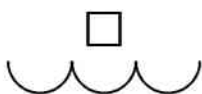






Marge is the eighty-second SFPA-zine (volume two, number fifty-nine) from Jeffrey Copeland. It is intended for mailing number 248 of the Southern Fandom Press Alliance and selected others. The text of *Marge* was composed using the \TeX typesetting system, and is set in 11-point Palatino. It was published by Bywater Press, 3243 165th Ave SE, Bellevue, Washington 98008, on 11 November 2005.



My daughter, in her usual inimitable fashion, suggested several candidates for paired titles for my two zines this month. My two favorites were “Bart and Lisa” and “Marge and Homer”. I’m using the latter because the images available for the front covers were more interesting. The “Marge” image then suggested the even-odder-than-usual format for this zine.

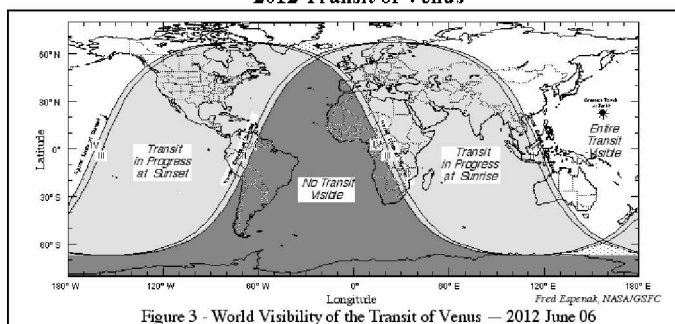
▶ Let’s start with some leftover points and corrections from my last zine. Final comments and zine assembly of *Black & White World* occurred in an all-day marathon. As a result, a couple of little things slipped through.

- In case I wasn’t absolutely clear, one of the real highlights of Cascadiacon was the time I got to spend with Hank. Hank and I have spent years writing at each other and saying hello to each other at conventions for years, but this is the first chance we’ve had to really hang out.
- The fourth of October was actually the 48th anniversary of Sputnik, not the 50th. This should be simple for me. I was born on 5 June 1957, which makes me ... mumble, carry the four, mumble ... 48. Sputnik was launched on 4 October 1957, which was ... er, um, mumble, *oh, yeah* ... 48 years ago. Doh!
- And then Liz was kind enough to catch spelling and diction errors, as she always does: It’s “Sam-mamish Slough”, not “Sammamish Slew.” And it’s “web site,” not “web sight.” The second was a legitimate typo; the first was a thinko.

▶ Then there are some additional notes from the comments in my last zine:

- ct **Guy Lillian**: “There was a transit of Venus? ... When can we expect a rerun?” Not only will it happen on 6 June 2012, NASA provides a nice map of visibility:

2012 Transit of Venus



- ct **Ned Brooks**: I said: “(And there are now two competing schemes for high-density DVDs, Blu-Ray, supported by Sony and Disney, and HD-DVD, backed by Paramount, Warner, and Universal.)” Of those two, Microsoft and Intel have announced they’re backing HD-DVD.
- ct **Janice Gelb**: I said: “However, I have reason to believe that there will be smaller format tablet PCs available in the next generation of hardware in a year or so.” “I have reason to believe...” is usually code for “I know for a fact, but can’t say...”. In this case, I’ve actually seen a

public announcement.

- ct **Sheila Strickland:** I said: *"The only thing that made Jack & Bobby worthwhile was the on-going 'what happens in the far future' thread."* And annoyingly enough, in the end they even cheated with the future timeline.

► Overnight on Sunday the 25th of September, while I was packaging our zines to go to Sheila, the following joke arrived via e-mail:

A man sitting next to a beautiful blonde on a plane looked over to see her seemingly in shock from the headline in the newspaper she was holding, which read "12 Brazilian Soldiers Killed in Riots."

She turned toward him and with trembling voice asked, "How many is a brazilian?"

Tuesday morning, the 27th, Janice Gelb e-mailed me the following joke:

Donald Rumsfeld is giving the president his daily briefing. He concludes by saying: "Yesterday, 3 Brazilian soldiers were killed."

"Oh no!" Bush exclaims. "That's terrible!"

His staff sits stunned at this display of emotion, nervously watching as the President sits, head in hands. Finally, Bush looks up and asks, "How many is a brazillion?"

Several interesting points arise. First off, the dumb blonde/George Bush correspondence is obvious once it's pointed out. Second off, which actually came first, the blonde or the Shrub? Third, of course, is the speed with which the transformation occurred.

► A car I saw last week had three bumper stickers. In order, they read "Re-elect Gore/Lieberman 2004", "Dean for President", "Kerry/Edwards 2004."



To defeat terrorism we have no choice but to invade Afriganist
Afgan- Aphghanis Afgah Iraq.

George W. Bush

► A joke from newsgroup `rec.humor.funny` on 10 October:

A guy meets this girl in a bar and asks, "May I buy you a drink?"

"Okay. But it won't do you any good."

A little later, he asks, "May I buy you another drink?"

"Okay. But it won't do you any good."

He invites her up to his apartment and she replies, "Okay. But it won't do you any good."

They get to his apartment and he says, "You are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen! I want you for my wife."

"Oh," she says, "that's different. Send her in!"

► A second joke from `rec.humor.funny` from the same week:

In recent years part of Air Canada's settlement with its unions was the hiring of handicapped people.

One day after that settlement, passengers on a small commuter plane were waiting for their flight to leave. The door opened and two men walked up the aisle, dressed in pilots' uniforms and both wearing dark glasses. One pilot was using a guide dog, and the other was tapping the aisle seats with a white cane.

Nervous laughter spread through the cabin; but the men entered the cockpit, the door closed, and the engines started up. The passengers began glancing nervously around, searching for some sign that this was just a little practical joke.

None was forthcoming.

The plane moved faster down the runway, and people at the windows realized that they were headed straight for the water at the edge of the airport perimeter. As it began to look as though the plane would never take off, but instead would plunge into the water, panicked screams filled the cabin.

At that moment, the plane lifted smoothly into the air. The passengers relaxed and laughed a little sheepishly. Soon they all retreated into their magazines, secure in the knowledge that the plane was indeed in good hands. Then over the PA system they heard the copilot say to the pilot, "You know Bob, one of these days, they're going to scream too late, and we're all going to die!"

► **Things for which I'm grateful:** Liz is on the mend after this year's round of surgery. We have *really* good medical insurance. James is soldiering through in his really hard history class, and is starting to get his head wrapped around it. Allie is making friends with the kids in her pre-law classes. My job is getting more and more interesting, and as customers line up to use our framework, I meet more interesting people from outside the company. There are more fun things to read and interesting little projects to work on than I have time for.

► A publishing industry group, Open eBook Forum, recently put together a press release of the best selling e-books in 2004. It's an interesting list, which I reprint here with some thoughts.

1-4. *The Da Vinci Code*, *Angels & Demons*, *Deception Point*, *Digital Fortress*, all by Dan Brown

So, the first four places are triumphs of marketing over substance.

5. *Darwin's Radio*, Greg Bear

6. *Holy Bible, New International Version*, International Bible Society

Appears on any list in any form, so this should be no surprise.

7. *I, Robot*, Isaac Asimov

Science fiction with movie tie-in.

8. *Electronic Pocket Oxford English Dictionary & Thesaurus*, Oxford University Press

9. *Darwin's Children*, Greg Bear

Interesting, since I don't think it was a huge seller in dead-tree form.

10. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster

11. *The Purpose Driven Life*, Rick Warren

12. *The Rule of Four*, Ian Caldwell, Dustin Thomason

13. *State of Fear*, Michael Crichton

14. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus*, Merriam-Webster

15. *Letters to Penthouse XIX*, Editors Of Penthouse

Compelling applications...

16. *The Automatic Millionaire*, David Bach

17. *Pandora's Star*, Peter F. Hamilton

18. *The Year Ahead 2004*, Susan Miller

19. *God's Debris*, Scott Adams

20. *Prey*, Michael Crichton

21. *The Da Vinci Code: Fact or Fiction?*, Hank Hanegraaff, Paul Maier

You have to ask?

22. *The Medici Dagger*, Cameron West

Followed by other knockoffs like Dante's Quill, Galileo's Cannon, and The Pope's Penis. No wait: that last is actually a Perry Mason mystery.

23. *Foundation*, Isaac Asimov

24. *The Procrastinator's Handbook*, Rita Emmett

I'm surprised it's that high; I suppose people buy it and then put off reading it.

25. *Song of Susannah*, Stephen King

26. *Electronic Pocket Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford University Press

27. *The Dark Tower*, Stephen King

28. *The Big Bad Wolf*, James Patterson

29. *Against All Enemies*, Richard A. Clarke

30. *The Art of War*, Sun Tzu

Those last two are an interesting juxtaposition....

Reviews

♥ *Firefly* is Joss Whedon's space western TV series. We ● have the plucky captain of the wagon train, er, space ship, and his loyal first mate, with whom he fought in The War, the brave pilot, and assorted others, some of whom Are Surrounded By Mystery. Of course, there's more to it than that: In Whedon's normal fashion, the story's really about the characters, not about the fantastic happenings around them. And that's where the fun lies. Each new adventure gets us another layer, or another bit of backstory. Well worth the effort to see the fourteen episodes of the original series, which we did preparatory to seeing the follow-on movie *Serenity*.

♥ That said, *Serenity* is just beautiful. It is space opera ● in the best sense. Adventure, plucky heroes battling against high odds, honorable antagonists, good banter between the characters, a damsel rescued from a far port, lots of cutlass and blaster action. The good guys win in the end, but at a high cost — there was a scene that took a turn for the worst where my reaction was “Whedon, you rat bastard!” — and the hero gets to expound his philosophy to the young apprentice in the last scene. There's no immense sense of wonder, no complicated world-building, no deep character studies, but this is the sort of boy's story that got many of us into science fiction in the first place.

WITH THE CANCELLATION OF “STAR TREK: ENTERPRISE”
WE PRESENT THREE SHOWS THAT GUARANTEE
THE FRANCHISE'S RETURN TO ENORMOUS SUCCESS:

STAR TREK
QUEER EYE FOR THE
PON FARRING VULCAN GUY

STAR TREK:
Space Lesbians

STAR TREK
RICK BERMAN GOES AWAY

♥ *Alex & Emma* is a bad knockoff of a John Candy ● movie about a guy who writes for a soap opera and writes the woman he's hung up on into the plot. Even with the presence of Kate Hudson and Luke Wilson, it sucks. Don't bother. No charm, no wit, just stupid.

♥ Matthew McCohaughy and Penelope Cruz are the ● protagonists in the movie of Clive Cussler's beach-read *Sahara*. A Confederate Ironclad may have sailed as far as Africa at the end of the War Between the States.

It may be in the desert. There may be a plague in Mali. There may be people out to get our heroes. There may be a deeper plot, but this isn't it, merely lots of dashing around, shooting, and hiding and adventuring. And if that's what you're looking for, it's a quite good movie.

● In 1968, James Goldman wrote a movie version of his play *The Lion in Winter* about Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine. Peter O'Toole played Henry; Katherine Hepburn played Eleanor. It was a stunning movie with Anthony Hopkins and Timothy Dalton in supporting roles. Nearly 40 years later, he wrote a slightly different script for television. That version was filmed in 2003 starring Patrick Stewart and Glenn Close, who get their ideas of the characters from the 1968 performances, not their own sensibilities. In effect, it's a wasted three hours watching Stewart imitate O'Toole and Close imitate Hepburn. Don't settle for the imitation, watch the original.

● While the script is nothing to gush about, *The Interpreter* makes up for that with superior acting and directing. It's got Nicole Kidman, who is just perfect in everything, and Sean Penn, who somewhere along the line learned how to act farther than the one character, and is now both more mature and far less annoying as a result.

● Ricardo Semler took over Semco, the Brazilian machine shop his father founded, and turned it into a multi-national conglomerate. It's been sufficiently successful that Semler is now writing books like *The Seven-Day Weekend: Changing the Way Work Works*. Semler's management philosophy boils down to "rule 1, treat your employees like adults", "rule 2, give them responsibility for managing their time and their work", "corollary 2a, make sure they balance their outside life with their work", "corollary 2b, if this means that they work from home some days or take Tuesday afternoons off to play soccer or the guys on the factory floor institute flex time for themselves, and they're getting results, don't panic", "rule 3, always keep management the hell out of the way." How Semco seems to prosper with these rules is that they actually apply them, unlike many American companies who only spout them.

▶ Because I'm so far behind, the comments that begin on the next page are, for the most part, in response to comments to me. I've picked up stuff that caught my eye, but I didn't do a comprehensive reading of the May and July mailings. Think of this as "The Best of Mailing Comment from Jeff."

Mailing Comments on SFPA 245/May

mike weber ➤ *A Stone for Bessie Smith* ★

Thanks very much for the CD of Big Daddy's "Sgt Pepper" and the rest. And for the "Sgt Pepper" artwork.

Page15: "Escaping would be easy for NovaGirl, but it would come at a high price." NovaGirl, with her leotard handcuffed to the wall and a pair of scissors with which to escape, has both too high a sense of modesty and a complete lack of understanding of topology.

ct Dengrove: "The 70's Dragnet was the first place i ever heard the Miranda warning. Which, oddly enough, i just encountered again, today (3/8/05), in the Funky Winkerbean strip, as a comicshop owner is arrested for selling adult comics. Not selling them to minors. In fact, not actively selling them to anyone, if i'm reading the continuity aright, just having them in his store for sale. On a shelf clearly marked 'Adult Comics'." Interestingly, in that "Funky Winkerbean" thread, the daughter of the woman who forced the prosecution — as you point out, a girl the comic shop owner might have married — is completely aghast that her mother would do this.

[[Your comments are set in Tekton, which is a pretty enough typeface, but just hell for my handheld scanner to read.]]

☒ "And then there's Moonraker, of which a major portion of the plot is an uncredited remake of an Italian spy spoof starring Mike Connors, Dorothy Provine and Terry-Thomas." Aha! The sterility-inducing satellite from *Se tutte le donne del mondo* — shown in the US as *Kiss the Girls and Make Them Die*. (I really like IMDB.)

ct Brooks: "As you've heard by now... Jack Chalker had died." There's a range of reaction to the death of a family member, and I found Eva Whitley's fascinating, since (at least in the places I see her on-line) it was out on the tails of the curve.

ct Hlavaty: "Your remarks about the way in which Frances Burnett was treated when she tried to sell the house that she had purchased with her own money put me in mind of the judge at the Ulysses obscenity trial [who] refused to allow excerpts to be read in court for fear of offending Sylvia Beach and her lover, who had published the damned thing." Which leads to the story of how my younger brother ended up at prep school in England for a year: The judge in the *Ulysses* obscenity trial, John Woolsey, was sufficiently successful in private practice that he set up a scholarship fund to send American kids to British public school for a year. Ian wanted to spend a year at Rugby, discovered this fund and applied. Woolsey's widow and my father convinced him that he really wanted to go to Eton instead. That seems to have worked out for him, as he's moving back to London (for the third time) after Thanksgiving.

Arthur Hlavaty ➤ *Nice Distiction 9* ★

"If magical realism can be written in a language other than Spanish, then *Trash Sex Magic*, by Jennifer Stevenson, is such a book."

Which I've added to that interminable list of "books Arthur says are fascinating" if only for the title. And I'd argue that Jay Lake does a fair job of magical realism in English.

Also, you have an interesting list of the Essential 20 SF Books. It re-nudges me to read some stuff I've been meaning to, like Vinge's *A Fire Upon the Deep* and Rucker's *Software, et seq*, but I've never been able to get into Greg Egan's short fiction, which suggests that his novel *Permutation City* wouldn't be a hit with me. And, of course, you're correct about Connie Willis: the essential Willis selection is not *Fire Watch*, even if it has better "lit-cred", but *Impossible Things*, which is an on-going hoot. "At the Bijou" is sheer genius.

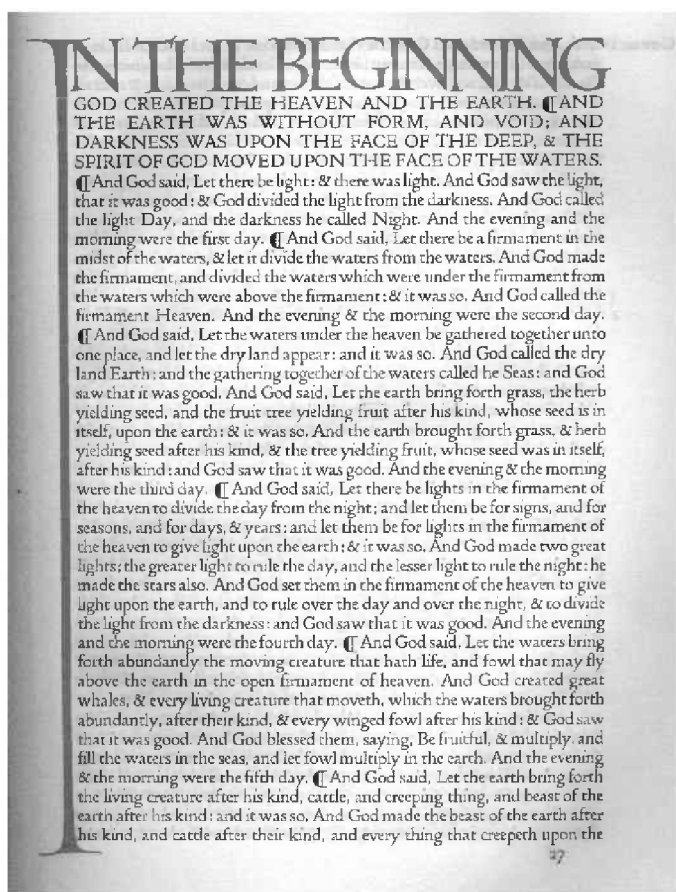
Ned Brooks ➤ *The New Port News* ★

ct weber: "I don't think I have EditPad on this machine, but NotePad would probably work just as well for editing a typesetter. So the DTP software is called PagePlus?" Hey, I'm adamant that I just be able to edit the text. Anything like Microsoft Word, which does point and click, makes me crazy for the most part. But I've said this before, and I realize I'm in the minority here. Just give me an alternative to (as Arthur put it once) not click on the bunny rabbit.

☒ "Yes, I remember the university experiments on getting student volunteers to shock each other — but I'm not at all sure it's a realistic simulation of the torture situation." I'd argue that the Milgram experiment is a reasonably realistic simulation of (at least) what happened at Abu Ghraib: the line grunts doing the torturing were doing so because they'd been told that they had permission from higher authorities to do it. That's exactly the point of the experiment, that if the "torturer" has been told to do it, they'll go much farther than their normal moral sense would allow. Combine that with the results of Zimbardo's Stanford Prison experiment, where the separation into "guards" and "prisoners" alone was enough to start abuse, and it was an inevitable outcome.

ct me: "Your Global Warming diagram is interesting, but in no way adds any light to the problem because there is no basis for your assumption that the four outcomes have equal probability. There is no 'one-in-four chance'!... The relative probabilities of these four outcomes are utterly unknown." Yes, the probabilities are unknown. That's the point. We *don't know* if what we're doing screwing up the environment, but if it is, and we keep doing it, there's no second chance. (Actually, even if oil company executives won't admit it, we *do* know that what we're doing is screwing up the planet, but we don't know how much.)

☒ "The only large illustrated Bible I have is the edition of the Jerusalem Bible with the Salvador Dali art. But the text is quite conventional — the art is all on separate plates." After 45 minutes of futzing around with the Duke University library catalog, and taking a wrong turn at William Morris and the Kelmscott Chaucer, I finally realized that the edition I was remembering is the Doves Press Bible. Though it's described as being 33½ cm, and I remember it as be-



ing about twice that big. And much to my confusion it isn't listed in the Duke catalog, even though I *know* that it was the Duke rare books librarian who first showed me a copy. There's a picture of the page I was trying to describe nearby. (And you, too, can have your own copy: there's one for sale from a dealer in Philadelphia for \$12,500.)

Guy Lillian ♀ *Spirus Mundi* ★

"Of course [John Paul II's] papacy was too conservative for these times." John Paul was too conservative for any time later than the 1400s. He drove the church backward in philosophy, in sense, in honesty. He was trying to do the right thing for his time, except that I think his time was the 18th century. "There are many social issues where his stature and stubbornness impeded progress. (His successor, the German priest Benedict XVI, is just as hidebound. Don't expect any lady priests soon.)" I'm unclear on whether it was John Paul or Benedict who rigged it, but the results of the conclave's election were a foregone conclusion: Benedict essentially was allowed to dictate the terms of the election once the conclave was under way. And I believe Benedict is a step backwards from John Paul. For example, he's had a minion write an article explaining that when John Paul talked about evolution being compatible with our belief in a supreme being, he didn't mean that evolution actually happened. "All I can say in John Paul's defense on such matters is that he was consistent in his moral scruples; remember that he condemned the Iraq War." He

could be amazingly forward looking — admitting that the Church had screwed over Galileo — but could also deny essential truths — that Pope Pius XII had actively cooperated with the Nazis.

"Mike [Resnick] had brought the tape of Metal Tears [to Deep-SouthCon], a student-made film of his Hugo-nominated short story, 'Robots Don't Cry'. Resnick took pride in telling us that the entire film cost as much as six and a half seconds of last year's awesome turkey, Van Helsing. Despite the crudeness of the production, the unpaid actors gave it their all and the sentimental power of Mike's story came through. Mike said that the story has been sold to a professional filmmaker, and only hopes that he does as fine a job." That was a truly excellent story — much better than the stories Mike had on the shortlist for this year's Hugo — and I'd be interested in seeing the film.

"Grace Molloy was the hit of the Rebel/Phoenix ceremonies." Well, basically that's because she's a babe.

ct me: "Rather thin issue from you, but reading of your work pressures, it's forgivable. Don't worry about your presentation. I'm sure you'll look like a rhesus with a spastic colon up there." Well, I held my own, but when I was done, the back of my shirt was soaked with sweat.

☒ *"Your. Comment. About. Three. Unrelated. Verbs. As an advertising schtick. Is the Best Bit in this Mailing."* Thank. You. Much.

☒ *"I want to hear your source for the statement that 'there were plenty of witnesses about [Terry Schiavo's] wishes' and details about the Texas law Bush signed, giving the state the right 'to withdraw the support from a person in a persistent vegetative state.' I want to pass these proofs along."* Janice provides exact references in her comment this mailing. The first — what her wishes were — was something I'd encountered in news reports. The Bush law was pointed out by Molly Ivins in her 22 March column:

For your information, while he was governor of Texas, George W. Bush signed the Advanced Directives Act in 1999, which gives hospitals the right to remove life support in cases where there is no possibility of revival, when the family cannot pay, no matter what the family's wishes are in the matter. In Texas, you can only live in a persistent vegetative state if you are accepted in one of the few institutions that provide such care or if your family is both willing and able to take care of you. And if Bush is so concerned about the right to life, why didn't he give death-row inmate Carla Faye Tucker more than 10 minutes consideration and some cheap mockery?

☒ *"Wow - with all those adventures in all those exotic places, your dad sounds like Flashman or Flandry."* And then there's the story of him sneaking out of the military hospital in Paris to knock on the door of Gertrude Stein and Alice B Toklas and ask to see their paintings. ("Yes," they said, "of course. How nice to see another American.") I couldn't make some of this stuff up.

"Late on a Thursday, early in May, Rosy and I pointed our noses south and returned to New Orleans. Once there, we recovered Bar-

bara Lee's keys from John Guidry and once again, availed ourselves of free crash space." And now it's all gone, destroyed by the disregard of Republicans in Congress. It's good that Ted Stevens only has to convince the populace of Alaska to vote for him, because after he insisted on adding millions to a bill for a useless bridge in his home state, and shorted Gulf Coast recovery efforts, he couldn't get elected dog catcher in the rest of the country.

Rich Lynch 🐉 *Variations on a Theme* ★

ct me: "On hack directors: 'Luc Besson wrote *Taxi*, a movie about a Marseilles pizza delivery boy...' Problem is, Luc Besson was the moron who brought us the abominable *The Fifth Element*, surely one of the most lame-brained, badly-acted and narcissistically adolescent movies ever made. It was truly sci-fi in the worse sense of the term. Given that track record, I wouldn't have any expectations the original could very good, either." Au contraire, mon cher Richard. Yes, *The Fifth Element* is a mismash and an excuse for Bruce Willis to be Bruce Willis, but Besson wrote and directed *Nikita* and *Léon*, both excellent thrillers, which were released in the US as *La Femme Nikita* and *The Professional*, respectively, and the latter of which introduced a 12-year-old Natalie Portman, and made a North American star of Jean Reno. He also wrote *The Transporter*, which isn't bad. The frustration of the American remake of *Taxi* is that the film was used as a backdrop for set pieces by Queen Latifa and Jamie Fallon, and yet you could see hints of a movie underneath that nonsense. If you want to complain about European directors who are hacks, Paul Verhoeven is at the top of the list, and then there's a large gap before you get to second place.

Janice Gelb 🐉 *Trivial Pursuits* ★

"The Final Solution by Michael Chabon... The detective is never named but that at least is not much of a mystery given his similarity to Sherlock Holmes. Chabon does a great job at writing a story featuring the character but not descending into parody or attempting to write a Conan Doyle story." Absolutely: it's never a parody, and you get the internal point of view of a whole lot of interesting characters, including the parrot, but certainly of Holmes.

ct me: "Allow me to express my appreciation for device driver programmers..." Hey, I express my appreciation every day. I work with a bunch of amazingly bright guys. Of course, their task is made more complicated by the baroque architecture of Windows...

Richard Dengrove 🐉 *Twygdrasil & Treehouse Gazette* ★

"My mother died April 13th at about 2 AM California time." I'm sorry to hear this. She clearly led a fascinating life, and I'm sorry for the pain you're having to go through to settle the estate.

ct Brooks: "I did a web search on Google popups and svchost... About svchost, it is apparently the name of a normally innocuous file. However, it can also indicate the Netsky F Worm and that you have to kill it before it multiplies." Actually, in the worm case, the worm masquerades as *svchost*. How-

ever, the real *svchost* is a vital part of the operating system operation: it's the process under which services — like printing and networking — run. It's normal for there to be multiple *svchosts* running on the system, since the services are grouped under separate processes to insulate them from each other. See the web site in the footnote* for a non-Microsoft description and further pointers.

ct weber: "RED STATES MAKE A MOCKERY. Distrust of government never includes the money people are getting from government." There's a wonderful exchange in the *West Wing* episode in which Bartlett is running for re-election and debating his opponent, a not-to-bright governor from Florida. The governor has just delivered his soundbite about a smaller, less expensive government and letting people in the states decide how to spend their money. Bartlett says, roughly, "Florida has a fifty billion dollar budget, and twelve billion dollars of that is money that you get from the Federal government over what your citizens pay in Federal taxes. Can we have it back?"

ct Feller: "How many times have I told about the Thai Room... A friend of mine said that the food was as authentically Thai as you could get out of American suppliers." One evening at NASFiC, we ate at a Thai place in a converted A&W drive-in† which was apparently started when Thai Airlines crew got tired of having no place to eat, bought the place, and flew a chef in from Thailand to feed them.

ct me: "That you weren't paying attention when I mentioned my sister dated Warren Zevon didn't bother me. I haven't paid attention a lot of the time." Thanks for being The Envoy into the story of your sister and that Excitable Boy. Since I'm so disconnected from pop culture, I have to cry Poor Poor Pitiful Me, and to rely on Guy, Toni, and Tom for stories of Lawyers, Guns, and Money. Of course I blame Microsoft's corporate policy which makes me spend all my time Looking for the Next Best Thing, which, in turn, means I'll Sleep When I'm Dead.

ct me: "Corel Wordperfect's tables are simple as pie. You just click the table function in the menu, add the columns and rows, and you are set. I haven't tried tables in Word, though." Word works the same way: click on ~~bunny~~ rabbit button, and choose how many columns and rows. But tables work just differently enough in PowerPoint than Word to make you crazy: in PowerPoint, you're stuck with your original choices and it's impossible to change the number of columns. *"By contrast, in T_EX, tables are difficult to do. I suspect, though, the final product looks much better than it does in either Wordperfect or Word."* The simple versions of T_EX tables are fairly straight-forward. And, yes, they do look better.

* http://ask-leo.com/what_is_svchost_and_why_is_there_more_than_one_copy_running.html

† That's okay: Threadgill's, the classic roadhouse in Austin where Janis Joplin used to be the house singer and which serves really good down-home food, is a converted gas station.

David Schlosser ♀ **Peter, Pan & Merry** ★

ct me: "Truly bizarre is that, apparently, Sen. Nichols of Oklahoma cited the Crichton book as evidence about how distorted the Global Warming claim is." Yes, these guys are making up science as they go, and citing fiction as fact.

Gary Brown ♀ **Oblio** ★

ct Ackerman: "Don't be too upset over Raphi ordering a margarita. He's just a parrothead in development." You could make that claim if he was ordering a frozen margarita, but not if he's ordering a frozen fruit margarita.

ct me: "A co-worker went to Seattle last month for a Business Editor's convention and heard your boss speak. He said Bill Gates was well received and interesting." I think Bill spends about half his time doing these dog-and-pony talks. I should say "hosting these dog-and-pony talks", since for the technical ones, he introduces people who introduce people who give demos. On the other hand, I've seen Bill on days when he was both "on" and "off". For his keynote speech at last spring's hardware conference he was way off.

☒ "And then there was DR. Bill Frist, who diagnosed Terri Schiavo from news clips he'd seen on Fox News. I hope the AMA calls him to task for that." And now, there's the question about Frist's "blind" trust, which very conveniently managed to dump stock in HCA just in advance of bad results.

[[And while I'm thinking about it Gary, the format of this zine is actually half-pages: so count it at half the page count in the Box Scores, please.]]

Sheila Strickland ♀ **Revenant** ★

ct Lillian: "Ct yourself on your fanzine collection: When I was doing research for my web site project, I discovered several places around the U.S. that have SF collections and more than one of them include fanzines. Tulane has an SF collection, but I don't know if they also have fanzines." I tripped over the Eaton Collection at UC Riverside years ago when I was looking up publishing data for a particular book on the UC Melvyl catalog — this was before Amazon could be used for that purpose.

ct Schlosser: "Hey, if you SFFAns going to Glasgow have a party, you know you have to do a one shot! (I think it's one of those hidden clauses in the bylaws.)" We certainly did a one-shot at NASFiC. I don't know if they did one in Glasgow — but if they did, it should have been in the September mailing, the slackers.

ct me: "The front cover cartoon is 20 years old?! Geez, I am getting old(er); I remember well when it was published. *Sigh* I miss reading 'Calvin and Hobbes'." Except, as you note later, it was actually "Bloom County." My father clipped that cartoon from the Sunday paper and sent it to me when it first ran, just a few days before Allie was born.

☒ "You listed several good and not-so-good movies of Shakespeare's plays; did you see the version of A Midsummer Night's Dream that came out awhile back? The one with Kevin Kline as Bottom and Michelle Pfeiffer as Titania and bunches of other famous people. It got mixed reviews, but I enjoyed it." The one for

which has Calista Flockhart billing above the actors? Saw it. Liked Kline & Pfeiffer.

Eve Ackerman ♀ **Guilty Pleasures** ★

ct Gelb: "Ohmigod, I love the image of killer hummingbirds duking it out on your deck!" We now have three hummingbird feeders on our deck, and we occasionally have dog fights. And they sometimes divebomb the cats.

Gary Robe ♀ **Tennessee Trash** ★

ct me: "I've not had to put in the hours that you are, but Eastman just had a record first quarter and the level seems to be holding up through the first half. So why did I get a notice this morning that my management is now scrutinizing all travel through the third quarter? I suspect that some of the higher-ups have blown all of our travel budget and so now everyone is suffering for their excesses." When I briefly worked for SHL, a company whose business required nearly everyone to be on the road, nearly all the time, the Dallas regional office managed to spend roughly a million dollars in the first six months of the year. They did this by doing things like chartering a jet for an outing to see the Texas Rangers playing in Toronto — the Blue Jays' stadium was around the corner from the corporate office.

mike weber ♀ **Like I'm Fixin' To Die...** ★

ct me: "On having to do a live demo - Rick Albertson had a button that read 'Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from a rigged demo.'" I've seen that button. I think I may have seen it on on Rick. And it's true.

☒ "Also consider, in regard to the Schiavo case, that Tom Delay successfully went to court to pull the plug on a relative in a similar condition some years ago." Not just a relative: his father.

☒ "While temp agencies charge the employer more than the going pay rate and pay the employee somewhat less, they are still usually cheaper in the overall for the employer, because the employer isn't paying benefits on that employee." The problem is, of course, that no one is paying benefits on that employee, so we all pick up the emergency room tab when their kid gets an ear infection.

ct me: "When i was doing phone support for NCR, word leaked out that the new desktop and tower models were codenamed 'Ren' and 'Stimpy'. According to Scott Adams, there was enough negative customer reaction to this that the engineers were ordered to always run any proposed codenames past Marketing." You perhaps know the story about Apple's code names for its operating systems. They had a series of names like Einstein, and Oppenheimer. Until Carl Sagan objected to their using his surname as a product code name. So they renamed that particular entry in the sequence "BHA," which stands for "butt-head astronomer."

ct Dengrove: "This line about replacing words with other word reminds me of George Carlin's routine about replacing the word 'kill' in movie dialogue with the f-word 'What're we gonna do now, Sarge?' 'Do? I'll tell I you what we're gonna do, Kowalski, we're gonna go over that hill and we're gonna f**k 'em all!'" Our favorite line from that routine is "now that we've

captured you, Sheriff, we're gonna fuck you and we're gonna fuck you sloow."

Toni Reinhardt ♀ *Yngvi is a Louse* ★

"The 10 places all Americans should see" Let's see, I've done six of them. I like this list, and agree with most of it. Los Angeles should be on the list, but you don't want Santa Monica Beach — Santa Monica *Pier*, perhaps, for the tourist value — but see the Venice Beach boardwalk (even though it's not raised and not boarded) to peoplewatch the locals, and Zuma or Rincon up the coast past Malibu for a real California surfing beach. Drive from the MGM lot on Washington Blvd to the Fox lot in Century City — Motor Avenue connects them, roughly past Ray Bradbury's house. The Century City Shopping Center, on the Avenue of the Stars is a quintessential LA mall — and a wonderful place to people watch. You won't see Arnold or Jane there, but you'll see the glitzy and over-dressed.

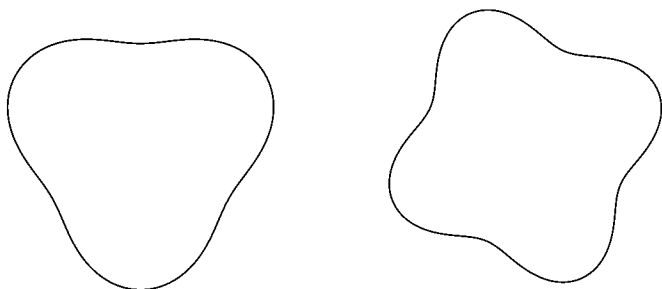
Sheila Strickland ♀ *Revenant .1* ★

"Not that it really matters in the long run; but I commented on Jeff Copeland's cover and said that I missed 'Calvin and Hobbes'. Of course, his cover was from 'Bloom County'. The remark still stands; but I also miss 'Bloom County'. Berke Breathed's new strip is not bad; but it hasn't been running long enough that the cast of characters has the same familiarity as 'Bloom County' in its heyday." Breathed's new strip, *Opus*, either hasn't reached its stride yet, or it's a dead loss. I haven't decided yet.

Mailing Comments on SFPA 246/July

Ned Brooks ♀ *The New Port News* ★

ct weber: "Manhole covers are round because that is the simplest shape that can never fall through its own hole - but there are a infinite number of other shapes that have the same property of having a constant diameter. None of them would roll as well, however. The simplest is the 3-lobe shape made of three 60° arcs, but it would have three sharp points. A continuous shape of constant diameter can be generated by the polar-coordinate equation in (r, ϕ) , $r = R + e \sin(N\phi)$ where R and e are constant lengths ($e \ll R$) and N is an odd integer that sets the number of lobes." I had to actually draw it before I could see why that would work as a manhole cover. And then I had to draw a 4-lobe one to see why it *wouldn't* work.



And, just to prove that I'm a geek, here's how I drew it:

```

%!PS-Adobe-2.0 EPSF-2.0
%%Title: cycloid de Brooks
%%Creator: JLC, 6 Nov 2005
%%BoundingBox: 66 66 459 234
%%Pages: 1
%%EndProlog

% show a cycloid of  $r = R + e \sin(N \phi)$ 

/R 72 def
/e 12 def

/polartorect { % r theta -> x y
    dup
    3 2 roll
    dup
    4 1 roll
    exch
    cos mul
    3 1 roll
    sin mul
} def

/lobepoint { % phi -> r theta
    dup
    N mul sin e mul
    R add
    exch
} def

/lobes { % x y N ->
    /N exch def
    gsave translate
    0 0 moveto
    newpath
    0 lobepoint polartorect moveto
    0 .5 360 {
        lobepoint polartorect lineto
    } for
    stroke
    grestore
} def

150 150 3 lobes
375 150 4 lobes

showpage

```

ct Dengrove: “Hard to believe that my ‘svchost’ popups are the result of the Netsky virus — if that were the case, why would they be intermittent and variable? ... They do have something to do with being online though — I have never had one offline.” See my comments to Mr Dengrove above, but: What’s the popup actually say? If it’s happening only when you’re dialed up, it’s probably the *svchost* that hosts the net-working stuff.

☒ “The Republicans like to boast about being ‘tough on crime’ - but they aren’t willing to fund the jails and prisons and courts.” If my memory is correct, something like half the federal inmates are there on drug charges.

ct Reinhardt: “Mark Twain pointed out long ago what a fortunate thing the schism of the Christian church was, as a monolithic church would inevitably get into government and abuse its power. How far will the Religious Right get here?” Well, as a hint, there was a recent appeals court decision that says that the Salvation Army can have a religious test for people working in their social services projects... even though those projects are fully funded by the government.

☒ *"I think Summers at Harvard was quite rightly criticized for his remarks."* Yes, I've heard all sorts of stuff about how Summers was wrong, how the things he said were horribly critical of women, how he should be kicked out of his job as Harvard president. Except that he was speaking at a session that wasn't recorded, and nobody took a transcript, and the feminist uproar involved some mis-remembered, out-of-context quotes, as reported by people who weren't paying attention.

mike weber ♫ *"Hardcore teddy banned from Zurich Bear Parade"* ★ So the city fathers of Zurich are putting up cute teddy bear statues, and don't want a bondage bear on display. Okay. Stupid, but okay. But "hard core?" Like "best seller", the word doesn't mean anything anymore. "Best seller" has been shortened from "the book that is selling more than any other book" to the simpler "book." Similarly, "hard core" no longer means "a presentation containing sex with a depiction of penetration," but is now shortened to "sex."

Norm Metcalf ♫ *Tyndallite* ★

ct me: "Thanks for the offer to send Sid Coleman copies of your pseudo-Ace double using his retitlings of the old and new Testaments. I sent you his address via letter." My helpful daughter tucked the letter away, and I didn't look for it until I saw this mailing comment. I'll get that zine on the way to Sid this week.

Richard Dengrove ♫ *Twygdrasil&Treehouse Gazette* ★

ct me: "Recently, I heard the CIA chief claim that we know where bin Laden is, and it is a sovereign State, where we can't go. Sovereign States have never stopped the Bushies before." Just like the CIA knew where to find the WMDs in Iraq, right?

ct me: "About Power Point Presentations, I can understand that you might want to put on a screen facts that might have passed the audience by." Ed Tufte's advice on this is to eschew PowerPoint entirely, and just do handouts. But I saw a Japanese PowerPoint trick the other day that I really liked: slides with a single kanji character.

ct Reinhardt: "Toni, I agree that, at times, we need war to defend civilization. However, we have to remember that war undermines civilization, and maybe we shouldn't be too quick to go to war." Former LASFAPAn Mike Shupp, in his series *With Fate Conspire*, suggests that when the civilians declare war, it should be the responsibility of the military authorities to murder the head of state and take over the government.

Arthur Hlavaty ♫ *Nice Distinctions* ★

"Meanwhile, Kevin was applying his comics knowledge at a panel called 'Queer Eye for the Caped Guy.' Like many people, I first got the idea that Batman & Robin had a thing going from Fredric Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocent*." Which is why, on the television version, the Irish police chief always said "Sure and Gomorrah!"

"Lunch was followed by the conference's first-ever designated Science Lecture, named after Rudy Rucker's forthcoming nonfiction

book, *The Lifebox, the Seashell, and the Soul*. Rucker has been greatly influenced by Richard Wolfram's theory that all of reality can be seen as computational." As I said earlier, I really need to read some Rucker.

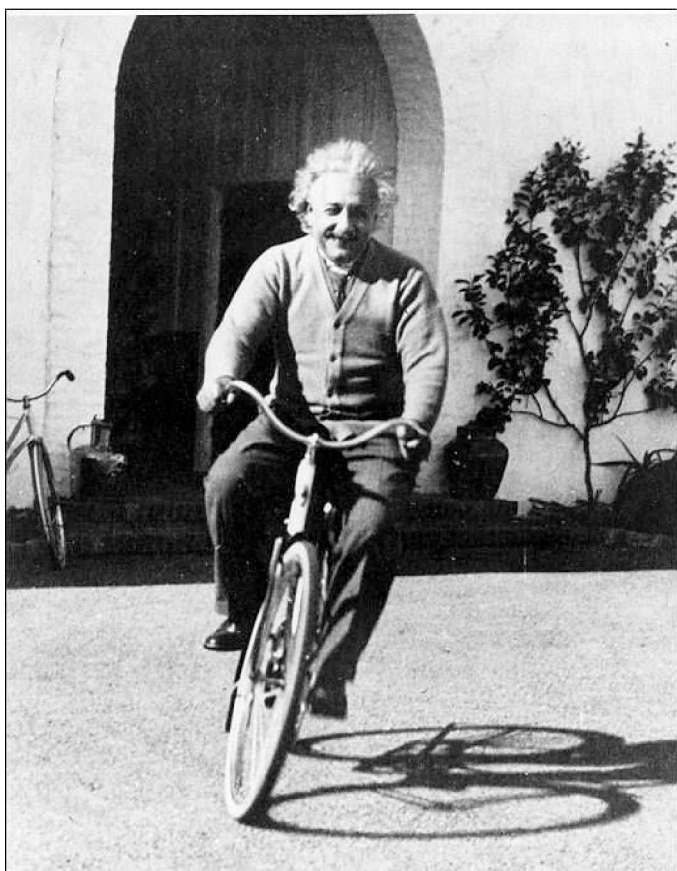
"Americans need to know more about Islam, and one good place to start is *No god but God*, by Reza Aslan. Aslan traces the history of Islam back through Muhammad and the caliphs, up to the present." And another book to the list.

"It's been said that the smaller the stakes, the more vicious the competition. *DisneyWar*, by James B. Stewart, offers a counterexample. Michael Eisner, the CEO of the Disney entertainment empire, would no sooner promote a new man to a position near the top than he would decide that the man was now a dangerous rival and begin trying to destroy him." As nearly as I can tell, Eisner went to a lot of effort to run the company for his personal benefit. And, now, finally, he's out. But, this, too gets added to the list.

"10 things normal people have done that I haven't: 1. Had my tonsils removed. 2. Watched an entire *Cheers*, *Seinfeld*, or *Buffy* episode. 3. Gone out on a date while in high school. 4. Heard anything by Nirvana (or many other performers of the last 30 years). 5. Bet more than \$10 on anything. 6. Ridden a bicycle. 7. Learned to play a musical instrument. 8. Read any of the Narnia books. 9. Cooked an egg. 10. Had to read *Silas Marner*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, or *Lord of the Flies*." Let's see: I've seen (more than one) whole episode of *Buffy*; though I've managed to avoid *Cheers* and *Seinfeld*. I went out on one date in high school, to the prom. I've never bet more than \$5 on anything. I've ridden a bicycle. A lot. (But see the nearby photo of another first-time bicyclist.) I had to read *Lord of the Flies* in high school; I finally read *To Kill a Mockingbird* when Allie enthused about it.

But what haven't I done that normal people have done? Only watched one football game beginning-to-end. I've never been hospitalized. Never had sex in the backseat of a car.

"If we can look forward to a time when Communism oppresses nothing larger than a university lit department, John Paul II deserves much of the credit, more so than Ronald Reagan, who did a few things right (like not listening to Dick Cheney) but was mainly lucky. The late pope was brave, honest, and intelligent. ¶But of course Russia's wasn't the only Evil Empire, and JP2, for all his admirable personal qualities, made his own empire significantly more evil, strengthening his own power and that of his office at the expense of the people, and particularly half of those. Mostly thanks to him, his church is standing fast in its efforts to assure that while men can be many things, women are first, last, and foremost ambulatory wombs. He was a celibate old man atop a pyramid of celibate old men, so removed from the realities of sex that they could not distinguish between a loving relationship of two people who happen to have the same sort of genitalia and one of their own inflicting sexual pain and terror on a child by implicitly or explicitly threatening the greater horrors of Hell." Nicely put. As I said to Guy earlier, John Paul used his beliefs to oppress others. He may have done some things right, but he drove the Church to the Right — and his successor seems intent on doing more



of the same. He strengthened his own empire at the expense of half of the people; unfortunately, like our only President, at the expense of the wrong half. And they could tell the difference between homosexuality and child molestation: they just chose to condemn the wrong one.

Your obit: *"Johnnie Cochran played the race card when it would almost have been malpractice for him not to. He played it skillfully."* He made his career by forcing LA Police Chief Parker and his imported southern cops to stop beating up on black guys in Watts. And then, he was bright enough to win the Simpson case by rolling over the prosecution in the jury selection. All-in-all, a skillful advocate, if mostly remembered for being theatrical.

Guy Lillian ♀ *Spiritus Mundi* ★

"Buzz Aldrin's Conspiracy Smackdown" I like this cartoon. While punching the guy may have been a little extreme, I think anyone who insists that the Moon landings were fake should be neutered in the interests of improving the gene pool.

However, I just read Spider Robinson's recounting of a conversation with Mr Aldrin. It turns out that after a certain Senator Proxmire objected to the amount spent on developing a zero-gravity pen, Mr Aldrin happened to be on the moon one afternoon, standing in a tin foil box the size of a large phone booth, when his companion managed to break off a switch. Which wouldn't have been a big deal, except that this was the switch

the turned on the rocket that would let them leave the moon. Mr Aldrin's companion, after swearing, remembered that he had a zero-gravity pen, which he took apart and used to actuate the switch.

Sen Proxmire also spent a lot of effort objecting to the money to maintain the Lunar Receiving Lab in Houston. At the time, I was working in the lab of Willy† and Gerry,° who, together, wrote a really scathing letter to Mr Proxmire explaining that not paying money to keep rain off the geologic samples we had spent a lot of years and a lot of effort and seven lives to collect was, at best, foolish.

"Cheryl Morgan, editor of the reigning Hugo-winning fanzine, Emerald City, asked us to lend our talents to the production of a most unique publication. This was Ion Trails, a faux in-flight magazine for this year's worldcon, a perfectly pointless exercise in fannish lunacy to be included in a special CD offered by Interaction. I hope (1) Interaction publishes a printed version and (2) Cheryl finagles me enough copies to run through here..." The cover looks wonderful. Hmm, official publication of the convention. Hmm, supporting membership. I want my copy, please, if only of the CD. (And if I can get a copy of the CD, and get permission, I'll take on the job of making 24 substantially identical copies for you, Guy.) Failing that: it would be nice to see it on the web.

ct me: "I'll hold my regrets for the loss of Liz's mother for her mc, but I must say that what you wrote about her is beautiful writing indeed. I wish every mother or mother-in-law would be so well thought of." Thanks. I miss her a lot. I'm still tearing up when I see little old ladies in TV commercials.

⊠ *"You were surprised that Homeland Security manipulated its alert levels to suit White House election needs?"* No: I'm surprised that Tom Ridge *admitted* it.

⊠ *"Evangelism doesn't belong in public schools — there's my 'well, duh!' comment of this issue — but, in this America, anything goes for the God Squad. That innocents like that science teacher are hurt means nothing; the evangelists' cause is worth the sacrifice of someone else's career..."* See my comment about the Salvation Army to Mr Brooks above. The problem is that for some people, the ends justify the means because they believe that God is on their side, and he'll forgive them their sins. Nope: if you insist on breaking the rules — if you torture someone because you think you're in the right, if you lie to convict someone of a crime, if you destroy the village in order to save it — you're no better than the people who you're fighting. But Mr Vonnegut feels slightly differently.

⊠ *"IMHO, Markstein's major contribution to the SFFA constitution was our bimonthly schedule."* Yeah, I'd have to agree with that.

⊠ *"I can understand the antipathy a young woman's parents*

† William Alfred Fowler, BS (Ohio State), PhD (Caltech, under Charles Lauritsen), Nobel Laureate

° Gerald Joseph Wasserburg, BSc (Chicago), MSc (Chicago), PhD (Chicago, under Harold Urey), Crafoord Laureate

There is no reason why good cannot triumph as often as evil. The triumph of anything is a matter of organization. If there are such things as angels, I hope that they are organized along the lines of the mafia.

— Kurt Vonnegut, *The Sirens of Titan*

would have to *Mystic River*, but if you avoid all Sean Penn movies you've also skipped *Dead Man Walking*, which is a masterpiece." Actually, Liz and I both gave up the novel of *Mystic River* when the son is molested, very early on. We actually saw Susan Sarandon's very good movie *Dead Man Walking*; I found that Penn guy annoying even in it. On the other hand, see my review of *The Interpreter*: I wanted to see it for Nicole Kidman, but Penn seems to have matured a bit.

☒ "Okay, MEGO again. I don't get the 4'33" business." Rich Lynch and I have explained by now, but it's the title of a piece by John Cage: four minutes and thirty-three seconds of silence.

☒ "Now that Deep Throat has been revealed as FBI agent Mark Felt, there's no need to call him 'Mr. Throat' anymore." Unless you're the *Los Angeles Times*, in which case your interview accompanying your music review of *Bat Out of Hell* kept referring to "Mr Loaf."

ct Gelb: "Anna Quindlen's *Newsweek* columns are consistently wonderful, but an item half-heard, half-imagined on a news show had me searching the web to see if she was still alive. Thankfully, apparently so. Her points on the Schiavo case are, as usual, both humane and right on." You had the same audio aphasia I did: the Schiavo case brought up reviews of the first right-to-die case, involving one Karen Ann Quinlen. She's, by the way, dead, unlike that *Newsweek* columnist with a similar-sounding name.

ct Reinhardt: "Ten Places All Americans Should See.... the Statue of Liberty." While you're on the water, it's worth stopping at Ellis Island. Two of my four grandparents passed through those halls, a story I'm sure is duplicated many times among the members here. "...But Americans should also cross the rest of the Harbor and work their way up Manhattan... sit by the Imagine shield in Strawberry Fields and contemplate the Dakota..." Again, from that volume of Spider Robinson essays, he describes the spontaneous gathering outside the Dakota on 9 October 1981, which would have been Mr Lennon's 41st birthday.

"Later natter... Re: the London subway bombings... You notice, the next day the citizenry was right back to life as usual. Tougher than they look - and far tougher than us - those Brits." Patrick, one of my retired buddies from the gym, was in London to attend his daughter's graduation, and was asleep, unaware, a block from Kings Cross Station when the bombs went off. Meanwhile, I don't know if you have read what Ken Livingstone, the mayor of London, said from Singapore after the bombings. Livingstone, who is far enough in the left wing of the Labour Party that

he's known as "Red Ken," gave a speech that had some elements stolen from Shrub — "Londoners will not be divided by this cowardly act." — and some echoes of Churchill — "[We] will stand together in solidarity alongside those who have been injured and those who have been bereaved." It was a brilliant performance, delivered off-the-cuff.

Thomas Friedman tells a story from when he was the *New York Times*'s man in Beirut with the same British stiff-upper-lip logic:

Beirutis had it right: There is no such thing as perfect security in today's world. All rational precautions need to be taken. But once you take them, then you basically have to decide: Am I going to sit home and hide in the basement forever, or am I . . . going to play whatever mind game it takes, or none at all, and just go on with my life? My mentor in such things is my late departed friend George Beaver, a crazy Englishman who played golf — as a man in his 80's — almost every day of the Lebanese civil war at the Beirut Golf and Country Club. (I confess that I joined him on some days.) When I would say to him, "You know, George, it's crazy to play golf under such conditions," he always had the best answer: "I know I am crazy to do it, but I would be even crazier if I didn't."

David Schlosser ♣ *Peter, Pan & Merry* ★

ct me: "After the London bombings there was a brief bit on the news about how light security is in many countries (England included) and how things can be learned from Israeli methods. (Which mostly means checking bags, tickets and IDs)" It helps that in Israel and in London, everyone watches. An abandoned backpack in London or Tel Aviv would be reported fairly quickly. (And if that civic instinct built up in the UK during the IRA bombings had started to fade, it was reborn in July.) But secure doesn't mean oppressive: I've written before about Japanese airport security, which is very tight, but exceedingly polite.

☒ "Where can us hapless Americans get a gander at those British Trojan commercials?" The original British web site — <http://trojangames.com> — doesn't seem to work from outside the UK (or at least isn't for me at the moment), but at <http://ifilm.com> I found fuzzy copies. Search for "Trojan Games". There are three of them there, though I remember there having been four or five originally.

☒ "The short answer re politicians' military service is that if you're a Democrat you have to have served w/ a clean record and not criticized while if you're a Republican simply not deserting or killing your own troops is sufficient. That would be because everyone knows that the GOP supports the military while the Democrats don't. Simple." I find it interesting that today the conventional wisdom is that the Democrats are soft on defense, and are all draft-dodging slackers. In the mid-sixties, Republicans tried to push the notion that the Democrats started wars.

☒ “Seems that some of the more radical fundamental Christians take views all too similar to that of some fundamental Moslems (and, yes, some Orthodox Jews) - that it's OK to twist/pervert the scriptures if your purpose is to defend them.” Interesting notion I steal from Aaron Sorkin: the best western analogy for Al Queda is the Ku Klux Klan.

☒ “First off I don't picture any hospital preventing someone from visiting. Given a family-only policy (which some may have for certain situations)...” Would a Catholic hospital allow Quentin to visit his partner Bruce in the Intensive Care Ward? Always? Even under Pope Benedict? Would a Baptist hospital?

☒ “I'm of the view that much (most?) of the Iraqi opposition really isn't Iraqi.” I think that one's obvious to all of us. We're “fighting the terrorists in Iraq so that we don't have to fight them here” by dint of having drawn all the terrorists to Iraq. But I'll point out that historically *nobody* has won a war against an insurgency. The American colonies, Algeria, and Vietnam (twice!) come to mind.

Tom Feller ♀ **Frequent Flyer** ★

“Social Security... Robert Pozen's proposal, endorsed by President Bush, to add means testing to the system is one way to do the latter. He calls it ‘progressive indexing’....” Y'know: a lot of the problems with social security obligations can be solved — could have been solved — by indexing the automatic increases to inflation, not wages. Historically, wages have grown faster than inflation — though not since Shrub has been President. And what President was it who convinced a Congress of the opposition party to institute indexing for social security in the first place? Why that would have been the evil liberal from California: Dick Nixon.

ct me: “Have you ever watched the film version of Cole Porter's *Kiss me, Kate* The highlight for me occurred when Keenan Wynn and James Whitmore sang ‘Brush up your Shakespeare’.” I don't think I've seen any production of *Kiss Me, Kate*, but the whole notion of a play based on Lunt and Fontayne putting on a play is kind of interesting. But somehow, I don't have images of Keenan Wynn and James Whitmore as song-and-dance men.

Rich Lynch ♀ **Variations on a Theme** ★

“To me (being an ex-small press publisher of sorts), an ‘actionable item’ is something that could get an offended party's lawyers sicced on you, for example, for alleged libel. An ‘action item’, on the other hand, is a task, often with a due date, assigned to you by some higher-up. I suspect yours are the latter, but on the other hand, with the number of people worldwide who are unfriendly toward Microsoft...?” Even “action item” bugs me on my more curmudgeonly days. How about “assigned task”?

Eve Ackerman ♀ **Guilty Pleasures** ★

“It was brought to my attention last month that a website was selling pirated ebooks, including my novels.” So you found book pirates after your pirate books, arrr? And illiterate ones at that from the sound of it. There's a line between

piracy and fair use, and these guys were way, way over it. Again, quoting Spider Robinson's recent book of essays, "Not all information wants to be free. My stories and songs aspire only to be reasonably inexpensive."

"Since we were repainting the room anyway, a legitimate repair, it seemed like it was time to do what I'd wanted to do all along, put a hardwood floor into the bedroom." My first reaction was "hardwood in the bedroom? won't echoes in the bedroom be a bad thing in multiple dimensions?" And then I realized that ① we have hardwood floors in our own bedroom and ② most bedrooms have a huge sound deadening object in the form of a (surprise!) bed.

"I'm out in the family room typing at my little Herman Miller 'Scooter' desk, one of the most useful pieces of furniture I've ever purchased. I got it at the Levenger's store some years ago (Mmmmm....Levenger's...must control pen lust..) and it's perfect for keeping my laptop at the right height and angle for typing." Scooter desk? It's the first thing under "furniture" on their web site. Oh, must have! I can't drop \$300 on one now, but it would sure beat the little TV table from Ikea that I've been using for my laptop in the living room. (But also, must control pen lust.... I stopped in to get rollerball cartridges for my Mont Blanc the other day, and nearly bought a new fountain pen.)

ct Brooks: "Tsk, Ned, my youngsters have drilled into me repeatedly that one no longer says 'orientals' to talk about those slant eyed people from the East. Now we're to call them 'Asians', as in 'Would you help me roll up the asian rug so we can get the new floor laid?'" That begs the question about why the new floor wants to have sex. On the other hand, was it Gary Brown who reprinted the auto-corrected headline about the Massachusetts state budget which told us the state was "back in the African-American"?

ct Lillian: "If you want to read the best review of 'Kingdom of Heaven', go to 'Popcorn and Chainmail'..." OK. They're pretty weird. It might be worth picking a movie they've watched and read their sendup along with the DVD.

ct Cleary: "I have to say Las Vegas is one of my least favorite places on earth. But I'd go back for a special occasion like a friend's birthday or wedding — I just would never choose to vacation there." You aren't the only person to say that this mailing. I've always found Las Vegas to be just a little bit odd, but what it's got going for it — at least for those of us who live places where it's wet and cold during the winter — is warmth and fairly luxurious hotels. Since I prefer "plopping" on vacation, rather than "cruising", it's a good candidate place.

Gary Brown ♀ **Oblivion** ★

ct OO: "I just noticed what I believe is an error in the Volume and Number system you've used here, Sheila. Three mailings ago, you changed the Volume from 22 to 23, but that's not how SFFA figures it." Yup. That would be an error. Volume changes with editor, not year.

ct weber: "The thing that drove this boom was cheap interest rates. I got my house for 6.25 percent on a fixed mortgage. Plus, I got to avoid a few legal hoops, thanks to some of the moves my



mortgage broker made. I don't know if I could have done it without the Clinton driven cheap interest rates." The boom in the '90's was driven by cheap money and cheap energy. Deficit spending has killed the first; the war in Iraq the second. So consider the effect of a (nominally) fiscally responsible President simultaneously cutting taxes on the rich while promulgating policies that drive up energy prices. It will screw his benefactors because nothing causes the erosion of capital as quickly as inflation.

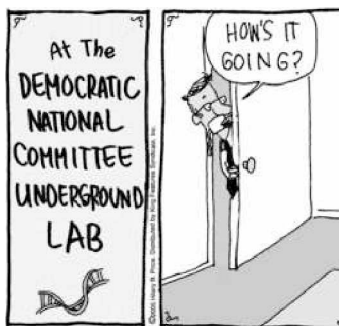
ct me: "No doubt, working for Microsoft is like working for a newspaper. When someone finds out where you work, they are immediately impressed or are ready to give you an earful about your company or profession." Yup: I'm always getting questions about computers at the gym. "More than one person at my reunion took me aside and told me about their recent writing project. One buddy from the football team has to reduce his thesis from 82 to 12 pages to get it published." Surely that's a typo: a twelve-page thesis?

☒ "Two things will go down as hallmarks of the Bush administration: he and his staff were outright liars; and enough people bought his lies to elect him to office once." And that wouldn't have happened but for his having been appointed by Rehnquist and Scalia. (On the other hand, if Gore had been President on September 11th, the Republicans would have run the exact same campaign in 2004 — terrorists, terrorists, terrorists, al Queda, terrorists, security, terrorists, evil liberals can't keep you safe, terrorists — and might have won that one.)

Liz Copeland 🐾 *En casa con el armadillo* ★

"To distract myself and to get something productive done, I went out to work on the garden. My knee had been hurting somewhat for the last few weeks, so I tried to avoid kneeling. Instead, I managed to slip on the hill, and twist my knee which caused ... pain. My

knee was swollen and discolored all weekend." I'm sorry about the crappy summer in a crappy year. But I'm glad your knee surgery went well.



Janice Gelb 🐾 *Trivial Pursuits* ★

"I guess I might as well get the big news out of the way in one fast gulp: I'm moving to Australia and marrying Stephen." No doubt this is all part of a plot to run for DUFF from both sides of the Pacific. But, sincerely, *mazel tov*. And we've already had a side discussion about the mechanics of keeping you in SFPA, which I'm happy about.

"Super Size Me — This documentary by Morgan Spurlock is an indictment of the fast food industry..." I liked his follow-on TV series *Thirty Days* where, beginning with him and his girlfriend trying to live on minimum wage for a month, he took some average Joe and put him in a different situation for a month. The farm boy football player from down-state Illinois living with the gay guy in San Francisco for a month. The mom trying to frighten her college-aged daughter into sobriety by getting drunk every night for a month. The ex-Marine moving to Dearborn, Michigan to live with a Muslim family for a month. All fascinating exercises in understanding.

"Jonathan Alter... June 13, 2005 *Newsweek*" Alter is exactly right. If Nixon were President today, he would have been given a pass, because the guys like Goldwater would've left the GOP. (Don't mind me, I'm grumpy and cynical.)

ct Lillian: "In case Jeff doesn't get around to providing you with the proofs about the Schiavo case that you are looking for, thought I'd do so: regarding witnesses about her wishes, her brother and sister-in-law's testimony were accepted in court,... Regarding sources about the Texas law Bush signed that gave the state the right to withdraw life support regardless of the patient's wishes..." Thanks for the exact references, Janice. See the Molly Ivins quote in my comment to Guy for the last mailing. The interesting thing about the article on the case deciding her wishes is that all the criticism of the husband was centered on his starting at "no, we won't pull the plug, in fact I'm going to sue for malpractice" and ending up at "I don't care what my in-laws think." In other words that he changed his mind. What the criticism completely ignored was that in the meantime, he had a chance to come to terms with the situation and the



doctors became convinced that she wouldn't recover.

ct Brown: "Don't know whether this will be upsetting or comforting but it was a few years before I got over this phenomenon you mention here, where you automatically think 'Oh, I have to tell my dad this' before you realize he's gone. For a long, long time I did that with my mom, thinking I had to remember to tell her something and occasionally dreaming that I'd forgotten to tell her something really important in my life." Yeah. I was walking down the stairs at my office on what would have been Liz's mom's 76th birthday. And I was thinking that under other circumstances — because she tended to spend her birthdays at our place — I'd have been going home early so we could take her out to dinner and we'd be getting cheesecake for desert. By the time I got down the three flights of stairs, I couldn't see for the tears. Liz had a much worse incident: she woke up from a drug-induced sleep after her knee surgery to the sound of the phone ringing and was convinced it was her mother calling to check up on her.

ct me: "So sorry to hear about the sudden death of your mother-in-law. You gave her a good sendoff here." Thanks. As I imply in the last comment, we're still both grieving.

☒ "I have an alarming ability to remember song lyrics. I often wish that those neurons were dedicated to something more useful, like geography, math, or economics, whose chips were never installed in my brain." Allie seems to be completely incapable of understanding math — we had the most extravagant screaming matches when I tried to help her with her trigonometry homework — but she took about four-and-a-half minutes to read the briefs, the appeals and Supreme Court rulings in *Griswold v Connecticut* and to understand, in detail, the salient points and the implications. Similarly, James doesn't always get grammar, but he can remember the plot of every movie he's ever seen back to the episodes of *Barney* he saw in preschool.

Sex is the mathematics urge sublimated.

— Michael C Reed

☒ "I am horrified at the seemingly unstoppable anointing of Hillary as the likely 2008 Demo candidate. (See this article . . .) I don't agree with most of it but one point he does make that I think is relevant is that there's probably nothing the Republican attack machine can come up with against her that the voters don't already know!" Unfortunately, having just seen the negative effect that Shrub had to the Republican candidate in the Virginia

governor's election, I can, off the top of my head, see two possible nasty outcomes of Mrs Clinton running: ① Bill campaigns for her, and the R's start launching attack ads against "only the second President to be impeached — and they were both Democrats" or ② Bill doesn't campaign and the R's launch attack ads about Hillary the ball-busting bitch whose husband doesn't even support her. And in any event, ③ some reporter is going to ask if she's been through menopause yet. (But see the comic spanning the top of the preceeding page.)

☒ *"Actually, I don't think PowerPoint is evil for individual conference presentations but it certainly has not performed well for Hugo ceremonies! It's probably the most intuitive Microsoft product I ever used, which probably means they stole it from someone :-)"* They actually bought it from some other company. But, it's user interface *requires* you to use the mouse, and it has controls and formatting that are subtly different from Word, which it otherwise resembles.

"No Need for Straw Liberals, Thank You" by Molly Ivins I'm amused that you and Liz both ran the same Molly column. I rather liked this column of hers dissecting Karl Rove's absurd statement that "liberals saw the savagery of the 9-11 attacks and wanted to prepare indictments and offer therapy and understanding for our attackers."

Randy Cleary ♡ *Avatar Press* ★

"Just a pulled groin muscle and a case of poison ivy (you would have thought I leamed my lesson from last year)." My office-mate a Interactive was on a hike one day and made the mistake of using an unidentified leaf when she had to squat in the woods. She was less than thrilled to discover the hard way that she had picked up a poison ivy leaf.

ct me: "Did you watch all the Easter Eggs in The Incredibles DVD? (Mmmm...I wonder what the politically correct phrase for Easter Eggs should be?)" No, but we watched enough of the other extras, and they were pretty much of a muchness after a while. (Politically correct phrase for Easter Egg? Passover Pachyderm?)

☒ *"So what do you think of the name 'Windows Vista'? Will the error screens say 'Hasta La Vista, Baby?'"* I thought it was a stupid choice, and I heard the "Hasta la Vista" joke before lunch the day the name was announced. I don't know why they didn't hire someone to make up a name like "Sony" or "Altimia" or "Exxon." But, then again, someday I still think of Windows 2000 as "NT5", Windows XP as "Whistler," and Windows XP service pack 2 as "the Security Push."

Gary Robe ♡ *Tennessee Trash* ★

"I'm not sure if the average Venezuelan knows it but their country has slid into dictatorship. The Chavez government now controls all the news media, and it shows." I appreciate your reports from the ground on South America, and you're providing important information on places like Venezuela and Columbia. But on Chavez, I've got to wonder if any of this would have happened if the Bush administration

hadn't tried to overthrow him with the connivance of the oil oligarchs. Not to mention Pat Robertson publicly calling for the CIA to murder him — like we did with Allende in Chile.



"The Robe Experience UK Excursion..." I'm amused that your one-page summary is remarkably similar to what I use for trips, though now I primarily use the data I've loaded into my Palm, with the reservation numbers cross-referenced to the dates and times.

mike weber ♫ *The Star in the Wind is the Word* ★

"A Silly Joke: A doctor, an architect, and a computer scientist were farguing about whose profession was the oldest. in the course of their arguments, they got all the way back to the Garden of Eden, whereupon the doctor said, 'The medical profession is clearly the oldest, because Eve was made from Adam's rib, as the story goes, and that was a simply incredible surgical feat.' The architect did not agree. He said, 'But if you look at the Garden itself, in the beginning there was chaos and void, and out of that the Garden and the world were created. So God must have been an architect.' The computer scientist, who'd listened carefully to all of this, then commented, 'Yes, but where do you think the chaos came from?'" In return: An astronomer, biologist, an engineer and a mathematician were crossing the border into Scotland from England on a train when they saw a field with a black sheep in it. The astronomer said, "Look—all sheep on Earth are black." The biologist said, "Look, in Scotland the sheep are black." The engineer replied, "No, in Scotland some of the sheep are black." The mathematician rolled his eyes to heaven and said, very patiently, "In Scotland, there exists at least one field, in which there is at least one sheep which is black on at least one side."

"I'm doing some housework type stuff and for backing music i've got Music Match running shuffle play of all of the MP3s i've got on the computer." Is Music Match any good? The version that came with some portable device we have was an ongoing annoyance until I disabled and uninstalled it.

Toni Reinhardt ♫ *Yngvi is a Louse* ★

"So in order to expiate my SFFA guilt, I will explain some reasons why I like CSI (the original, not the spin-offs, which I've been avoiding as I watch too much damn TV because of the TiVo anyway)" Yes: the original is the best. *CSI: Miami* is complete crap — David Caruso should be put out of our misery, and the Tony Scott-wannabe staff director with him. And *CSI: NY*, which has good acting is just more than I

want to take the time to watch. *"The puzzle-solving. While sometimes grisly, the show is not hard-boiled, but more my type of procedural detective story. I also like cozy mystery stories. These are not cozies."* Nope, they aren't cozies, but they are procedurals. And I find Gil Grissom to be just fascinating, from the first time we see that he's multidimensional, in the episode when he has a bad day and finishes it riding a roller coaster, through the wonderful episode "Slaves of Las Vegas" in which Grissom becomes friends with a dominatrix, and onward.

ct me: "Mallard Fillmore cartoon sounds like the study it's citing is flawed. What metric would you use?" For determining the bias of news sources? I wouldn't do the three-card monte thing that these guys do: Impute ADA ratings to think tanks based on how often Senators refer to them on the floor, and then impute the same ADA ratings to news organizations based on how often they refer to the the same think tanks — that's a statement about who's doing quotable research.

I'd start by using more than just the ADA ratings as the spectrum analyzer — there are other rankings. Then I'd measure how often politicians appeared in various news outlets. I might weight appearances in news stories and interviews and speaking or writing opinion pieces and appearance on "Crossfire"-type shows separately to see if they got the same rankings. For example, I'd *expect* to see a different result for the news stories and opinion pieces of the *WSJ*. I'd expect that less for the *Times*, in part because the *Times* has worked hard over the last 15 years to push it's op-ed pages to the right — though Judith Miller's uncritical printing of the administration's press releases has probably served to push the *Times'* news pages to the right, too. I might correct the numbers for the average rankings of the population of elected officials — for example, that would allow a little leeway when there's a Republican majority in the Senate. But I find suspect any method that classes Matt Drudge as a journalist and then ranks him smack in the middle of the road.

☒ *"Let's be specific: Clinton didn't get trashed for objecting to the war, he got trashed for draft dodging. Likewise, Kerry didn't get trashed for draft dodging, but his actions during and after his sendce. Bush didn't get trashed for draft dodging, but his actions during service."* But Bush got a bye, which is the point I'm making. The Democrats had to defend their actions, and Bush has consistently weaseled out of doing so. He still has only released portions of his National Guard record, while claiming he released it all — and one of his Texas staffers claimed parts of it were destroyed while Shrub was governor. Kerry made the mistake of saying he'd release his records, and then didn't. The press pushed on Kerry, but not on Bush.

That said, both positions — volunteering to fight, or staying back to protest to bring the war to an end — had merit. As Molly Ivins has pointed out, there were no good choices in those years. This is why I disagree

with you about Kerry: he fought in the war because he thought it was the right thing, even though he had misgivings. However, seeing the war up close caused more misgivings, and when he came back, he became active in trying to end it.

I have to noodle over this a little more, but Kurt Vonnegut was writing about *Slaughterhouse Five* in his new collection of essays, *A Man Without a Country*, and talked about the impression the war made on him when he was essentially still a child. That made me realize that while the Great War was fought between armies, the introduction of the strategic bomber in the late '30s was explicitly intended to attack civilians. Vonnegut and his cohort were the first citizen soldiers to see a war against civilians up close. They were so put off by the waste and horror, and episodes like the firebombing of Dresden, that they felt they had good reason to protest Vietnam.

☒ "RE:rcmts about media & Republicans influencing Dem's choice of Hillary as pres. nominee: are you saying the Democrats are so weak as to allow the other party to pick their candidates?" No, I think she's surrounded by media hype. "I think the media would find Hillary a meaty candidate, but are there any other nationally known Dems who are likely?" Off the top of my head, Gore, Kerry, Edwards, Harkin, Feingold, Gebhardt, possibly Obama or Feinstein.

ct Schlosser: "RE: Marriage: I'm still noodling over this, but it seems to me that the universally human practice of marriage is culturally about the orderly transfer of wealth between generations. All the other benefits — communal stability, love, etc — are fringe. The onset of reproductive technology has caused this culture to lose sight of the original purposes." I've got to think about that one myself.

(Meanwhile, Texas passed their second anti-gay marriage and anti-civil union proposition. Unfortunately, it was so badly constructed that it quite possibly makes every marriage illegal in Texas.)



George Wells ♀ **Poster Girl #1** ★

You don't get any quoted text back at you because all my comments to you are on the graphics. I suppose if I was being really anal retentive, I'd scan in the images of your pages and cut-and-paste the graphics into the zine, but I'm not.

Who's the young lady on your return address label on page 2? She looks vaguely familiar. And who's Allison-Mack.com, who you've got as "talented actress being attacked by alien crawling toward her neck" — yes, that is an absurd dress she's wearing.

I like the poster for the Nightmare Cafe: "Three souls caught between this world and the next. ... Proudly serving mankind with hot coffee and second chances 24 hours a day." It sounds like an interesting concept, but was the execution any good?

I laughed at the visual pun of whoever that actress is in a dress that enhances her cleavage with the caption "Filler from *Charmed*." *Charmed* is about nothing so much as cleavage, as nearly as I can tell.

Sheila Strickland ♀ **Revenant** ★

ct me: "Ct Gary Robe on the price of professional conventions vs. Worldcons. The annual Unix conference is \$900? Wow, and I thought the Public Library Association conference next year in Boston was pricey at \$200. I'd like to attend; but I'd probably have to pay most or all of my way." In egalitarian enterprises — of which the ones you and I are working for aren't necessarily good examples — the line employees go to conferences to improve their skills, rather than the managers going to schmooze. (That said, Microsoft is usually good about sending small armies to technical conferences. Even though my buddy Bruce got waved off of going to give an invited talk in Spain last week because his department had overspent its travel budget by a factor of three in the first two months of the fiscal year.)

ct Cleary: "Las Vegas sounds like one of those experiences I'd like to sample once. I don't gamble and most Vegas-style shows don't interest me; but the Star Trek experience sounds like fun." See my comments on this to Eve, earlier. For my purposes of "warm place to hunker down in a big hotel room and read and spend time with my wife for a long weekend in the winter" Las Vegas fits the bill.



Stand by for *Homer* which I've started work on, which should appear later in the mailing, and which (*mirable dictu*) contains some current comments. Huzzah!

Art Credits

Front cover: Marge Simpson from the web, with artificially-enhanced hair to better fit the aspect ratio of the cover. Inside front: while I'm doing a color cover, a Matt Groening cartoon for *Maxim* magazine. Page 1: from <http://sunearth.gsfc.nasa.gov/eclipse/>. Page 3: yet another bit of Internet ephemera. Page 5: *User Friendly* from 6 Feb. Page 9: the first text leaf of the Doves Press Bible, from the web page of the University of Florida Rare Book Collection. Page 19: Albert Einstein riding a bicycle for the first time, outside the Caltech faculty club, 1933. Page 25: *Arlo & Janice* from 14 Sep. Page 26: *Rhymes with Orange* from 7 Nov. Page 29: *Non sequitur* from 24 Oct. Page 31: Ben Sargent in *The Austin American-Statesman* from 3 Nov — unfortunately, this ballot measure seems to have passed in Texas. Back cover: Bart Simpson from the web.

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Caught-Up-o-Meter

