

PETER, PAN & MERRY #41

A zine for SFPA # 225

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Come and Tarry on SFPA 224

Southerner – I think my final clue (if one was needed) about the mail service problem occurred across New Year's. On Dec 20 I printed the temple newsletter. On the 21st everything was bundled and ready to go and I took it to the post office. As of January 6th, none have been delivered (to my knowledge). This is in and around town, not the one's going out of the area. Tomorrow I, or someone, have to call and find out what's what. (MIA is what they are. Now we need to reprint and remail. The mailing will be at no cost but nobody can get to our free printing service for now.)// And shouldn't you have enclosed a non-attached delivery confirmation form so those completists among us won't have any issue about using them?

Ned Brooks – Ct Richard D: Just looking at a quick convenient (and not overly new) reference I have handy, it's not known what reactivates the herpes zoster virus to initiate an attack of shingles but a likely reason it only occurs once is that the reactivation is like a booster shot and the body can then deal with any future attempts. (Generally shingles occurs in “older” people a good number of years after their chicken pox infection so their immunity would be down a bit allowing the initial reactivation to occur.) // Voodoo cards to get from one floor of a building to another? Is that something like a portable hole? // Hmmm. If the Confederate flag design is Civil War and beyond in usage, then it could be argued that it really is divorceable from the concept of slavery. Unfortunately that same timeline means it gets associated with racism, Jim Crow laws, the KKK, etc. It seems like a no win situation for the design.

To some extent you're right about some of the religious schools in that region (I don't recall the specific name for them) vs medieval Europe. But in Europe, those who actually went to schools (I believe) were taught to read and write Latin. For the populace, the Bible was all “learned” by what they heard in churches and were told by the literati rather than being specifically taught it by rote. // Ct me: Janice and I disagree on this but it still seems to me that feed containing animal waste would make the cattle into “scavengers” and thus not kosher. / Seems to me that CJD is rare enough that getting it via dura matter from a corpse would be unlikely. Still, it's hard to track when there are few and far between incidents. And, of course, it's during the early stages of data gathering and sorting that all sorts of possibilities crop up that require further study to weed out. // To clarify: 1) The photos you saw did not show prisoners. At the time the pepper stuff was used, they had handcuffed themselves (in metal sleeves) into an office. (I guess they were technically under arrest though.) 2) The purpose was to get them to release the cuffs. What that does or doesn't do to justify the actions is another question.

Norm Metcalf – Ct Ned: Even if they had batteries sufficiently advanced to power a locomotive, how many were required to run for how long? Would they have enabled the Nautilus to operate for anything like the length of time it did? And at anything near the comfort level? // Ct me: I suppose one can (to an extent) differentiate between something that is technically or critically good vs something that is just plain enjoyable (I can even do it between “I like this food” and “It's well made but I don't like it”.) but as a practical matter both are simply measures of the author's craft and they don't have to coincide.

Normallite - I wasn't questioning the ability of the Austronesians (or others) to sail the seas. I was thinking more of motives. Island (or peninsula) hopping would be reasonable simply because the shorter distances would have made it more likely that they might have heard rumor of the place and gone looking rather than just exploring. // No, I'm not using "science fiction" as a shorthand for any imaginative tale. But I don't think boundaries between the various forms of imaginative fiction are hard and fast. There are gray areas. "20,000 Leagues" is in that area between SF and Techno-thriller and could even (evolutionarily speaking) be considered an ancestral form of both. // I know that - historically - there had been a relative shortage of women in fandom, but that article made it sound like the balancing of that was a recent change rather than around 30 years old.

Richard Lynch - Ct Guy: I think it'll be an interesting year for Dramatic Presentation: Rings, Potter, Shrek, maybe an episode of Enterprise, lots of conflicting interests. (Of course, none of the movies mentioned are SF) Next year too with Spiderman, SW Episode II and Two Towers. // Ct Toni: I saw an analysis of the WTC that indicated that pretty much everyone who was below the crash site had time to make it out before the collapse and that almost nobody was able to make it out from at or above the crash site. So it did do something of what it was supposed to. Also, the problem was not just that there was a big fire. The structural damage and jet fuel pretty much wiped out large areas of insulating material and thus subjected the frame to more and faster heat than was anticipated.

Steve Hughes - Ct Ned: The problem with so many laws of good intent (weapons at school, child pornography, whatever) is that they tend to be written with no wiggle room and rely on people using common sense in what to prosecute. Which would be fine if everyone actually used common sense in that. Trying to list all (or, at least, the main) exceptions (and exceptions to the exceptions) might be the only answer. // Ct Guy: For the moment it appears as if air traffic is moving back towards normal levels. Last I heard, I think things were at about 80% of pre-Sept 11th levels. How much higher that goes and how soon is impossible to say. And I don't know what level the airlines need to be viable. I guess we'll find out just how everything shakes out in the not too distant future. // Ct me: While there are a few spotty areas (we'll need to toss some more seed down after the rains let up), grass has been growing quite nicely over the entire lawn area, including where the pool had been. It may have something to do with having used a local blend of grass seeds that would be amenable to the general soil type that we have. // I'd like to say that the linkage is more that the stock market is a measure of the economy rather than a driver of it. But by now there is so much perception involved that people's confidence in the economy is heavily based on how the stock markets go so it's pretty tough to untangle the two.

I think the thought would be that having all these economies interlinked would create something of an effect whereby the stronger ones would hold up the weaker ones at any given time. The problem being that weaknesses in a couple of big places really aren't offsetable by strength in a few small places. // Ct Janice: Israel makes no bones about using "racial profiling" in its security checks. / The catch with using it (particularly in a place like the U.S.) is that it's all too easy for someone with a plain old prejudice to use that to harass people of their choice. I don't know if there is any good "middle ground" here unless it's that, in times of heightened danger, you err more towards security and at other times lean more towards civil liberties. And that's a pretty dicey razor's edge to be on.

Wishing You Steve - // It seems like all the prediction of American ground troops and casualties are falling flat. Certainly there is a presence, but it wasn't mostly in active combat (although there was a more active role in searching the hills) and casualties have been minimal. As for breeding more terrorists, I suspect that a) the total dead civilians is about what it might have been just given a continuing civil war, b) those inclined to do so would find justification somewhere else if not in Afghanistan and c) most of the Afghanis seem fairly happy with the outcome. // I've heard a retort to "violence is the last resort of the incompetent" – that it's the first resort of the incompetent and the last resort for the competent. But whichever, I agree that it's use is appropriate when it's appropriate and not automatically either EVIL or The Right Thing. // Ct Toni: See my comment to Richard Lynch about the breakdown of survivors vs deaths at the WTC. If correct, it shows – apparently – there were enough stairs to allow for the complete evacuation in the time that they had. How else explain the nearly complete skewing of survivors below the crash sites and casualties above?

Jeff Copeland – The "Handcuffs and Peanut Butter" title reminded me of some of the recent commercials where two nasal sufferers collide and "You got your nasal strip in my Vapo-rub." "You got your Vapo-rub on my nasal strip." I just wonder how many people remember where that idea came from. // I agree that a "National Travel ID Card" isn't going to do much to increase security. ID is ID. // While Random was annoyed at stuff that was left out of *The Sorcerer's Stone*, we all enjoyed the movie greatly. And agree on the casting of Hagrid as just about perfect – as was Alan Rickman as Snape. // I'll be interested in your take on LotR. So far, the harshest critic of the film that I've talked to was (surprise!) David Bratman. I think everyone who has read the books will have things that really bother them about the adaptation. Mine mostly involve character points or (IMO) significant plot points that were changed/ignored to allow more time for action – MINI SPOILER ALERT - For example, compressing the timeframe on the leaving of Bag End and the Shire forced Merry and Pippin's joining them into being a spur-of-the-moment decision rather than the well-planned show of loyalty and friendship that it was and leaves those two hobbits looking rather too flip. That was probably the thing that bugged me the most since it didn't add anything to compensate for that loss. Yes, there was more "action" in the movie than was actually stated in the book but, except as it forced trimming of some character/plot points that I felt were significant, I found that to be within bounds.

Ct me: I've occasionally had the borrow-read-find thing happen when I was visiting with Greg and Jenny. I suspect (for me) that part of that is checking something out, finding I like it and then making a more active search and thus finding the book(s). // While Kay and I like vacations where we can "plop", we want there to be enough to do to let the plopping be enjoyable rather than having it run off into boredom. Napa was edging a bit close to too much "plop" mainly because there wasn't enough "right there" stuff to do (doubly so not being vinophiles). But better that than overbooked. // Ct Trinlay: So maybe Anakin's having to "give up" his mom plays a role in that it makes having to give up the Princess too just too much. Of course the die roll didn't force him to give up his mother, either way the roll went they would have been split up. / If I was going to play Jedi Shrink, I'd guess that his thrill-seeking (eg pod-racing) would be the character flaw that would be the wedge to drive him over to the dark side. // Ct Janice: Why not pre-print a tardy excuse with check off boxes for you to fill in as needed. Then just sign and date and you're ready to go.

Handcuffs and Copeland Butter - Ct Janet: Almost worse than the national security shortcut through the Bill of Rights is Ashcroft's baldfaced assertion that anyone who complains on that basis is aiding and abetting the terrorists. Gee, I wonder if they might arrest someone for that. // My problem with gov't "pork" is not the spending of money on projects but that, rather than discussing them on their own merit, they get added to some popular or important bill or other as a way of assuring passage. Even that wouldn't be toooo bad if all states and districts got a fair share of the benefits. // Ct Toni: Actually, the U.S. did end up with 4-5 major political parties. They just happened to run sequentially instead of concurrently. // 221// Ct me: On The Simpsons the other night, the local Republicans were meeting and one of the items was that "Thanks to Disney Animatronics, Strom Thurmond would stay in office for another 100 years". Even funnier, to me, was having Bob Dole give a reading from the Necronomicon (it even sounded right).

Eve Ackerman - So the tour guide at Harvard could be considered an example of Ivy League inbreeding?

Gary Brown - It's hard to say how things would have turned out (considering the total difference in support available to "the enemy") but the way that Afghanistan was run seems like it was the way Vietnam should have (and for a short while was) run. Air support, ground troop coordination, etc but no active, on-the-ground, military involvement. I suspect that Vietnam would have turned out the same way overall but would not have invoked nearly the hue and cry on the domestic front. Of course hindsight is so marvelously clear. And who knows where a less divisive '60s might have led us to. // Seems to me that the point is not who would have ultimately won if the Florida recount had gone through (ie "See we won anyway so what's the difference?") but that a legal recount was prevented by the Supreme Court. // I find the Hutchins article on Superman to be amusing in at least one sense: To say that a couple of Jewish kids from NY would come up with a Christ figure is a bit odd. On a minor point, the word "Kal" itself means "all". "Hal" - if it means anything by itself - seems related to the word for "praise". Of course, going with that theme, we have trouble with his father as "Jor" would have no specific meaning in Hebrew since the "J" sound isn't part of the alphabet.

Ct Richard D: Your dad's situation sounds something like mine. He generally doesn't use a walker (although at times he does) but he keeps a cane handy all the time. He did have a walker that he used a lot for a while but it did more harm than good since he refused to listen to how it was supposed to be used and just did as he felt like. Up until now my they have been able to handle most things pretty well between the two of them but now my mom has to limit the usage on her left arm (following the lumpectomy and lymph node removal) so I can see it starting to get a bit more difficult. Whether that will move them to the stage of having more regular help or even into some sort of assisted living arrangement only time will tell. // Ct Richard L: Maybe Selig wants MLB to undergo contraction so that some new teams can be born? // Ct me: Several years ago the front end of my old car was a bit bashed in and the hood release rather screwed up. You could still open it, but the initial release (that let you get to the second catch) didn't work well and it took some doing to reach the second release. // While there was clearly a story in the Levy case - and a sidebar on Condit - it seems that the tail (the Condit sidebar) was wagging the dog (the Levy disappearance). // Yeah, we've known Tom since way back in my time in L.A. - even if we didn't see him all that often.

Obrowno - Ct Janice: The Israelis must have done it because the Moslems don't have the capability. Is that fainting with damn praise or what? I can't even begin to comment on all that fallacies that statement is loaded with. // There was a Krispy Kreme cart at the mall in L.A. where we went to see Harry Potter. Didn't buy any. // Ct Don: Why should W have flown back to the White House on Sept 11? Aside from a macho "I dare you to try that again" what would have been the point. I suspect that, even had he wanted to, his security detail would have completely nixed that idea. /// For some reason your zine got me to thinking about why I stopped buying comics a few years ago. I didn't – and don't - have any firm reason but I suspect that it involved a) the evolving art and layout style and b) the preponderance of multipart, multi-title story lines.

Gary Robe – I don't think you should blame the Mexican authorities for having daylight savings on a different schedule than the U.S. Wasn't it the U.S. that changed the dates for our time changes back a decade or two so there would be more of it? // The thing with Sky Marshals is not that they have to be on all flights, just that the uncertainty of that possibility would act as a deterrent. "... Afghanistan... an entrenched and popular regime..." Where did you get the notion that the Taliban were particularly popular? From what I gather they weren't very popular at all – just entrenched and in power. / And, on a practical level, we never really invaded the country anyway. // Re Ashcroft: And don't forget: Don't complain about restrictions on civil rights. That's giving aid and support to the enemy. // And congratulations on the Red Belt. // Ct Ned: Having recently seen Young Frankenstein for the first time, Random is now quoting from the film at odd moments (albeit not as well timed as Isaac's was). // Ct me: Yeah, it was one hell of a play-off and World Series this last year. The only way it could have been better would have been if the Dodgers had won. My only regret is that the way the games were scheduled I wasn't able to watch more than a couple since I had to be at work (and radio reception is dicey best there). As to when there has been as good a one, I don't know. I will say that, in some ways, having a really good series when I'm totally neutral is just about the best of all worlds (and in this one I most certainly was not neutral).

That's quite a drop in cholesterol level. But that triglyceride is pretty high. In fact, it makes me wonder if a) you weren't fasting when the blood was drawn or b) there is some sort of hereditary condition involved. // Ct Janice re terrorists hiding behind car bombs: I was reading in American Heritage a review of some good films on terrorism and one had a semi-quote: When accused of being cowards for using baby carriages, the response was "You have planes, tanks, etc. If you give us those, you can have the baby carriages." I don't think that the weapons used are the defining criteria so much as the primary targets of the weapons.

Liz Copeland – Speaking of buying new cars, I got an email from Jenny Montaire that – partially on my recommendation – her new car is a Saturn. And I'm supposed to be getting a "Thank You" gift of some sort from the company. And maybe this year we'll be able to get Kay a new car too as our income looks to be predictable enough to be able to budget for that (after we pay off the Saturn). // If Jeff wants to cycle to work but his knees are giving him trouble, he might want to look into recumbent bikes (you actually sit in them and pedal more forward and back than up and down). // Ct me re Westercon v DSC: I probably shouldn't talk. Considering the number of LASFAPans I had hoped to see there, I would probably have referred to it as LosCon. // So now that we've agreed, in principal, to a swapping of slugs, are we looking at a one-for-one trade? Well, maybe better not. They have concerns about non-native species invading the area. // Random loved the Potter film – even if he was more annoyed about what was left out than we were.

Lizadillo – Ct Arthur: The problem with trying to do ability grouping w/o stigma is that, even if you don't label the classes as being sorted that way, it will become known that "If you're in X's class you must be slow". I do agree that the ideal should be classes that are at a level that are challenging (but not overwhelming) for each student (which implies ability grouping) which would give them the maximum chance to really learn. Parents need to be more concerned with the now rather than the "How will this look on a college transcript?" // Ct Gary R: While we don't carry boxes of stuff along, we do try to bring a small variety of things for Random to do while on longish drives. (Toys, tapes (for all of us), a game or two. We also have a book in the car for Kay or I to read aloud – We've been working on ElfQuest.) // So, in the case of Mr Rowan's protest of the art exhibit, pride goeth before the phallus?

Janice Gelb – While not a happy situation, I don't know that the way Sun was going to handle determine who to lay-off is really unfair. Going by the importance of the job(s) being worked on seems like as reasonable a way of doing things as any other. // Yeah, it was a great Series. Of course, by definition, any time the Yankees lose it's a least a good one. // Re the Fox report on the Microsoft case: Of course how can consumers complain about a lack of options if they don't know what those options might be? I wouldn't complain about (for example) the not being able to have a fridge with an automatic icemaker until I was aware that such a thing existed/was possible. // Well I guess that having a blocked tear duct is better than poke in the eye with a sharp ... oh never mind. // Ct me: Still seems odd that, with scavengers being non-kosher, it would be OK to used cattle feed containing animal parts. // For a while our evaluations came with the requirement that each department have a certain average %age of salary increase from evaluations each year. I guess that's pretty much the equivalent of requiring the distribution of evaluations to be on a Bell Curve. // Yeah, that was quite an amazing year that Bonds had. Makes me curious about record totals for father-son major leaguers. // Re *Clash of Kings*: OK, maybe I'm just less of a depressive sort than you are. (;-) // It's not that you need the ceremony to *become* Bar or Bat Mitzvah but that it's part of the acknowledgement and celebration by the person and the community.

'Fraid not. I certainly knew about Magic Fingers (I've got them) but never stayed anyplace that had it. // I see the lack of Baskin-Robbins, Trader Joe and Del Taco as opportunities to include some special little things in trips we take down south. // It was a relaxing trip report because it was – as planned – a relaxing trip. // Ct Tom: Our Doonesbury runs on the OpEd page. // Ct Gary: Actually you do sweat as much in a dry heat. The catch is that it evaporates fast which a) cools you down and b) makes you think you aren't sweating as much. Which is why you are more likely to dehydrate – you aren't as aware of the water loss. // Ct Jeff: If you buy a Saturn, let them know who's recommendation moved you in that direction. They may get a gift out of it.

Guy Lillian III – Your house looks like the last scene in **Citizen Kane**? With a fire inside it? // Ct Gary B: While June in Florida is brutal, I was down there in August for a wedding. That was truly an experience for this desert rat. // Speaking of **Die Hard**, Kay let Random watch that with her a few weeks ago. Rather surprised me when I found out (especially as it was before they had watched **Young Frankenstein** (which I felt was much less inappropriate)). // Ct Janice: No, we're not that stupid as to repeat all the errors of the 20th century. Our military does learn from past mistakes. Our political leaders... // Without discussing it, I will echo that **24** is a very cool show. I have to wonder if it'll be renewed for another season. ☺

mike weber – Ct Gary B: We see the same things in both Bush's low-profile during Sept 11 and in the China plane incident. Both, for some odd reason, strike me as very common-sense positions.

Janet Larsen – I'd like to see a copy of that anti-Potter sermon. Should be good for a few screams of outrage. I do agree that it seems a screaming waste of time to go off on that issue.

Guy Lillian redux – Ct Richard D: I don't think that Chandra Levy has been forgotten but, really, the only reason this was front page news for any length of time was the connection (albeit probably irrelevant) to Congressman Condit. This is not to take away from the worry and pain of her friends and family, just a realistic look at how big a news story that really was. // No, no, no. They did not do anything so insane as making Arwen a part of the actual Fellowship – I know I'd have walked out if that had happened. I admit to having had a bit of worry based on the fact that she got a fair amount of air time in the ads that I saw but (even if they did play her up a tad much) they expanded her role by giving her Glorfindel's place. I can deal with that. // Ct me: I'll partially concede the point about Hugo voters. I'm sure some number vote based on name recognition and some (I hope) larger number vote based on the one or two works that they are familiar with out of the set. And then there are the more dedicated folk who will try to read or see all of them.

Part of me wonders if the "real" reason for allowing eavesdropping of attorney-client conversations is to hobble the attorneys' ability to do their job and thus get a good conviction rate to show that "something is being done". // Would "The Klingon Trio" be something like The Three Tenors? After all, the only Klingon music I know is their opera. // Who says Vader wouldn't have straightened himself out without Luke? The context of the film as shown and book as read. It was pretty clearly Luke's faith in him and his unwillingness to be turned that stirred things up in Anakin. Yes, it could have been engineered to have Anakin return without Luke, but nothing in the story as told has any indication of that possibility. // While there was always the possibility of someone lying about their Chart data, all the information was volunteered (or confirmed) by (at least) one participant directly to either Alan, Andrea or myself. And I don't recall any that were disputed. // I didn't think Potter was overlong at all. Ditto my reaction to LotR. As for the Dramatic Presentation Hugo for this coming year, I lean to Potter over LotR if only because the latter probably carries more "but in the book..." baggage that might pull serious voters away from it while the latter will have full support of the general Potter fans. I could well be wrong though. // Dunno about the rest of the country, but I'm finally back to golf after a month plus of abundant rain. // Ct self: Well, considering the importance of Amidala in the scheme of things I can't fault developing that relationship in SWII.

Tom Feller – Ct Guy: It wasn't just that the name parking areas in Disney parks after characters. It was that the one in Shrek was named in such a way as to dovetail as a nice pun related to the name of the principality. (('Twarn't a kingdom since he wasn't a king.))

Don Markstein – At the least, if they were indeed preaching Christianity then they were breaking (what passed for) the law in Afghanistan at the time. Whatever we think of the law, that fact would give some justification to jailing them. On the flip side, unless those currently jailed here are suspected of being in violation of some law (and that includes immigration or visa violations) then there's no valid reason for holding them. The catch, of course, is in that "suspected of" phrase.

Spherestein – Why isn't Saudi Arabia being bombed? 1) Al Queda (decentralized though it may be) was headquartered in Afghanistan. 2) The Taliban specifically gave them shelter. 3) If you want to go after financial backers, bombing isn't a very effective tool. // I don't know if having the gov't refer to something as "An Act of War" gives insurance companies an out or if there is some standard industry definition of that phrase. I may have missed it, but don't recall hearing anything one way or the other about insurance claims from Sept 11th. // While that anniversary may be relevant to the timing of the attack, in a lot of ways that makes it seem more like lashing out at someone "convenient" whether or not they were relevant to the original harm. The Kurds didn't do this. The attack was not against any of the major European players in the division of Middle East territory and, unless you count Israel, it seems to have no relevance to borders at all. // Mazel Tov on your grandson.

Ct me: Well, there are various ways to view self defense. (And, admittedly, it can get pretty dicey.) But if one's neighbors (even if not next-door) are under attack might not self defense include helping them out lest they to under and you find yourself with no allies when your turn comes? I think that would be a valid argument for involvement in WWII, even if a Pearl Harbor was needed to bring popular support to that cause. As a point of fact, even if the Japanese force had been intercepted, the very fact of launching the attack would be an act of war and thus cause for response. As for your assertion that Japan couldn't attack us anymore after 1943, without some sort of formal surrender or the like, would you trust someone who had launched such an attack to not try to do so again for the same reasons? And, of course, it brings up the question of whether it's OK to let them conquer as much as they want as long as they leave our stuff alone (the issue of helping one's neighbors from above). And somehow, based on the casualty rate, I hardly see Japan as being anywhere near hospitalized at that point. / Essentially I see WWII as the national equivalent of the situation of "First they came for the Jews, and I wasn't Jewish so I did nothing. Then they came for the Gypsies..... And then they came for me and there was nobody left to do anything." Would it have played out that way? Who knows.

Sheila Strickland – Ct Ned: It's not so much that Hansen's disease isn't contagious per se. The organism apparently is spread with reasonable ease but really isn't that virulent and so no disease develops in most people.

Richard Dengrove – Ct OO: I don't think you can calculate precisely when mail will arrive, but I think most of us have an idea of how long a first class letter or package should take to get between two points in the country. Once you reach the 5 or 6 day point then it seems out of line to me no matter what the starting and ending points are. // Ct Richard L: I think the weakness of some of the retro Hugos (the fannish ones anyway) is that it's even more based on name recognition than is the case with contemporary ones. // Ct me: Age gp has nothing to do with it. If Random has something to say (worthwhile or not) he'll go on and on with it. His "uncle" Richard has taken him on drives and reports non-stop chatter. // I'd suppose that the reason AA would have some input on Harry's rejoining LASFAPA would have to do with whether he would be getting positive or negative input which could affect his self-esteem and thus his ability to stay sober.

DenHouse - // Well now, there were certainly good relations with at least some Israelite kin. The Midianites, for example. // I don't recall the specific source of the Hillel on one foot story, but it's a fairly famous and well-known tale about him. // How much of running away from Judaism was to avoid anti-Semitism vs how much was to "look more American"? Not that they couldn't be somewhat related. And, back then (the '50s) there was a lot more to the melting pot and (more or less) blending in view. Since then there's been a pendulum swing to more pride and acknowledgement of one's heritage. // That the meaning of surnames may be forgotten is no surprise although I'm sure a bit of hunting would turn up the meaning. If my very limited knowledge is correct, the "ski" at the end of Genderovski is the Slavic form of "son of" for whatever that's worth by itself. // Actually collecting the data for the LASFAPA chart (1st and 2nd hand) was rather fun doing. It was even more fun trying to keep the 2D construct legible and the 3D one from becoming unmanageable. // Does Random qualify as a hobby that I was taking a vacation from? I think of him more as a vocation than avocation.

Ct Sheila: a) Your temperature conversion formula is backwards. What you wrote is for Celsius to Fahrenheit, not vice versa. b) Why 18/10? I was always taught 9/5. It's the same but with the "properly reduced" fraction. In any case, that formula is the exact conversion. // Ct Tom: Somehow I'd think of a restaurant where the Mafiosi go as being like the truckstop where all the truck drivers go – the food must be good.

APAC = NC² (Natter x Comments)

The primary activity for the month of November was our annual LA trek for Thanksgiving. As it had been at least a couple years, we also included a weekend at Disneyland in the plans.

We started off from here on the 15th with Kay doing the first few hours. The only part she enjoys driving is the northern part of the route when there are more hills and such and that lets me deal with all the stuff involving city traffic or long-haul, boring driving. It worked out well enough. The "stop" pretty much involved pulling into a gas station / minimart and using their (fairly generous) grounds to picnic on and stretch our legs a bit. Aside from a brief rest stop, we didn't get off the road again until Buttonwillow (one of a set of towns along I-5 who's "suburbs" consist of several restaurants, gas stations & motels). This one was a close thing though. I knew we had enough gas to get there when I passed the previous chance to fill up, but wasn't expecting that a 5-mile stretch of road would be under construction with traffic backed up and barely moving. I sweated out that last bit watching the gas gauge but managed to get there with a bit over half a gallon to spare. From there it was on to Anaheim. I did almost make one blunder when I checked the map before starting that last leg. The address of our hotel was 11000 something Harbor in Garden Grove. The closeup map I had for the area had Disneyland as being at 2000 something of Harbor and I was a bit annoyed at having an extra 8-9 miles to go. Luckily I saw the hotel's name before just zipping by it a half mile or so past the magic kingdom: Garden Grove has a different numbering system and the middle of Harbor Blvd is the dividing line between cities.

Friday we opted to sleep in a bit. So after taking advantage of the buffet breakfast at the hotel, we caught the 9:30 shuttle and headed for the fun. If you haven't been there for a while, they've redone the place. The shuttle enters in the front and let you off in front of the ticket booths. Left is California Adventure, right is Disneyland and ahead is Downtown Disney (the shopping district). (Although we didn't go that way, the new parking structure is behind the Downtown area.)

Today was California Adventure day. The entry area is beautifully decorated as a series of hills with mosaic art representing various California environs. Not surprisingly, all bags were being checked before entry to the park. As it was being done while waiting in line, there really was no appreciable delay involved and I have no objections to the extra security. The new park has several "lands" – but many of them had but one or two attractions. The only places that had multiple things going on were Paradise Pier (something like the old Pacific Ocean Park or the Santa Cruz Boardwalk-type of "traditional" amusement park), Hollywood and an agricultural area whose name I can't recall. Our overall view was that it was a good "land" or two but there just wasn't quite enough heft to it to be a separate park.

The good stuff included Grizzly Rapids (a whitewater rafting ride – great for the warm day we had), California Soarin' (hang-gliding over parts of California using a Star Toursish combination of the filmic image with the movements of the seats), the Muppet 3-D theatre (including a decent waiting area) ((one of the people at that show had that performance dedicated to him as he was there for his 100th birthday)) and the big roller coaster whose name I can't recall (instead of dragging you up the first incline, it shoots you up using (I think) a mag-lev system). The Redwood Creek Trail was also pretty fun to walk through. Still and all it just misses. My biggest complaint however was the cost of the food. We opted for a burger place (which we didn't realize until the last moment was just a McDonalds' franchise) and it cost us as much as a decent dinner at a sit-down restaurant would ((for comparison, our dinner at an Italian place in Downtown Disney cost us only ten bucks more)). We finished the day with the light show over the lagoon in CA Adventure and a jog over to Disney for a ride on Star Tours.

Saturday was our day to use the early admission option and do Disney right. In the hour and a half of even lower than usual crowds we were able to do Star Tours, Space Mountain, Matterhorn, Peter Pan and Mr. Toad's Wild Ride. The crush of people coming into the park at the 9am opening made a bit of a backlog at the Indiana Jones ride but mostly that was just getting people through the first entry point and we were able to get all the way in and through in just 5-10 minutes. That gave us plenty of time to catch Pirates of the Caribbean before heading back to Main Street and using our package deal to do one of the tours (something neither of us had ever done). We opted for the "general" tour rather than the "Walk in Walt's Footsteps" tour to let Random get in some rides (although our guide had recommended the latter since we knew the park already). Still as we were it for the group, our guide mixed in a bit of both to spice things up for us. Because we'd done Pirates already, he changed the route and we did the Jungle Cruise and a good thing too. We landed one of the better guides that any of us (including our tour guide) had ever experienced – great patter and a good mix of old and new jokes at the ride's expense. Definitely worth it.

This time we got smart. After the tour ended about 12:30 we took a break from the park. Shuttle back to the hotel, walk across the street for our Del Taco fix (at half the cost of a meal in the park), back to the hotel for Kay to nap and Random and I to go down to the pool and spa. A good rest that let us be in good shape for evening in the park.

First thing on our return was the Haunted Mansion ((revised with a Nightmare Before Christmas theme)) and the first real line we'd had to deal with – all of 30 minutes worth. I wasn't clear if the change was long term or just an interim arrangement for the holiday season. The variation was nice but not really as cool as the original so I hope they have something up their sleeves. After that was a ride on Thunder Mountain before checking out the new food facility in Frontierland – not impressive. Sort of cafeteria style, but too damn expensive again and a bit of a zoo.

After a brief foray into a Toon Town closed prior to the fireworks, we worked our way back to the carousel and found good seats to wait for the show. While waiting, Random asked about a churro for dessert. Sounds simple. It took me about 5 minutes to find a booth selling them. While waiting in line, she ran out. That entailed a walk half way around the castle to find another booth. All told I was gone 20+ minutes and Kay was wondering what had happened. But I racked up a few "Dad points". Watching the fireworks show they put on made me remember just what a good fireworks display is like – the itty-bitty one's they have up here "grow" on you after a while.

Sunday had no early admission, so we started the day along with everyone else. It was a real ride fest: Thunder Mountain twice, Star Tours, Space Mountain, "Honey, I Shrunk the Audience" and the Innoventions (computer based games, machines, etc in hands-on display) before breaking for lunch at "Pizza Port" – another overpriced cafeteria. After that we split up with Kay taking the Storybook Boat ride and Random & I heading to Splash Mountain (which he'd been asking for all weekend). The line at Splash Mountain really was the longest we'd seen yet and would have taken about an hour or so to get through. But we invoked the newest crowd control gimmick – the FastPass.

((In general you go to the ride, stop at the FastPass Distribution point and, using your entry ticket as a key, make a reservation for a time to come back (you get printed tickets with a one-hour block of time to come back in). When you come back you get in the FastPass line and things move rather quicker.)) With our package, we got one Anytime Fastpass each and we used those now to get on the ride in about 15 minutes. The only "catch" is that, once you have a reservation, you can't get another one until the first one is used or two hours go by. In any case, the system worked fine.

We met Kay back at the Carousel and she pointed us at a shop we hadn't seen before – one dedicated to the Villains. I just got a couple of neat magnets ("Bad Boys" and "Bad Girls") but they had some really nice t-shirts and such too. A small store, but fun to check out. It's just through the castle gates and to the right if you have the chance.

Something I never did decide though was why the park was so uncrowded. I suspect a lot of factors – it was the weekend before Thanksgiving, the travel and economic situation for the last couple of months and the opening of the Harry Potter movie probably all had their effects.

Done for the day, we headed back to the hotel to get our car and drive back up to my parents' place – who had just come back from a birthday celebration for a friend who – to everyone's amazement – was 100 years old. Encountering two 100th birthdays on the same weekend has to be somewhat unusual – I know it's not happened to me before.

Monday, after helping my mom with her shopping, I called to see about the availability of tickets for Harry Potter. To my surprise, I was able to reserve tickets for a given show over the phone. Even better was that when we got to the theatre there really was neither line nor crowd (OK, going to the first matinee on Monday probably had a lot to do with that). Overall we thought that they did a good job of bringing the book to the screen. Yes we had nitpicks. Random, of course, grouched about what they left out (unavoidable) and we all had interpretations we would have changed (surprise!) but it was very enjoyable even if the book remains clearly better (as it should be). As the theatre was in one of the local malls, we also made a foray to the games store in search of new and interesting ones for the family to indulge in and acquired a new copy of UNO as well as a game called Pirateer that is turning into another popular choice for our family games. (Move your ship(s) out of harbor, get the treasure and return without being captured. Whoever brings the treasure back to anchor (or the only one with ships left) wins. I'd call it something of a cross between checkers and parchesi in movement.)

Tuesday we took both my folks to their MD appointments (same doc). Both were essentially routine although mom's also involved seeing how things looked following her lumpectomy in October (small tumor, caught early, now getting some mild daily radiation treatments). All looks good. Afterwards ("to my immense surprise") they wanted to take us out to lunch and (after arguing about where the place was (not odd as we were talking about two different places)) ended up at a deli near Reseda and Ventura. Good stuff and everyone was happy with the meal.

During, and immediately after, the meal, Kay and I made forays to different nearby shops to look for things (I was looking for a new bottle of Sabra liqueur – not there, but I was pointed in the direction of a nearby store that would have it – and Kay for a new hansa (hand to ward of the evil eye) to replace my lost one). While in the restaurant however, my t-shirt was noticed and commented on by another customer (this was the See No Evil, etc tree frogs shirt that I got in NOLA last year). Nice to be noticed.

After dropping everyone off, Random and I went for a short round of golf at the obscure, uncrowded and inexpensive little Par 3 course on the grounds of the local VA facility. Once we got past the first couple of holes (and the attendant arguing), he did well and we had a good time. I really wish they had a course of that size around here for me to take him on and not feel like we were holding people up.

That evening we went to visit Tom and Marina Stern in their "new" home just 2-3 miles away. Talked Disney and dogs and stuff. They were "annoyed" that we hadn't given them notice to plan a party but we figured that we weren't going to around on any weekend so a party wouldn't have worked out to well anyway. Next time.

Wednesday was my big golf day. I'd made the reservations the week prior at a new county course at the north end of The Valley (just a straight shot up Balboa from my parents). Nice place. Cut into the hills near the reservoir with a lot of nice views of the hills, the course and the valley below. Probably the most interesting thing were the golf carts, which were the newest model, and included a GPS system linked with course layout maps so you could see where you were and how far it was to various points on the hole. They also came with attached ice chests to hold canned or bottled drinks. Plush. (Normally I don't take carts, but between the hilliness, the distance between holes (which always bugs me) and the fact that it was included in the price...) Overall my round was OK, if not great. On the other hand I'm always at a disadvantage playing in L.A. now since I use the rag tag combination of my old clubs and my dad's old clubs that have survived his giving others away. We had a good foursome and enjoyed the day as well as the company. Afterwards it was off on errands as I swung by UPS to mail a box of stuff home and Bodyworks Emporium to restock some massage supplies that I can't get here before heading home again.

Thursday, of course, was Thanksgiving. This year, like last couple, we met at my sister's home rather than at my parents'. (It definitely was time to move the venue and minimize the amount of work that my folks felt they had to do.) Their back yard is coming along well with the planters, the Jacuzzi up and running, the "Industrial strength barbeque complex" about 80% done and the base for the planned waterfall set in. Not my choice for a backyard, but I suspect it'll look real good when it's finished. The only "new" arrival at the gathering was my cousin Les' daughter Alyson and her husband ((they got married about two weeks after my nephew did last year)) who, it turns out, are living up in Oakland so now we have even more people to see when we visit that area.

Friday was our visiting day. Visit with Suzy for a bit then, leaving Kay and Random behind, I went off to see my friend Sharon. (She managed to keep away from evangelical themes until near the end so now we have an email discussion going. It was only a matter of time.) Back to get the gang – who weren't ready to leave – so I headed home to run some errands with my dad as promised. ((Suzy and Kay really get into their conversations and Random – amazingly enough – spent the 6-7 hours he was there helping Mike (Suzy's husband) with the work he was doing in the yard ((digging trenches, running conduit, etc)) and earned himself \$20 in the process. After dinner I went over to visit Lee Ann (for the unfamiliar, Lee Ann and I lived together from 1979-1983) (I still have trouble believing that it was that long ago) and see how things were going with her. As usual, we talked for a couple of hours and Kay overheard my dad asking my mom about what I was doing over there so long and so late (my mom told him to not be ridiculous).

Saturday was leaving day – and just in the nick of time – as we had storms coming down from the north and passed through about 3-4 significant weather fronts on the way to the Bayarea. But it didn't really impede out progress much and we arrived at the Jenkins/Saunders abode in good order. Aside from the lovely meal and grand company, Random got his heart's desire – another game of SolarQuest (interplanetary Monopoly). It was fun, even if we both had totally crappy luck. Overnights with them aren't enough, but re-parsing the Thanksgiving trips just isn't very feasible.

Sunday, of course, it was home again with the obligatory stops at Trader Joe in Santa Rosa and Real Goods in Hopland. Gotta satisfy the soul even if you don't spend 1% as much as you'd need to buy what you want. And our housesitter was a success. The house and critters were in good shape and he even left us a note with how things went and what minor problems there had been (which he'd dealt with). To bad he's going away to college next year.

Other stuff. The clinic where Kay works has hired a new assistant for the lab (she'll be mostly clerical help for the time being, but that's the main need anyway) so by mid-January she should be back to her more normal 4-days per pay period schedule. On the other work front, Sally (the last of the PMers that hired on with me) gave her notice just before I went on vacation. After much shuffling and negotiating, she will go to our partner facility and get the half-time job with fewer weekends she want while we will get one of their techs for the 6 months or so until he retires and buy some time to hire someone new (unless Sally decides to come back at that point – she wanted the fewer hours/weekends to allow more family time with her new baby). And, just a couple days ago, our lab director resigned. Am I confused? At least we have a temporary night person in place and another one in line to start in March when the registry person's contract is up.

Nothing major with Random. He will be dropping one of his judo days, at least for a while. He's now too old for the class he's been going to (don't get Kay started on that) and the age appropriate one runs at a horrible time for us to get him there. Even with a friend taking him it would mean he was doing school-day care-judo with no meal or downtime. That's just not going to happen. When Kay's schedule changes we'll see – or we may look at a different dojo. ((A month later and things look good for his continuing where he is and maybe even upping his time there.))

We had some overdue work done on Corky. He had a large lipoma behind his right shoulder and a cyst on his eyelid, so we had them removed as well as getting his teeth cleaned. I pictured liposuction, but there was a full incision and a shaved area there when we got him back. He was a bit slow and we needed to do the antibiotics until the stitches were removed, but he did real well. I do wish we'd done this in the summer when that hair wouldn't be missed as much. Something about the hair of the dog. And while we normally wouldn't think about a doggy sweater, I have to admit that if ever there was a time it would be a worthwhile idea this would be it.

Chanukah has come and is about to go and it's been a nice one. Sometimes Kay and Random lit the candles while I was at work, sometimes we did it together and sometimes I did it after getting home. Naturally we had lotsa latkes ("latkes" wasn't flagged by my spell checker), including the night of our Chanukah party. IMHO it was one of our better ones – a good turn out, good and plentiful food, plenty of conversation. Random got his usual surfeit of gifts, but for a change I made sure that we had a couple of true family gifts in the mix: A croquet set and the tape of the BBC production of *The Hobbit* ((to go with the LotR tape we've had for a few years now)).

Post-Chanukah, there's not a whole lot to talk about. The big "event" was finally getting to see how they did with **Lord of the Rings** (a subject David Bratman and I have exchanged a bit of email on). Overall, both Kay and I felt they did a very good job of bringing the first book to life but we certainly had issues with some of the cuts/changes that were made. (It's sort of nice to be able to discuss plot points without having to worry about giving things away to someone who hasn't seen the film yet – but I'll minimize that just in case.) The time frame from the Birthday party through reaching Bree was too compressed and had to sort of "shove" Merry and Pippin into the picture (and, in my view, never quite made up for that lack of character development in those two). They also compacted events in Lothlorien a bit too much (in the editing rather than the filming, I think) leaving some things that you do see a bit unexplained. From a character PoV my other big issue (on a minor point) was how Frodo handled himself at Weathertop, leaving him looking like a weaker character than is true. Again, we both had issues with various and sundry things but overall we thought it was a remarkably good adaptation – and not a bit overlong at just shy of three hours.

For New Year's Eve we went over to a friend's house and had a nice, two-family "party". Random and their son, Cole, spent most of the time videoing but did make it to midnight and the celebratory mess making ((they do a thing where you "put" things you want to get rid of into eggs and throw them away – their property is big enough)).

Oh yeah. During the school break, we've done some video watching. (Well, mostly Kay and Random) Breaking all previous restrictions, the two of them spent evenings watching *Die Hard* ((I was surprised when Kay told me that as I'd expected the next experiment to be ---)), *Young Frankenstein* and *Alien Nation* before settling back to another "first timer" – *The Villain*. We also rented and watched together *The Great Race*. Random liked all of them but we all really liked *The Great Race* (neither Kay nor I had seen it for years) and had a lot of laughs. So I think it's time to expand the viewing selections again ((*Some Like it Hot* and *Pirates of Penzance* are on my list)).

My mom's doing well with her chemo and radiation post-lumpectomy. Both treatments, while frequent for now, are of the mild variety and aren't bothering her beyond the fact of going for the radiation each day. We've been checking up on her every week and things look good all around. Probably the, potentially, hardest part would have been getting to the hospital every day but it turned out that they offered a shuttle service and that's been a real blessing since it means they don't have to impose on friends or family or rely on some taxi service. Actually she also told that adjusting to the usage limits on her left arm is a bit of a bother as well (no heavy lifting, no raising above her head, that sort of thing).

That must be why they call this the dead of the year. Not much is happening. Of course, the nearly two months of pretty consistent rain may have something to do with that as well.

AUF WIEDERSCHREIBEN