

Frequent Flyer

By Tom Feller

September 18, 2002

Po Box 68203
Nashville, TN 37206
Tomfeller@aol.com



Frequent Flyer

I survived my eye surgery, but Anita's eyes still occasionally bother her. As you may remember, my right tear duct was blocked, and the surgeon opened me up to unblock it. She discovered that it was blocked in two places and that the infection caused the blockage rather than the something blocking the duct and causing the infection. This explained how Anita's eyes became infected as well. Perhaps a more aggressive anti-biotic treatment may have fixed the problem, but we couldn't know this beforehand. The surgeon inserted a tube from the eye to the nasal cavity to assist drainage, and there was one week in which there was a mucous discharge. Fortunately, I still had some eye drops, which took care of the problem. The tube is scheduled to come out on October 16. I'm traveling again and getting caught up on my work.

The Green Bay Packer fans have decided on a sports bar to gather together to watch the games. It is called The Scoreboard and is located in a commercial development across the street from the Opryland Hotel. It is close to where we live and features booths, which are more comfortable than bar stools. We ourselves visited three sports bars last year and watched the Packers at home whenever possible.

Aftermath of 9/11—

Because of the terrorist alerts, I decided to stay home on 9/11 this year. Obviously, my caution was unnecessary. Nonetheless, I felt better, and Anita didn't have to worry about me.

The August 13 issue of USA Today had several articles on 9/11. Among some of the interesting facts are:

Airports that received and landed the most rerouted flights:

Airport	Number
Memphis	45
Indianapolis	45
Halifax, Nova Scotia	42
Kansas City	36
Nashville	28
Raleigh-Durham	26

Halifax in particular had trouble finding space for all the planes, according to one article.

Original destinations of rerouted flights, by airport:

Airport	Number
Los Angeles	54
Dallas-Fort Worth	46
Phoenix	43
Denver	42
La Guardia	40

Obviously these are all major airports with planes coming from long distances and therefore heavily laden with fuel.

Departure site of rerouted flights, by airport:

Airport	Number
Atlanta Hartsfield	48
Dallas-Fort Worth	47
Chicago O'Hare	41
Houston-Bush	38
Philadelphia	32

Airlines that had the most planes rerouted:

Airline	Number
United	100
Delta	97
American	97
US Air	81
Northwest	72
Continental	70
Southwest	53
America West	37
Trans World	33
British Airways	24
Continental Express	24

Frequent Flyer

Number of planes in the air by airline at 9:45 AM ET on 9/11:

Airline	Planes
Delta	234
American	232
United	185
USAir	153
Southwest	142

2,868 planes were landed between 9:45 to 10:45 AM EST that day in the United States.

The paper also reports that more than 150 books have been or will be published by the end of 2002. This breaks the record set by the O.J. Simpson trial, for which about 100 books have been published.

The article did not say how many books have been published about Pearl Harbor or the JFK assassination, but few, if any, came out within a year of the event.

Smith Travel Research reported that hotel occupancy in the second quarter of 2002 was 63.3%, which is down 1.9% from 2001's second quarter. Average room rate fell 3.1%. For the first six months of 2002, occupancy declined 3.6% to 59.5% while the average rate declined 4%. This is consistent with my companies experience.

Lloyd's of London reported that its estimated losses for 9/11 are \$8.95 billion. Silverstein Properties, the leaseholder of the World Trade Center, and Swiss Reinsurance, the primary insurer, are scheduled to go to court in November. The issue, which I mentioned in previous mailings, is whether the bombings were one or two events. Coverage was \$3.55 billion per incident.

The June 13 issue of Workplace Substance Abuse Advisor reported an increase in alcohol and marijuana use among Manhattan residents. A survey showed that 25% of the population increased their alcohol usage and 3.2% increased their use of marijuana.

Airlines lost \$1.4 billion in the second quarter of this year. U.S. Airways has filed for chapter 11 bankruptcy. The closing of Reagan Washington Na-

tional for three weeks hurt it more than any other airline, because its routes are concentrated in the East. American Airlines, which lost \$495 million, is cutting 7,000 jobs, retiring 74 Fokker 100 and 9 Boeing 767 jets, and deferring deliveries of 35 new jets after losing \$495 million in the second quarter. Continental announced that it will charge \$80 for the third piece of checked baggage and \$20 for a paper ticket and that it will retire 11 MD-80 jets. Delta will charge \$40 for the extra baggage.

I read a study, which said 3,438 "injury only" (non fatal) workers compensation claims have been filed in New York for 9/11. There is evidence of stress in 1,594 of them, of which 929 are stress only cases.

Space—

The July 29 issue of Business Insurance reported that the standard premium for insuring a commercial satellite is 16% of the insured value, and policies included deductibles and exclusions, such as for terrorism. 2001 losses totaled between \$1 and 1.3 billion, but premiums only came to \$500-550 million. Because of the projected increase in premiums, some satellite insurers are self-insuring rather than paying such high premiums. For instance, Echostar only insured its EchoStar VIII satellite during its June launch, but not in the post-separation phase or in orbit. SES-Global, which operates 40 satellites, paid \$1 billion in premiums between 1991 and 2002, but only filed claims totaling \$33 million, so they are going the self-insurance route. Satellite Insurance is a small market in terms of insured items. According to the article, only 20-25 new satellites are insured per year and only 80-100 satellites currently in orbit are insured.

I've been following Lance Bass's attempts to become an astronaut. A member of the pop band In Sync, his passage had been cancelled, because his sponsors could not come up with the money. I just read that Pepsi-Cola has come on board and will provide most of the fee. The plan is to make a documentary of Bass's adventure. Both David Krieff, his producer, and Mark Burnett (*Survivor*) are reported to be working on game shows for which the first prize will be a trip in space.

Frequent Flyer

All's Well that Ends Well—

The Nashville Shakespeare Festival presented its annual outdoor play in Centennial Park in August and September. Neither Anita nor I had ever read or seen performed *All's Well That Ends Well*. The reason is that it is one of the bard's lesser works. The weather was good the first weekend it was performed, so we took advantage and went.

The strength of the play is that it features one of Shakespeare's strongest female characters, Helena (Quincy Tyler Bernstine). The weakness is that it features one of his weakest male characters, Bertram (Brian Niece). The key plot point is that Helena is madly in love with Bertram, but we couldn't see why. She is in love with him at the start of the play, but of bourgeois birth while Bertram is a noble. Bertram is a class snob, and, by casting a black actress as Helena, this production also brings the issue of race into the conflict.

The costumes and sets were circa 1910. The director, Audrey Stanley, chose the period, because officers still wore swords for more than ceremonial reasons, but the women's movement was well underway. The acting was quite good. We have seen Niece in two previous Shakespeare productions (Puck in *A Midsummer's Night's Dream* and Orlando in *As You Like It*), and he is an excellent actor. It was a good show, and we were glad we attended.

Gabe Kaplan—

Many of you may remember *Welcome Back, Kotter*. For those of you who don't, it was a situation comedy that aired on ABC from 1975 to 1979. Gabe Kaplan played the title character, the homeroom teacher for remedial high school students known as "Sweathogs". One of the actors who played a sweathog was John Travolta. The characters were based on people Kaplan knew in his own high school.

After the demise of his show and making a few forgettable movies, Gabe Kaplan left show business to play the stock market and professional poker. About a year ago, he returned to stand-up comedy, which is how he began his show business career. Fifty-seven years old, Kaplan's hair is shorter, and he has shaved off his moustache.

He performed at the Gibson Bluegrass Showcase at Opry Mills, the mall that replaced Opryland.

Anita and I drove over Friday evening with the backup plan that we would see a movie if the show was sold out. Not only was the show not sold out, but also we could have sat next to the stage if we so desired. However, after seeing Jackie Mason a few years ago and how he picked the members of the audience who sat up front, we sat back two rows of tables and were about 30 feet from the stage.

In addition to the tickets, there was a food and/or beverage minimum. Anita and I ordered nachos and salsa and then a pizza. Later Anita had a glass of white zinfandel and I had three bottles of Coors Light.

Kaplan was very funny and told a few stories from the show. He really did go to school with an Arnold Horshack, played by Ron Palillo who recently fought on *Celebrity Boxing*. The original Horshack talked exactly as Palillo played him and had the annoying habit of reminding teachers to assign homework.

Since the mall is within a short walking distance of The Grand Ole Opry House, he explained he was there on a cultural exchange program and said some country music performers would be performing at the Apollo Theater in Harlem.

We enjoyed the show but wondered whether his comeback will succeed. He is using much of the same material that he used 30 years ago so his appeal is strictly nostalgic.

Outsidecon—

This relaxacon west of Nashville took place the weekend after Conjose. Anita and I were still tired, so we elected to just day trip on Saturday. We arrived around lunchtime and were surprised to find that they were down in attendance. We figured that with Libertycon cancelled and the Worldcon on the West Coast fans in Tennessee would be experience deprivation. Yet all the Nashville fans who went to San Jose came to this convention as well.

It took place at Camp Marymount, a Catholic youth camp. Since there are no eating places close by, the con provides meals. There is a dealer's cabin as well one for videos. We donated a few books to raise money for the Middle Tennessee Science Fiction Society, but there were few takers. Galacticon, a small convention in Chattanooga, had an excellent cabin party with a well stocked bar. We were sorry we left it

Frequent Flyer

to attend the costume contest, which was a disappointment in that there were only five entries and all those at the last minute.

Greater Tuna—

This is the first in a series of three plays about the third smallest town in Texas. Anita and I had already seen the second and third ones, but never the first, which was originally performed off Broadway in 1982. It is a comedy in which two actors each play ten parts and featured the original cast of Joe Sears and Jaston Williams, who are also co-authors. The third co-author, Ed Howard, directed. The story, what there is of it, revolved around the funeral of a local judge and the actions of a local citizen group, Smut Snatchers of the New Order, who want to ban books such as *Roots* from the local school library. "It's too one-sided," said Bertha Bumiller, one of the characters. There is even an SF element when R.R. Snavelly has a close encounter with a flying saucer. My favorite character was his wife Didi Snavelly, operator of "Snavelly's Used Weapons." Their slogan is "If we can't kill it, it's immortal." It's great fun.

Comments to #228

SFPA sightings—

I saw Eve Ackerman, Janice Gelb, Rich Lynch, and waitlister Robert Lichtman at Conjose.

The Hugo nominations—

Here is the order in which I voted for the Best Novel:

1. *Chronoliths* by Robert Paul Wilson. I thought this had the most original premise of all the nominees. The chronoliths of the title are massive structures that come from the future. Most of the story consists of working out the changes to society and individuals that result from these objects.
2. *Cosmonaut Keep* by Ken Macleod. The alternate story lines kept me guessing about what was going on until they converged at the end. This is a novel that begs for a sequel.
3. *Passages* by Connie Willis. Like her other novels, this was slow to get started and her attempts at humor are sometimes distracting. However, it was

worth the effort as the book was hard to put down during the last hundred pages.

4. *Perdido Street Station* by China Mieville. By the end of the novel, I could not decide whether it was science fiction or fantasy. There are both fantasy and technological elements that the author skillfully mixed together and developed with a rigor that I find are usually absent from fantasy stories. It is probably the most ambitious of all the nominees.
5. *American Gods* by Neil Gaiman. This was the winner. I ranked it below the others, because it is fantasy rather than science fiction. I got a kick over the scenes at the House on the Rock in Wisconsin, which I have visited, and the ending takes place on Lookout Mountain near Chattanooga.
6. *Curse of Chailon* by Lois McMaster-Bujold. This is a good fantasy novel, but I don't consider her work to be on the same high level as the others.

I did not get around to reading the short fiction nominees, but I did read two of the non-fiction nominees, both of the books on Tolkien. I made the one edited by Karen Haber my first choice, because I found it more accessible than the one by Tom Shippey. He was working at a level of Tolkien scholarship that is too advanced for me. Haber's book consists of short essays of prominent fantasy writers on how Tolkien influenced them.

Summer movies—

- *Spiderman*: I liked the special effects and was glad they stayed faithful to the first few issues of the comic book, except for killing off the Green Goblin. I hated the Goblin's mask, however. I agree with Eve that Tobey Maguire was perfectly cast in the title role, but Kirsten Dunst did not have the sexual edge that Mary Jane has in the comic book.
- *Star Wars: The Attack of the Clones*: It was better than the previous movie, which isn't saying much. The weakest scenes were the ones with Annakin and Amidala. Certainly Lucas could have found a dialogue writer to help out with the love scenes. On the other hand, I found the political developments and the concept of the clone soldiers to be espe-

cially interesting and can see how they will evolve into Imperial Storm Troopers.

- *Windtalkers*: I thought it was a well-photographed movie, especially the action. However, one of the main plot points, that the Navajo Marine code-talkers had bodyguards with orders to kill them to prevent capture, was not historically accurate. The reason for its inclusion was that they needed a white actor (Nicholas Cage) as the star.
- *Reign of Fire*: This movie exceeded our expectations, which were low because of a very negative review in the newspaper. I've generally enjoyed Matthew McConaughey's performances. I see he's spent a lot of time pumping iron and wonder if he's trying to re-invent himself as an action hero. The premise is that fire-breathing dragons wipe out civilization. If you can get beyond that, it's an OK movie.
- *Minority Report*: It is my favorite film of the summer, and I plan to include it on my Hugo nomination ballot next year. The future Spielberg and the others envision is quite fascinating. Some parts of it are even plausible. I have not read Philip K. Dick's original story, so I can't say how faithful it was.
- *Insomnia*: I liked the concept, originally from a Norwegian movie, of a detective unable to sleep during the Alaska summer and making mistakes because of that. The snow horrified Anita, especially since it was summer and the snow still hadn't melted.
- *Signs*: My second favorite movie of the summer. It is kind of a cross between *Night of the Living Dead* and *The War of the Worlds*. I really admire M. Night Shyamalan's work (*The Sixth Sense* and *Unbreakable*) and look forward to his next film. Critics are already comparing him to Hitchcock and Spielberg, which I can understand although I think it is a bit premature.
- *The Sum of All Fears*: I liked Ben Affleck's version of Jack Ryan in this loose adaptation of Tom Clancy's novel, although I miss Anne Archer as Cathy, Ryan's wife in *Clear and Present Danger* and *Patriot Games*. She's been a favorite actress of mine since I first noticed her popping up in various TV guest star roles in the 1970s. Unlike Jeff Copeland, I am more interested in discussing which Cathy is the best, Archer, Gates McFadden in *The Hunt for Red October*, or Bridget Moynahan in *The Sum of All Fears*.
- *The Bourne Identity*: I had low expectations, because I did not like the novel and failed to finish it. I just couldn't identify with the main character. Jeff Copeland commented on Julia Stiles that she must have done it for the money. I figured she did it because someone else paid for a trip to Paris.
- *Men in Black II*: I laughed through the whole movie. I've liked Lara Flynn Boyle ever since *Twin Peaks*.
- *Austin Powers in Goldmember*: This is another movie in which I laughed the whole way through, even if it is mostly bathroom humor.
- *Crocodile Hunter*: We had never seen Steve Irwin before so we found him amusing. The story was just an excuse for his antics.
- *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*: This is the sleeper hit of the summer. It has grossed \$110 million and only cost \$5 million. The biggest name in the cast was John Corbett, former of *Sex and the City*, who played the male lead. Nia Vardalos, who plays the female lead and wrote the screenplay from her stand-up comedy act, had previously been part of Second City, the Chicago improvisational comedy group. She is pretty but also looks like a real person. Michael Constantine (*Room 222*) and Lainie Kazan were familiar faces. Anita and I had noticed that the film stayed in the theater week after week and finally got around to going. We found it a very pleasant and enjoyable movie, albeit little more than a good sitcom. It is the story of a geeky Greek-American waitress in Chicago who transforms herself from into a beauty and has a romance with a WASP.
- *The Adventures of Pluto Nash*: This Eddie Murphy vehicle is having the opposite success of *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*. It cost \$125 million and has grossed \$4 million. If you've

Frequent Flyer

seen the trailer, not only have you seen the best laughs, but also most of them. Murphy's character is a former smuggler who owns a night-club on the moon. The filmmakers invested large sums in special effects and art design, but little in the screenplay. The story is a take-off on the 1940s *film noir* with Murphy in the kind of role George Raft might have played. Pam Grier was good as Nash's mother, however. The distributors had so little confidence in it that they withheld it from advanced review. This had the disadvantage in the Nashville area that it did not get mentioned in our local paper's weekend section that comes out on Friday and thereby missed out on free publicity.

We still have *Lord of the Rings*, *Harry Potter*, *Star Trek*, and *Solaris* to look forward to.

Wigwam Village—

A few weeks ago, Anita and I watched a movie called *The Dark Wind* on cable. Based on a novel by Tony Hillerman and starring Lou Diamond Philips and Fred Ward, several of the scenes take place in the Arizona Wigwam Village motel.

Liz Copeland—

My condolences and sympathies at having two major funerals so close together. We had two big ones last year, and it took a lot out of us.

We watched the fireworks at Nashville's Riverfront Park on July 4 again this year. They made one major change. Instead of taped music accompanying the fireworks, the Nashville Symphony performed standards such as the *1812 Overture* and *Stars and Stripes Forever*. It worked very nicely, except when they performed Gerschwin, whose songs don't go so well with explosions.

Gary Robe—

Your performance on the DSC panels was quite good, and you have nothing to be embarrassed about. What you will find embarrassing in the future is that you showed up for a 10 PM panel at 10 AM, and the tape captured it.

A young Huntsville fan wrote a letter to the North Alabama Science Fiction Association Shuttle

complaining that there was little to do at the DSC. I know him. His primary interests are costuming and live action role-playing, so I suppose he found us old farts boring.

I had the unfortunate experience of losing a cousin before I was forty, and she was a younger cousin as well. She developed Type One Diabetes as a child and never controlled it properly.

Guy Lillian—

Yes, you may quote my Weekly World News comment. How can you trust a publication that doesn't know the difference between the actors who played Charlie Chan's number one and two sons? Proclaim it to the world.

In the DSC picture that included me, you misidentified John Hollis as "John Collier".

Robert Redford was on a flight from New York to Los Angeles on 9/10 last year, but was originally booked on the flight that crashed in Pennsylvania the following day.

Mike Weber—

I once read an article by Bill Maudlin about his experience of filming *The Red Badge of Courage* with Audie Murphy. In the original script, Murphy's character confesses to Maudlin's that he got scared and ran during the battle, and Maudlin says he ran, too. Murphy couldn't bring himself to confess his character's cowardice to an REMF such as Maudlin, so they reversed the dialogue, with Maudlin confessing first.

Your comments about General Sherman as someone "who simply set a valid strategic/tactical objective, put their head down, and went for it the best they could" also could apply to Longstreet. His treatment in *The Killer Angels* and its movie adaptation *Gettysburg* is much more favorable than Jeb Stuart's and in some ways even more positive than Lee's. By the way, Longstreet and Grant were close friends before the war.

While *Once Upon a Time in the West* is a slow moving film and I had to see it at least twice before I could keep up with all the characters, I agree that the review you reprint is obtuse. Jane Fonda said once for a documentary that her father's first scene, which I won't give away, was the only time he ever surprised her on screen.

Frequent Flyer

This may sound perverse, but I found Mrs. Jetson more attractive than Judy. Josie, Daphne, and Velma come from a period after I stopped watching Saturday morning cartoons. I don't think my local TV channels showed any Betty Boop cartoons, so she was not part of my upbringing. Daria and Jane are so clearly characters of the 1990s that I have a hard time imagining what my pre-adolescent self would have thought of them.

Let me get this straight. You devoted all that space to Scoobie Doo, but considered *Leave it to Beaver* to be too stupid to waste your time on.

Gary Brown—

My parents, who live in a retirement community called The Villages between Leesburg and Ocala, complained that the weather prevented them from playing a full 18 holes of golf all summer. A typical day would start out nice, but by the time they got on the back nine a storm would be brewing.

Ned Brooks—

Dilbert appears in the business section of The Tennessean, Nashville's daily newspaper, except on Sundays, when it appears with the other color comics. *Doonesbury* appears in the regular comics section all seven days. The paper dropped *Cathy*, a couple years ago, although both Anita and I liked it.

Steve Hughes—

I've never met Bernie Ebbers, although we may have shared an elevator when our offices were in the same building, and I've never heard anything negative about him personally. The September 19 issue of the USA Today had a long article on him saying that he acts the same today now that he is bankrupt as he did when his net worth was over \$1 billion and expects to be exonerated of all wrongdoing. He no longer drives a pickup truck, but rather a Lexus SUV but still wears blue jeans to almost all occasions.

So far the Worldcom CFO Scott Sullivan and Comptroller David Myers have been the main objects of investigation, and many people believe that since Ebbers was a "hands-off" manager, he may not have been aware of their financial manipulations, such as classifying \$3.8 billion in operating expenses as capi-

tal investments, to produce positive earnings reports. Since you wrote your zine, there has been the allegation that they were also manipulating the reserves for bad debts and lawsuit losses by \$3.3 billion on the balance sheet to improve their earnings. Again, this is something that Ebbers himself may not have realized, and in Worldcom's defense, a lot of other companies did the same thing in the 1990s, although not on Worldcom's scale.

Even in Worldcom's heyday, the most common criticism against their acquisition strategy was that they paid too high a premium when they bought up other companies. I just read an article that said they may have to write down the value of those acquisitions.

Irv Koch—

I have a cigarette car charger adaptor for my cell phone, but only use it on long trips. Normally, I recharge the phone at night.

Jeff Copeland—

Anita and I saw *Glitter* starring Mariah Carey on HBO. We don't think it ever reached the movie theaters in Nashville, or, if it did, it left too fast for us to see it. It was not a great movie, but hardly deserving of the scorn that was heaped upon it.

I read an article a while back that speculated that the reason Pakistan and India did not go to all-out war this summer was India's software industry. Because such a war could go nuclear, software companies supposedly informed India's government that they would cancel all their software development contracts and cripple India's economy if they didn't cool it.

Re the new stadium for the Denver Broncos: At least with the Green Bay Packers, their financial statements are known to the public, and they only wanted to remodel the existing stadium, which is older than Mile-High. What I find objectionable is that stadiums that are only 20-30 years old are classified as "obsolete". It used to be that when a city built a stadium, they could expect to get at least 50 years of use out of them. Not anymore.