

Home

With

the

Armadillo



Home with the Armadillo #47 is brought to you by Liz Copeland of 3243 165th Ave. SE, Bellevue WA 98008. Phone number is 425-641-0209. Email is received at lizc@nwlinc.com. Done in May 2001, for SFPA 221.

Spring pollen continues at record levels. This means I have had little energy for anything other than the necessities. I know Guy will disagree with me here, but SFPA is not one of my necessities. Sorry. So, we have yet another skimpy zine. Knowing this was likely, I did keep a list of what books I've read since the last deadline so there will be reviews. And a few comments.

Besides being laid low by pollen and molds, what have I been doing? Most importantly, I've seen a new doctor who has started me on thyroid medication. This seems to be helping my general energy level and dissipating the morning mental fog I have suffered from for years. Apparently, it's common for some women to develop thyroid problems after pregnancy and I am one of them. We're still working on getting the right dose but I'll report on that later so as to avoid the SFPA Jinx.

The other project going on now is The Magician card for the Tarot quilt project. I had a great idea, sketched it out and spent a couple of weeks dyeing fabric to try and make it work. Then my sewing machine decided to malfunction. And I looked at the fabric pieces all together and decided that the design sucked so I spent another week dyeing more fabric to do a second design. Then the group deadline was changed from May 1 to Sept 1, so I put all the fabric away and decided to let it stew for a bit. My machine goes into the shop next Monday so it will be a week or two after that before I get the project going again. (The local Bernina store runs a three week backlog on machine work so I had to make an appointment. My doctor does better than that...)

In mid-April, during their spring break, the kids and I went to the humane society and picked out a new cat. JJ got final veto power since Charlie and Susie are Allie's cats and the rule is 2 pets per kid. We looked at a big fluffy cat named Taz but he had this bad habit of suddenly hissing at you in the middle of being petted, so we decided

someone else could deal with him. Our second choice cat had a name of Scotty on his card. He's black and only about a year old and was probably abandoned as he came to the humane society via the Animal Control people. JJ named him Scotty Tuvak Schwarzin Copeland. I think he's been watching too much Star Trek lately...

And last, but certainly not least, JJ had his 11th birthday on April 26th. He asked for art supplies so we went to Aaron Brothers and bought him watercolors and acrylics plus brushes and paper and canvas boards. He's decided that he doesn't like watercolors; even with the tube ones that he can mix to any consistency he wants. However, he loves the acrylics and is doing 5 or 6 paintings a week. JJ was sweet enough to give me the one that I really liked for a Mother's Day present. It now sits in the middle of my display space in the livingroom.

Reviews

As is usual when I'm feeling bad, I did quite a bit of rereading this last two months. I started out with the *China Bayles* series by Susan Wittig Albert. I took a class on journaling as a spiritual quest from Susan when we were living in Austin so I bought the first one because I liked the class so much. China is the main character that used to be a lawyer but decided that life in the fast lane wasn't as fulfilling as she wanted so she got out. She opens an herbal shop in Pecan Springs, a small town south of Austin, and proceeds to live her life while wrestling with the changes. And all of the books in the series have herbs in the name. I like the series, and tend to reread it when I'm going through one of my periodic reevaluations of my goals. Here's a quote that I particularly liked this time around:

So I said "No Thanks, Tom. I want to spend the rest of my time here getting some rest. And doing some thinking." I'd already done a little of both, enough to realize that the only thing wrong with my life was an overabundance of good things. All I needed to do was search out the center - the thing I wanted most to be, wanted most to have and do - and use it as a compass.

China Bayles, Rueful Death by Susan W. Albert

In order, the books are *Thyme of Death*, *Witches' Bane*, *Hangman's Root*, *Rosemary Remembered*, *Rueful Death*, *Love Lies Bleeding*, *Chili Death*, *Lavender Lies*, and *Mistletoe Man*. The new one coming out this October is *Blood Root*.

I was particularly pleased that the **Krispy Kreme** doughnuts fedexed by **Toni** arrived right after I finished and hung up the Seven of Cups over the mantel in the livingroom, and finished reading *Chili Death* in which someone has an allergic reaction and dies upon eating chili that has peanuts added to it. I've never had these doughnuts before and I loved them, especially the kreme filled ones. Anyone know the ingredients list? I'm just curious if there's anything in them that I'm not allergic to.

A new book from a very good author is *All the Dead Lie Down* by Mary Willis Walker. This is the third Molly Cates book and may well be the last. In it, Molly discovers new evidence about her father's death. His death, and the mystery surrounding it, have twisted and changed her life and continue to shape how she lives. To finally solve that lingering mystery has been her lifelong dream. In this book, she does so. It's probably good enough to stand alone, but I'd still recommend reading at least *The Red Scream* before reading this one. The second book, *Under the Beetle's Cellar*, is difficult for me to read, as it is a story about children being kidnapped and held hostage. Although it is a good book that won 3 awards. I just get squeamish on account of having kids.

My next book event was having **Lisa** ask for a recommendation for which Nero Wolfe to read first. Her interest was piqued by Rush Limbaugh recommending the series. (I note that even a broken clock is right twice a day.) So I had to think which ones I would recommend for someone to start with. *Some Buried Caesar* has always been one of my favorites so that one headed the list. But I wanted to give her more of the later books too so I added *Too Many Cooks* to the list. And, of course, *Fer-de-Lance*, the first one had to be first. This whole email exchange with Lisa made me yearn for Archie so I reread the whole series. Serendipitously A&E started running their Nero Wolfe series just in time for both Lisa and I to enjoy them. I had just finished *The Doorbell Rang* the week before the first episode and found both to be very enjoyable.

After I finished the Nero Wolfe books, I noticed I had a stack of Robert Crais books sitting in the corner, unread. So I read them. Well worth it. I'm now trying to get Jeff to read the first Elvis Cole book, *The Monkey's Raincoat*. I see echoes of the early Spenser books here, but with the focus on Elvis and his buddy. Any women are peripheral to their relationship and their work. And Crais puts more depth into them than Parker did with Spenser. I was particularly pleased to have these lead me to Crais' latest book, *Demolition*

Angel. This is book about a female detective who used to be on the bomb squad but transferred to another group after being blown up and losing her partner/lover. I found the bomb stuff fascinating and the characters very interesting. I'd recommend this one to any mystery reader who doesn't limit their reading to cozies.

My reading this last week was *Timeline* by Michael Crichton. It's an interesting idea, and done well. There's time travel and parallel universes but even better, there are the main characters who go back in time to medieval France. They discover their misconceptions about life in that time period and have multiple harrowing experiences trying to rescue the lost professor.



In and amongst reading these books, we watched several movies. I didn't do as good a job as Jeff of keeping track of what movies we've seen but here's a few of them.

The 6th Day has Arnold doing his thing. Nice helicopter bits, reasonable plot. I give it 3 stars, using the Netflix rating where 1 is didn't like it, 2 is just ok, 3 is liked it, 4 is liked it a lot, and 5 is really, really loved it.

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon on the other hand, rates 4 stars easily. Great story, fabulous photography, wire fu that cannot be believed. If you haven't seen it, you should.

We continue to appreciate finally getting the sci-fi channel. The latest cause for appreciation was the 6 hours of *Dune* that they did. It captured the essence of the book and kept our attention. Allie was intrigued.

Shaft kept the mood and style of the original and updated it to today. Samuel L. Jackson does a good job as the main character, with an excellent supporting cast. It's a Jackson action flick with the great Shaft music. 3 stars.

Men of Honor was surprisingly good. After seeing Cuba Gooding in *Instinct*, I was worried that this would also be overly contrived, but I was pleasantly surprised. But I'm a sucker for determination and grit conquers all obstacles type of movies so take that into account in deciding whether to see it. We rented the DVD, so we got to see the extra stuff including some great interviews with Carl Bashear, the man whose life is portrayed. I'd give it 3 stars.

In an attempt to decide whether to buy the DVD, we rented *Miss Congeniality*. I don't think we've decided on the buy issue, but it was great fun to see it again. Sandra Bullock is one of the family's favorite actresses and everybody enjoyed the combination of humor and action flick in this movie. Not to mention the wonderful performance by William Shatner as the aging commentator at the beauty pageant. (And to get me to praise Shatner, it had to be good.) Definitely 4 stars, maybe more.

Every so often, there's actually a movie that the whole family wants to see in the theatre. *Shrek* was it for this spring. What a great outing! The movie is funny with adult references and snide bits that make it fun for the parents, a good story and great animation for the kids and a smidge of potty humor, which seems to be required for comedies this year. Fortunately, the gross stuff is over with early and then the story takes over. 5 stars.

And that wraps up this zine for now. Oh, yea, the bacover is a picture from Archie McFee's webpage for the official t-shirt for the pug rescue group. Pugs have become a family obsession since the day that Allie found a stray one wandering down the block and put in the garage and then called me 5 times to ask if she could keep it. The neighbor who owned the pug showed up before I got home from work, thus rescuing me from the horns of the dilemma but Allie has adored pugs ever since.

GSA says there's no truth to White House vandal scandal

BY DAVID GOLDSTEIN
Knight Ridder Newspapers

WASHINGTON — Without a hint of fanfare, the General Services Administration (GSA) found the White House vandalism flap earlier this year was a flop.

It concluded departing members of the Clinton administration had not trashed the place during the presidential transition, as unnamed aides to President Bush and others had insisted.

Responding to a request from Rep. Bob Barr, R-Ga., who asked for an investigation, the GSA found nothing out of the ordinary had occurred.

"The condition of the real property was consistent with what we would expect to encounter when tenants vacate office space after an extended occupancy," accord-

ing to a GSA statement.

In other words, no wholesale slashing of cords to computers, copiers and telephones, no evidence of lewd graffiti or pornographic images. GSA didn't bother to nail down reports of pranks, more puckish than destructive.

Clinton aides apparently removed the "w" key from some of the computer keyboards and placed official-looking signs on doors that said things like "Office of Strategy," after a "Saturday Night Live" spoof on Bush.

The vandal scandal, however, was the hottest story in town during the early days of the Bush administration: unverified charges of wanton property destruction in the White House and on Air Force One.

The press reported it all,

which Bush aides fanned into a front-page controversy.

"I think it was this calculated effort to plant a damaging story," said Alex Jones, director of the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard University.

And it worked. Clinton's critics went ballistic.

Typical was Tony Snow, a syndicated columnist and former presidential speechwriter for Bush's father, who wrote that the White House "was a wreck." He

also said that following the inauguration, Air Force One "looked as if it had been stripped by a skilled band of thieves — or perhaps wrecked by a trailer park twister."

He went on to list all manner of missing items, including silverware, porcelain dishes with the presidential seal and even candy.

"It makes one feel grateful that the seats and carpets are bolted down," Snow fumed.

Except none of it happened. At the height of the controversy, an

official at Andrews Air Force Base said nothing was missing. President Bush himself acknowledged that a few days later.

And now GSA has made it official.

As for the critics, Barr's office refused to return calls about the GSA findings.

Snow was somewhat contrite. "I'm perfectly willing to admit my error on the aircraft," he said, but added that he still believed his sources who told him about White House damage.

White House won't apologize for Clinton mischief charges

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Bush's spokesman said yesterday there will be no apology to former Clinton administration aides for allegations of pranks and vandalism as the White House changed hands.

Asked about a letter signed by former Clinton aides seeking an apology, White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said: "No apology is merited. They are well-advised to leave it alone."

Rep. Anthony Weiner, D-N.Y., scheduled a news conference at the White House gate yesterday to deliver the letter, which follows an investigation of the matter by the General Accounting Office, Congress' investigative arm.

The GAO concluded that "there was no proof of anything matching the allegations" by identified White House officials who said they were greeted by damaged offices and equipment. Former Clinton aides said the GAO's findings vindicated them.

The media blew it on Clintons' gifts

GENEVA OVERHOLSER

Syndicated columnist



WASHINGTON — The ruckus over the Clintons making off with unprecedented amounts of loot from their White House years is a great story. Do we care whether it's true?

The Washington Post reported Jan. 21 that the Clintons, "faced with multimillion-dollar houses to furnish here and in suburban New York, left the White House yesterday with an unprecedented \$190,027 worth of gifts received over the last eight years." The always lively New York Post said: "Prez and Hil Gifts Could Fill Mansion."

The Washington Post was more sophisticatedly scathing. "Who Said You Can't Take It With You?" said a feature story. "Count the Spoons" said an editorial, concluding that the gift list "demonstrates again the Clintons' defining characteristic: They have no capacity for embarrassment. Words like shabby and tawdry come to mind." And note this: "No previous president appears to have accepted parting gifts of such magnitude, nor did the Clintons approach their last year's total in prior years."

The last part of that sentence is true. A May 1994 story in the Minneapolis Star Tribune noted: "Compared to the bounty reported by previous presidents, the gifts reported by the Clintons this week seem relatively modest, and in keeping with what you might expect from the first baby boomer president. Of the dozens of unsolicited gifts that arrived at the White House, the Clintons accepted \$11,000 worth, less than half the value of those accepted by the Bushes in 1990."

Media accounts cite \$26,839 as the Bush total the first year. Each May after that, the report was filed and the stories followed: \$3,100 worth of evening bags, a gingerbread house

A May 1994 story in the Minneapolis Star Tribune noted: "Compared to the bounty reported by previous presidents, the gifts reported by the Clintons this week seem relatively modest, and in keeping with what you might expect from the first baby boomer president. Of the dozens of unsolicited gifts that arrived at the White House, the Clintons accepted \$11,000 worth, less than half the value of those accepted by the Bushes in 1990."

for Millie, fishing rods and ties for the president. The 1992 list included "a \$265 briefcase from Actor Dan Aykroyd, a \$1,245 handbag from designer Judith Leiber, three bathrobes and two sweat shirts from Ivana Trump . . . and a \$400 membership at the Arundel Beach Club purchased by a Maine neighbor."

Such lists don't exactly elevate a public servant, and when the final year's Bush filing came in at \$53,000, there were editorial complaints about the White House becoming a black hole for gifts. But that was it.

So how do the Bushes and Clintons compare? Hints emerged a week after the first story, in a Washington Post piece about bad reviews for the Clintons' final days — including the gifts. It said: "The \$190,000 in gifts they accepted includes some gifts received in earlier years, but which the Clintons only decided recently to take with them out of the White House; the cumulative gifts they accepted are roughly on a scale with what previous presidents have taken, and not nearly so grandiose as Ronald Reagan's decision to let friends purchase a \$2 million home for him until he raised money to buy it back."

Then The New York Times, which previously ran only a brief accounting of the gifts, on Jan. 30 reported that Mrs. Clinton "refused today to discuss the gifts at any length, saying: 'We followed all the rules.' . . . She also suggested that on a yearly basis the Clintons had accepted gifts in the White House at the same level as former President George Bush and his wife, Barbara."

So is this true? According to the government office where these ethics reports are filed, the documents are destroyed, by law, after six years. But the fellow I talked to said he's

been in the office for 20 years and believes, "What makes this different is that they're reporting it all at once. I don't think (the Clintons) had done a whole lot of reporting before."

News accounts over the eight years show a total of \$253,000 worth of gifts reported by the Clintons. For three years, I found no news stories. The only media estimate I could find of Bush's totals was \$144,000, listed by the online magazine, Salon. My own Bush count from news stories was \$130,000. So, presumably, an eight-year equivalent would be something like \$275,000. That leaves plenty of unknowns — but a strong impression that Bush and Clinton are in the same range on per-year gift acceptance.

As for other presidents, the reporting requirement began in 1978. Since then, we've had only the parsimonious Jimmy Carter; Ronald Reagan, of the \$2 million gift house; and Bush and Clinton. Before the reporting requirement, presidential historian Michael Beschloss has said, "It was pretty loose. . . . President Eisenhower in the 1950s, friends of his gave him all sorts of things for his farm in Gettysburg. They built a cottage for him at the Augusta National Golf Course."

Full disclosure. A comprehensive reporting of the facts: These have been good advances in public policy. They make good media policy, too, when not ignored. To borrow from the Washington Post editorial, the press has little capacity for embarrassment. And words like shabby come to mind.

Geneva Overholser is a columnist with the Washington Post Writers Group.

Pugs on Parade

Or the annual spring fun dog thing in Seattle

BY SHERRY STRIPLING
Seattle Times staff reporter

If you think that you will never see a pug as pretty as a sunflower, you missed last year's pug fashion show.

Will that be the highlight Saturday at this year's "Pug Gala 2001: A Pug Odyssey"? Or will it be the pug races or the pug talent show, which could have an encore performance from the jack-in-the-box pug who perfectly times his leaps on musical cue?

The 2 to 4 p.m. event at Meany Middle School on Capitol Hill benefits the pug division of Seattle Purebred Dog Rescue.

To David Wahl of the sponsoring Archie McPhee & Co., nothing comes close to the legendary moment of silence. That's when the only sound in the room is hundreds of pugs wheezing.

"It's almost overwhelming," says Wahl, proud owner of Roscoe, 4, who's featured in an Archie McPhee beanie on this year's benefit T-shirt. Then again, says Wahl, you can hear them all breathing even if everyone in the room is *not* quiet.

"In fact, the humans have to speak up just to be heard."

Pugs date back to 100 B.C., if you accept that they were the little beauties described in China as "short-legged, short-headed dogs whose place was under the table."

Dutch traders brought the dogs to Europe — such cute dogs were said to be a way to curry favor with the ladies. And royals have al-

ways had a soft spot for pugs.

Can you blame them? Sniff. Sniff. Wheeeeeeeze.

Wahl says the compact dogs with even more compact faces were bred for no other purpose than to entertain. And they do it superbly.

In addition to being the most loyal dog he's ever had, Wahl says Roscoe shares these traits: "Pugs are nice, affectionate and they're hilariously funny.

"Not that they always appreciate being laughed at, but that just makes it funnier."

That good personality is one reason pugs end up needing rescue. People forget they are inside, social animals and leave them outside, where they pine away from lack of attention.

Or they're abandoned because they have medical woes, including respiratory problems (snout's too short) or vision complaints (eyes too big and vulnerable).

For more details on the event — which promises "lots of great sights and sounds and a few interesting smells" — visit www.mcphee.com or call 206-297-0240.

*Sherry Stripling can be reached at
sstripling@seattletimes.com or 206-464-2520.*

