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Weasel Crossing is the sixtieth SFPA-zine (volume two, number thirty-seven) from Jeffrey Copeland. It is intended for mailing number 230 of the Southern Fandom Press Alliance and selected others. The text of *Weasel Crossing* was composed using the T_EX typesetting system, and is set in 11-point Palatino. It was published by Bywater Press, 3243 165th Ave, SE, Bellevue, Washington 98008, on 28 November 2002.



As much as I try to avoid talking about our family's medical problems, it's worth mentioning that Liz spent a couple of days in the hospital in November, and will probably do so again in January. It turns out that when she was visiting the doctor for something else, she was asked "so, how painful are those kidney stones?" The logical response was "what kidney stones?" "Oh, these four kidney stones, two on each side, the size of goose eggs, that are completely blocking one and almost completely blocking the other kidney."

Non-invasive techniques showed just how non-cooperative Liz's kidneys were going to be, and forced her to go under the knife. I'll let Liz fill you in on all the gory details. Suffice it to say that her left kidney seems to be happily functioning now, and we expect she'll get the right one fixed in mid-January.

This has been abnormally stressful on a number of levels for each member of the family. We'll get through this, though, and Liz should be a fair bit healthier afterward.

Voter News Service, the statistical consortium owned by the television networks, didn't release their projections on the evening of the mid-term election, because they were "dissatisfied" with their exit poll analysis. CNN said: "the data it was collecting from exit polls was 'not being properly analyzed by the organization's new computer system' developed after the 2000 election debacle when various news organizations projected Democrat Al Gore the winner, then retreated from that statement." The *New York Times* reported the day before the election: "Republicans believed that the networks' initial mistaken declaration that Al Gore had won Florida, before the closing of all state polls, prompted some supporters of George W. Bush to stay home." The *Times* also quoted Ken Johnson, a staff member for House Committee on Energy and Commerce, as saying, "We fully expect the networks to live up to their promises not to call an election in any given state until all the precincts close."

So what's wrong with this picture?

First off, no network declared that Al Gore had won Florida until *after* the polls had closed on the west coast. Anyone who claimed otherwise was simply lying. Period. End of subject. Why the obfuscation?

Second off, the networks' prediction, when it came, was based on information that *was* correct. The question Voter News Service asked was essentially, "who did you go into the voting booth to vote for?" The answer to that question in Florida was "Gore" by a large margin. That answer was not incorrect, because who people *thought* they voted for and who they *actually* marked their ballots for were not always the same. Thus did Pat Buchanan, who praised Adolf Hitler, carry a precinct composed entirely of a Jewish retirement home.

So on election night in 2000, Voter News Service committed two errors, which compounded one another.

The first problem was that they backed down from their original statistical analysis. The second problem was that they backed down from their original statistical analysis because they'd hired a cousin of the governor of Florida and one of the presidential candidates, and the cousin told them that their numbers were wrong. I understand that the flip-flop from "based on exit polls we believe Al Gore won Florida" to "George W Bush's cousin says he won Florida, so we're changing what we said" was embarrassing to them, but that's what sometimes happens in reporting spot news. Particularly when (in the second case) the story is being dictated.


If they're now "fixing up" their models to sweep the differences they detected under the rug and restore a phony "confidence" around the election results, then they're failing to serve the public and their subscribers. VNS were absolutely correct in their numbers two years ago, and they should be proud of that: it drew attention to a much more serious problem. Let's fix the real problem instead of shooting the messenger.


Care should be taken in all this process. An efficient and a successful administration manifests itself in small as in great matters.


— Winston Churchill, memorandum of 8 Aug 1943 on operational codenames


*q*uick sidebar: Our only president got made out to be a hero for taking a few seats in the Senate in these mid-term elections. I'd suggest that he's actually done what Bill Clinton did: He's got a reasonable grasp of politics on the ground. He meets people, he talks to them, he makes them feel like he cares about their problems. At Lee Atwater's knee, and by being the hatchet man for his father (as opposed to his brother Neil, the bagman), Shrub came into contact with every sorry sumbitch county committeeman in the country. And they all remember him. This contact with the grass roots of the party is part of the reason that Clinton founded the Democratic Leadership Council. However it's a mental Rolodex that Gore never managed to build for himself, and McCain can't because he's pissed off enough GOP aparatchiks. In fact, I'd argue that at the moment, there's nobody in the democratic party who actually has that kind of contact with the party-on-the-ground. Without it, there's no hope of taking back the White House in 2004, and barely a prayer of winning back control of either house of Congress.

Reviews

 *The Decline of the American Empire* is a delightful French-Canadian comedy covering an evening in the life of some members of the history faculty at Laval University. The men cook dinner and chat about their sex lives, while the women are at the gym, chatting about their sex lives. Then they join up over the dinner, and talk about history and obliquely about their sex lives. All very entertaining, in a very Gallic way. (Damn! I wish my French was more serviceable — or at least my knowledge of French colloquialisms was better. I'm sure the subtitles missed a lot of the subtlety of the idiomatic Québécois.)

 *Proudly Serving My Corporate Masters* is Alan Barr's book about being a developer at Microsoft for a decade. It was originally recommended to me because it has a long discussion of the oddnesses of the Microsoft interview process. (Indeed, I had a discussion at lunch last week with my manager³ at which he asserted Microsoft's interview process is the most demanding of any company in the world; I've been through it twice, and I'm not convinced it's true.) Barr screws up a lot of details, glosses over some of Microsoft's less savory moments, pretty much fails to understand why Linux is interesting, discounts the reasons for the importance of web browsers and standards, advocates unrestrained profusion of application program interfaces, and completely misses many reasons why the Department of Justice might want to sue Microsoft. But then, maybe we need to wait for version 3 of the book for the bugs to stabilize.


 *The Panic Room* is just a great movie. An excellent thriller, in which a divorced mother and her daughter move into a new house, and have burglars the first night. There is not a stupid character in this movie — though one of them is crazy — which is part of what makes it so thrilling. Each character has a goal and works to achieve it. The mom works to protect the daughter. The daughter thinks on her feet. The burglars are organized, and readjust their plan on the fly when they find out the “empty” house is occupied.

 I worked my way through all but two of the stories in *The Stories of Your Life* by Ted Chiang. As Arthur suggested, there is a bit of Ellison going on here. (You'll recall one of the useful Hlavaty observations is that in any collection of Harlan Ellison's short stories, there is one brilliant story, several good stories, and one story for which he should be lynched. The problem is that each reader categorizes the results differently.)

I'm not sure the title story, “The Story of Your Life”, rises to brilliant, but it is very good. Seth Goldberg's favorite SF novel was *Timescape* because, he said, it


was a true story of how real scientists worked. I always enjoyed the novel because it talked about the connectedness of everything in the timestream. Thus, too, is the dichotomy of "Story of Your Life." I still think that "Hell is the Absence of God" is the story for which he should be lynched. Similarly, I'd said some uncomplimentary things about "72 Letters" last year. I still stand by some of them: the story takes a while to get moving, and in the end is an exploration of politics and eugenics. Nonetheless, I have a more favorable impression on forcing my way through to the end.

What I conclude from this exercise is that Chiang is not light, easy reading. That's fine, but frankly (and see the following note) what I want from my science fiction at this point is escapism and entertainment.

 Here's a non-review in the review section, so bear with me for a moment. I want to expand a little on that statement above that "what I want from my science fiction at this point is escapism and entertainment."

Certainly, I read SF for the possibilities of the future, for a notion of what life *might* be like — or might *have* been like. I find the world-building of Catherine Asaro to be fascinating. I enjoy the sense of wonder in Clarke's space opera and Niven's galactic empires. I delight in Connie Willis' sense of the absurd.

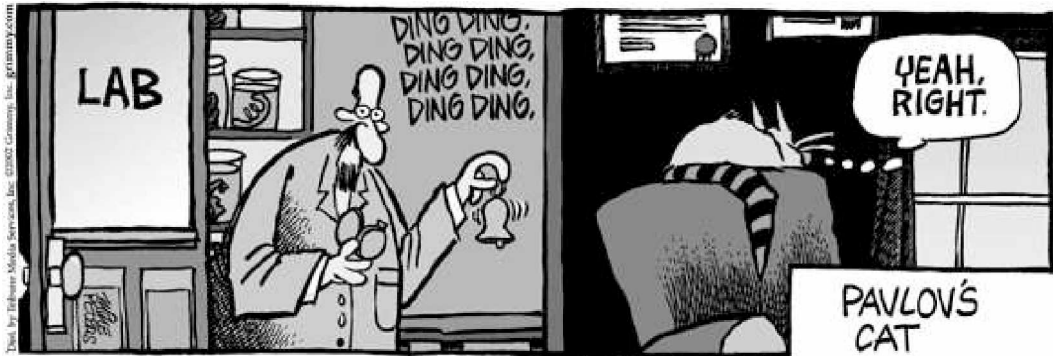
However, as hectic as life is lately, the last thing I want is for my entertainment reading to devolve into think pieces. I want to be amused. I want to be tickled. I'm willing to work through interesting ideas, but I'm not up to reading *Finnegan's Wake* right now. Unfortunately, part of why Ted Chiang is setting off my curmudgeon reaction is that his fiction requires a certain amount of emotional and intellectual investment which I've been unwilling to make for fun in the past year or more.

 A couple of years ago Callie Khouri burst upon the scene with the screenplay to a light comedy entitled *Thelma and Louise*. Now she's written and directed *The Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood* from Rebecca Wells' novel of the same name and its companion *Little Altars Everywhere*. The story of the painful childhood of our hero, Siddalee Walker, is recounted through flashbacks and flashbacks of flashbacks, through her eyes and the eyes of her mother's life-long friends. Some of Siddalee's childhood was simply too painful for me to watch, but in the end, we find out the foolish, prideful, antiquated, stupid reasons for her most painful episode of abandonment. It's actually a nice movie, even if the plot gets wrapped up a little too neatly with just a little too much forgiveness on only a little bit of understanding. In part, it's enjoyable because it has this wonderful view through time, in which Siddalee is played by Sandra Bullock and Allison Bertolino, and her mother is played by Ellen Burstyn and Ashley Judd and Caitlin Wachs. If George Cukor was directing this movie, the characters played by James Garner and Angus

MacFadyen would never have appeared on screen.

🦊 *The Tuxedo* is this month's Jackie Chan movie. Chan in a magical dinner jacket. Jennifer Love Hewitt in a succession of dresses with anti-gravity support. The usual plot to subjugate the world is defeated by kung fu fighting. Suitable for twelve-year-olds and their fathers.

🦊 *Santa Clause 2* follows from the previous Tim Allen movie but without quite the same sense of discovery and fun. As nearly as I can tell, Allen literally phoned in half his role.



🦊 *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* is the first of the must-see series entries this winter. It didn't follow the text as slavishly, and that was probably to the good. Our heroes do good and save the day again. Good acting all around — Robbie Coltrane is just bloody marvelous again, Richard Harris is appropriately grandfatherly and stern as needed (and will be missed), Maggie Smith is still wonderful as house mother and Professor McGonigle. Don't take any children who are arachnophobic, though.

🦊 *Die Another Day* is a James Bond movie. Do not expect Shakespeare. Do not expect John Cleese to be explicitly funny. Do not expect Judi Dench to turn in an Oscar-winning performance. Do not expect Pierce Brosnan to say "oh, what the hell, give me a mai tai." Do expect things to blow up. Do expect some very cool gadgets, including a very nice Aston-Martin. Do expect Halle Berry to be amazingly hot, even in Iceland. And do expect a certain edge that brings the tone closer to the one the characters had during Timothy Dalton's reign as Bond.

🦊 *Put a Lid On It* is this year's Donald Westlake novel. Some guys want to commit a political burglary because the president has violated some laws in the interests of doing an oil deal, and he's running for re-election, and his

opponents know about it, and his campaign needs to commit a burglary, they find a real burglar to do it. Not as guffaw-producing as a Dortmunder novel, but that's okay: it's still worth a read.

Mailing Comments on SFPA 228

Still behind in mailing comments. Pooh and bother. And with everything else going on in our lives, it only looks like I'm going to manage only one mailing worth of comments again. At least I'm not falling further behind.

Toni Reinhardt ✉ *Yngvi is a Louse* ♣

ct Ackerman: "Thanks, too, for the book reviews. I'll have to check out Robert Crais." I've got some of his stuff in my bedside pile, which is getting pretty high again. I'm going to try to make a dent by taking Sheffield's MacAndrew stories, Tim Power's *Declare*, and Crichton's *Timeline* as reading for Christmas — along with SFPA, of course.

ct Brooks: "Reyrcmt Lynch about being turned down for giving blood: If you told them you had thalassemia minor (like your nephew Joe and I have), you would have been turned down." So, I'm trying to figure out if thalassemia minor is a blood condition or a geographic feature in the Horn of Africa.

✉ "Fascinating reading about the process in Naval Proceedings, how Congress will give the Navy more than it asks for for pet pork projects, but cut whole programs the Navy thinks are really important." Well, how do you think there got to be a major naval base in West Virginia? Admiral, er, Senator Robert Byrd might have something to do with it. Of course, the greater DoD lunacy was "home porting", in which every congressional district had some military installation, thus insuring that every congressman had incentive to vote in favor of appropriations bills, lest their district lose the federal largesse. Of course, now that we're trying to run the military on a budget, all hell is breaking loose as bases get closed. (Sausages and legislation...)

ct Cleary: "See you at DSC! Send more art!" You might contact former member Trinlay Khadro for art, too: trin63@dias.net

ct me/Travelogue: "Nice teasing reference to '12/17ths' of a dirty haiku — are we not going to see it?" Short answer: No. Some people are willing to widely share the smut they write, but I write for an audience of one,* and the installments are rare.

ct me/Pepé le Pew: "Your quotation from Ender's Game, and the character's explanation of why he kicked his foe after he'd won the battle, also serves to illustrate the speciousness of the arguments of people who want Israel to use 'appropriate' force to retaliate against the Palestinian terrorists." I'm not sure what "appropriate" is in the case of Palestinian terrorists. ✉ "It's the

* Not entirely true: I also store roses for winter, which was part of what I was doing on that trip.

Palestinians who are breaking the rules first — no doubt because they think they have to.” This is a case of both sides being twits in some regards. But, again, the Palestinians could have had what they wanted at nearly any time since the Oslo accords if they’d just stop attacking Israeli citizens. It’s not really clear to me if Arafat is talking out of both sides of his mouth or if he’s powerless. If the Palestinians had any sense at all, they’d adopt the Gandhi approach, and start non-violent sit-ins. (Though that’s the jumping off point in the novel *Sum of All Fears*; since Muslim terrorists seem to get their ideas from Tom Clancy, maybe they’ll steal this one, too.) By the same token, Ariel Sharon has done his best to inflame the situation, which isn’t helping — going to Temple Mount for a photo op, on a Friday, when Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat were at Camp David having their feet held to the fire by Bill Clinton seems to be pushing the boundaries a little. The net effect of Israeli attacks dismantling the Palestinian Authority is going to be the rise of community warlords again. In other words, instead of having a single Palestinian body to negotiate with, they’ll have to come to separate terms with a number of local militias. This may not be what they intended.

Today the terrorists have the will to destroy us, but they do not have the power. There is no doubt that we have the power to crush them. Now we must also show that we have the will to do just that. Once any part of the terror network acquires nuclear weapons, this equation will fundamentally change, and with it the course of human affairs. This is the historical imperative that now confronts all of us.

— Former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to the United States House of Representatives Government Reform Committee, 20 Sept 2001

☞ *“Reyrcmt Robe and confidence in our National Guard: Probably better trained than Indian armed guards, but still, remember Kent State? On the other hand, they probably don’t actually have bullets in their guns, anyway...”* Well, I’m almost certain the Indian armed guards don’t carry loaded weapons. But I’m reassured that the airport guards don’t either. It’s been six months since I’ve been on an airplane, but I’ve been to the airport a couple of times since then, and the guards were clearly a joke by then. (When Liz and I went to Las Vegas last October they clearly were *not* joking. At that point, they were taking the job seriously, even though to any thoughtful observer knew they were providing Nerf Security.) I’m getting the sense that we’ve gone off on this mad tear to guard against the *last* attack, without even understanding what the last attack consisted of: it wasn’t tweezers or crochet hooks or box-cutters that caused the attack, but the will to use them to capture an airplane and use *it* as an offensive weapon. The Transportation Security Agency is the Maginot Line of the War on

Terrorism.

☞ “This is a question for Allie & Liz and the rest of the gals of SFFA: Am I right in thinking that the guy who played Anakin in Attack of the Clones was reasonable eye-candy if you kind of squinted, but he couldn’t act his way out of a flimsy paper bag?” I got definite hints of menace from him a couple of times, though it may only have been gas. Natalie Portman, on the other hand — like Claire Danes — is both watchable and can act.

☞ “Also reyrmt Guy I see you are running for OE again: Good! I want to see a return to those spiffy color OOs, like Liz did, though.” We’ll see what we can do: since I did the original design of those color mastheads for Liz, I’ll have to see if I can improve on them, or if we’ll just fall back on the same model.

☞ “I like the idea of the SFFA Model Rocket contest! Are we voting on esthetics or duration of flight time? Both? And should we do this with a prescribed list of ingredients?” No, I think there should be a proscribed list of ingredients: no monkeys as passengers, thrust under five hundred thousand pounds, no warheads, no help from escaped Nazi rocket scientists.

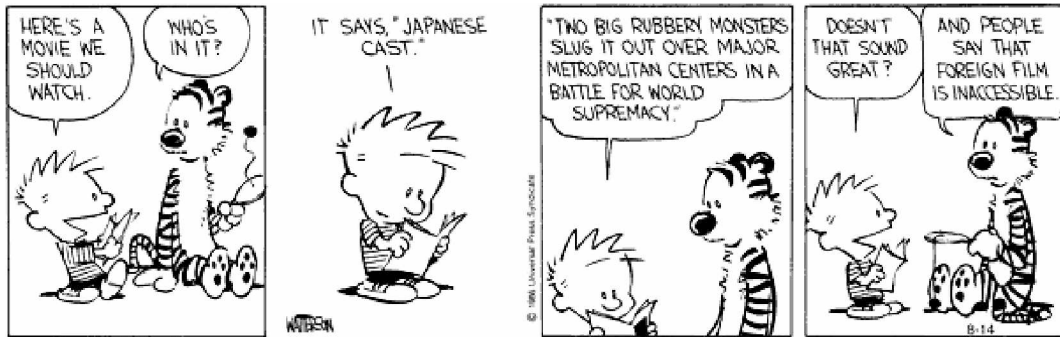
ct Gelb: “Enjoyed the ‘completely satisfied with the size of my penis’ cartoon on page 8. I keep getting the spam e-mail about penis enlargement, too! Sheesh!” Y’know, at one point, for internal corporate reasons, I had to get a Hotmail address, even though I never used it for e-mail. About once a month, I check to see if there are any messages, and though I’ve never given out the address I still get about ten messages a day, and none of them have ever been anything but spam. My favorite back-to-back pair, though, has to be “increase your breast size,” followed immediately by “increase your penis length.” ~~Oh, wait, those were addressed to Myra Breckinridge.~~

ct Larson: “Also, you ask why Israel needs a standing army to defend themselves from the Palestinians...” Why does Switzerland need a standing army? Which, like Israel’s, is mostly populated by reservists. (There’s a probably-apocryphal story about a meeting between the Swiss foreign minister and Hermann Göring in about 1940. Göring asked “what would you do if we put a million men across your border tomorrow morning?” “We’d have a million men ready to meet them.” “And if we put two million men across your border?” “Each of our men would have to fire twice.” It’s become clear recently that it was financial favoritism rather than threats and bravado which saved Switzerland from the Third Reich, but it’s a nice story anyway.)

(On a marginally related note, let me recommend John McPhee’s *La Place de la Concorde Suisse*, which is his book about Swiss Army reservists, and was the first McPhee I read.)

ct *Things I’d Like to See Dept*: “English subtitles on those Spanish language TV channels: they always look like the most interesting ones when I’m flicking through with the remote. I suppose I could just learn Spanish...” I had the same reaction when I was in India: the Hindi movies on

television were just amazingly fun to watch, with magnificent production numbers and lots of singing, and duets between the boy and the girl, and lots of dancing, and a zillion chorus boys and girls, and clear sexual sparks about to ignite... but I never understood a single word of any of them. (Though I was, as I may have mentioned, remarkably pissed off one evening: they started showing *Entrapment*, which is a lot of fun, and then after 45 minutes, cut to a Telugu news program, and just dropped the movie — just about the time Connery and Zeta-Jones are committing their first burglary together.



ct Schlosser: *"REyrcmt Guy: I liked your explanation of the Nigerian scam."* I've started getting a fascinating variant of the Nigerian scam spam: the Rhodesian rancher scam. "We're being forced off the land by the corrupt government of Rhodesia, even though we've ranched this land for years. However, even though we're subsistence ranchers, we've managed to get access to five hundred million dollars US, which we plan to live on in exile, and all we need. . ."

"REyrcmt Dengrove on shortage-glut cycles in job skills: On planes I've sat next to several older guys who used to work on nuclear plants, but have moved on to other sorts. In another 10 years or so, we'll have lost that field completely, and if we ever want to build another one, we'll be starting from scratch or using foreign engineers." Oh, great, the guys running our nuclear power plants are going to be trained at the Indian Institute of Technology and the Moscow Nuclear Science Institute. That gives me a warm fuzzy feeling, and where are my iodine pills? But, like the space program, if you don't build things, you lose the ability to build things. I'm afraid we've blown the window for putting a colony on Mars or in the asteroid belt. I hope the cockroaches like running the planet after our stupidity kills us off.

ct *Things that Tick Me Cjf Dept: "The phrase 'In control of their own destiny.' It should be banned to all sports announcers."* Actually, Toni, I'd like to see sports announcers banned. Like political commentators, they add nothing to the picture, and merely breath air that could be reserved by useful people.

Ned Brooks ☒ *The New Port News* ♣

ct Dengrove: "I don't know enough about Jewish theology to evaluate the ideas in Abraham Ettleson's Lewis Carroll's 'Through the Looking Glass' Decoded." This whole book sounds loopy. But then, I think that about any book that seeks to explain the secret messages in earlier works that were left by space aliens, God, Bavarian Illuminati, or Francis Bacon.

ct Lynch: "A recent program on the Discovery channel seemed to say that carbon dioxide in the air is continually lost to the oceans, and that the only thing that keeps up the level of CO₂ in the Earth's atmosphere is vulcanism." I think that fails to explain the ozone holes, which are fairly recent.

ct Lillian: "I always assumed that whatever went through the apa got page credit in the Box Scores, but I have no idea whether all the statisticians have counted franked material. Certainly whatever of Challenger goes through should be counted." That's been my thought, but Gary's keeping the box scores and gets to set the criteria. In the absence of a *Spiritus*, I'd count *Challenger* toward Guy's minac; in the absence of a regular zine from me, I wouldn't count my quotes collections against minac, though. That's the basis on which I suggested Gary's criteria were wrong.

Arthur Hlavaty ☒ *Derogatory Reference* ♣

"There were many more of the usual crew [at the ICFA], such as Fiona Kelleghan (whose sf criticism and appearance in a bathing suit — both excellent — were noted in the Washington Post)." I finally found a picture of her on the web, and she's moderately cute. However, that article in the *Post* by Michael Dirda about last year's ICFA was completely over the top about her in the bathing suit.

Usual Suspects ☒ *Moodling, Canoodling and Oogling* ♣

I finally noticed this year's Fifi on the back cover of this one-shot. I don't know if anyone read the tag, but she was from a collection of cow sculptures done as urban art around Houston, in the same vein as the animal sculpture in Chicago and Seattle and Washington. The thing that tickled me was that Fifi was sponsored by Mr and Mrs Ken Lay, so this is actually the Enron Fifi. ~~At least we didn't pay \$175 for a Fifi that's now delisted on the exchange.~~

Rich Lynch ☒ *Variations on a Theme* ♣

"In my ten-minute stroll from Italy to Japan [at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival], I saw and experienced some pretty interesting things going on that were show-casing the various cultures — stone carvers from Tuva (a part of Russia bordering Mongolia)... " The subtitle of the last book of essays Dick Feynman wrote and Ralph Leighton edited was "Tuva or Bust!" Feynman was fascinated by a place without any vowels in the name of its capital city, where they do throat singing, and whose language is unspoken in the western hemisphere. He was in the process of getting a visa to visit when he died.

ct me: "On temperature scales: 'I seem to remember that [water freezes at 32° and boils at 212° in the Fahrenheit temperature scale] because zero was actually the freezing point of some specific formulation of brine and 200 was the boiling point for the same mixture.' And just what was your grade in Chemistry? (Brines have higher boiling points than pure water, not lower.)" Um. Oops.

ct Weisskopf: "It is bullshit to claim, as Pat has, that politics come before family. If it was the other way around, with an American child held by relatives in Cuba, Pat would be screaming the loudest for us to Do Something to get the child back to his or her parents. In fact, dozens of such situations do exist, where a child was taken out of the US by one parent against the wishes of the other. Pat, being a lawyer, should not have to be reminded about the legal precedents involved." Harken back a couple of years to a nasty custody case where the mom had consistently refused to allow the father to see the kids at all, going so far as to not produce the kids under court order. She got bunged up for contempt for something like eighteen months. She'd shuffled the kids off to live with her mother and stepfather in New Zealand to keep them away from their dad. Now, the fact that she'd lied under oath, accusing the father of abusing the kids was apparently irrelevant. Apparently the fact that she'd violated the divorce agreement and custody agreement was irrelevant. What mattered, and finally made her case important, and got her sprung from jail due to a change in the federal contempt laws customized for her case, was that her boyfriend was a federal judge.

So here's the precedent, apparently: if you're a mom, and you have a well-connected boyfriend, you can get Congress to pass a private law to override the custody agreement with your ex-husband.



Richard Dengrove ✉ *Twygdrasil and Treehouse Gazette* ✉

ct Hughes: "Don't we already in effect have national identity cards? The picture ID with the Social Security number seems to be it." I, for one, don't have a picture ID with my social security number. I believe it's a violation of federal law for my state drivers license bureau to ask for my social security number and I've always refused to give it to them.

ct me: "Get a child at six and you have him for life? Why do so many people I know rebel then?" I think this is actually a case of what we used to call "hearts-and-minds." If you get the child's attention and get him to sign up for your program with all his heart at age six, then you've got him. Here's the counter question, though: of those kids indoctrinated in the Saudi-sponsored Wahabi fundamentalist Muslim schools in Pakistan, how many become active terrorists? In the example I was citing, of the Seattle-area school kids, engaging the kids in the program *reduced* drug use and pregnancy, but didn't eliminate them.

☞ *"Tommy Franks making private deals so Arab Taliban members can get smuggled into Pakistan? I would prefer to believe it's just incompetence on his part."* The problem, of course, is that the deal was to repatriate some Pakistani Taliban members in return for which Pakistan would continue to cooperate. Surprise, surprise, suddenly all sorts of Saudis and Kuwaitis were flowing across the border.

ct quotes, vol 3: "The 'Yes Virginia, There is a Santa Claus' quote is sentimental slop. And it's 100% true. We need faith and we need dreams." On the other hand, I saw a repost of a humor piece the other day, which began something like "Dear Arkham Advertiser, Is there really a Cthuhlu?" So we need faith, we need dreams, and we need the occasional elder gods rising from the briny depths to suck the souls out of every living creature.

☞ *"I go farther than Molly Ivins. It's not that government is intrinsically good, bad or neutral; it's that it's good or bad depending upon the people who make it up."* So, we have a government of men, not laws, eh? Or perhaps a government of laws that are unevenly enforced by unpredictable people.

We are a nation of laws, poorly written and randomly enforced.
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— Frank Zappa

Sheila Strickland ☒ Murphy Makes a House Call ☛

"I was on my way to a really nice zine this time around. I had finished my DSC report, worked my way through the mailing comments; and was just about to finish.... Put the disk back in and the computer refuses to read it." Ouch. That's no fun. It's happened to me, too. "How a disk manages to get itself damaged over the course of less than an hour I don't know." It's actually pretty simple. Windows doesn't have an unmount command. That is, there's no way to say "I'm taking the removable disk out now, so finish up writing to it and make sure all the files are closed." In later versions, with things like removable USB readers for the storage card from your camera, there are ways to do it — "click here to safely unmount the removable media" — but those are hard to find, and seem (from customer reports) to be mostly ignored.

David Schlosser ☒ *Peter, Pan and Merry* ♣

ct me: "It'd been a while since I read *Sum of All Fears*, but my biggest problem with the story was that I had to try and reconcile a roughly Red October-aged Jack Ryan with a plot from much later in his life. Overall though I don't think they did that much damage to the plot." The thing that really appealed to me about the film of *Sum* is that it was a completely different story with the same plot, raising many of the same core moral issues, which I really liked.

☞ "Pardon, but there are no new *kibbutzim* on the West Bank. Settlements/communities, yes. *Kibbutzim*, no." Quite so. Sorry for my confusion. But still, continuing to put settlements on the West Bank can't help but be provocative. That the settlers are picking fights with the Palestinians — and vice versa, to be sure — isn't making the matter any better. Under any code of civilized behavior, using farmers out picking their olive crop for target practice should condemn you to the seventh circle of hell. As should shooting at people on their way to Friday evening services, and then ambushing the soldiers coming to their rescue.

ct natter: "Well the highlight was at the end when we took a long weekend and traveled down to the Bay Area to spend some time at the Oakland estate of Elizabeth Jenkins and Philip Saunders." Boy, I miss Elizabeth and Philip. I wish we were all healthy enough and solvent enough to bop down to Oakland for Thanksgiving with them. Terrorists prevented us from having Thanksgiving together last year. Liz's kidneys have prevented us from doing it this year.

Steve Hughes ☒ *Adventures in Graphic Design* ♣

This is really cool. I understand why the basic image is doubled, but why is there a double of the image of the hotel within the double? Is it actually the little images of the hotel that are the stereoscopic ones, or the whole card, with the convention information in 3D?

Even if a man's whole day be spent as a servant of an industrial concern, in his spare time he will make something, if only a window box flower garden.

— Eric Gill, *An Essay on Typography*

Tom Feller ☒ *Frequent Flyer* ♣

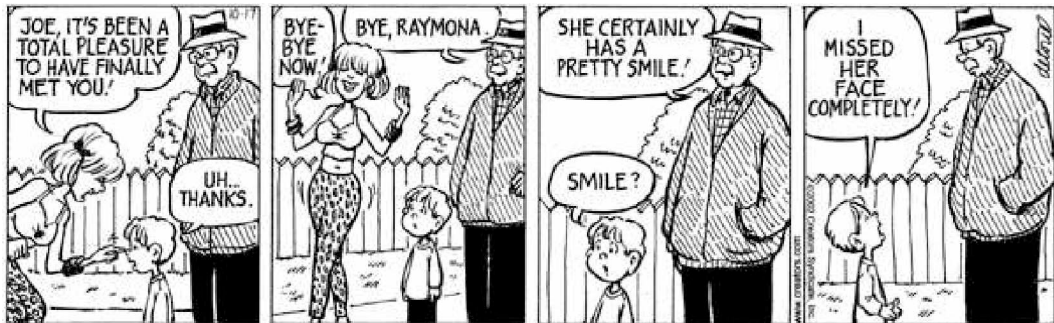
"What I did not like about *Proof of Life* is that Russell Crowe's character says at the beginning that *Kidnapping & Ransom* specialists don't do rescues and then proceeds to rescue the kidnapee..." The mood of *Proof of Life* owes quite a bit to Dick Francis' *The Danger*. Of course it helped that Russell Crowe has a range of facial expressions from grimace to grimace. That served him well in *LA Confidential*, but in anything that requires a modicum of emotional interaction, why bother? That is: in *Proof* I had trouble with him as the romantic lead, but not as the rough-and-tumble mercenary.

me ☒ **All The Mailing Comments That Fit in Print** ♡

The colophon says, “The original of this publication was printed on 24 July 2002 and it was reproduced by the Xerographic process.” That hasn’t been true for a while: I’ve gone back to printing the whole press run directly rather than photocopying an original.

ct Lillian: “Britney Spears — side bet: Playboy spread within two years...” Entertainingly enough, last time I was in the grocery store, one of the tabloids had a front page article saying that since she broke up with the boy band, she’s been hanging out with a notorious lesbian porn movie star, whose name escapes me at the moment. That suggests that she’d be in *Penthouse* if it still existed. (A quick web cruise reports the porn star is Jenna Jameson. Hmm, elsewhere there appears to be photographic documentation of what Ms Jameson looks like, too. And thanks to what I’ve learned in SFPA, I can say for sure that *those* are silicone.)

(Speaking of *Penthouse*, Guy, who was it who ran one of the infamous Vanessa Williams *Penthouse* photos as a SFPA cover? You remember: the one with the caption “Now Available: the Miss America Duck Call.” Like Alan Hutchinson’s cartoon of Beanie and Cecil in flagrante — “I’m a comin’ Beanie Boy!” — this one’s warped my worldview.)



Gary Brown ☒ **Oblivion** ♡

ct Correction: “I misspoke last issue. When describing the circumstances surrounding a Don Wright editorial cartoon that had a man sitting in an office calling civil libertarians as a plane was about to smack into the building. I said that it was drawn when a group of lawyers was preparing to sue the airlines, airport security systems and such. Nope. Not even close. I was convinced that was it, but it was only my mind playing tricks. Actually, it was drawn when a fuss was kicked up about the treatment of prisoners from Afghanistan down in Guantanamo Bay. It inferred, of course, that the prisoners are being given the benefits of our legal system, when those in the World Trade Center and the Pentagon did not.” Then Don uncharacteristically missed one: ‘cause those guys sure as hell don’t have legal protection. It took direct intercession from the Crown Prince of Kuwait to Shrub, his patron’s son, to get the imprisoned Kuwaitis released —

even though the DoD freely and publicly admitted that the Kuwaitis were guilty of nothing but being in Afghanistan. The *British* think that we're violating the rights of those prisoners, which would be about the first thing Tony Blair's government has disagreed with Shrub on since September 11th.

ct David Berg drawing: This simple sketch of Berg's is wonderful. I think it's really cool that you've been accosting these comic artists for years and getting them to do stuff like this. And I think it's really great that you're sharing the fruits of the effort with us.

ct Southerner: "Could you or Steve tell us what it would take to get a Web site up and running? What type of initial effort would it require and weekly or monthly maintenance? And the cost? I would love it if we had a site to post information and eventually list the history of this apa, but as I understand, it would take a good deal of work to begin and maintain. In your thinking, is it just too much right now for a couple of people to handle?" First off, we *have* a web site up and running, with current information and immediately past contents. It's just not widely publicized or in a very public place. There are two-and-a-half outstanding issues, I think.

① *Getting the current contents moved to the web address Steve Hughes was kind enough to obtain for us, southernfandom.com.* That issue is for me and Steve to work out, and both of us have projects which have higher pull on our time. (In my case, Hugo software and trying to develop some contacts in the local Unix community is taking the time I'd otherwise devote to the project; Steve's being distracted by some writing projects and getting their house finished.)

② *What information we want out on the web and* ③ *who's going to put it together.* I'm of two minds about pushing a vast amount of historical data to the web site. I've got some very nice copies of early SFPA OOs and other ephemera from Toni and Guy, but I don't think it's appropriate to put all of it on the web — it's graphically intense (read: will take a long time to download the page), and unless you know the names involved, it's not of immediate interest. We can be justifiably proud of our heritage, but like, say, the Jesuits, making that relevant to the current state of the universe is a challenge. Guy drafted some historical text a while back, which I think is utterly appropriate for the purpose. (I've used a modified version of it on the existing pages.)

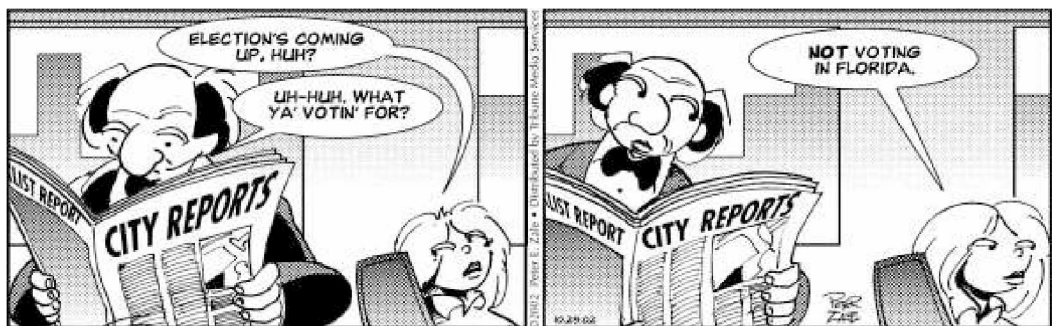
As for who, my first goal was to get the current information available to the membership. I think we're there. Once we've gotten that available to the world-at-large, we can tune it a little to make it accessible to non-members, and I'll tap folks to help add additional historical and recruiting information.

What other questions did you ask? Oh, maintenance and costs. As for cost, web space itself is probably a no-cost item, the domain registration is about \$15 a year (depending on who we register with), and maintenance costs us nothing if we're doing it ourselves. Maintenance itself is sort of a non-issue until we have

something larger to maintain. Doing regular updates to the existing site on the same schedule as the mailings seems to not be too big a deal at the moment. As the site develops, having someone other than the regular maintainer fully cruise the site once a year to proofread the text and check for broken links† is probably a good idea.

ct me: “I also find that when I get together with college buddies or high school friends, we always talk about the old times. Sure, we ‘catch up’ on what everyone is doing, then someone says, ‘Do you remember when...’” The thing that’s always bothered me about those sorts of conversations is that they look back rather than forwards. I have enough problems reminiscing rather than thinking about where I want to go, and the last thing I need is more encouragement. Doesn’t mean those sessions aren’t fun, though.

(I’m sorry: I’m blasting through zines here and I feel, Gary, as though I’ve shorted you and Richard Dengrove both on number of comments.)



Eve Ackerman ☒ **Guilty Pleasures** ♡

ct me: “I actually think Micah would make a good rabbi. As I told someone years ago, ‘if you had a problem, Raphi would care about you and put all his brainpower into helping you solve your problem. Micah would feel your pain.’” Yeah, Allie and JJ sort of have the same break, though perhaps not as severely as you’re describing. Allie works really hard to help people. JJ has empathy for their problems, but is too introverted to feel comfortable offering help. It’s been an education for me to have them: my siblings and I have sufficiently similar personality types that the vast differences between Allie and JJ are occasionally shocking. On the other hand, they are often the best of buddies and will conspire against their parents with alacrity and aplomb.

Steve Hughes ☒ **Comments** ♡

“We came back from a recent shopping trip to find our house had crashed.” That’s got to be the quote of the mailing, even though it was immediately apparent from context

† I sense a job for the SFFA president.

that you meant “lightning hit our house and the computers that run it all crashed.”

ct Brown: “Take 9/11 for example. What if Bush had been told that terrorists would attack US airlines in the month of September and the information was from a good source?” In some sense, forewarned is forearmed. I think that a warning before September 11th would have carried more weight than one of the standard non-specific warnings does now, particularly if the pre-September-11th warning was of the form “we have information from our informants inside the group that bombed the embassies in Tanzania and Kenya that they will attempt an airline attack *inside the US* in the month of September.” In that case, perhaps the report from actor James Woods that on a New York-to-LA flight there were four arabic men with him in first class who seemed to be up to something might have been taken seriously. In that case, perhaps the first three hijackings would have been thwarted by passengers, too — particularly if there had been some indication of the hijackers intention to use the planes as weapons. In that case, perhaps someone might have made the leap of intuition that weapons *per se* were not all that was needed to hijack a plane — as some actor put it in a bad spaghetti western I saw once, “all you need to set off a bomb are balls and matches and I have plenty of both.”

However, that’s in the best of all possible worlds. I agree that with statements like “there’s chatter in the system, so there will be an attack sometime” the warnings are useless. In that case, the only thing to do is adopt the British approach: “Those IRA bastards want us to be scared and change our way of life. To hell with them. We will continue to ignore them, play cricket, and have tea.”‡ In the absence of real information, it’s certainly what I’m doing.

ct me: “The network’s problem with DVRs is simple: its change. The entire media industry in this country hates change. If they had had their way there would be no VCRs of any sort. Remember the Sony case went all the way to the Supreme Court.” Interestingly, Sony’s now on the other side: they want massive copy protection for HDTV broadcasts, and are (so I understand) actively standing in the way of adoption. The only way to survive is to accept that change is going to happen, and embrace it. As I think I’ve said before, Microsoft may have sown the seeds of its own destruction with the dictum that the One True Operating System was going to be Windows, from cell phones to PDAs to game consoles to desktop to server. I vaguely remember Ken Olsen

‡ Thomas Friedman, in a *Times* column shortly after September 11th, wrote about a retired British ex-pat he met during his time in Lebanon. Even during the worst of the civil war, the guy played golf every day. He was simply not going to let a little war change his life. As the Queen Mum said after Buckingham Palace was bombed by the Germans in 1940 and the press asked if the princesses were going to be sent to Canada for safety, “The children will not leave unless I do. I shall not leave unless their father does, and the King will not leave the country in any circumstances whatever.”

at Digital giving a rant about how DEC *had* a standard operating system and it was called VAX/VMS and there was no need to pay any attention to those cretins flogging Unix.

☞ “I think you may have misunderstood the point of my article about how Enron worked. I was not trying to justify their behavior but to explain that what they were doing was a misuse of common business practice.” Ah, yes I did misunderstand. Thanks for the clarification. ☞ “There will probably be a part two to that article talking about how companies report income since that seems to be the most recent problem and it’s a really tough subject to understand.” Yes, please. It’s been half a lifetime since I took the course on how to read a corporate balance sheet, and too much of the GAAP have changed since then.

☞ “At the stereo photography convention we just attended I sat next to a guy who was a developer on Windows XP. ...[He] admitted that he was tired of people asking him why various programs don’t work after they upgraded to XP. I said he was being too paranoid. Then he told me he was one of the people responsible for solving compatibility problems with the OS and I told him, ‘You’re not paranoid enough.’” Do you remember the guy’s name? I wonder if I know him, since I lived down the hallway from the application compatibility guys for a while. But you’re right: the app compat guys get all the shit, none of the glory, and have to be paranoid all the time. I understand the user’s side of it really very well — what do you mean this game won’t work on the upgraded operating system? — but that means an amazing amount of crap goes into the operating system to support stuff that should have been taken behind the barn and shot years ago.

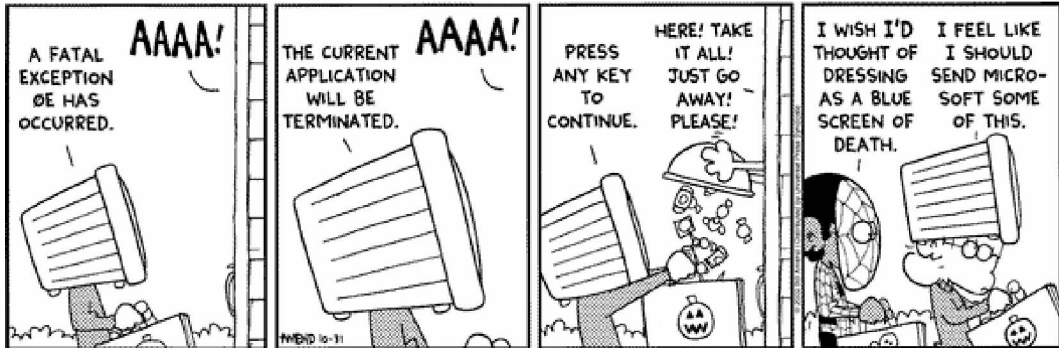
I pray daily that more of my fellow programmers may find the means of freeing themselves from the curse of compatibility.

— Edsger W Dijkstra, Turing Award Lecture, 1972

Steve Hughes ☒ Random Thoughts ♣

“Needless to say the SEC and the Justice Department were not encouraged to aggressively pursue possible market problems. The SEC, principal market policeman, actually had its budget, in real dollars, cut.” And it continues: While I don’t have a particular opinion on recently-resigned SEC head Harvey Pitt, I think Pitt pushing William Webster as the chairman of the new accounting oversight board was just foolish, particularly after Webster (as chair of the US Technologies audit committee) had fired the auditors for questioning some flaky accounting. “In all fairness to Mr. Clinton it would have taken someone of exceptional political bravery to have acted to cool down the market.” I think it was more than just riding the wave. I’ve heard it suggested that Clinton and Greenspan explicitly decided to *not* cool down the market while people were already nervous about the effects of any Y2K problems. Thus, when Greenspan made his cooling-down statements and the Fed jacked up interest rates in the first quarter of 2000, things crashed a

little farther and harder than they might have if the pot had been brought off a boil sooner. (How's that for a paragraph of massively-mixed metaphors?)



"Unfortunately [in response to the corporate accounting scandals] we will probably get some hasty, as in repented at leisure, laws passed to make everyone feel good while very little actually changes for the good." Yup. And I think we did, just like we got the Patriot Act — talk about misnamed laws! — in the wake of September 11th. What the hell good does it do to require a statement in each 10-Q that says, "I certify, pursuant to §906 of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 (18 USC §1350), that to my knowledge..." Ken Lay would have signed the damned thing anyway, and then said he'd been lied to by his underlings.

On Worldcom: *"The telecom industry thought it had died and gone to heaven when the Internet boom started. Here was a whole new market for communications that appeared unlimited. There was a new business starting every week predicting that it would have millions of customers all of whom would need to use telecom to use the companies' products."* I'm surprised that nobody thought about market saturation. HBO, for years, kept seeing subscriber growth in double digits. Nobody stopped to think that sooner-or-later, they were going to come up against the hard limit of people who had cable or satellite dish access and not be able to sell into any new cable systems. Microsoft's sales and stock price were on a Moore's-Law curve for twenty years, until the maximum market penetration of PCs was reached in the US. (Yes, that saturation hasn't been reached in Europe and Asia, but the growth there will be at a much slower rate for a variety of reasons.) Even ignoring the issues of bandwidth over-capacity because of the spread-spectrum breakthrough, why didn't anyone in the telecom industry think about where the top of the growth curve was? At least Worldcom wasn't the first company to ever make that mistake and telecom wasn't the first industry.

☞ By the way, the thing that comes through here is that you actually care about this stuff. The actual nuts and bolts details of running a business have always struck me as so much noise, but you're interested and understand them and care

about them. Probably why you get to retire at 50, and the rest of us are still working. (The other thing that's clear from your explanations is that the press — even [and perhaps, especially] the expert press — is generally clueless. But I've known that from years of experience in a number of arenas.)

mike weber ☒ *Send Out the Pace Zamboni* ♣

ct Lillian: "Galaxina, you mean? 'Putrid SF comedy', you say? Sigh. Galaxina is one of two films that people throughout fandom denounce as trash which, i have found, will fill a video room at 2AM..." What's the other? Hugo nominee *Flesh Gordon*? (Which, as I mentioned in this same mailing, was actually pretty funny.)

ct me: "Like to dream of island vacations, eh?" Actually, I like to dream of any vacation that involves me going someplace where it's warm and sunny and I can read and not touch a computer and take afternoon naps and eat well and drink a little too much and spend evenings in the warm breeze and languidly make love with my beloved and generally do fuck all for as long as I can stand it.

☞ "Your comment that you've never been able to dance in public like no one's looking rang a bell; that's exactly how i feel about dancing." That's actually a Guy Clark line, "You got to sing like you don't need the money / Love like you'll never get hurt / You got to dance like nobody's watchin' / It's gotta come from the heart if you want it to work." I'm pretty sure he got it from an old bluesman, but I'm not sure who.

☞ The amazingly obtuse Amazon.com review of *Once Upon a Time in the West* was interesting. I wonder how old reviewer Michael Rybikowsky is. "It is so slow you can see moss grow on the actors." Rather misses the point of the pacing, doesn't he? I wonder if he's been raised on too much MTV. (JJ's sitting here watching *Yellow Submarine* as I'm working on this, and it is certainly paced as though it was written in a different time. But that doesn't make it a "waste of money" or a "poor excuse for anything.")

☞ "[Chuck] Jones had a long and happy life. and he got to be famous and popular for something as simple and that he loved as much as making people laugh." Back when I was at the mental institution in Pasadena, Jones came to give a talk one evening. He found us so engaging and enthusiastic that a couple of weeks later, when he had a rough cut of the Bugs Bunny/Road Runner movie, he sent a bus over to campus with directions to fill it up and come to a screening. It wasn't as fun as hearing him talk, but the same joy was there on the screen, raw and a little unpolished. When I read Jones' description of his life — "For me the startling, unbelievable matter is this: when I was nineteen years old, somebody offered to pay me to draw. For over fifty years and over 250 films, other somebodies have, amazingly, persisted in continuing to reward me for doing what I love to do." — I couldn't help but think that he'd led an absolutely charmed life. (I've been nearly as lucky: someone started paying me

to fiddle around with computers when I was fifteen, and I've been lucky enough to find people who've been willing to do so for two-thirds of my life. I haven't had the constant joy of creation that Jones had, but that's okay.)



mike weber ☒ *An Unanticipated Denouement* ♣

"I forget when or why I came across the web page shamelessly swiped below, but it's just about perfect... 'Daphne or Velma?'" The question isn't "Daphne or Velma?," it's "Betty or Wilma?" (Betty.) Or maybe it's "Buffy or Willow?" (Willow. Duh.)

ct me: "...the notion of Xena on X-Files makes me want to see the show again... 'Leather bustier, sword and all?' Yes, that was rather the point. Lucy Lawless in leather, hunting space aliens could be a hoot. (Xena or Gabrielle? Gabrielle.)

"We bought a 1990 Honda Civic wagon a couple months back. Kate didn't understand why i kept pointing out Civic wagons in Auto Shopper and so on; then she test-drove it when we went to look at it and understood." Yeah. When I was living in Los Angeles and working in Austin, the National Car Rental office in Austin had a small number of Civic wagons. I was a frequent enough customer that they were happy to always hold one when they knew I was coming. Nice car. Good handling. Comfy seats. Real interior room.

George Wells ☒ *Alien Cows Will Make Us Know Everything Will Be All Right* ♣

ct me: "Re Oscar considerations, did you see *Frailty*, the controversial movie of the year?" No. I hadn't even heard of it. The current crop of controversial movies that look interesting are *Autofocus* (biography of *Hogan's Heroes* actor Bob Crane, with emphasis on Crane's fascination with pornography), *Secretary* (woman leaves mental hospital, takes job with lawyer and starts a kinky affair with him), *El Crimen del Padre Amaro* (Mexican priest sleeps with young girl in the parish and helps her get an abortion). Of course, I probably won't get the time to see any of them.

ct me: "I thought 'The Body' episode of *Buffy* was a fine mundane story. I vaguely recall there were some fantasy or sf scenes but the main salient thrust was mundane." That's part of why there was real emotional content there: It was essentially a very simple, human story in

a science fiction setting. See, for example, Neal Stephenson's *Cryptonomicon*. The musical episode of *Buffy* was just nonsense. Yes, some of the songs were funny, and yes, it ended with Spike and Buffy kissing, but there wasn't any there there.

ct Brooks: "I still have not seen any more Smallville because 24 has conflicted with it." Y'know, I still haven't watched last season's episodes of 24, and now it's out on DVD.

Janice Gelb ☒ *Trivial Pursuits* •

"... this morning I got e-mail from my ex-husband's dental office partner, Chaim, telling me that Neil is in a hospital oncology ward..." As I told you in e-mail, I'm so sorry to hear this.

"Turned out there was only one DVD that I wanted to buy there: an Australia-only edition of The Dish." What was different about the Australian edition?

"When I got home, I asked Rich to keep an eye out for a region-free DVD player I could afford. Last week, he called to say that Circuit City had an Apex player... that had a hidden menu that would enable region-free playing." When Mike Weber went through this excursion, wasn't the raw material also an Apex machine?

"Minority Report: I probably wouldn't have seen this without Stephen dragging me. I was convinced that it would be a special effects/chase scene extravaganza. However, it had more plot than I expected and better acting." I just picked up Dick's novel at the library, and it was interesting in the normal "here's an interesting idea about the nature of objective reality for you to chew on" that Dick does. But, "better acting?" with Tom Cruise? I scoff.

ct Brooks: "It was only a few days later that I found out that first-class postage had gone up.... I think it helped that I used American flag 34-cent stamps, which evidently closely resemble the placeholder stamps for the new rate." Boy, those unlabeled stamps are really annoying. You can't use them for international mail and you can't tell what they're really worth. "First Class." OK. But when?

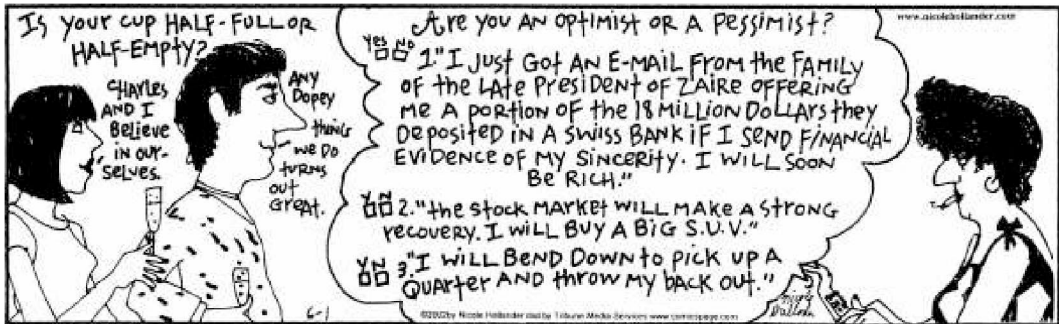
ct me: "What a great picture of Bruce! Thanks for running it, and the tribute as well." I wish I had a credit for the photo — which was from the Portland Westercon. I couldn't find out who took it from the web site where I got it.

ct Schlosser: "As you note, there are plenty of things that could be used for weapons that you couldn't possibly screen for, like pens and pencils. Heck, the stylus of my Palm would make a better weapon than the crochet needle they confiscated." Insane Saudi assholes killed three thousand people with four boxcutters. Short of making us get on unfurnished airplanes naked and carrying nothing, I don't think they're going to be able to prevent chutzpah. And even at that, there's no telling when you've got a defensive weapon like Gary Robe on board.

☞ *re: Mel Brooks* — "The guy's humor can be annoying but his instincts are so funny that I forgive him a lot." A man who can invent both Maxwell Smart and Max Bialystock gets about the same amount of latitude in my book as the man who can invent both Road

Runner and Pepé le Pew. (Or that man who invents quantum electrodynamics.)

☞ *"Regarding layoff strategies, I said that I would drop people based on performance rather than the project on which they were working. You ask whether it makes sense for a company to drop someone in the middle of a project that well."* The HP variant on this was exactly what you suggest: just lay off the employees with lowest rankings in their last reviews. Of course, since there's some randomness in the review process, even at a company with a reputation for having anal-retentive quantitative geeks and their procedures enumerated out the wazoo like HP, this doesn't guarantee that the exact people you want get the axe. (The vagaries of the HP review process resulted in a chap I know getting an unsatisfactory review and the IEEE Gold Medal in the same month.)



ct Strickland: *"You say here that one of the advantages of working for a multinational company is 'the occasional opportunity to work elsewhere like you'll be doing.'"* Yeah: first prize is a month in New Zealand and Australia. Second prize is two months in Bangalore.

☞ *"... The condo in Melbourne was a third-floor walk-up Brit style: ground, 1st, 2nd, 3rd. Between the stairs and the walk to the tram I definitely got a lot more exercise than I do at home!"* That's sort of my Japanese diet: I eat no fat, and walk everywhere. When I came back from Asia in March, I weighed about twenty pounds less than I do now. (Actually, I never weigh myself, so I don't know exactly how much weight I've put on, but I know that I'm about twenty pounds paunchier.)

ct Brown: *"Looks like the economy has taken over as top story from the grind-it-out effort in Afghanistan."* Well, four months later, it's Iraq that's at the top of the headlines, but that's okay: John Ashcroft says there'll be a terrorist attack tomorrow.

ct Robe: *"You mention the unexpected departure tax that you thought was included in your ticket. I thought my New Zealand was included in my ticket, too, but I was also mistaken."* Ah, forewarned is forearmed: I was all set to pay the airport departure tax the second time I went through Bangkok in March. Except that I didn't have to do it because I never actually cleared customs and entered the country.

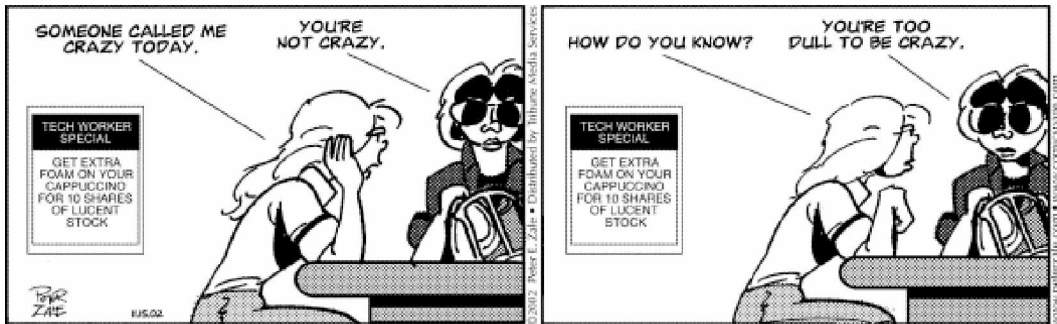
☞ The cartoon of Jimmy Carter in Cuba — *"Ending the embargo would give Cuba exposure to the fruits of a free and open society, and in return the US would*

gain access to something it desperately needs: pitching.” — is even more amusing given the citation for Carter’s Nobel Peace Prize, which was calculated to flip off Shrub.

ct me: “As for the joke about the guy trapped on the roof, the punchline works better if he’s talking to God after he dies.” I’ll try that variation when I tell it next. (That joke, by the way, was JJ’s favorite for a long time. “Tell the joke about the roof, Dad!” “OK: ‘So how’s Mom?’ ‘Well, she’s on the roof.’ ” “No, Dad, not *that* one!”)

☞ “Regarding not joining lists because of the e-mail load, I absolutely adore Yahoo groups (and now Topica) for this very reason: you can read them on the web!!!!” That sounds familiar. Didn’t there used to be this thing called Usenet that worked similarly? (Duck.)

☞ “You quote Kevin’s raseff post about being able to reassure his co-worker that a contact of his at Sun who worked at the WTC was still alive because of a post I made. I was very touched by that post as well, obviously, because I felt that I’d at least prevented a teeny tiny bit of extra unhappiness around that whole awful day.” I actually saw your original post that day. It was a bright point in a day that was, otherwise, a waking nightmare.



☞ “Interesting to read the the stock market freefall has affected morale at Microsoft. Our stock price is down to about \$4.50 at this writing, which is depressing in the extreme, but first of all, everyone I know is mostly blaming the stock market rather than the company.” The problem is that stock is a central part of the compensation package at Microsoft and always has been. It’s not just lagniappe or bonus. With the Moore’s Law stock price curve, people were getting three-quarters or more of their income in stock. This was exacerbated by the structure of Microsoft’s stock option package, which treats stock as a form of delayed compensation rather than capital gains. This meant that the year we arrived, the average Microsoft employee (exclusive of those on the executive compensation scheme) had W2 income in the \$400k range.

So there are two effects: one, people who still have stock options that are worth something have had a decrease in their income as the stock price has flattened; but, two, folks who arrived in the last 40 months don’t have the Porsches and Range Rovers and houses on the lake and the vacation cottages in Ireland that people

who've been here longer have gotten, *just as a side benefit of working at Microsoft*. This goes beyond your observation about people who cashed out rather than saving their stock gains being the winners out of the artificial bubble; these are the sort of toys that everyone at Microsoft had as a matter of course up to about 1998.

(This all gets ramped up to a fever pitch during the annual United Way drive, where it's clear that there are haves and have-nots. One is bombarded for six weeks with nearly daily messages about how it's important to give to United Way, about how we can all afford it because we're privileged to work for a company that gives us all this stock, about how the company will match the first \$12,000 you give, so you should give at least that much.)

The further problem is that for new folks at Microsoft, there's no incentive to put in the insane hours and extraordinary effort, in fact there's incentive to *not* do so: if we're just living on my salary and we can't rely on the stock for retirement or college funds, we can't afford to eat out every night and I have to come home for dinner so I can help my son with his homework rather than hiring a tutor. Worse, it's painfully clear that there are never again going to be the rewards that the long-timers got no matter what happens — even the long-timers believe they're gone for good — so there's simply no incentive to put out effort for the promise of non-existent future reward. This means that Microsoft's competitive advantage of having insanely motivated Mongol hordes to throw at a problem is gone.

There are more observations about my personal situation with respect to all this now that I'm working closer to the core of the operating system, but that would border on lifting my leg and peeing on my employer in public.

☞ “BCS stands for ‘Bowl Championship Series,’ a very complicated points scenario that was invented to supposedly create an undisputed college football national champion instead of the previous scenario where different polls often had different teams at the top.” I was stuck with nothing to read in the sauna at the gym last week, and there was a copy of *Sports Illustrated* sitting there so I read an article about the BCS. No matter how you slice it, it's still a friggin' poll, except now it's just a weighted average of multiple polls. If football wasn't such a stupid game, they could actually play enough games in a season that a national champion could be selected by figuring out something really complicated like COUNTING UP WHO WON THE MOST GAMES.

[[Let me step aside here for a small rant: This same sloppy weighted averaging for football championships is used by *US News & World Reports* and Rand-McNally in two instances and for two different purposes.

[[In the first case, *USN&R* jigger the weights in their college rankings every year so that Harvard is ranked first and Princeton or Yale is ranked second. (There was one occasion when Caltech was ranked first because they made the mistake of putting extra weight on tuition; Caltech is about 50% of Harvard's cost.) Then

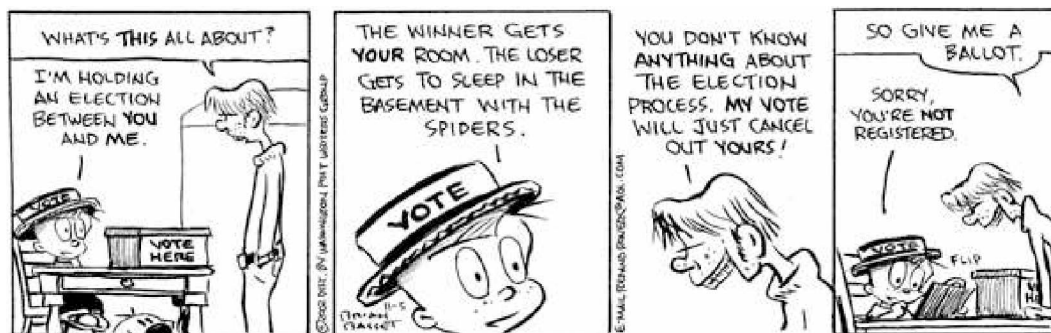
they committing gross violations of sense by using a zero for data they don't have — which has the effect of dropping the big state universities that don't report all their demographic data, like Indiana and Michigan, as way lower than those that do, like North Carolina.

[[In the second case, Rand-McNally rearrange the criteria for their *Places Rated Almanac* every edition so that a different set of cities can be in the top ten every time. One year entertainment is more important (which is why Durham, NC, with the highest number of bowling alleys per capita, ranked first the year we moved there), and the next art museums are.

[[In both cases, the numbers are not comparable from year-to-year or edition-to-edition, making the whole effort rather pointless.

[[Now back to Janice's comments:]]

☞ “Not only can you get online subscriptions to several SF magazines, the Hugo short fiction nominees are usually posted online every year. It doesn't help with nominations, of course, but it's great for voters. It's enabled me to vote the short fiction categories recently when I went years without being able to do so.” Fictionwise, my normal e-book fiction supplier, has been really good about providing the nominees for free. I keep sending Fictionwise publisher Scott Pendergrast e-mail of encouragement to keep that up.



Guy Lillian ☒ *Spiritus Mundi* ☞

You asked about the progression of Rule 4s I've used in *The Southerner* in the past two years and what the pattern is. There were actually two: the first was a set of lines from movies for the first five mailings; the second as you'll now have figured out are last lines from Hugo-nominated (and mostly Hugo-winning) short fiction. In order,

- 1988 short story winner “Why I Left Harry’s All-Night Hamburgers,” by Lawrence Watt-Evans,
- 1989 novelette winner “Schrödinger’s Kitten,” by George Alec Effinger,
- 1993 short story winner “Even the Queen,” Connie Willis’ “period piece”,

- 1972 short story winner, “Inconstant Moon,” by Larry Niven,
- 1995 novella winner, “Seven Views of Olduvai Gorge,” by Mike Resnick, and,
- 2002 short story nominee (not winner), “The Bones of the Earth” by Ursula K LeGuin.

I wanted the last one to be a non-winner, but something that people would have had been likely to have read. I was tempted to use the ending of Niven’s “The Return of William Proxmire,” a 1990 short story nominee — “Nope. He’s taking six of their people on the Mars expedition, though. They paid their share of the cost in fusion bombs for propulsion.” — but I’d already used a Niven. So I used the LeGuin, which was the most quotable of the non-winning nominees from this year. Unfortunately, it didn’t get wide circulation, so nobody recognized it.

There were a bunch of rejects. My two favorites were:

“For New Years, I have made two solemn vows.

“One is that on this date I will not worry about my chest, I will not be self-conscious, even if the guy stares.

“The other is, I’ll never eat another dog.”

— Suzy McKee Charnas, “Boobs,” 1990 short story winner

and:

“At the door, he glanced back and saw the granddaughter tearing her linen napkin into little bits and eating the shreds, delicately washing them down with sips of wine.”

— Michael Swanwick, “Ancient Engines,” 2000 short story nominee: it didn’t win, but it was the most science-fictional closing line of the candidates

ct Bruce obit: “The page of praise to fandom pillar and great person Bruce Pelz is very nicely done (Rose and I want to know how you got the photo to come out so clearly).” Thanks. That photo came off the web, and as I said to Janice earlier, I wish the web site had had photo credits. It was taken at last year’s Westercon in Portland. As for reproducing the photo, the original was in color, and I did a little color tuning of the picture, converted it to black-and-white, and then printed all the originals on a color printer, which has good toner contrast. (That particular printer is one of the few Xerox printers I’ve ever met that can apparently be tuned to have consistently high contrast. Somebody in manufacturing apparently screwed up.) I think the photo’s a little washed out myself, but that’s me.

But on a similar topic, I’ve discovered that neither Liz nor I have a copy of the memorial page we did when Seth Goldberg died. It seems to have gone missing in the move along with a handful of other file copies of zines. In fact, I was looking for something in my file copies the other day, and realized I’m also missing some

Perhaps the safest thing to do at the outset, if technology permits is to send music. This language may be the best we have for explaining what we are like to others in space, with least ambiguity. I would vote for Bach, all of Bach, streamed out into space, over and over again. We would be bragging, of course, but it is surely excusable for us to put the best possible face on at the beginning of such an acquaintance.

— Lewis Thomas, on how to communicate with extraterrestrials in *The Lives of a Cell*

zines since we moved to Bellevue. The cats must be borrowing stuff to read.

ct Liz: *"My sympathies on the demise of your stepfather, a champion of our species."* You don't know the half of it: I'd known in a vague sort of way that he was quite generous, but the fact is that he gave away nearly every penny he ever earned, occasionally neglecting his own family to do so. His daughters thought that he was a tightwad, because he was so private about it, but in fact he was always broke because money flowed from his pockets to people who he thought needed it more. Many people stood up at his funeral to talk about his giving.

ct Lynch: *"The little bio you give of Johann Sebastian Bach reminds me of the famous comment one music scholar made, when asked what music should be included on the record sent into space aboard Voyager. 'The works of Bach,' he replied, 'but that would be bragging.'"* It was actually Lewis Thomas, the biologist, and the full passage is around here somewhere.

☞ *"The fact that Budapest's subways are unafflicted by graffiti makes me wonder — and perhaps Toni, a scholar on the subject, can inform us — what graffiti says about the society in which it appears."* So, back in the bad old days of the Soviet bloc in the late sixties, there was a campaign in Moscow to cut down on used bus tickets being dropped on the sidewalk. "Don't throw your used bus tickets on the ground so we may have a pristine Socialist Revolution" read the posters. Of course, the other countries in the Warsaw Pact were encouraged to follow suit and also have anti-littering campaigns. In Poland, the posters read "In the spirit of Socialist Cooperation with our Soviet brethren, we encourage you to not drop your used bus tickets on the ground." In Yugoslavia, they read "Our fellow Communist countries don't have a bus ticket problem: we can solve ours, too!" In Hungary, the posters were emblazoned "Our Soviet partners encourage us to not have a bus ticket litter incident." In Czechoslovakia, "Pick up your bus tickets or the Russians will send troops to do it for you." In Albania though, the posters read, "What buses? What tickets?"

ct Metcalf: *"Can anyone tell me if Enterprise has been renewed? Not that I've ever seen more than a few minutes of an episode, unfortunately not the shower scene."* Yes, it's been renewed, but *what* shower scene? JJ's made me watch nearly every episode of this and I

managed to miss the damned shower scene. However, I think I made up for it by seeing the episode with the Vulcan babe sweating in the white jumpsuit.

ct Brooks: "Not that we weren't perversely lucky anyway. Had Atta Boy and his fellow shitbags struck later in the day, after more folks had come to work, and lower on the towers, blocking off more floors ... we lost 3000 people that day; we could have lost ten times that." My back-of-the-envelope calculation that morning was roughly "there's smoke pouring out of these two buildings, and there are fifty thousand people in them, and at best only ninety percent of them will get out." As we were driving JJ to school, and Bob Edwards on NPR said, "Yes, you can see the second tower collapsing now," my voice said, "they evacuated everyone after the 1993 bombing, they did it now," but my brain was screaming, "FUCKNOFUCKNOFUCKNOFUCKNO!" We lucked out because the bastards wanted to kill the building, thinking that was where the economic power of the United States was, making them as brainless as they were hateful. Or as near-victim Michael Weholt put it in early October last year, "Yeah, that's pretty much what I thought about today. We're alive and they're dead. Stupid asshole motherfuckers."

☞ *"Ah, The Wicker Man. Christopher Lee sings, Edward Woodward burns alive, and Britt Eklund dances around naked. Top that, Citizen Kane." Too bad Eklund's career went down the tubes — the fate of nearly all Bond movie female leads — but as a teenager of my acquaintance says, "nummies." Lee's name, at least, is being bandied about replace Richard Harris in the Harry Potter movies.*

☞ *"Great quote: 'Our entire war against terrorism has been a total success except for its object.' Watch. We invade Iraq just before the midterm elections. Never mind that the real reason for the battle would be to correct Bush Sr.'s most egregious mistake — after his failure to support the democratic revolution in China, that is — Our Boys would be in harm's way, and criticizing their airheaded Commander in Chief will be damned as unpatriotic. Watch." Winston Churchill put it most clearly. He absolutely understood that he was managing a country in a war, not getting a chance to do what he wanted with the war as an excuse. But see the back cover cartoon ... it's actually from 1991.*

The principle that we work on is, "Everything for the war, whether controversial or not, and nothing controversial that is not bona fide for the war." That is our position. We must also be careful that a pretext is not made of war needs to introduce far-reaching social or political changes by a side-wind.

— Winston Churchill, 1943

☞ *"The only thing you have to remember about Ray Lafferty is that he was a conservative Irish Catholic with the wildest — yet kindest — sense of humor on the planet." That's a really nice epitaph. I only had the chance to meet Ray once, but it was clear that there was simply not an unkind bone in his body. You don't meet many people with that*

characteristic in life, and you've got to treasure the few there are because they aren't an easily renewable resource.

ct Gelb: "I love the Dave Barry column you ran about the Olympics, because he focused on one of my favorite moments of the Games — the Aussie skater winning Gold because everyone in front of him simply fell down. There's a lesson in that, but damned if I can say what it is." It just goes to show you, sometimes 90% of life is just showing up.

ct Schlosser: "A recent technothriller close to the quality of *Fail-Safe*, *The Sum of All Fears*. No, who am I kidding. *Fears* was very good — I loved the James Bond character — but *Fail-Safe* is epic. It was the movie's bad luck that it should come out practically simultaneously with the even more wonderful *Dr. Strangelove*." The scary thing about *Fail-safe* — certainly to the Pentagon — was its accuracy. But there are some nice things about *Strangelove*: Stanley Kubrick's direction, George C Scott playing Curtis LeMay, Peter Sellers playing Henry Kissinger.

☞ "I suspect an equipment failure of a stupendous sort in the Soviet space program — the capsule called *Zond*, sent — allegedly unmanned — on a translunar trajectory shortly before Apollo 8. I don't think it was unmanned. I think cosmonauts died on that ship, in a reckless attempt to beat Borman, Lovell and Anders to the Moon." Let me recommend, if you haven't read it yet, Andy Duncan's Hugo-nominated novella about the Russian space program, "The Chief Designer," from last June's *Asimov's*.

☞ "Hobbit slash fiction? How about one starring Galadriel and Goldberry? That I'd read!" So we've got confirmed Hobbit slash, confirmed Harry Potter slash (which I've got to admit squicks me just a bit). Is *Smallville* Superman fanfic?



ct Brown: "I sent our boy Mark Verheiden, a producer on the show, a fan letter, praising the respect *Smallville* shows the Super-legend ... I didn't ask Mark if young Clark would someday meet a neurotic kid who'd lost his parents to crime — rich boy named Bruce Wayne — or if ace reporter Chloe Sullivan would someday change her name to something simpler ... like, Lois Lane. But I bet both things happen." I don't know: Do we have any indication from the Canon that Lois has roots in *Smallville*? The Bruce Wayne thing would be amusing, though — we know their alter-egos meet later.

ct Robe: "...the 2000 election reduced America to the level of a banana republic, but our secret police aren't as intrusive — yet." With the signing of the Homeland Security bill, we're nearly there. The new Total Information Management program at the Pentagon, headed by old Iran-Contra buddy John Poindexter, is now authorized to suck up every credit card transaction, every e-mail, every web click, every medical record in the country. [*Springtime for Ashcroft / and Bushie friends...*] A judge rejected a challenge to the detention of prisoners at Camp X-Ray at Guantanamo Bay Naval Base in Cuba, saying that the plaintiffs, a coalition of clergy and professors, have no legal standing in the matter. [*Winter for the ol' Bill of Rights...*] The Bush administration won an appeal to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court of Review (all members appointed by Rehnquist) allowing it to use national security warrants interchangeably with criminal ones. [*Don't be stupid / Be a schmarty / Come und join / The Grand Old Party!*]

Oh, and Donald Rumsfeld said in his weekly press conference: "And then there was the office of strategic influence. You may recall that. And 'oh my goodness gracious isn't that terrible, Henny Penny the sky is going to fall.' I went down that next day and said fine, if you want to savage this thing, fine I'll give you the corpse. There's the name. You can have the name, but I'm gonna keep doing every single thing that needs to be done and I have. What was intended to be done by that office is being done by that office, *not* by that office in other ways." So, there is *still* a domestic propaganda office at the Pentagon. Doubleplusungood.

ct Hughes: "How very cool that you could read your airplane's flight information on your laptop as it took you across the Pacific..." On the wide-bodied airplanes doing transoceanic service, you get a little video screen at your seat (at least you do when you're not flying cattle class); the neutral position for the screen is to show a route map and flight information, but you can also watch whatever badly-edited movies they're showing.

ct me: "Beautiful cover — it belongs on a poster. Five planets visible in one glance — if you count the one Stonehenge is sitting on!" Actually, six — Jupiter, Mars, Venus, Saturn, Mercury, Earth — though Mercury is a little washed out by *my* printing process. See <http://www.astrocruise.com/planets.htm> for information about posters and large-format prints.

☞ *"As for losing weight, Rosy's estimate is that I'm dropping about a pound a month — which isn't much, but it's staying off, which is the point."* That's about the right rate. Large, quick losses and gains aren't as easy to make permanent. I've been less active in the job I took in April, and less good about making it to the gym, and also less happy (which means I'm eating more), with the net effect that I've slowly put on a bunch of weight that I don't need. I've started making it to the gym an extra day a week, and am trying to avoid chocolate binges and mid-afternoon snacks.

✎ Your DSC photos remind me of how much I missed being there. The look on Hank's face in his picture with Mib is priceless. And you're right: Mike Rogers hasn't aged a day. It's that recessive Dick Clark gene.

Gary Robe ✉ *Tennessee Trash* ✎

Thanks for the reviews of the Hugo-nominated novels. I think that Neil Gaiman's *American Gods* deserves to be read if only for his acceptance speech. Connie Willis' *Passages* is sitting in the bed-side pile, but *To Say Nothing of the Dog* is above it.

Liz Copeland ✉ *Home With The Armadillo* ✎

Yeah, that was a busy couple of months. Let's go back to Victoria again soon. And not have any more funerals for a while.

Well, that's all we've got time for this mailing. Until next time. . .



7-9-02

Art Credits

The “Weasel Crossing” sign on the front cover was drawn by Scott Adams in honor of this year’s Weasel Day, October 22nd. From the Dilbert web site. Page 5: *Mother Goose & Grimm* from 28 Oct — we never have this sort of reaction from our cats. Page 9: *Calvin & Hobbes* from 14 Aug 1991. Page 11: *Calvin & Hobbes* from 20 Nov 1991. Page 14: *One Big Happy* from 17 Oct — I’ve had conversations like that with low-cut blouses. Page 16: *Helen, Sweetheart of the Internet* from 29 Oct. Page 19: *Foxtrot* from 31 Oct — I don’t need that Halloween costume on my porch: I’ve got it on my desk! Page 21: *Heart of the City* from 18 Nov — expect this girl to visit your next con suite. Page 23: *Sylvia* from 1 June — speaking of Nigerian e-mail spam scams. Page 24: *Helen, Sweetheart of the Internet* from 15 Nov — note the sign on the wall — that’s the really amusing bit. Page 26: *Red & Rover* from 5 Nov — Catherine Harris must have purged the electoral rolls. Page 30: *Arlo & Janis* from 14 Aug — I feel the same way this fall. Page 32: *Tom Toles* from 9 Sep — call it Nerf security, call it window dressing, neither does any good. The back cover features a Tom Tomorrow cartoon from 1991 which is strangely relevant again. *Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose.*

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THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW

IT'S TIME FOR THE 11:00 NEWS...

GOOD EVENING! IN THE NEWS TONIGHT-- 100,000 DEMONSTRATORS GATHERED IN THE STREETS OF SAN FRANCISCO TODAY TO PROTEST AGAINST THE WAR IN THE GULF...



100,000 PEOPLE? GOSH, BIFF-- THAT'S COMPLETELY AT ODDS WITH THE CURRENT MEDIA PERCEPTION OF A NATION **STRONGLY UNITED** BEHIND THE **PRESIDENT!**



THAT'S **TRUE**, BETTY! THAT'S WHY WE'LL DOWNPLAY THE MAGNITUDE OF THE EVENT BY RUNNING ONLY A FEW BRIEF SECONDS OF FOOTAGE FROM THE DEMONSTRATION...



... FOLLOWED IMMEDIATELY BY COVERAGE OF FIFTEEN **PRO-WAR** DEMONSTRATORS IN WALNUT CREEK-- SUBTLY INDICATING THAT THE TWO EVENTS ARE OF **EQUAL IMPORTANCE!**



FINALLY, WE'LL CONCLUDE THE SEGMENT WITH THE LATEST **NETWORK NEWS POLL** SHOWING THAT A SOLID 97% OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE BELIEVE THE ANTI-WAR PROTESTERS ARE **TRAITOROUS DOGS** FOR WHOM **HANGING IS TOO GOOD!**



COMING UP NEXT: REALLY COOL FOOTAGE OF JET FIGHTERS AND EXPLOSIONS.

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