

## **PETER, PAN & MERRY #47**

A zine for SFPA # 231

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Come and Tarry on SFPA 230

Southerner – If Sercomb was mated to a bullfrog in a Sou’wester, then he must have had pretty poor Sercomb-navigation.

Hugo Box Lunches – Interesting but I think some people may have too much time on their hands. Maybe another apa membership is called for?

Ned Brooks – Ct Sheila: I hadn’t been aware of a 20-hour LotR audio. The 13-hour BBC version is impressive enough. Of course by adding 50% to the length I guess they could just about do the entire tale with no cuts and that would be pretty damn impressive too. The British accents from the BBC version do seem to feel right for (some of) the characters but I don’t think I particularly heard those accents in my head when I’ve read the books. // Not that it is quite possible to acquire beef, chicken, veggies, etc that are certified to not have been grown with hormones, antibiotics, pesticides, etc. They are a bit more expensive though. It’s just a matter of what you want and what you’re willing to pay for. // Ct Toni: One of the negatives of having a country with a good economy (often) is the attraction of the low end jobs to people from places with weak economies. The Catch-22 is that while they may be important parts of some industries’ profitability, they also pay no taxes but still impact public services. And yes, at various levels there is probably also some competition for those jobs. Perhaps one step to alleviate the conflict (I won’t call it a solution) is to – using the best data on illegal immigrant use in various industries – would be to impose some sort of tax on those industries to offset the estimated costs of public services used. This would probably have to be done on a state or local level as I think most of the costs hit there. In some cases I could even see that producing a conscious effort to lower use of illegals. / And we already do “require” everyone who wants to stay become either a citizen or hold a valid visa – that hasn’t stopped the tide.

Ct Dengrove: “The witches riding goats must have been midgets – I don’t think the average goat can bear the weight of an adult human.” Thus proving that the goats and/or witches must have been possessed of some sort of demonic power. // Ct Guy: Hey, how about Tim Curry playing Ashcroft while dressed up as Franken Furter? // More significant than how Iraqi nukes compare with French, Indian, etc nukes is how they compare with North Korean ones. At least I did hear one straightforward explanation of that difference – it’s easier to nip it in the bud (with Iraq) than to deal with it once the genie is more or less out of the bottle (N. Korea). // Ct me: For sure the carrying capacity of a car is a matter of design as much as size. My general point was that the Prius is a decently sized (small) family car that’s usable for most common load needs. // I don’t know, Mr Bones, why does Stedman hold the “indicator lawn” over his face to spread the cells on it?

Self – Ct Toni: My bad. I don’t know where my head was, but Soc Sec is not included in the Federal income tax one pays. // Ct Jeff: Speaking of cutting bagels the wrong way, Random was cutting some bread last month and managed to slice the webbing of his left hand pretty well. Plenty of blood but no significant damage.

Still me – Ct Janice: Having seen the DVD of Fellowship and thought over the clues, it does indeed seem obvious that they can't do the Scouring of the Shire in the last movie. Both because there won't be time for the trouble to have occurred and because they don't have the gift that heals the damage. Not that there can't be some version of kicking Saruman and Wormtongue out. /// And it was obviously a damn good thing that we included Corky in the set of family portraits that we had done this Fall.

Rich Lynch – Ct Dengrove: I seriously doubt that anyone is autoclaving mail to sterilize it. That pressure and steam just ain't too good for the paper. // Ct me: Given dead flat to slightly downhill road conditions, I'd be willing to bet that I could run the Prius up in the 70 mpg range (with just enough gas usage to kept he battery charged). / I don't know about they hype, but we were never promised 60+ mpgs by anyone. / And I hear that one of the major car companies is talking about a hybrid SUV in the next 5 years. Oh, and one point on operating costs – routine maintenance is every 7500 miles instead of the usual 3000.

Arthur Hlavaty – Ct TKFWR: But music fans, in downloading songs, aren't just learning more about the produce, they are acquiring the product itself. // Ct GHLIII: Which moose symbolizes Minnesota? Bullwinkle? // I was actually surprised at some of the moments that didn't crack the Top Ten for Baseball. Like, say, the Bobby Thompson home run. /// If you want to consider that your new zine titles are an advance on the "D.R." series, use the letters "E" and "S" (Say, Evanescent Senility). If the new zines are a regression, use "C" and "Q" (eg Curmudgeonly Quatrain). // Someone was telling me about a theory that one's blood type is related to the primary diet one should eat (ie carbs or fats or veggies). Not that one determines the other but that they are traits that are genetically linked.

Richard Dengrove – Ct Ned: I believe that both the variation of as star's brightness and any wiggle in it's position can be used to determine if it has a companion. Of course most of the things you can find fairly "easily" are Jupiter-sized or better. // Ct Jeff: Jar Jar having sex with Luke? Rishathra and pedophilia? // Ct Guy: I bet you could work up a secondary level get-rich-scam by selling people the technique for doing a proper job of the Nigerian scam. Heck you might make more money with that than with running the scheme itself. // The claim that the aluminum foil would protect you from flying saucer rays was a false trail to trap the unsuspecting into acting as guideposts for the invasion. "Ack-ack-ackack-ack." // While the drug \$ - terrorism connection may well be valid for some drugs (if it comes in from overseas, all bets are off) but it's a connection that rather tenuous for marijuana of which we have a pretty good home-grown crop. (And arguably the suppliers can just claim it's "homegrown" when it really is imported.) / Of course what's interesting is that nobody ever made a similar ad campaign linking drugs to organized crime, gang violence, etc. // There probably weren't that many Israelis in the WTC. The slander was that all the Jews had been warned to stay home that day.

Ct me: The issue of aspartame and phenylketonuria is a bit of a red-herring since sugared products are harmful to diabetics and *they* certainly aren't being pulled from the markets. If you pulled every ingredient that was harmful to some people there might be nothing left to eat at all. As to how much harm to what percent of people is allowed, well that's what law suits are there to determine.

Twyggrove - I don't know if that was the "point" of Fail-Safe, but the limitations on the technology of the time were a key part in how the story developed. // The UN resolution called for a partitioning of Palestine into Jewish and Arab "areas", fine. But I'm pretty sure that there was nothing in the resolutions that "forbade" – or even discouraged the parties from declaring their areas to be sovereign states. // Swell, in situations where one can't readily distinguish civilians from enemy combatants then (regrettable as it is) the civilian casualties are "collateral" in a legitimate action rather than a result of terrorism. But just where the line falls in any given case is a pretty fuzzy arrangement. // Tempest and Forbidden Planet? Wizard and innocent daughter "marooned" on an island. Some sort of "demon" present (Caliban, Id monster). Arrival of strangers, one of whom courts the daughter. They aren't identical, but the plot threads are there. // I charge \$40 per hour for massages – plus travel expenses. I'm nearing the point of considering a slight price jump. // Ct Gary: I'd agree re Star Wars. The original movie was a real jump (at least Sfx-wise) over what went before and had a solid plot and characters. In looking back it has certainly gained in stature and everyone expected another such leap. When it wasn't forthcoming they were disappointed. My only real disappointment was that Jar Jar was a notch or two too high on the Comic Relief scale and thus proved an annoyance rather than a relief. // Ct Jeff: So what if people could see the flaws that those in authority had? Part of the point of the Bible is that these great leaders had very human frailties and failures.

Guy Lillian III – So, was your cousin's "skilled labor job" in the Antelope Valley with Lockheed? // Any idea why the A.D.A. would do something as stupid as withholding evidence from you? // Ct Southerner: I won't check the roster for everyone, but my zine # clearly shows that I haven't reached my 10-year membership mark (although if you add in the time from the previous incarnation...). // Ct Toni: As the weeks go by I have to wonder if Greek Wedding will eclipse the theatrical run of Titanic. At this point I think it's been out there long enough to have given birth. // My immediate thought about stun guns in an airplane would be to wonder what effect a miss-hit might have on the electrical systems. Most likely not much, but I would want to know for sure before using them. // Ct Jeff: Kay and Random were big Nero Wolfe fans too. They watched it pretty much every Sunday. // "Axis of Evil" or not, I note the difference in approach between Iraq and North Korea. Admittedly there has been a historical difference in how well negotiations have worked and how well pledges have been kept so that can explain some of it.

Ct me: A side question regarding "a high crime area". I've wondered just exactly what the term "High Crime" means with regard to impeachment. From the context I would guess it was an old term for "felony" but it could well have a more specific meaning. / That's an interesting question. Can you successfully challenge evidence obtained in a search based on the warrant itself having been improperly issued? I suspect there's almost no way to have a process for obtaining a warrant that doesn't invoke a judge's judgment. And really, shouldn't it be that way even if we may disagree? I suppose some sort of computer program could be used – if a record of the input was available to see if it matched the known facts at the time of the request. And lying to make the case more compelling should be treated as perjury (whether to the computer or the judge). Bottom line is that any system is only as good as those who make it work. // Retirement – early or not – is becoming less of an option for a lot of people, so don't feel alone there. What constantly bugs us is that we really ought to have more money than we actually do if you just look at our incomes. Maybe we're just out of touch with the times. // I like the direction of your definition of "terrorist" but can't there be a "strategic aim" involved? In fact, doesn't there have to be some sort of goal?



Mundi Guy – As I think on it, you probably are more suited to being a lawyer than a judge. After all, as a lawyer you are allowed to try to wax eloquent in each case. As a judge you wouldn't be able to that and it might be like trying to keep a bird from flying. // Hey there are plenty of West Coast Wonders that I've never heard of – let alone seen. I think that's the cool part, that there's always going to be something else out there to check out. (See I didn't even say anything about how Sea Lion Caves has a constant temperature of about 55 F and this is, indeed, cool.) / And this was my first visit to Crater Lake too. If I get to base up in Klamath Falls again we may try to do Lava Beds Nat'l Monument as well. // Ct Dengrove: Even if someone got a Flight Attendant to fake an emergency call to the cockpit, why would they open up? The point of the whole thing is to not open the cockpit door in an emergency but to keep control of the plane in that case. // Ct Janice: Tisha B'Av commemorates the date on which both the First and Second Temples (in Jerusalem) were destroyed. It is, therefore, a day of fasting and solemnity. // Ct Gary R: I agree (and have said so in letters to my Reps) that we need to use our power and authority to lead, not bully, the world. // You have to wonder if, having barely gotten a that third season, they were just not getting any good material since the writer's were looking elsewhere for work, and thus using stuff more from the slush piles? I'd need to check the credits for third season Trek episodes to be sure. Alternatively they may have been shooting for outré to try and do something with a horrible time slot. // Ct mike: Are Kryptonians ticklish? Probably not on Earth considering that being ticklish is a very low-level pain response and it'd take a fair amount of effort to try and accomplish that effect. // I think the point of dropping the bomb on Nagasaki (aside from the fact that the Japanese had not yet surrendered) was to show that we didn't have just the one bomb (we, in fact, has all of two). // “With his daughter and con-in-law, Joe could.....” Something you aren't telling us?

Janice Gelb – As I said to a few people around the end of December, I wanted a “Do Over” for last year. Not a repeat. // I disagree. I think the Democratic candidates (often) lost because they so fully avoided any signs of attachment to the Clinton presidency and policies. When you're in a fight, use the weapons you've got. I don't know if they would have done better or not, but the fact is that during the Clinton years we had a good economy, good relations with our allies and a decreasing deficit. If the morals issue comes up, meet it head on. / I think, essentially, we're talking on similar tracks. The lack of message was, in part, from not having a voice willing to challenge the Republicans on those issues and act as a rallying point. But yeah, they needed to hit the issues head on rather than just sort of “I agree but, mmmmbble” // It's not strictly true that you can never go to Minicon because of Passover. While the almost always overlap I have been to one or two where Easter and Passover were a week apart and didn't interfere with the con. (But I agree that it's a real pain in the tuches when the overlap is there.)

Ct Guy: The part you missed in the LuAnn strip was where Ms Eiffel fires Zane and, a few strips later, makes a not-quite-subtle hint to Bernice....just before the guy from HQ walks in and transfers her to Tokyo. // If being bit by a spider in NOLA qualifies one for euthanasia it's clearly the spiders that are tough. // Ct Jeff: The Sunday of the great “we have to go to Detroit” arrangements, Random managed to cut the webbing of his hand while slicing bread for his sandwich. Kay opted to bring him in to verify that there was no real damage – which there wasn't. It was just one more thing to enhance the flavor of the week. // I try not to use my ATM card on trips but considering the number of networks there are it seems possible that a card from a given institution might not be on a particular network that the place you're trying to get cash from was using.

Purgelb - Ct Tom: Didn't I go with you to one of the performances of "Greater Tuna" that Jerry was in? Damn, I can't even remember just when that would have been. // Actually, his parents should take advantage of the summer sunshine and get in two rounds of golf. Have the first round early, have some lunch and go out again after the afternoon rain passes. I really don't see the problem here. // It may be old, but Dodger Stadium is still standing 40 years later. That doesn't make it the oldest (Fenway, Comiskey and Wrigley come to mind) but it may be the oldest survivor of post-WWII vintage stadiums. Or not. // Ct me: Yeah letting economics determine the fate of teams could be a problem, but better that than letting the league make that decision. But if a team can't draw flies, why leave it somewhere. And isn't economics the logic of moving teams to another city in the first place? // I would beg to differ but am going to end this Bar Mitzvah argument if it's the last thing it do. // You're not the only one glad my back is better. But I won't name names. // My understanding is that we've had quite a little skunk population explosion up here in the last year or so. Seems that way to me too. // I do think we've hit on a nice pattern where we have one (or at least one-half) separate vacation each year. Good to have tales to tell. // Ct Steve H: Does wearing ID count? Like on a bracelet or lanyard? Or you could take a hint from your parents and have your name written on your shirt, pants, underwear, etc. // My school-age kid isn't fed up with baseball. He was happy to watch the playoffs and series with me.

Odd question but isn't all this selling of tickets on line just high tech scalping? Or is it only scalping if done on the premises? Or do they just not care about it anymore? // One :Memorable Moment that I was surprised didn't make the list was the Bobby Thompson home run. // I agree there are times when you should grab the moment even if, in purely practical terms, the price or inconvenience should rule it out. I still regret the missed chance I had.

Tom Feller - Ct me: Whatever Anakin may have done differently in making C3PO, it was most likely internal rather than external. We do see other C3 series droids and they look the same as 3PO. This is assuming that Owen even bothered to pay any attention to 3PO when he was there with Anakin and Amidala in the first place. // Ct Hank: Having the sharps containers is a good idea although it's the initial finding of the damn syringes that is most likely to cause the problems. Is there just the one container or do all the maid carts have one? // Was the Hispanic man the only one pulled for further searching? Were other Hispanics checked? That'd be at least something of a hint if they were profiling. (Note that on the way back from Detroit, Kay and I were both pulled out of line for closer scrutiny. Aside from screwing up our chance to get our bags in the overheads it really didn't take much time nor was it particularly inconvenient.)

Don Markstein - Well of course you have to dress up freedom destroying bills with patriotic-sounding names. Just as you have to dress up anti-family planning/choice bills with family-oriented names. Who would vote for, say, the "Persecution of Probably Innocent Folk so we can Look Good" Act? // Actually, it isn't Black Canary who is on "Birds of Prey", but her daughter. The original blurbs did make it sound like it was Black Canary though. // Ct Ned: Ah, so that's why I sometimes get attachments from people that come up totally undecipherable. I figured it was something like that but didn't know the details. // Ct Reinhardt: While not specific to railroads, it does strike me that the gov't has a valid interest in maintaining the infrastructure for interstate commerce. So things like highways and railroad tracks should be eligible for tax support. And I do realize that highways truly are gov't owned while the tracks are private but on gov't-given rights-of-way. That only passingly impinges on long-haul passenger trains though.

Jeff Copeland – Bond films, like Trek ones, tell you a lot about what to expect just by the nature of the beast. In general as long as they don't muck with the flavor of the characters too much then people will be happy with it. And those who don't like that sort of thing won't go so see it anyway. // Ct Toni: Thalassemia (minor or major) is a blood condition involving faulty hemoglobin synthesis and thus anemia and generally weird-looking red blood cells. It's most common among people of Mediterranean descent. // That's rather the problem, just what is "appropriate" force vs the Palestinian terrorists? The answer should be "enough to discourage the terrorism without undue harm to the civilian population", but that's a damn tough point to find. // Note that the Sharon visit to the Temple Mount seems a pretty shaky basis for the reaction it got. In any case, even with the PA in place Israel still had to deal with all the independent terrorist groups (including the one under Arafat) so is that aspect of crippling the PA really any different? / The relative good times between Oslo and the latest uprising should have been a clue that that was the way to go. Really makes one wonder about the true agenda on the Palestinian side.

So which ad did you respond to? Increased breast or penis size? // If we got rid of sports announcers, there would be an awful lot of dead air when they did radio broadcasts of the games. // Ct Lynch: I don't recall that particular custody case but as a point of interest why would a change in federal law apply? Wouldn't all that have taken place under state laws? // Ct Dengrove: Yeah, I don't recall any ID card with both a picture and SS# (damn I have weird gut reaction every time I write those initials). Certainly not my driver's license. // Ct me: Now that you mention it, the story around the plot of Sum of All Fears (beyond the Ryan age) was indeed different in various directions. Of course it was still under Clancy's aegis so I'm sure he was careful about what changes were allowed. / As a side note I have to wonder if the Jack Ryan movies are going to become something of a Bond franchise with actors rotating in and out and story-lines weaved from different books (although that'd be harder for the Ryan books than the Bond ones).

I'd agree that there should have been a semi-freeze on new settlements in the West Bank. I say semi because I could see some greater development for connecting near settlements with each other or to Israel proper (although even that would probably have been better done as part of a settlement). And for some reason I have to wonder if the Federation-Cardassian settlement plan would have some hope: Those settlements that are on the PA side of any final border are under PA authority and it's residents are PA citizens. / I certainly agree that there have been moves by the Israelis that (based on what I know) were ill-advised or poorly executed but at least any (IMO) outright bad stuff seems to have been individuals rather than organized actions. Damn the man who shot Rabin. // Kay has mentioned once or twice that she's love to be living next to Elizabeth and Philip. Of course we've had no luck in convincing them to move up here ☺. As may have mentioned, the current plan is to spend a few days with them again this coming summer. I'd suggest combining visits, but suspect that that would be more than the Prancing Pony could handle.

Ct Steve: I'll buy into that. The best action barring a specific threat is to – not ignore the situation – but to live life as usual. The disruption is part of what they want. // Interesting notion that, with the Y2K concerns, there was some concern about the added effect of trying to cool the market. I guess you could put that under the heading of having two equally unappealing choices and having to pick one anyway. Don't know if it's true or not but it is thought-worthy. // ct mike: I'd want to guess that the other "denounced as trash" SF film that will fill the room at 2am would be "Plan 9 from Outer Space".



Jeff's Weasel – Ct George: I just recently discovered that fX shows reruns of 24 on the following Monday night. Although I'm still not quite up to trusting that yet. // Ct Janice: Or they could even have, like, a playoff series for the National Championship. Almost like they do in every other major college or professional sport.

Janet Larson – We have something similar to the Medical Savings Acc't you refer to. We can elect to have some amount of \$ withheld from our checks each pay period (pre-tax) that we can use to be reimbursed for non-covered medical expenses (deductibles, non-plan providers, etc). The catch is that it's a year to year thing and any left over \$ at the end is lost. A true MSA, like an IRA, would work better than that simply by letting the money carry over. But making them mandatory opens up a totally different can of worms – at that point the MSA has just become a tax. I could see it (in conjunction with the low-cost/high-deductible insurance) as one option in a menu though. / From what I've read of MDs who are trying different styles of billing (ie no insurance billing) is that it seems to work pretty well for them. It also seems to cut down on their workloads a bit since, when you know what the cost is and have to pay it, there is an incentive to not over indulge. At the least I'm sure that getting out from under the paperwork is a relief. It does, of course, beg the question of being able to afford the visits but as long as there are other choices of provider around it seems a valid arrangement for Family Practice and other primary care physicians. I suspect it would be a problem for specialists.

Ct Toni: I think the "exposure to many men's sperm lowers the immune system" was one of the early efforts to explain how all these weird and rare diseases were showing up in the gay community. (At least I have some vague recollection of reading about that notion. Could have been in "And the Band Played On". // Ct Jeff: Why has Iraq not sold as much oil as it's allowed? First guess is PR – look how the sanctions make our people suffer.

Steve Hughes – Speaking of the duty of elected officials, I am reminded of a letter in our local paper a while back. Seems the writer was very upset. He'd written Senator Feinstein in opposition to war with Iraq and got back a letter explaining her reason for supporting the resolution. And he was mad that "She wasn't voting as her constituents wanted". A bit unclear on the concept.

Gary Brown – Nice reunion tale. I just got an email that my High School class was planning it's 30<sup>th</sup> Reunion for later this year. Of course September in L.A. is not really in the plans. I suppose I could make it work if there were enough people that I really wanted to see, but there were only a handful of people I was really friendly with and I know where to get ahold of them (and vice versa). The only one I did attend was the 10<sup>th</sup> and – big surprise – I really only knew three or four people. // The scary part about what you say regarding what had the most influence on the election results is that it's such a predictable reaction (although not invincible). People are scared and look to the party that (they perceive) will be toughest on The Enemy. Great way to push a government away from the more moderate side. // Ct Southerner: Actually, I intend to be the last member standing and thus inherit the SFPA Treasure. // Ct Richard D: Tough call about treating Taliban and Al-Queda in the same legal and court system as Americans. Not because they should have fewer rights but due to the question of jurisdiction. The Taliban was the gov't and probably would have to be tried by the World Court. For Al Queda members cases could probably be made but possibly not en masse. Not that we may not force the point at which time I'd agree that either we play by the reulse we espouse or be exposed as hypocrites.

SpongeBrown Garypants – Ct me: I'd agree that the way the playoffs and series went was a great way to close this rather problematic season. It's great when a team without a gazillion dollar payroll comes through. I'm sure that Fox was unhappy about the geographic non-spread of teams but that's what makes the game fun, it's a crapshoot. A LASFAPAn who has been an Angels fan since their inception tells me that the way they played in the playoffs and series was absolutely indicative of how their entire year had been. // Ct Janice: This brings up the question of just how to handle managing dilemmas in an All-Star game. In a regular game you don't generally change pitchers every inning or two unless it's such a blow out that extra innings aren't a worry. And you don't generally have to worry about getting everyone game time that one night. So there are considerations that are different. As a start I'd suggest holding some players back and doing massive substitutions in the last couple of innings if people are still unplayed. But what do you do if you run out of pitchers? Have the last one's go longer and maybe screw up their teams' rotation? Free substitution? I don't think their solution was good but I do think it needs to be discussed beforehand.

Eve Ackerman – I've read one of Hambly's Dr January books and definitely need to get another. Very easy and enthralling reading. // Ct me: a) ~~The~~A couple blood donations ago, when they were getting the tubes for testing after the unit was collected, the adaptor came off and we dripped a bit of blood on my hand and arm, and the floor and chair arm. A "Oh. Hmm." Moment. b) I discussed your question with Kay and the only thing we can see would be that the nurse may have been putting the needle in at too steep an angle. Perhaps by "having the thumb down" she meant further away from the tip of the needle assembly which would serve to flatten the entry angle. // // Random, on his own, has pretty decent decision making ability. His problem (at least thus far) is a tendency to get caught up in what everyone else is doing and spiraling a bit out of control. It can be a nasty synergy effect. A well, we keep working on it.

**APAC = NC<sup>2</sup>** (Natter x Comments)

Once again we've been There and Back Again to L.A. Except for Random's scarfing his breakfast and then returning it for a refund, the first part of the drive went rather well (FYI, I had a bag out and was getting it ready when Random called "Bag!" So there was no damage to the interior of the new car. It's nice when the safety devices are actually engaged.) We took the Prius this time – as we'd both done drives to the Bay Area with it this summer, we were both comfortable that it would work fine for the longer trip too.

Aside from some leg-stretching, we didn't do any real stops until we reached Alameda – we'd brought along the massage table that Kay's brother's friend had claimed. After dropping that off, we swung by a nearby shopping center to see about a bite of lunch. We found a place that appeared to have been at that location far longer than the rest of the stores. A little place called the Southshore Café. Nothing special of note in the food, but the men's room was rather odd. You come in on the long side of a rectangle. The sink is in the top left corner and the toilet in the right top corner. Luckily there was a urinal, as standing in front of the toilet was not possible due to the proximity of the sink. I'm not sure if sitting on the toilet was possible or not. Also, the TP rolls were situated on the wall at just the place one might expect to find the paper towels. Rather disconcerting.



Dinner and gasoline were acquired at Kettleman City, the only major oasis along that stretch of I-5 that I had not previously made use of. Again in exploring mode, we opted for The Roadhouse Café. A nice little place with an internal gift shop and a rather impressive collection of '50s and '60s toy vehicles – not the matchbox size, but the kind you could sit in and push or pedal. From there it was straight on 'til evening and we arrived at the old homestead just 12.5 hours after leaving home with an average gas mileage around 48 mpg.

The folks are doing reasonably well. My dad's recovering from a cracked rib that he got from a fall in the kitchen a week or so earlier so he's a bit slower and in occasional pain, but not bad at all. Mom's much the same although less interesting in walking up to the store than she used to be. And the horde of "Not my cats" continues to grow in their backyard. To no one's surprise, Random now tops his grandmother in height. Mother and aunt are next in the target line.

Friday we had one planned activity – catching the earliest possible showing of Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets. We found a 9:30 am show at "The Plant" – a shopping center and movie complex built on the grounds of what was once an auto assembly plant. A rather impressive complex although there are rather too many of them around as it is. We enjoyed the film – as expected – and got a bonus out of it. We had some sound problems during the course of the showing (a low hum that kept cutting in and out) so everyone in that theatre was given a free readmission pass. After that, it was back home to spend the rest of the day with my parents.

Saturday was mostly another open day, but we did have a party to attend. Our own. Tom and Marina Stern had offered (virtually insisted) to host a party so we could invite our friends – fannish and less so – and not have to chase all over creation to see them. We'd emailed a bit the week before and it sounded like they had a real feast laid on (snacks, pasta, roast, desserts). While the attendance was smaller than I'd hoped for, it was great seeing everyone who did attend. I think the thing that most impressed Kim (Brown, nee Marks) was how well Random played with their son, Grant (about 5 years Random's junior). In any case, it really was a fun time and we owe Tom and Marina some thanks.

Sunday was our next planned event day – a visit to the Autry Museum of Western Heritage. Interestingly, one of the rotating exhibits was about Jews in the American West. It was a pretty cool (and rather extensive) display and had a number of group tours going through it. (For the interested, that one lasts until some time in January.)

The second rotating exhibit was about (more or less) California Coastal Culture. So, naturally, a chunk of that involved beaches, lifeguards and surfing – although that was hardly the all of it. The main (and I think permanent) exhibit is about the West in song, story, movie and TV. That was clearly the part ~~that~~ Random enjoyed the most even if the whole thing wasn't really his cup of tea. Another nice feature of the museum is the central, open, auditorium where (today) they had Roy Rogers jr and his band playing. Provided a nice ambiance.

Also of note (although not surprising given the presence of the exhibit) was that the gift shop had a lot of gneat Judaica and we picked up a few small things for gifts and souvenirs.

Monday I went golfing, Kay went shopping/chatting with my sister and we left Random in charge of his grandparents. That was also the windiest day of our visit (luckily it was a warm wind) and resulted (overnight) in the fence behind my parents' house being blown over. As it happened, that fence was entirely their neighbor's property so it wasn't our problem.

Tuesday was the last event day, and we went to check out the Museum of Tolerance. The security was fairly noticeable (I can't say if it's been increased) with us having to show ID and open the trunk for inspection before entering the parking structure. It's a pretty powerful exhibit with parts just on tolerance/intolerance and a section on the evolution of the Holocaust, as well as more general exhibits and an ongoing set of survivors telling their tales. As Random said, "Upsetting."

For the drive home I avoided the freeway and opted to drive over the hill on Beverly Glen Dr. I think it was a good choice as it took under 1.5 hours to traverse the route during rush hour.

Wednesday was another low-key day with a visit by a family friend and our cashing in of free movie readmission with a viewing of the new 007 film. It was the usual fun romp, albeit with a few fewer toys than usual. A fun item was the sequence with "Q" in a storage area with bunches of old equipment (read – props from previous movies). The only point where the internal logic broke down for me was when Bond didn't realize on picking it up that his gun had had the bullets removed (I suppose that the tinkering could have been more sophisticated, but there was no evidence that that was the case).

Thursday was Thanksgiving. Kay made rolls & pies and the lot of us went over to my sister's for the evening. A good time was had by all and most of us were even able to walk afterwards.

Friday I spent time visiting two old friends (Lee Ann – who some of you know – and Sharon, who you don't know) and catching up on what's been going on. I tell you, it only takes seeing a handful of people to remind me that I do miss L.A. quite a bit in many ways. We have talked about the possibility – after my sister retires and moves out of town – of moving back to take care of my folks. As that's a few years off it's not a pressing concern but time will tell. Ah yes, Friday was also our "Buy a whole lot of Western Bagels to take back with us day" – just 7 dozen this time (half for a friend). Yes, we can get bagels in Eureka, but not as good nor as long lasting.

Saturday we hit the road north for an easy drive up the central valley to Oakland. As usual there wasn't much to comment on, although we did finish off the travel book – Another Fine Myth. Unusual, it usually takes much longer to get through a book when we're driving. Of course the Myth books are pretty light. Either way it was a lot of fun – it's been a while since I read the things. As usual we stayed with (the non-Royal) Elizabeth and Philip and had a wonderful – if too brief – visit. It also made us think about the idea of using a week of vacation next summer to spend in the Bay Area and let Random get taken to camp by one of the buses that runs from there. Have to coordinate this but it could work.

Sunday it was up 101 and back home. The traditional stop at Trader Joe's in Santa Rosa for various sundries. The equally traditional stop at Real Goods in Hopland – just for fun. The usual. The cats have indicated they appreciate our return (daily visits by our neighbor just didn't make the attention quota) and Corky was quite happy to be home even if he did have fun at the kennel.

While I was away Sally, the only remaining PM person from when I was hired, gave notice. She, her husband and daughter are moving to SoCal (his job disappeared a few months ago and down there is where the jobs are). Last man standing. In that same shuffle, one of the techs from the other local hospital accepted a job offer with us and will be starting around New Year. (That leaves them even more staff-strapped than we are.) The only other work stuff is also annoying. One of our vendors lost their contract as a supplier for one of our equipment manufacturers. As a result our standing order was dropped about 3 months early with no notice. We've managed (I think) to juggle things for the moment but need to restabilize things again. Oh well, at least on the next schedule I'm off of the half-overnight shift so I get a small break there.

And the beat goes on. About a week after getting back from our vacation – and just as we were getting back into stride – Kay's father had a heart attack and died. This was enough of a mess that I'm going to gloss over things quickly. We scrambled (this was on a Sunday) and arranged for crash space in Oakland, flights to Detroit, boarding for Corky, rescheduled Random's orthodontist and let our bosses know we'd be gone for the week. Having accomplished all this, it turned out that *all* that occurred during our visit was a brief family viewing of the body (what fun) and a bit of a semi-wake. The cremation would take a few days and, after getting a plot, the interment would occur in June. What a fuckin' waste of time, money and energy – none of which we had an abundance of anyway.

So we get home the following weekend and I pick Corky up from the kennel. He'd had a good day and week but he wasn't right when I came to get him – slow, non-responsive, unsteady – and had obviously had another stroke (I'm presuming during the nap he had been taking). Anyway I get him home and figure we'll see what the morning brings. Well, the rest of the afternoon brought on a series of seizures that convinced me that waiting for the morning wasn't going to happen. So I took him over to the emergency vet and closed out the circle of this year (I hope!) by putting him to sleep too. (I'm getting weepy again thinking about it) We buried him in our yard with his favorite blanket and his bone, said a few words and planted an azalea on the spot. I want a redo on this last year! (Yes, we will be getting another dog, but I'm not up for that just yet.)

On a lighter (?) note, our garbage disposal recently ceased to work so today our friend Richard came over to verify we had what was needed before replacing it. That may seem a strange thing to get help on but around this house.... Seems that the previous unit had been installed with a liberal bit of caulk to do something or other and everything that should have been a twist off or unscrew was virtually welded in place. Suffice to say that an hour's worth of work turned into a desperate afternoon's combat.

The Two Towers. And I have to say that I'd probably side more with the "purist" position than I did with the first one. More of the deviations from plot and character felt unjustified this part. (At least unjustified in the sense of doing something to advance the plot vs giving them a chance to do something neat and exciting or give air time to people from the first film.) I'd list the variations in Theoden (weaker), Gimli (slightly comic), Elrond (who shouldn't be in the film at all) (objecting to the Arwen Aragorn match?!), Faramir (wanting to take the Ring to Gondor!) and the Ents' initial vote to not get involved in the war, the Elves helping at Helm's Deep, the fight scene on the way to Helm's Deep and Aragorn's being wounded and the sequence with Faramir and prisoners in Osgiliath. As I said last year I have no trouble with combining characters if done well or tweaking things to avoid "sidetrips" that don't develop the plot. On the flip side I dislike weakening main characters. In this case I think two of the main tweaks mentioned above had no benefit to the plot, some harm to story flow and to the reputation of some of the characters. Was it impressive? Yes, but I think the changes as made leave a funny taste if you know the story. Yes, I know no book ever survives unchanged in the transition to film and I'd really just like to know the justification for the changes that bug me – if I can see the reasons I'd feel better. In the first film I saw the reasons (albeit not agreeing with all) but here I can't see all the reasons.

**AUF WIEDERSCHREIBEN and HAPPY NEW YEAR**