets! Gut departments! End entitlements and services! The utopian goal of no government is almost in sight! Soon we will no longer be brothers, and the free market will uphold my freedom to club you over the head and take your catch.

Yet the same people who hate their government and want to get rid of it, will turn livid if anyone dares knock the state in its role as cop, spy, arms dealer and warmonger. War is necessary. War is noble. War is good business. An officer in uniform is a virtual demigod that ordinary people must step aside for, much less withhold respect. He must have the mostest and bestest that taxpayer money can provide. Until the warrior wants a pension, of course...

Yes, everyone talks “trash” about government, but the one thing they won’t do in America is cast an educated, unselfish vote.

Not exactly white noise. It sounded more like the mechanical rattle of a watch chain caught in a hamster wheel. I thought it was my hard drive, and put my ear to the case to confirm my suspicions. But it didn’t seem to be the hard drive, so I went back to typing. A few moments later, a racket like a 21-gun salute broke the silence. As everyone knows, noises from your hard drive are a *bad thing*. But I was lucky this time. Once I realized that the odd rattling, bumping sounds were not coming from inside the apartment, I knew they weren’t signs of imminent hardware failure. It seemed that the knocking noises I heard at first were just a warm-up for the cacophony I was hearing now, and it was coming from *outside*. And I was on the 21st floor...

When you live on the 21st floor, binoculars are a way of life, and when I went out on the balcony I discovered that a crowd had collected around a number of jugglers and a drum kit in the parking lot, half a block away. The drummer was doing his best to beat Gene Krupa to the finish line and accounted for most of the racket.

Well ... that was alright then. The seed of a fanzine article, perhaps. Something to post on FaceBook right away.

My comment had only been posted for about a minute before it drew a reply. I was being congratulated for *Blanche Nuit* coming to Parkdale, my part of Toronto. I thought of asking what rock band that was... but, luckily, I decided that I had better look it up on Wikipedia first.

Oh. *That* Blanche Nuit.

They say an ill wind blows no good. On the CBC’s news page tonight is an item about the lowered value of property in the vicinity of power generating windmills. Some ninny blamed her headaches on mysterious “vibrations” caused by the turning blades, and insists she can only sleep on her nephew’s couch, six miles away. Another lady says her \$250,000 home could only be sold for \$175,000. Of course, the current depression in property values everywhere *couldn’t* have anything to do with that.

I don’t dispute that property values *might* have gone down in some instances – value, after all, is entirely in the head of the purchaser. If I’ll only pay five bucks for a ring with a diamond the size of a meatball, then five bucks is all it’s worth... *to me*. If buyers won’t pay as much for a home because it’s in an immigrant neighborhood or close to an Islamic educational center, then in a manner of speaking the property values *have* gone down. I’m not defending irrationality, just acknowledging that it’s a factor

whenever fallible human beings exchange money. It's wrong. It's ludicrous. But it's the way the market works.

All the same, irrationality is no basis on which to formulate energy policy. I think the government should just ignore complaints of this sort, just as similar prejudices and resistance to progress have been ignored in the past.

Grandparents of the people complaining today about wind turbines probably complained about electrification. There were the almost-sensible arguments about the danger of electric shocks and sparks starting fires. More revealing, there were complaints that the wires overhead were making a hum *that some folks in fact can hear*. I'm sure not one of them, but this phenomenon has been documented. One wonders how loud it could have been, or how much of a real nuisance. Mysterious emanations from turning turbine giving sensitive people headaches, on the other hand, seems to be completely the product of the creative imaginations of hypochondriacs. Pure, pristine, premium-grade, self-induced hokum. Similarly, there is some documented evidence that the associated electrical fields of high-tension lines may have an effect on people. But, if a *few* people in the vicinity of transmission lines *did* develop headaches, stomach complaints or boils all over their bottoms, what of it? There was, and is, no evidence the vast majority of people are adversely affected by electricity... short of sucking on live wires. A wide right-of-way seems to insure enough of a safety factor for any reasonable degree of uncertainty. Should we have abandoned the electrification of the countryside because of a few, highly suspect claims? Well, we didn't. We proceeded with bringing the 19th century rural parts of Canada into the 20th, and a damned good thing! Aunt Hortense learned to take a pill and live with it, or moved away to find true happiness with her wood stove and oil lamp somewhere else.

Let's get on with moving ahead into the 21st century! Build the turbines and be damned to the Luddites.

Apparently prejudice is one of those irregular conjugations. I am *judicious*, you are *judgmental*, he is *prejudiced*.

Now, I had hardly posted the comment on wind turbines when some yahoo posted his objection. He accused me of being a smart-ass city guy, dismissing people who lived in the country. If that was the level of his reading comprehension, maybe *he* was someone who deserved dismissal, but I was talking about *Luddites*... not people who live in the country per se. Any confusion of one for the other is in the mind of the dope who lodged the complaint, and no fault of mine.

His other argument was that problems shouldn't be ignored. Of course they shouldn't... if they're *real* problems, and not just a deep-rooted suspicion of the unfamiliar. It's a waste of time to give attention to problems that are 98% in some crank's mind in the same the way you'd listen to a verifiable problem in the physical world – real-life issues such as air pollution or carcinogens in tar sands, for example. You don't have to credit anecdotal illnesses when the tap water runs black and there are dead cows bloating in the farmyard. If the complaints about windmills were as easily verified as petrochemical pollution, we would be able to detect the supposed influence of wind turbines with modern instruments. So far as I know, no elusive sounds or rays that have ill effects on human health have been detected. If they are undetectable, is it reasonable to assume they exist? Should progress be halted on the unlikely chance we're dealing with novel, unknown, undetectable forces?

It stands to reason that if *some* people really *are* susceptible to the effects of hitherto undetected ultrasonic squeaks and hitherto-undiscovered electromagnetic fields, the same percentage of these people live in cities as in the country. If anything, city dwellers are surrounded by electric fields of *much greater* strength, and are under a constant barrage of noises all up and down the decibel scale. Do we hear the Luddites boo-hoo about that? I wonder if, in fact, the prejudice isn't on the other foot – against city people, who are presumed to lack the same delicate sensibilities of just plain country folk? Perhaps city dwellers just don't matter as much, since they're mostly pinkos, Pakis, potheads and pansies anyway?

Tempting as it is to surmise that countrified prejudice is at the root of this nonsense, I don't really believe it. The real cause of it is just *not thinking*.

The thing about gold coins is that they're gold. I have five of them. I would like more, many more, but five is how many I've been able to scrape together over quite a few years of coin collecting. They aren't *cheap*, you know.

Oh... you *have* heard that gold is currently at \$1650 an ounce, then?

The arrogant blundering of the American financial sector lead to a crisis that quickly spread around the world, and may yet sink us all. For which, I might add, the blunderers have been rewarded beyond any mere mortal's wildest dreams. Since then, gold has exponentially increased in value. The precious metal has more or less *tripled* in value.

Two of the gold coins I have are Roman Solidii, a type first produced in the late empire from about 300 AD, and well into the next millennium by the Byzantines. The first is of the early 5th century emperor of the West, Honorius. The other is the late 5th century emperor of the East, Leo. I had only planned to buy the first, and paid for it in instalments over several months. The second was dirt cheap by comparison because of defects in the emperor's face.

I had also acquired an 1861 US gold "Half Eagle," denominated at \$5. I had especially wanted one of these because of its association with the American Civil War. I came by an 1866 English Half-Sovereign at some point as well. It was worn and a bargain. The final gold coin in my collection is French. The 20 Franc piece was minted in 1857 and shows the bust of the emperor Napoleon III. All are Civil War era and of a piece, stylistically.

Their real values have nothing to do with the denominations they were minted to represent, of course. They are worth a lot more than the sum of \$5, half-a-Pound and 20 Francs. But *how* much? I wanted to know!

The first step was to look up their weights. For the 19th century coins, this was easy. Looking up such details are what published catalogs are for, after all. But I didn't have a precise weight for the two Roman Solidii. I had a notion that they were around 6 grams each. But no book can list the precise weight of a particular ancient coin – each individual is hand struck, and their weights commonly vary by as much as a tenth. I went on-line and looked up the weights of a number of individual Solidii on offer by a dealer. The first thing I discovered is that I had misremembered my weights. Older Roman *Aureii* weighed 7 to 8 gms. Later *Solidii* were about 2/3 that weight. The examples I used weighed from 4.9 to 4.3 gms. and averaged out at around 4.4 gm.

Not that the issue was quite that simple. Gold coins are not *all* gold, you see. Once again, my catalogs provided me with amazingly accurate details about the purity of modern coins. I had to fall back on memory for the ancient Solidii. As I recall, Roman gold coins tended to be rather more pure than ours. We add up to 10% copper, I presume to make them more durable. I picked 95% as a likely figure. So...

US 1861 \$5 "Half Eagle"	8.359 gm	90.0%
UK 1866 Half-Sovereign	3.994 gm	91.7%
France 1857 20 Francs	6.452 gm	90.0 %
Honorius Solidus	~ 4.4 gm	~95 %
Leo Solidus	~ 4.4 gm	~95 %

~27.6 gm

Adjusted to 92% gold that's about 25 gm. Or .88 oz.

At the current value of \$1650 per ounce, the value of my 5 coins is about \$1452, irrespective of their premium as coins.

Cost of the 5 coins was altogether \$1370. So I made \$82 profit on the metal alone.

As it happens, a dealer in ancient coins will give up to 90% of the resale value to buy a gold Solidus. A more realistic appraisal of the two Roman coins would add about \$500 to the total.

A \$600 profit on a \$1370 investment over a number of years isn't a very good annual return, I grant you. About 4%, perhaps, but that's still better than the bank pays in interest. I'm sure this is the only time I've made a potential profit from any of my hobbies.

I am a Man Without a Country. If there's one thing that's more hated in Canada than white, middle-class, middle-aged, English-speaking males, it's white, middle-class, middle-aged, English-speaking males from *Toronto*. I'm one of them – a man without a country.

Seriously, when Toronto was second banana to Montreal, Montrealers derided us for being bankers and shop-keepers with no culture. Not to mention that our hockey team couldn't beat the Habs. Now that we're number one and have all that culture stuff too, the West hates us because we hug trees and we're too sissified to wear cowboy boots to bed. Not to mention that our hockey team can't beat *anyone*. Some raps you just can't beat.

It isn't just the people in the rest of the country who hate Toronto. So does the government in Ottawa. Not only because the Conservatives are in office, either. Even before the detested Steven Harper arrived in Ottawa with his carpetbags full of oil money, we Torontonians felt the displeasure from Parliament Hill.

With their eyes on Quebec, their ears turned to listen to word out of Washington, nerves attuned to rogue premiers in Newfoundland, even the out-of-power Liberals had little love for us. The only part of Liberal anatomy Toronto was familiar with was the hand in our tax pocket.

It is worse under the Conservatives, though. Millions spent on new parks and broadening the sidewalks of small-town Ontario in preparation for the G20 meeting, but it was Toronto that was actually stuck with the job of host. All we got was overpaid extra-duty cops to deal with the protests, and odious police-state security measures that paralyzed our downtown and major thoroughfares.

Just last year the Royal Canadian Mint released a commemorative Loonie that puzzled me. The Queen on the obverse was the same decades-old beldame who always looked to me as though she ran a boarding house and served boiled cabbage to the lodgers. On the reverse side was the initial "S." "S?" "S" for what? Behind the initial was a rectangular object with frills of indistinct design around the border. It resembled a throw-rug as much as anything. The idea that formed in my head was that the Loonie celebrated the grocery store chain, Safeway.

I knew right away that had to be wrong, but had no better ideas. Imagine my surprise when I learned that the carpet was in fact a football field, and that the "S" was for the *Saskatchewan Roughriders*. (Not to be confused with the defunct Ottawa Rough Riders, a completely different CFL team.) As I understand it, Saskatchewan CFL fans are totally bonkers about their team. They wear watermelons on their heads, like helmets, and sport seeds all over their faces like so many freckles. That's neither here nor there, but it indicates zeal for a certainty. There are *other* teams in the CFL, though. Saskatchewan's was one of the older ones, and was 100 years old in 2010. But the Toronto Argonauts are the second oldest of all, having been founded in 1873. I don't recall any special coinage for the Argos's 100th anniversary in 1973. Nor their 125th anniversary in 1998. The Roughriders were being celebrated for *their* anniversary for reasons no one has made clear to me. If the Argos are not given a Loonie in 2023 for their 150th year, I think I'll have every right to believe the slight is intentional.

Imagine my surprise when this year Steven Harper created a photo op for himself next to a new quarter for this year. The 2011 coin is to commemorate the return of the Winnipeg Jets. Quite some time ago, the original team had been sold to some oil billionaire in Phoenix, naturally creating understandable

heartbreak and a storm of protest in Winnipeg that has never really been forgiven. This year, the fans were thrown the highly *unsuccessful* Atlanta Thrashers as appeasement. The new Jets were hardly off the plane and on the ice before the Mint announced a special quarter to celebrate the team's "return." Technically, it is not even the original Jets, sold south and renamed The Coyotes.

The original Jets only came into existence in 1972, and the team expediently renamed "The Jets" was created as late as 1999. They have almost no history or significance as NHL teams go – the Toronto Maple Leafs were born in 1927, and have played under other names since 1908. Bad as their record has been for the last 40 years or so, the team has won the second greatest number of Stanley Cup playoffs ever, bowing only to the mighty Habs. To my recollection, the Royal Canadian Mint has never acknowledged the existence of the Leafs in *any* fashion. Not even by issuing a pot-metal, counterfeit, Mexican centavo. But let Winnipeg acquire a third-rate team after having lost a second-rate one, and the engravers outdo themselves to unveil a new quarter before the team can even play a game – which the newly "returned" Jets *lost*, by the way.

As if this weren't an obvious example of the Harper government pandering to Western voters, the new Jets logo is even more provocative. The old team emblem was the word "Jets," stylized by a "J" resembling a hockey stick. It wasn't inspired, but it was straightforward and germane, you have to admit. The old logo also included a small and figurative red jet plane. The new team's logo is anything but figurative. It is a dead copy of the Canadian Armed Forces roundel, with a CF-18 superimposed on the red maple leaf in the center. Not only is it almost identical to one of the emblems of the national armed forces, but it was designed in cooperation with the Department of Defense.



Original Team Logo



Canadian Armed Forces Roundel



New "Jets" Logo

In other words, the government has actively endorsed the Winnipeg team by identifying it with the CAF. If you don't find this highly improper, you might ask yourself if the taxpayer shouldn't also pay the players' contracts and buy advertising for the Conservative party during the televised games.

Maybe it's time its time that Bob & Doug McKenzie returned the affections of their fellow countrymen. We can take inspiration from Quebec and form an independence movement just for the Greater Toronto Area, and tell the rest of the province and country, "take off, eh! *Hosers!*"

Books have the property of Infinity. Far too many books minus any number of books is still too many books.

For the last few days, I've spent the odd hour here and there examining my bookcases for volumes I had no further desire to possess. Over the years, books that once seemed I could never be parted from gradually grew less and less an indispensable part of my existence. The truth was, that should I ever develop a burning need to re-read *The Manchurian Candidate* or *The Sand Pebbles* again, I

could easily find them in a public library. Why was I letting battered, bowed, commonplace paperbacks clutter up my bookshelves? I yearned for more space that I could fill with *brand new* books I *hadn't read!*

In the end, I built two dangerously leaning towers, each nearly three or four feet high, of books I no longer needed. The funny thing is that their absence really didn't seem to make much difference. My bookshelves were still quite full. There were a few empty inches here, a few more inches there and a corner empty that I could never conveniently reach, anyway. I've talked with other book-hoarders about this, and they confirm the paradox. No matter how many books you delete from your collection, there will never be any useful empty space.

Never mind, I thought. I wasn't going to put them all back. For one thing, there was no space to put them back into – Q.E.D.

Today I took them across the street to *The River*. Even among used book stores, *The River* has become one of my all-time favourites. While the books for sale are roughly on par with the contents of other used-book stores, other book stores aren't run by David McGowan. He isn't like the usual bibliophile-turned-book-store-owner. He certainly does like books, but his life doesn't revolve around them as is common among book dealers. In a previous incarnation he was a biker, he has traveled around the US and Canada, and was once even *married*. His having had a life makes dropping in on David, when I pass by the store, more than likely to result in a good, satisfying conversation.

David also operates on the sensible principle that books in a store should be sold as quickly as possible, not priced so loftily that there are few to no buyers in a given decade. What this means is that I have almost never had to pay more than \$6 for a book. Often only \$3. the same pricing applies to music CDs and movies on DVD. I did have to pay ten whole dollars once, for one huge, coffee-table volume on the ruined city of Pompeii – but, to be fair, the price on the dust jacket identified it as a \$100 book to start with. The drawback is that David rarely *pays* as much as \$2 for any book. But a buck a book is still better than giving them to the Sally Ann for bupkis.

Just the non-SF titles that I brought in for David to look at filled a backpack and a shopping bag. Fortunately, *The River* is hardly more than 100 yards away from the lobby of my building. The magnificent sum of \$22 was offered in trade. It wasn't much, but it was for books I didn't want, after all. Of course, I promptly spend the entire \$22 *and then some* on some used CDs and a collection of *Night Court*. It's easy to see how *The River* makes a profit...

But I can also add to the profit side of the ledger a short anecdote of David's.

His story begins with a CD of Supertramp's "Crime of the Century" that I had just bought. David looked at it a moment, then said, "speaking of tragic decisions, did I ever tell you about my father-in-law?"

He hadn't, of course, but was about to. "My father-in-law was one of those people who simply can't make the right decision, even with a cheat card laid out in two columns: left hand for "smart" and "stupid" on the right. For instance, my father-in-law lived in England, and one of his sons by his first wife was a musician. The son was a friend of Rick Davies and Roger Hodgson, the founders of Supertramp, and played with them in the early days, before they were recorded. My father-in-law insisted the boy give rock music up, and go in for some respectable career instead. Of course, Supertramp went on to be a world famous progressive rock band and made millions of dollars. My father-in-law's son is a clerk somewhere in the Midlands and makes some modest salary like £30,000 a year."

I made sympathetic sounds. But that was only David's warm-up to the story.

"Years ago, my father-in-law came into possession of an antique billiard table. It was one of those huge, regulation-sized ones, with carved Victorian legs, rails and pockets, and a genuine *slate* top. Any lover of the game would kill for such a table. Undoubtedly, it was worth a great deal of money if my father-in-law had wanted to sell it. But he didn't. Unfortunately, the table was much too big for my father-in-law's rec room. Any normal person would have sold the antique and bought a smaller, modern table for far less than he sold the big table, and pocket the rest (so to speak). Not my father-in-law, who fancied himself a bit of a carpenter."

Seeing where the story was going, I felt a little sick to my stomach.

Yup. The father-in-law tore the antique Victorian billiard table to pieces, sawed the wooden members to more convenient lengths, broke off a couple of feet of the slate as well, somehow, then reassembled the butchered table in nice, compact dimensions. Value of table afterward? Scratch.

Apparently, he saw no loss, just gain. It fit in the father-in-law's rec room, without costing him a dime. I gather he didn't even play billiards often. He did it mainly for the satisfaction of a job well done... One imagines a similar style of thinking in the boardrooms of Goldman Sachs and Lehman Brothers, where trillions of dollars of value went up in smoke so that they might make a paltry few billion.

The 21st century may well see the Triumph of the South. The way I look at it, the cradle of democracy was New England. Democracy might also be native to Canada, but, if not, democracy spread north with the arrival of the United Empire Loyalists. The love of civic freedom is a precious thing. It should not be confused with the sort of doltish freedom that passes for liberty in too many places – the “right” to get in as many fights as you like, run a meth lab in the basement or not wipe your boots when entering a hospital is actually inimical to running a democracy.

But while the love of true democratic institutions thrived in the Northeast, in both Canada and the US, it had many enemies elsewhere in the New World.

In the South, democracy and liberty never took root. Rights were conceived mainly as a license to behave uncivilly, beat your wife or n[redacted]s and shoot your neighbor in a duel over a trivial insult to your probity or, worse, manhood. It was the 1960s before any real progress was made toward democracy in the Old South. Old habits die so hard that the love of order, conformity and authority is *still* overwhelming in the South. Instead of developing a home-grown democracy, the South continued the way of life of Georgian England, with a landed aristocracy, classes, peasants, a love of war decorations and military parades, a dislike of cities and immigrants, the intolerance of difference. Add to that mixture a tad too much Scotch-Irish distrust of learning and honest labour – only the coloured folk worked for other people – and you have the historic South.

The two cultural poles, North and South, fought against each other almost from the beginning. It broke out into a general conflict in 1861, but in all honesty Northerners and Southerners had already been shooting at each other for years out West. By 1865, it was over and the Northern way of life had seemingly won. However, the South insidiously regained its ground, spread into the West and wheeled toward the 49th parallel. By outflanking the spread of New England democratic ideals, the South stopped them dead. Gradually, Southern-ness spread back into the Midwest too, feeding on the religiosity of rural and small-town people. Racism spread north, as well. Jim Crow laws began to appear on the books in Baltimore and Chicago. By 1900, it was fashionable in Eastern universities to misuse Darwin to explain the inferiority of the black races.

Today, the Southern way is all but totally victorious. It lost the battle for slavery, unquestionably. But no matter. The important values are triumphant – hierarchy, love of wealth, dislike of intelligence or culture, and obedience to authority where it really matters: the secret service, the war hero, the raving evangelist. It's fine to be rude to atheists, queers or commies, but God forbid you question the war on drugs or suggest that Israel does not deserve the vast subsidies it gets from the American taxpayer.

Let's look at presidencies. In a sense, the shooting of Kennedy was the last act of the Civil War. Having shot Lincoln, the job was unfinished. It took shooting the president from Boston – the very heart of Antebellum Abolitionism – to complete the Southern victory.

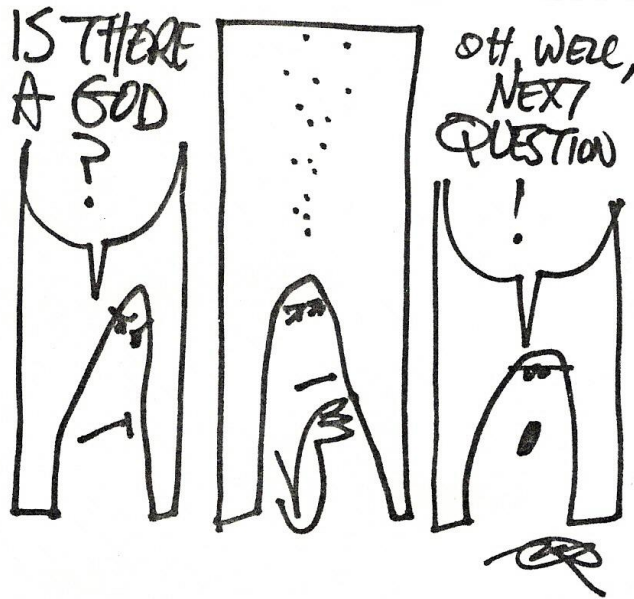
Johnson was from the South. So was Nixon, though I'm aware that California is only “South” by stretching a point. Nixon occupied the White House for two terms. When Nixon disgraced himself and the Presidency, Ford became the first and only unelected President of the United States. He was from the Midwest, but he can be discounted as *nobody's* choice to occupy the White House. Reagan, on the other

hand, was a return to the pattern. He was from California and nominally the South. He held office twice. Carter was a dyed-in-the-cotton Southerner. The elder Bush who followed was from Texas, and was president for one term. Clinton was from the South and was president for two terms. Then the *younger* Bush for two terms. Ignoring Ford as the nonentity and blip in the statistics that he was, Obama is the first President to be elected from the North since Kennedy was shot. From 1963 to 2008, apart from the brief interlude of Ford, a Southerner of one sort or another had occupied the Oval Office. The GOP is looking to put the next president in Obama's place, and may well settle on yet another Southerner as the party's best chance.

Look how many Presidents were from just Texas alone! Three out of the last nine Presidents were from the Lone Star State. One of the major contenders for the Republican Party's nomination for the next Presidential race is a Texan! Of the last ten Presidential terms of office, the buck has stopped in front of a Texan for 4 of them – so far.

The Cradle of Democracy has lost the war in the long run. It was the South that Triumphed, y'all.





CONTRIBUTORS

Chris Barkley, cmzhang@yahoo.com

Jeff Copeland, jeff.copeland@gmail.com

Mike Estabrook, mestabrook@comcast.net

John Neilsen Hall, johnsila32@gmail.com

Binker Hughes, embgh@mindspring.com

Joe Major, jmajor@iglou.com

Curt Phillips, ansarka_prime@comcast.net

Michael Ward, mjward@hidden-knowledge.com

Taral Wayne, taral@teksavvy.com

Charlie Williams, cwilliams@knology.net

David Williams, dbwilyumz@tds.net

Greg Benford, Mike Resnick, Rose-Marie Lillian, c/o *Challenger*

Harold D. Rothbard is Rose-Marie's stepfather.

BAD TIME, INC.

Rose-Marie Lillian

It was a long time ago, but there are some things you never forget, not through the fog of war, not through the encroaching years.

"Want to go for a walk?" Harold asks, ready in his red Piper jacket and bomb group baseball cap.

"Sure," I say, "let me get my hat." I don my own baseball cap and we're out the door to see the ducks.

Lucky, Harold has always been lucky. Once, he threw his name into a drawing for a \$1,000 shopping spree at a swank new mall opening in the Palm Beaches. When he received a call telling him he had won, he hung up on the caller thinking it was a practical joke. The caller rang again to convince him that his name had indeed come up in the draw. Another time he won \$500 after placing his first ever bet on a Jai Lai trifecta. And that doesn't include his modest but regular luck in Vegas.

But his luck may have peaked on a chilly day in 1944, in the freezing sky over the cold, cold North Sea. Tailgunner in a standard nine-man crew aboard B-17 44-8418, jocularly dubbed *Bad Time, Inc. II*, he spent missions "on my knees on a bicycle seat," nothing but glass between him and the Blue. The crew's predawn mission briefing that day ended with their unit's familiar joke, "Eat your breakfast, boys, it may be your last one." They did; they always did.

Harold's crew had already suffered its first loss. Pilot Dick Garland, assigned to a practice run with a different crew because another pilot was taken ill, had been shot down by the Germans. The crew, which had trained together for months stateside, never flew a combat mission together.

After breakfast on November 8, three squadrons took off from Royal Air Force Station Glatton, in Cambridgeshire, to attack a synthetic oil plant in Merseberg, Germany. Rough weather and dense fog prevented the two upper squadrons from gaining formation. The planes tried assembling at different altitudes but without success. Mission recalled, the upper squadrons headed for home, but the lowest squadron managed a full complement of planes, soaring across the German border in a determined effort to join up with a different bomb group.



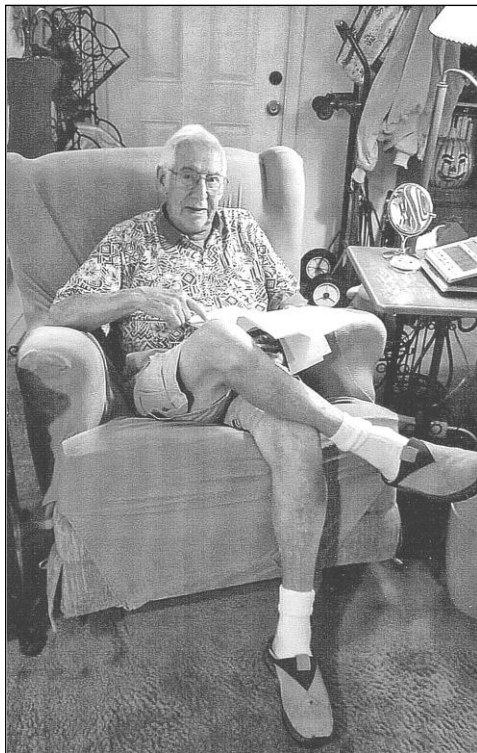
But the worsening weather once again intervened and the squadron was finally recalled.

“Look,” Harold says, pausing in our circumnavigation of the neighborhood. “*Cumulus congestus nimbus*.” We gaze upward at the towering clouds threatening the Florida skyline. He studied clouds in flight school. He has known them personally.

No one knows for sure why the B-17s collided.

According to the Eighth Air Force Historical Society, of the 690 bombers and 890 fighters that flew that day, 350 bombers were recalled because of weather conditions. Three bombers and 11 fighters were lost, one airman was wounded and 27 went missing. The wounded airman was Sgt. Hank Anderson, ball turret gunner aboard *Bad Time, Inc.*

Bad Time’s replacement pilot, Lt. James Elduff, told the Pennsylvania *Reading Eagle* last July that after six and a half hours of flying the mission, he was due for a break. He turned the plane over to co-pilot, Lt. James Jenkins, allowing Jenkins to gain formation time.



Elduff believes that Jenkins flew out of formation in the haze 20,000 feet over the North Sea, colliding with a lower B-17, 42-38064. Of all the planes in the sky that day, the aptly named ‘Arf ‘n’ Arf may have been the unluckiest. The hybrid plane had been assembled from the fore and aft sections of two bombers, one silver, the other camouflage green.

Other sources claim *Bad Time* was the lower plane, ‘Arf ‘n’ Arf colliding with it from above. Either way, the resulting high-speed collision broke ‘Arf ‘n’ Arf in half at its joins, the separated sections plunging into the haze. *Bad Time*, thrown into a spin, began spiraling down.

The ducks, if not quite friendly, are unafraid of approaching humans and apparently unconcerned with the impending storm. Harold nudges me, pointing to a couple of ducklings near the bank of the canal. They paddle carefully through the murky water. We stand and watch for a moment, caught up in their quarrels and escapades.

Elduff grabbed the controls, he and Jenkins fighting to get the plane under control. The crew, glued into place by the centrifugal force of the spin, was told to bail out. They would last, they knew, for just about 20 minutes in the North Sea, a timely rescue unlikely.

For Elduff, the first order of business was to lighten the plane, so he dropped the bomb load immediately. Miraculously, the plane straightened out and started to climb. Harold wriggled from his cramped bicycle seat in the rear as the bailout order was countermanded. A mad scramble to assess damage to craft and crew ensued. They determined that two inboard engines were damaged; the left stabilizer and elevator sheared off, and the bomb bay doors ripped open. Radio operator George Schuller, checking through a window, found the plane had lost its tail.

In spite of its condition, *Bad Time* dipped toward the water, searching for survivors from the ‘Arf ‘n’ Arf. They spotted a man in a Mae West and dropped a dinghy as close to him as they could. Air-Sea Rescue later arrived to find the floating dinghy, but no sign of life.

Needing to save its own crew in a plane barely holding together, *Bad Time* wobbled toward the English coast on one engine.

“Women,” Harold says.

“Women?” I echo, distracted by the ducklings.

“They were all over the place.”

On leave, Glatton’s airmen would run down to London, about an hour and a half south of the air base. The city’s men were at war, the children shuttled to the countryside. That left women, many young, many looking for a little luck with the American G.I.s and their famously generous pocket money.

Flying was great, but leave had its own compensations.

While navigator Ashton Geren desperately searched for the nearest landing site in England, crew members yanked at the tightly stuck ball turret door. They wrenched it open to discover the unfortunate Anderson, unconscious and bloody from a severe head wound.

They pulled him out, laid him on the deck and applied pressure to staunch the gushing blood. They grabbed powdered penicillin from the medical kit and dumped it all over the wound, maintaining pressure on Anderson the entire way to RAF Manston, an emergency airfield a mile inland from the Cliffs of Dover.

Once there *Bad Time* circled the crowded airspace, awaiting permission to land. Nearly out of fuel, the Flying Fortress finally hit the ground, bouncing about 30 feet in the air a few times, or so Geren told the (Farmington, N.M.) *Daily Times* in 2002.

It was the crew’s first mission.

“A hot shower,” Harold explains. It was part of the attraction of the Air Corps. First, there was the flying itself. Then, if you lived through each mission, there were hot showers, regular meals, comfortable quarters in a British Nissen hut, and a surprising lot of free time.

“They treated us well,” he says.

The war was over for Anderson, carried off to a hospital, eventually ending up with a metal plate protecting his broken skull. The rest of the crew took to the air again within an hour, broken up and assigned to different squadrons, completing many more missions.

They eventually learned that Garland’s mangled plane had landed in Sweden, where he was taken to a hospital to recuperate, according to the (Farmington, N.M.) *Daily Times*. The Army had presumed he was dead and arranged his insurance payout. But his mother had refused it because she had dreamed he was alive.

Harold completed 11 more missions before his honorable discharge. He joined his father’s restaurant business in New York City and enjoyed a successful career there and in Palm Beach.

Forty years later the crew discovered they were all still alive and in good health. They organized annual reunions, the last in 2002.

We give up on the ducks as the first sprinkles start to hit our hats, and we know the storm has found us. We turn for home, where there are regular meals and hot showers. Perhaps tomorrow we will drive over to Palm Beach International Airport to watch the planes take off and land.

