Proper Boskonian

31

December 1993

Proper Boskonian History

by Anthony Lewis

Proper Boskonian is the general fanzine of NESFA. The name was suggested by Dainis Bisenieks. Other proposed titles for this zine included *The Fenway*. It is ostensibly published on a quarterly basis, but, in reality, has only done slightly better than annually. It contains writing, art, book reviews, and the like from both members and non-members. All issues have been 8" by 11". Issue 0 was dittoes; all subsequent issues have been mimeographed or offset.

#	EDITOR/NOTES	DATE	LENGTH
0	**Cory Seidman Panshin** /"The Great Pumpkin Lives!"	10/67	10 pp
1	"Happy Birthday, Tony Lewis"	2/68	30 pp
2	"Special Fuzzy Pink Issue"	6/68	44 pp
3	"Smoffing is a Way of Life"	11/68	32 pp
4	"Beware the Ides of March"	3/69	46 pp
5	**Richard Harter**/"Tranquility Base Here, the Eagle Has Landed"	8/69	48 pp
6		7/70	56 pp
7		4/71	56 pp
8		9/71	82 pp
9		4/72	82 pp
10	**Tony Lewis**/"Real Soon Now"	7/73	28 pp
11	"Highmore in '76"	5/74	18 pp
12	**David Stever**	5/75	26 pp
13		1/76	18 pp
14	**Sheila Glover D'Ammassa**	8/76	36 pp
15		11/76	58 pp
16		2/77	40 pp
17	**Mike Blake**	12/78	22 pp
18	**James Mark Anderson**	12/79	36 pp
19		1980	38 pp
20	unnumbered, distributed with *Instant Message* 292	5/81	6 pp†
21	distributed with *Instant Message* 294	6/81	2 pp†
22	distributed with *Instant Message* 296	7/81	3 pp†
23	distributed with *Instant Message* 300	9/81	12 pp†
24	unnumbered, distributed with *Instant Message* 307	1/82	12 pp†
25	**Joe Rico**	11/84	74 pp
26		12/85	46 pp
27	**Laurie D. T. Mann**/"The Fall of '73 Issue"	5/90	44 pp
28	"Back to Boskone"	2/91	32 pp
29		8/92	34 pp
30	**Kenneth Knabbe**	6/93	42 pp
31		12/93	88 pp

† These issues had no covers.

Proper Boskonian 31
December 1993

Proper Boskonian is the semi-annual (I am trying) genzine of the New England Science Fiction Association. Send all contributions (writing, art, LoCs) to *Proper Boskonian*, c/o NESFA, Post Office Box 809, Framingham, MA 01701-0203.

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Contents

Artists

PB 32 is planned to be out late April/early May. The deadline for material is February first. I will accept material at Boskone. Material can be left at the NESFA tables in the Hucksters Room.

Official Notices

This zine is available as part of NESFA membership (still $16 a year for subscribing members); or for a contribution of writing, art, and/or Loc; $2.00 per issue; trade; and/or editorial whim.

PB 30 was mailed on June 16. In the reviews and letters I have seen, several people have commented on my software problems. They all seem to have missed the point. People seemed to think I was complaining about not having the newest or best software with all the "whistles and bells." The problem I was having was that the pieces people were giving me were all in different formats. I received some in: ASCII, Word for Windows, and Word for Mac. In addition, all the text I wrote was in Galaxy. Doing the corrections and getting the result printed added a lot of time and aggravation to getting the issue out. I am glad most people seem to feel the effort was worth it. In addition, a number of people have complained about the readability of some of the writing. I hope the size type I am using in this issue is acceptable, as I plan on making it my standard.

For *PB* 31 I have purchased Ami Pro © Lotus. Even though I have had to work with data in five different formats for this issue, I have not had the conversion problem I did previously. Yes, it is among the newest of software and does have many extras I will eventually learn to use, but I bought it because it can translate data to/from almost any other format and I have found it easy to learn.

People have written to me inquiring about Boston Worldcon bids. NESFA is not bidding. NESFA puts on Boskone. The plans for that convention are coming along nicely. If you have any questions, or would like to help with Boskone, I will be happy to hear from you. MCFI, the group that ran Noreascon Three, is bidding for 2001. Their address is PO Box 1010, Framingham, MA 01701-0205. A new group, the BCEC is bidding for 1998. Their address is Post Office Box 98, Carlisle, MA 01741. Rather than give incomplete or more likely incorrect information, I suggest that you address any inquiries to them directly.

This issue starts out with "Crosstime Bus" by Joe Mayhew FN. Some of you may remember it as the play for voices done at Boskone 30. The play, which included the voices of Joe as God and Suford Lewis as Satan, was a big success. Joe Mayhew had the performance recorded for the vision-impaired. If you would like a copy, write to him. When I asked if I could publish it, Joe sent me the short-story version.

Next is a trip report to San Francisco by Leslie Turek FN. Leslie has not done any writing for NESFA in over two years. It is nice to see her back in print. Her piece is more a trip report than a conreport, but it does give a good attendee's view of ConFrancisco.

As collator of Apa:NESFA I sometimes see writing that I think will be of interest to the entire membership of NESFA. Last issue I published the piece on John Campbell by Tony Lewis FN. This issue I have the discussion of the writings of Heinlein written by Jim Mann FN.

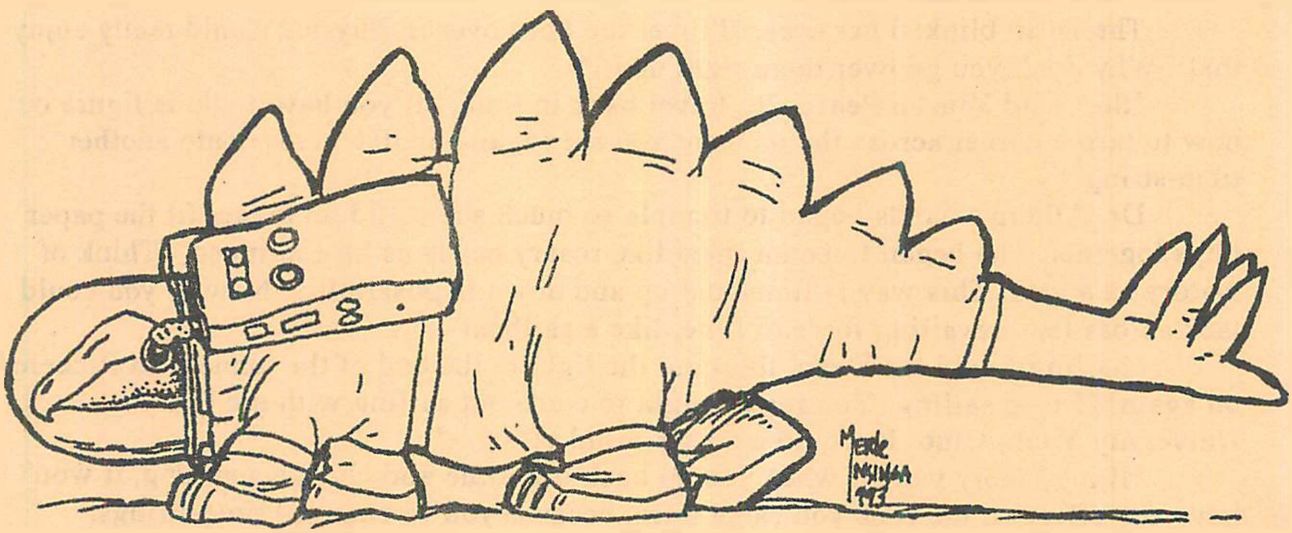
In last issue's Boskone report, Evelyn Leeper said people were taking bets on how long her next report would by. This one, on ConFrancisco, started at 28,207 words. In order to be kind to Claire Anderson FN, and not make this an all-Leeper issue, I have edited it down to 25,174 words. This means that most of her non-convention material, and all of her Hogu report were cut. I assure you she does do more than record panels. Also this is a joint report with Mark Leeper, so the

impression you will get that she was in multiple places at once is misleading. The report seems very inclusive.

If you will remember from last issue, I promised a piece on the work of Clifford D. Simak. After all the complaints about the masters (including him) going out of print, I expected to receive many reviews and comments. I can only believe that when people noticed his books starting to reappear on the shelves, they found it unnecessary to write. While I did receive several comments, I did not get any reviews. Why should the publishers keep the masters in print if people do not tell new readers why they are worth buying? George Flynn FN and I have put together a list of Simak's work. While it is not complete, it should enable people to find his work more easily.

While this issue contains less art than the last, I am pleased to report that I managed to get some new pieces from Merle Insinga. In addition, the art of Alice Lewis adorns the back cover. While I received fewer submissions of art for this issue, I have been fortunate that the art I have been sent is very good.

I would like to get *Proper Boskonian* on a regular schedule. According to the NESFA calendar, late April and November are the best times for semiannual publication. With this in mind, I am setting the deadline for submission to the next issue at February first. I will accept material at Boskone, but except for Boskone reports all other material is due in then. For next issue I plan on doing a retrospective on the art of Joe Mayhew FN. Joe tells me there is a twelve page cartoon he did that has never been published. I will try to have it for next issue. In addition, I would like to put together a piece on Hugo recommendations. What do you think should be nominated? Send me your ideas along with reviews and comments, and I will compile and publish the results. Please try to limit yourself to five nominations per category. This is your chance to prove that while you may not read the masters you still read the new writing being published. As always, other material, art, and letters are welcome. (After all, gathering material an issue ahead makes it easier to get a volunteer for next year.)



Crosstime Bus

by Joe Mayhew

God is sitting around the kitchen table with Satan, who is shuffling a deck of cards. She slaps the cards down into a hand of canfield.

"Solitaire again?" God asks, looking a little hurt. "Wouldn't you like to play God?"

"Don't tempt me," says Satan, playing a red jack on a red queen. "Frankly, Pops, you're a poor sport. You always have to win. So I'm not in the mood to play another round of `You bet your Faust' with you. You let your friends get by with murder. Anything is possible for them."

"As author, I get to write the parts any way I like."

Satan picks up the red jack and then slaps it back down again. "For example: your buddy down there, Vinson Pease. You made that idiot richer than Scrooge McDuck by letting him buy up the world's garbage dumps and then discover how to transmute rubbish into gold."

God cuts himself a slice of bread and slathers on some low-calorie grape jelly. "Well, Angel, he does good things with his money. He founded Pease University. And furthermore, he is not an idiot. Right now, he's discussing science with the Dean of Philosophy."

Satan touches the jack again and it turns black. "Just listen to him! Vinson Pease is a crackpot. He's boring her with his latest theory about time travel."

Dean Lillian Athern's eyes were dry-glazed. She tried to focus her sanity by daisy-chaining paper clips as Vinson Pease's words soared around her head like horseflies, "... and so, all history is made up of a string of separate little `nows.'"

"It's getting late," said the Dean.

But Vinson Pease sang on, "What if those moments could be strung together in several other ways? My theory is that each moment could be connected to a great number of possible histories."

The Dean blinked her eyes. "I'll bet the boys over in Physics would really enjoy that. Why don't you go over there right now?"

"So," said Vinson Pease, "to travel back in time, all you have to do is figure out how to turn a corner across the moment you are in, and switch across onto another time-string."

Dr. Athern's hands began to tremble so much she could no longer fit the paper clips together. She began to count them like rosary beads as he continued, "Think of history as a grid: This way is time, and up and down is possibility. Now, if you could tack across the prevailing force of time, like a sailboat --"

"Sailing!" said the Dean, thinking the light at the end of the tunnel had flickered on again. "I love sailing. You really ought to come out sailing with the Pease University Yacht Club. It would get your mind off of --"

"If my theory works, when you go back into time and change anything, it won't have any effect on the time you came from, because you've changed time-strings. Think about it! You could do ANYTHING you want while you played around in the

past and none of it would ever come back to haunt you. Wouldn't that make history a great vacation spot?"

The Dean tossed her paper clip chain into the trash basket. "Vinson, your time-travel theory is just another heap of -- Well, Time is entropy, time is --"

"-- money," said Vinson Pease. "I've decided to offer a substantial grant for research into my time travel theory."

The Dean hoped he wasn't thinking of turning this philosophical problem over to those frozen minds in Physics and Engineering. Those pretentious garage mechanics would laugh at the very idea of time travel.

But Vinson Pease smiled blank checks at her on which an angelic chorus sang an amazing number of `0's. The Project was hers!

Satan notices the red queen is now a queen of clubs.

The next few months saw Dr. Athern on an extended staff hunt to Acapulco, Monte Carlo, Disneyland, and Club Med, where she carefully recruited the best-looking research team money could buy.

Her design for the Pease University Time Academy's research center won the Ludwig of Bavaria Award for Astonishing Taste.

Satan puts her black jack down on the discards and says, "Doesn't she suspect the whole thing is only that crackpot's idea of a practical joke?" The jack blushes red.

The deans of Physics and Engineering at Pease U. were dutifully scandalized by the simply shocking fact that the Department of Philosophy's new PUTA center was a flagrantly expensive replica of the Alhambra palace. Why, it had the world's largest Jacuzzi and a fleet of 72 color-coordinated Jaguars in its motor pool. They were most anxious for Vinson Pease to view all of that riotous extravagance with righteous alarm. When the above-mentioned deans dragged Vinson Pease through Dr. Athern's center, they licked their lips imagining the dean's fiscal rage and budgetary humiliation when Vinson Pease would confront her with her criminal folly.

But they hadn't taken notice of the beaten-up old bus with "P.E.N." scrawled on its side which was parked in a corner of the PUTA garage. They had no idea that the Dean of Philosophy actually had built a working time machine. There it was: the Crosstime Bus.

Satan palms the jack back into the deck but turns over another red jack.

God suggests, "Angel, play the three of clubs on that four of diamonds."

Vinson Pease pressed his nose flat against the windows of the bus's door. He said, "Why didn't you tell me you had perfected time travel?"

"Because there are still a few problems to be worked out -- mere technical problems, I assure you."

"Oh. I see. What you meant was that you have the metaphysical problems of time travel all worked out, and now, all someone else has to do is solve the tiny problem of actually building something that works. Doubtless you mean to leave that to lesser minds."

The Dean feigned a hurt look.

Satan plays the three.

"No," said Dean Athern. "We really do have a working time machine and we have been able to send things back into time. The problem is getting things to return.

It seems that the machine can't be pre-set to come back, so an operator would have to time-hop with it."

"I'm your man!" said Vinson Pease.

"But we aren't sure that the machine can get back to this particular time-string."

"Time-string! That sounds like the time machine works on my theory."

The Dean sat down on the hood of a fuchsia Jaguar and almost wept. "I'm afraid it does. By some miracle you were right."

Satan turns over the card which was under the three of clubs. It's a jack of spades, which plays on the queen of diamonds.

The Dean of Engineering was unconvinced. "How did you build anything that complicated without using our labs?"

Dean Athern batted her eyes as though she were lying through her teeth and said, "We turned it over to Mr. Fixit's Toaster and TV Repair Shop."

"No doubt," says Satan, playing the jack, "while Mr. Fixit spliced and diced spare parts, you made a tossed salad of the universal laws of physics so that this time-machine absurdity could work."

A red ten turns up from below the jack.

Vinson Pease moved in on the battered old bus like a six-year-old examining a new puppy.

Satan finds another red ten under the red ten.

"By the way, Dean Athern, what does this big 'P.E.N' mean?"

"It stands for 'Pease Entrópic Navigation'. The time machine has an entropic inertia drive."

Carefully laying the second red ten on top of the first, Satan tries to make God flinch. "Daddy, that's the second ten of hearts in this deck."

God takes a bite of bread and jelly. "It's a pinochle deck."

"It wasn't when I shuffled," says Satan, wincing at the sudden taste of grape jelly. She puts the deck down and says, "It isn't fair to have entropy, which is the garbage can of the universe, power ANYTHING. If that's how you're going to play, I quit."

"Now, Angel, you know very well that you can't quit. So just carry on and do your best -- or your worst. Your problem is you don't have any sense of fun. Just look at Vinson Pease. He's so happy. That's what I like about him."

And Vinson was. "Oh, Dean, this thing is wonderful! All these knobs and buttons -- let's take it out onto the road for a spin. I'll bet this lever controls the door."

The Dean slapped his hand away in time. "No, Vinson, that's the time shift. I think you'd better read the instructions before you try to operate it."

Vinson tried the bounce of the driver's seat. "Dean Athern, why don't you just tell me which levers to pull as we go along?"

"No, Vinson, that wouldn't work. Someone has to remain behind in case anything goes wrong." After all, there still was a lot of money in PUTA's accounts.

But Vinson Pease was all go and no discussion. He told Dr. Athern to have the Crosstime Bus gassed up and waiting for him in front of the Pease U. Student Union by noon the next day.

When the battered old P.E.N. bus clanked to a halt in front of the Union building, Vinson Pease was ready with a gaggle of volunteers from the Pease U. Adventure Gaming Club. One of them, a certain Arthur Daggett, had dressed for a field trip back into history. He was wearing a chain-mail shirt which glistened in the September sunlight like silver. It was, in point of fact, made of plastic-covered aluminum clothesline.

Vinson and his kids bounded onto the Crosstime Bus in high spirits. However, as soon as they were aboard, they became totally oblivious to the world around them. Every one of them was busy with charts, forms, thirty-seven-sided dice, and copious character notes as they prepared to navigate Arthur Daggett's Dungeon.

Martha Norton, the driver whom the Campus Shuttle Service had supplied, hadn't exactly understood the nature of the field trip when she volunteered for overtime pay. As she eased the battered old Crosstime Bus down the lovely elm-shaded brick lane which curved gracefully across the quiet and shady neo-colonial campus of Pease U. toward quaint but authentic West Tisbury, Vinson Pease touched the time-shift.

Suddenly the bus began to toss and bounce wildly. Cows scattered in cow terror as the bus screeched to a stop. While the folks aboard the bus were more than a little puzzled by their new surroundings, their sudden arrival out of thin air had sent some of the local farm boys fleeing in banshee terror. The local farm boys were fifth-century Britons. The report they filed at the local castle caused quite a stir.

Caius Dumnonius, son of M. Dumnonius Hector, was backed up against the cold flint wall of his father's officium. "But, Dad, I'm not joking. There really <u>is</u> a dragon down in the pasture!"

His father held him by the shoulders and tried to scream reason into him. "CALM DOWN, KAY! What you saw was just another stunt of that mountebank -- whazzisname."

"Oh, come on, Dad, Merlin is the greatest wizard in all Britain."

"He's a meddling old phoney. He's got all the fools around here expecting a miracle-king to save us all from the Saxons."

Kay squinted and affirmed his faith. "Merlin-says-we-will-know-our-Rightful-King-because-he-will-be-able-to-pull-the-magical-sword-out-of-its-enchanted-stone."

Hector dropped his hands from his son's shoulders and stepped back. "The <u>Rightful King</u>! Son, the <u>Rightful King</u> is the man who knows how to make everyone obey him. That old fart wants people to think that the strongest lout around ought to be king. That's a lot of barbaric nonsense. Merlin is behind the times. We're civilized Romans now, not just any of your paint-yourself-blue savages. Why, woad went out years ago. Nowadays, a civilized king can simply go out and hire all the muscle he needs." Sir Hector knew down in his heart that if it weren't for Merlin's sword-in-the-stone nonsense, he'd already be king.

Kay's squire, Bedevere, came in puffing and round-eyed. "Gor! Sir Hector! There's a dragon chasing cows down in new pasture."

Hector was skeptical. It was probably nothing more than a Gryphon or a Wyvern. "Come on, Kay, Bedevere, let's make sure it doesn't interfere with the cows. God knows what would come of that."

God pauses to consider the possibilities and smiles.

At first what Hector saw looked to him like some sort of building or a barge or maybe a giant's wagon. But Bedevere still saw a dragon. Kay saw there were three proper Roman letters scrawled on the magical thing's side: "P. E. N." Perhaps this was the mythical pendragon. Kay's father enlightened him from that error with a firm cuff to the side of the head.

Bedevere said, "Gor! Look, the pendragon eats people: you can see them inside it. But I think the dragon is sick. It just puked somebody out."

Arthur Daggett had stepped out of the bus to ask directions back to the road. He thought they had stumbled into a Renaissance Fair. From the silvery mail Arthur wore, the Britons thought he might be a Saxon prince. Hector planned on murdering him after exchanging a few pleasantries.

Martha had closed the bus door behind Arthur, but Vinson Pease, thinking it would be wise to leave him a quick retreat, tried to open the door. Naturally he hit the wrong button. Whereupon the cow pasture, the Crosstime Bus, and/or the Dragon vanished; according to your point of view.

In a flash, the Crosstime Bus reappeared stalled on an Interstate. Cars were swerving and crashing into each other and into the crowds of people along the roadsides. Signs increasingly littered the pavement. One said, "WELCOME HOME, VINSON PEASE, FATHER OF TIME TRAVEL."

With a sickening feeling of déjà vu, Martha got the bus started and drove it carefully up the highway to a bunting-beswagged reviewing stand. Vinson Pease shook hands on up to the podium, and on the way was told that time travel had become such a great success that this tribute had been arranged for his historic return. People had time-hopped in from all directions to be here for this momentous occasion. In places of honor, he could see an entire row of himself at various ages. He waved graciously to them, but hoped they all weren't scheduled to speak.

Vinson adjusted the microphone and began: "Ladies, Gentlemen, and myselves: When I was a kid I invested every cent I had into sanitary landfills. Then I came up with a formula for turning garbage into gold. Those dumps provided the capital which allowed me to mine atmospheric pollution, and that in turn funded the research into Time Travel that got us into all of this.

"Still, it wasn't just the refuse of our teeming shores, but rubbish of a more spiritual sort, which played a major part in fulfilling one of man's greatest daydreams. I turned to the vast resources of intellectual rubbish available at our great universities, and to my delight it was Philosophy, the very ash-bin of man's struggle with knowledge, which delivered the goods."

Martha Norton came up behind him and tugged at his elbow, saying, "Excuse me, Dr. Pease, shouldn't we try to get back and pick up Arthur Daggett before those thugs eat him or something?"

Vinson Pease looked a little relieved. He smiled to his audience, and some of them smiled back. The bus was empty when he got on board.

Martha explained that most of the gamers had snuck out the back door when he went out the front. They said that all the bumping around was upsetting their adventure. Reality is such a drag.

Meanwhile, Merlin the Sorcerer (etc.) was showing their dungeon master, Arthur Daggett, the famous sword-in-the-stone.

Merlin spoke in heartfelt strophes:

"The powers governant of the Earth
Do ordain unto the common weal
A trial by grammary
Which shall have patent to appoint
A sovereign for this shattered land:
And whosoever by his right and royal hand
Draws Excalibur, sword of prophecy,
From its seat within enchanted stone,
In that, is manifested
Rightful King.
For unto him Excalibur shall follow from that day,
'Tis meet all Britons thence should, acknowledging,
obey."

Sir Hector spoke in heartfelt antistrophes:

"What a bushel of bear turds."

Arthur had busied himself with Merlin's famous sword. After a while, he drew Sir Hector aside and told him, "I've taken a good look at how Merlin's sword trick works. It's held in the stone by a sort of Chinese finger-trap. You stick your fingers in one and then, the harder you pull, the tighter they are held. Any fool could pull Excalibur out of Merlin's stone."

Hector wasn't interested. He said, "Only a fool would think that pulling out that trashy sword should make him king."

"Sir Hector, if Merlin's got everyone believing that, couldn't you pull out the sword and make yourself king?"

Hector looked at Arthur with either pure love or pure greed in his eyes. "Good point! No. I couldn't. I've been bad-mouthing Merlin's gimmick so much it wouldn't work for me."

"What if your son, Sir Kay, pulled it out?" said Arthur. "I could show him how."

Arthur tugged Kay over to the stone and pointed into the hole around the sword, "Kay, look down in there, where the sword enters the stone. See that metal webbing which surrounds the blade? Well, the more anyone pulls on Excalibur, the tighter the webbing holds onto it. But, if you push down on the sword, like this, and then shake it loose, like this, it comes right out, see?"

Bedevere had been bouncing up and down trying to see over Kay's shoulder. When Arthur's demonstration worked, Bedevere blurted out, "Gor! Look, everyone! Arthur pulled out the sword. Arthur's the Rightful King!"

Everyone around broke into oohs and ahhs except for Hector, who broke out into something which sounded to Arthur like a blender full of rusty nails at low speed.

The great bard strophed again, but Hector caught him by the arm, and holding a small but diplomatic dagger at Merlin's kidney, said, "Mountebank! I want a word with you!"

But Arthur Daggett was more alarmed at the turn of events than either of the above. "Pardon me, gentlemen, but, you see, I'm a stranger in town. I haven't registered to vote here; so I don't see how I could even run for dog-catcher, let alone king."

Merlin raised an ornamental eyebrow and strophed again:

"Gallant Hector,
Yonder noble innocent displays
Wise appetite for counsel.
An we work in friendly consort
We can do mightily with this
Untutored prince."

Hector heard something in what Merlin strophed, but he still had his doubts, and his dagger. He tapped the point against Merlin's ribs and said, "The boy might have been smart enough to see through that cheap sword trick of yours, but what good would he be at holding back the Saxons?"

Merlin strophed on even though it was only his senescent constipation which was saving him from embarrassment:

"Gentle Hector,
Each hillock in this shattered land
Has its reed-king to rule
Some score of farms around a market town,
And thus, with deft ease, the avid Saxon
Comes to mow them one by one
With his peculiar blade.
But let this unpartizaned youth
Be glove to your own strong hand
(And thus un-claw your enemies
With his right ordained power)
And your wise governance
Shall proceed with but small contention
For: He that has not taken friends in close degrees
Is free of faction
And of enemies.
Hector, let us as his royal guides unite
To stay the Saxon fiend in common fight
Ere he reaps this land unto the Irish Sea.
Soft though our reedy kingdoms be,
When bound as one,
Do gain both strength and might!"

The Bard had made a convert. Hector felt moved to verse himself. "Say, Merlin, do you know this one?

"There once was a widow from Kent --"

Arthur Daggett's only previous knowledge of King Arthur's times was from having seen Monty Python and the Holy Grail. Still, he did reasonably well as King, guided by Hector's unfailingly common instincts, unstinting cruelty, and utter devotion to quick and dirty profits.

Merlin dressed everything up in sonorous phrases until greed sounded like selfless devotion to apple pie and the Pre-American Way. Arthur was soon married off to the princess-next-door, Gwenevere, heiress of Camelot.

When Hector's thugs met with success in burning out several farms which had fallen into the hands of illegal Saxon immigrants, the other local kings saw that Arthur was good for their extortion racket, and got onto his team.

Everything was going by Malory until one day when Sir Kay came running into the castle without wiping his feet.

Gwenevere was mortally offended. "Sir Kay did NOT wipe his feet. No wonder we have to hang the rugs on the walls!"

"Sorry, Queen Gwenevere," Kay said, "but, you see, King Arthur's pendragon is back."

The Queen screwed up her face like a Wagnerian soprano and said, "So, Arthur, your dragon has come back for you just like Lohengrin's swan. You'll have to go back with it now, won't you?" There was hope in her voice.

But Sir Kay knew what was expected in this sort of circumstance. "The book says all us knights should go down and fight the dragon until we slay it, or until each of us dies heroically, but horribly. Knights are supposed to be very brave."

Gwenevere, always the soul of wit, said, "They are also supposed to wipe their feet."

Sir Kay, who knew exactly how to speak to women, smiled sweetly, but firmly, and said, "King Arthur and I have more important concerns right now, Queen Gwenevere. There is a big, nasty dragon outside the castle and the books say we are supposed to drive it away."

Arthur Daggett hoped that driving the dragon in question away might actually be Martha Norton's job.

But it wasn't Vinson Pease and the P.E.N. bus. It was only a load of tourists from the year 1374. Gwenevere thought that one of them was the most charming of gentlemen. He introduced himself as Sir Lancelot du Lac.

Before two weeks had passed, hordes of 19th-century fops were wandering around in fanciful costumes in search of the Holy Grail.

Merlin soon packed his carpet-bag and vanished on a chartered bus with a slinky black-arts major from Pease U. named Vivian Bassett. They were headed for the court of Elizabeth Tudor, where the manager of the Globe Theatre was advertising big money for some good propaganda plays. Meanwhile, the domestic scene at Camelot left something to be desired.

Gwenevere sat at the Round Table stuffing herself with pastries imported from the 19th century. She said, "You don't love me! You only married me so you could get your hands on Camelot without having to go to war with Daddy."

"Is that what your fancy-man Lancelot has been telling you?" said Arthur, who had been reading up on Arthurian legends.

However, Gwenevere, who knew the script without ever having to read it, whined, "Leave him out of this! Sir Lancelot is the PERFECT knight. He is so far above mere politics that he would never say a single word critical of his King."

"Screw Lancelot!" said Arthur in a figurative sense.

Satan shrugs her shoulders and shuffles the cards.

"Hypocrite!" said Gwenevere, spitting Danish-pastry crumbs all over the Round Table. "I know you've been cheating on me. That brat of yours, Modred, is the proof!"

"Proof of what!? This morning, some punk shows up with an army of Saxons. He claims he is my son and heir, but how could anyone fall for such a crazy story? It's impossible! Gwenevere, this Modred, who claims to be my son, is TWO YEARS OLDER THAN I AM. For another thing, he couldn't be your child either. Its been eight months since our wedding; and what with your saint's days, bad omens, and those unfailing headaches, ain't NOTHING happened between us yet."

Gwenevere lobbed a chocolate croissant at him. "Why should I let you into my bed when you've been crawling all over that little witch, Morgan le Fay? Well, look outside the castle, buddy. That bastard Modred's your reward for cheating on me!"

Arthur took a bite of the croissant. It was stale."That's just simply CRAZY, Gwenevere! How could poor little fourteen-year-old Morgan le Fay be Modred's mother? Modred is seven years older than she is."

"Hah!" said Gwenevere. "Listen, O Once and Future King, I know all about TIME TRAVEL."

Gwenevere was right. Morgan le Fay had slipped out of Camelot the night her pet rabbit died. She took a time bus to 1934, where she became the dinner companion of Hermann Goering. When she had given birth to Modred, she hopped onto another time bus and was back in her cozy little bed less than an hour, Camelot time, after she had left for Germany.

Modred was raised by the Nazi Lebensborn and when he turned 21, they dropped him off by time submarine, about two days, Camelot time, before his mother would conceive him.

Bedevere raced into the castle at full bumble. "Gor! King Arthur! There's a tiny dragon down at the drawbridge. It has a white flag of truce. Should I let it in?"

Martha Norton had come to Arthur's rescue in an old Volkswagen Beetle.

Arthur greeted her with a game smile but sad eyes. "Look at me, Martha, I'm King Arthur of Camelot, just like in that movie. I'm playing King, all right, but I think I'm married to Monty Python. How'd you get through Modred's army?"

"It must have been the Volkswagen. Modred said something in German and they let me through. That guy sure looks a lot like you, Arthur."

"That shouldn't be too surprising," said Gwenevere. "Arthur's his father. Modred is a Royal Bastard."

Martha agreed. "You can say that again. He wants to run Arthur down with an immense Timeways Scenacruiser. That's his idea of a joust."

But Gwenevere had another two cents to get in. "Why don't you get his mother, that little witch of yours, Morgan le Fay, to go out and plead with him for you?"

Martha thought that might be a bit of a problem. When she had last seen Modred, there was a hot little witch sitting on his lap. They said she was his mother,

but from the way she was carrying on with him, Martha thought someone must have been kidding.

"Let Modred have Camelot!" said Arthur. "Martha, can you get me out of here?"

Gwenevere blew her nose on her hankie and said, "You mean, you'd run off and leave me defenseless?"

"Nonsense, Gwenevere, there's the perfect knight, Sir Lancelot. If memory serves me, didn't you pick him as Queen's Champion?"

"But you know he led most of your Round-Table knights off in search of the Holy Grail."

"Just when Modred showed up with his brown-shirted Saxons. Martha, let's get out of here."

"OK, but there isn't enough room inside the castle to get my Volkswagen up to 30 miles an hour."

"Won't the time machine work when it's standing still?"

"No, it always goes to the day of its historic return. Dr. Pease and the Crosstime Bus are trapped in a time loop where Dr. Pease has been arriving to make the same speech over and over and over again to the same crowd."

"How'd you get away?"

"The last time we arrived at the grandstand for Dr. Pease's speech, some kindly old gentleman with a grey beard pulled up behind the Crosstime Bus in this time-beetle. He told me what was going on and how I could get here to you."

The cards fly out of Satan's hands as she tries to shuffle. "Ah-hah! Another Deus ex Machina solution!"

God nods benevolently and says, "You know, Angel, there really IS a lot of leg room in those little cars."

After some consideration of his options, Arthur said, "If you can't get the time machine to work inside Camelot, it looks like we'll have to pretend to go through with Modred's joust. Sir Bedevere, please go out and tell Modred I will meet him on the road a mile from the castle."

"Gor!" said Bedevere.

Arthur hoped they'd be able to avoid that. The plan was that Arthur and Martha would charge out over the drawbridge in the Volkswagen. Then, before Modred suspected anything, they'd have vanished off to rescue the Crosstime Bus from its time-loop. "The Old Gentleman with the grey beard said you were the only one who could do it."

"I'm glad he has faith in me," said Arthur.

Satan magicks the cards back into a neat stack. "I'll bet they'll be smashed to shrapnel by Modred's Scenacruiser before that time machine works. With your taste for violence, who knows what kind of shenanigans you are up to this time."

"God only knows," says God.

"Sounds like they're in trouble," says Satan, laying out a new hand of canfield. "By the way, Dear Old Dad, if Arthur leaves Camelot now, isn't there just a little problem with Modred? I tend to pay attention to this sort of detail, and I happen to know that Arthur hasn't bedded Morgan le Fay yet."

"No problem, Angel," says God, watching her peek under each face-down card as she sets it on the table. "He does that in another time-string."

"So this poor dolt is the Virgin Father?" says Satan, turning up a card. It's Nathaniel Hawthorne. She plays him on Mark Twain.

Hector and Kay climbed up onto the castle wall to watch the joust. Modred was waiting just a few yards from the drawbridge. A little twinge of moral superiority propelled Sir Kay to say, "Daddy, I don't think Modred is being very chivalrous. Isn't he supposed to be waiting for Arthur a mile down the road? Shouldn't we tell the King?"

Hector, who hadn't felt any sort of twinge at all, said, "No, Kay. That's a family quarrel down there. It wouldn't do for us to stick our noses in."

"But Daddy, Modred's dragon will smash the King's little beetle like a bug and then Modred will be king."

"No, Kay. Daddy plans on being king himself. Daddy has tampered with the brakes on Modred's dragon. After Modred hits Arthur's little dragon like a mace going through pumpkins, he'll crash into Camelot. That will be the end of both of them."

Holding out a soiled hankie to Arthur, Gwenevere said, "It is customary to wear your lady 's favor when you go out to joust. Here, you may tie this to your antenna."

Arthur could tell by the lace that it was Lancelot's.

Martha and Arthur buckled their seat belts and said a little prayer of sorts. As Martha revved up the engine, Arthur called out, "Lower the drawbridge!" and they were off.

From his perch on the battlements above the gate, Hector could see it all about to happen.

Martha uttered another little prayer, of sorts, "Good GOD! He's too close! He'll hit us before the time machine can work!"

Hector felt queasy after Modred's Timeways Scenacruiser crashed face-first into the castle wall directly below him. It wasn't due to the thought of smashed bodies and such, but the sheer physical effect of the wall moving under his feet.

Nevertheless, he took the time to say, "So much for pendragons père et fils. So, Kay, how does 'King Hector' sound?"

His son, Sir Kay felt sick unto death. His last words were, "The wall is mo-ooo-vi-i-iing!"

"Gor!" said Bedevere, as Camelot fell down.

Martha, who had swerved off the drawbridge into Camelot's moat, actually splashed down in the Pease University duck pond.

When the paralysis in Arthur's throat had unseized enough for him to squeak, he said, "Until you drove into the moat, I thought it was all over."

Satan turns up the old maid and plays her on Mark Twain. "I was wondering why it was a Volkswagen you time-rigged for her: they float. That was cute. I really hate cute."

Martha shifted gears and drove out of the duck pond. Just as the campus cop who took up the chase as they sped across the student parking lot managed to draw up alongside them, the time-beetle vanished into the future. Martha handed her car over to a grey-bearded parking attendant and hurried up to the podium.

"Hold it, Dr. Pease! Arthur Daggett and I are here to rescue you."

Vinson Pease looked at his watch and then gave a little sigh. "Excuse me, folks, I think this is where I came in."

As he climbed aboard the Crosstime Bus, he shook hands with Arthur Daggett. "It's good to see you again, young man. I was afraid you would be stranded forever back there in the Dark Ages. We couldn't get the Crosstime Bus --"

Arthur held up his hand and cut in to save the word count. "Martha told me that each time you drive away from the grandstand, just after you lose sight of it, it appears again ahead of you."

Martha nodded in agreement. "It's like we're going around a curve, even though the road runs straight as far as you can see."

"Right!" said Vinson Pease. "The Crosstime Bus can't seem to achieve escape velocity. And yet, the harder we try, the less the machine seems able to do. My theory is that we're in orbit around the time particle we stopped on."

God agrees. "OK. I can do that."

Arthur thought about it for a while and said, "Maybe it works like a Chinese finger-trap."

"That boy is the original one-trick pony," Satan says, turning up another old maid.

Arthur practically glowed with scientific insight as he continued, "The impact of the Crosstime Bus on that time particle has set up an entropic warp which absorbs resistance and uses its power to hold the bus. To break out, we'll have to push into the warp and then shake ourselves loose by stopping suddenly. So, set the time machine for 5th-century Britain and get the bus moving as fast as it can go. When we get to the exact spot where you entered this time, we simply switch the dial back to the present --

"-- and step on the brakes!" said Martha hopefully.

"No," said Arthur. "The brakes won't stop us fast enough. To break free, we'll have to crash into that bridge abutment over there."

God is pleased. He says, "That's kind of neat."

Martha was not pleased. "We'll all be killed!"

But Vinson Pease was. "Not at all!" he said. "The instant the entropy warp hits the wall, we'll spring back into time. The only problem is: How will I know when to reverse the dial?"

"We'll use my sword, Excalibur." said Arthur triumphantly.

"Oh, no! Not the magic sword bit!" gripes Satan, playing the second old maid as an ace.

"Good play," said God.

She immediately takes it back.

Arthur was as wild-eyed as a Russian mystic. "Stick the sword's tip into that slot in the time machine."

"What good will that do?" said Martha, wondering in her heart whether there might be some easier way to get back from this future. There were probably regular time shuttles. Couldn't they send for a motor pool mechanic or something?

Martha was captured by Arthur's beatific visionary smile. Her heart melted when he said, "I have a hunch that the sword will tell us when to reverse the dial."

"A hunch," Satan confides to the old maid in her hand. "Well, I have a hunch they are going to crash into that solid cement wall so that Mr. Omnipotence over there can get his jollies."

But Martha shook her head no. In the end it was suddenly catching sight of Arthur's face smiling back at her in the rear-view mirror that made up her mind. She turned on the ignition and soon had her old rattletrap doing nearly ninety. Martha thought out loud, "Just a few more laps around the grandstand and the old girl will be flying. One way or the other." A less romantic part of her soul thought that it would be a lot easier if she didn't have to dodge all those wrecks.

"The sword is disappearing!" said Arthur. "Hit the time switch! Martha, head into that bridge abutment over there. Now!"

With a ninety-mile-an-hour version of the Liebestod singing in her heart, Martha Norton plunged onward toward the concrete wall. She wiped away a tear. At forty-five she had wiped away a lot of them. Perhaps this would be the last.

Back somewhere in time, Bedevere was surprised to see the sword pop back into its enchanted stone.

Just as the Crosstime Bus touched the concrete, it vanished and the solid stone walls of Camelot were dead ahead.

In that slow motion of the mind when things are racing out of control, Martha thought calmly to herself, "We'll crash this time. The brakes won't have time to stop us."

"Gor!" said Bedevere. "There goes another silly dragon to bash its brains out against what's left of Camelot."

But Vinson Pease changed the time dial and the Crosstime Bus went speeding past the future reviewing stand.

Martha felt a little sad. "We're back on the Interstate. There's the grandstand. We're still trapped!"

But soon they had driven a mile past the grandstand and it hadn't appeared again ahead of them. The Crosstime Bus was back in business.

As they continued down the Interstate, Arthur sank into a pensive funk. Finally he said, "Dr. Pease, is it too late to go back and un-invent time travel?"

"Why should I want to do that?" asked Vinson Pease.

"Now that everyone can travel around in time, people from the past and future are messing with each other's time and there's no-when safe to hide. Ancient Rome will be full of Hollywood types, and now, Pease U. will have to enroll Neanderthals."

Martha thought they already did.

Arthur said, "When I first got there, Ancient Britain was muddy and strewn with rubbish, all natural and bio-degradable. But after the tourists started to show up I noticed that the parking lot behind Camelot had a lot of plastic trash blowing around on it, and there got to be a lot of spray-can graffiti on the castle walls."

Vinson Pease took what he said into consideration, but soon he brightened. "Arthur, all of that will soon sort itself out. For instance: If you find graffiti, all you have to do is go back into time and catch the swine in the act. As for the litter problem, my corporation will make a bundle mining it."

Martha thought about it too. She said, "Maybe people from over-crowded times could move to ones with smaller populations. And if you don't do something right the first time, with time travel, you can go back and give it another try."

Arthur's eyes began to sparkle again. He said, "I'd like to give being King Arthur another try. Maybe I could make it turn out a little better. Being King of Britain was a lot more fun than playing Dungeon-master. Back there, I had a REAL dungeon."

"What would you like to do, Martha?" asked Vinson Pease.

Martha paused and considered her options, present, past, and future. "Well, I guess I'd like to stay with the Crosstime Bus."

"Good!" said Vinson Pease. "I'll give it to you."

"Are you tired of time travel already?" asked Martha.

"By no means!" said Vinson Pease. "I plan to have a time machine installed in a flying saucer and go off to explore the universe."

"Do you have a flying saucer?"

"Not yet. But I have faith."

Satan picks up the deck of cards and tosses them into the trash. They reappear on the table, shuffled and in good order. She says, "So Arthur goes back to Camelot and sires Merlin? No doubt you're going to rescue him over and over again? Do you think it's fair never letting me win? Why do you let me play at all?"

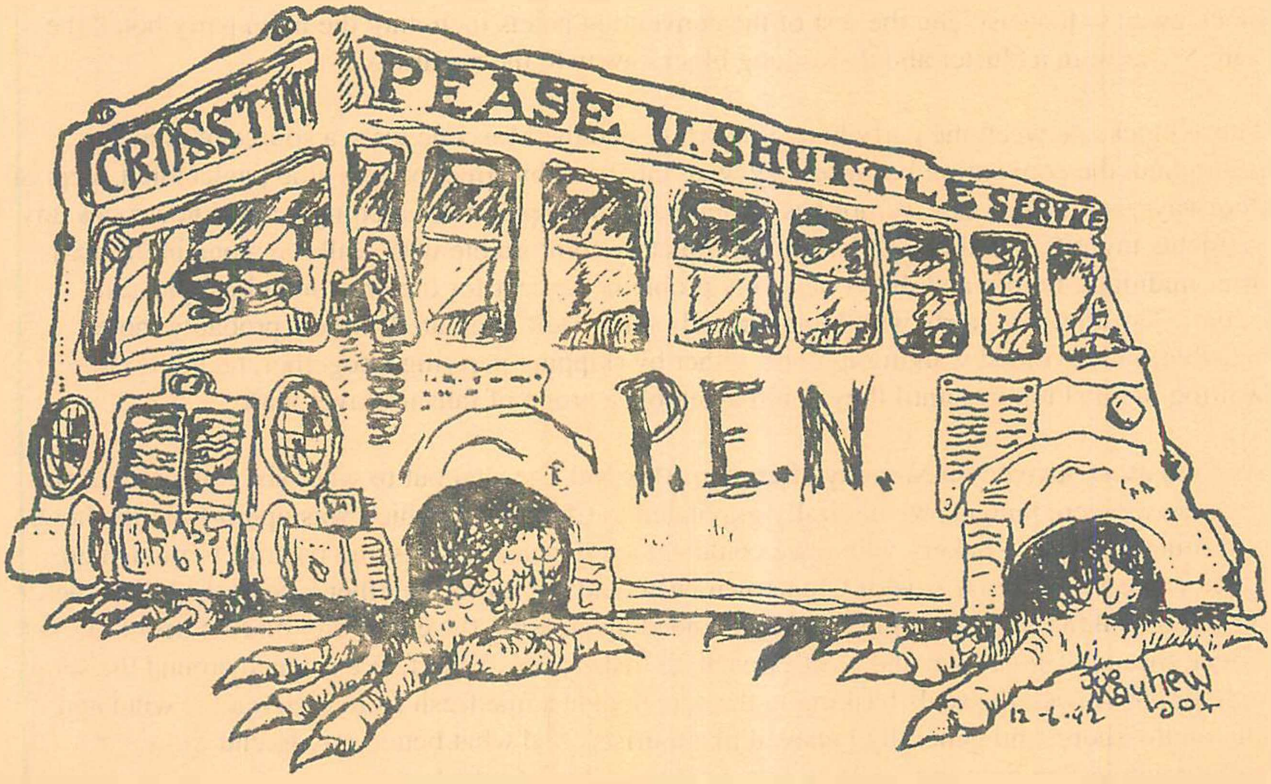
"It's necessary for the plot."

"The plot!" says Satan, fumbling angrily with the cards. "No wonder we're a dysfunctional family. What the Hell are you plotting this time?"

"For Heaven's sake, my darling Lucifer, the bringer of light who cheats at solitaire, the plot is the same as always: I'm trying to show you a good time. Trust me."

"Trust you? Hah!" Satan says, peeking at the cards to see what kind of deck it is this time. "Sorry, Pops, but you made me a little too bright for that."

"I see," says God, picking up the deck and laying out a tarot pattern. "Oh, well, I suppose it's time to re-table my pieces back at Camelot."



SF in SF

A ConFrancisco Report by Leslie Turek, FN

In spite of all the pre-con hype about how messed up "ConFiasco" was going to be, it really turned out, like most Worldcons, to be a pretty good con. All of the traditional events came off just fine, and the problems that cropped up were pretty much the usual Worldcon problems (lines at registration, lack of communication - you know the list). And San Francisco was a great city to visit, with lots of good restaurants and other neat things to do.

I should warn you before we start that this con report will be a little spotty because when I go to a Worldcon I tend to spend a lot of time touring the city and visiting friends and almost never get to much of the formal program. And because of my past experience, I usually spend some time working on the con (although lately it's been mostly at the gopher level), and tend to pay a lot of attention to the organizational details. So this con report will reflect these interests.

Monday

I traveled out to San Francisco with Alexis Layton on Monday to allow a few days for sightseeing before the con. The flight was uneventful (thank ghod) and we arrived at the con site by early afternoon. We were staying in an unofficial hotel, the Marriott, in a room block arranged by Scott Dennis in the name of the Cincinnati Fantasy Group. After checking out the hotel layout, I concluded that the Marriott was a fine choice because it was in the center of everything. The Moscone Center was two blocks away to the southeast, the ANA hotel was a very *long* block away to the east, and the rest of the convention hotels including the main party hotel, the Parc 55, were in a cluster about two long blocks away to the northwest.

Those blocks between the party hotel, the ANA, and the Moscone were a source of concern throughout the convention because they were inhabited by street people who panhandled, slept in doorways, and sometimes (rumor has it) approached people in threatening ways. I never saw any incidents myself, and although I wasn't completely comfortable with walking alone in the area after midnight, I did it and didn't have any problems (except for the unavoidable unpleasant odors). The area was fairly well lit and usually fairly well populated. Other (probably more sensible) fans avoided walking it alone, either by skipping partying altogether, taking taxis, or waiting in hotel lobbies until they could assemble a group of fans to travel with.

As soon as we arrived on Monday afternoon Alex and I headed out to walk about the city. And because we were hungry, we naturally gravitated to Chinatown, which was uphill from the hotel, and found a Chinese bakery where we could get some steamed buns and pastries to munch on. Once we reached the far side of Chinatown, we could see down the other side of the hill to the bay, and couldn't resist heading on. So we ended up crossing the entire city on foot, from Market Street, through Chinatown and North Beach, to Fisherman's Wharf. We roamed around the shops on Pier 39, viewed the seals basking in the sun, bought some fresh fruit, enjoyed the wind and sun on the shore, and generally behaved like tourists. And what better way to end a day sightseeing in San Francisco than to ride a cable car back to the hotel?

Tuesday

On the second day, we went back to the Fisherman's Wharf area to eat crabmeat cocktails from the sidewalk vendors and catch a boat to Sausalito across the bay. The weather was beautiful once more, and the boat ride had great views of San Francisco, Alcatraz, and the Golden Gate Bridge. Alex got a thrill when we saw an aircraft carrier crossing under the bridge, and it turned out to be the *Carl Vinson*, the ship he had worked on (installing software) from the Philippines to Singapore some years back. It wasn't an incredible coincidence, since the *Vinson* is based in nearby Alameda, but still it was neat.

Sausalito is a very pleasant tourist town and artists' colony. It has a row of "shoppes" along the bay and some interesting houses in the hills above the main street. Of course Alex wanted to climb the hills and explore, although by this time my legs were getting pretty sore from all the walking we were doing. Before I actually collapsed, we had a nice late lunch on an outdoor deck with a great view across the bay to San Francisco, and then took the ferry back to the city.

Back on the San Francisco side, we still had time to tour the *Pompano*, a WWII submarine, before heading over to the cable car turnaround. As we waited, we listened to the street entertainers and watched the August blue moon rise over the Ghirardelli Square area. It had been a really nice day.

Wednesday

Wednesday morning I got up early and limped over to the Marriott's hot tub to see if it could help out my aching legs. It was huge - big enough to swim in! - but unfortunately not very hot.

After a hotel buffet breakfast, Alex and I went over to the convention center to see what we could help with. I was still very tired, with my body all aching and wracked with pain, but I still toted those pipes and lifted that pegboard. After getting trained on some exhibits hangings, Alex was turned loose by Gary Louie to supervise the art show setup. Elayne Pelz, who was in charge of the art show, couldn't leave work until the next day, so we did our best to follow the diagrams that Gary had. The main problem was that we had diagrams of each segment and exactly which panels should be fabric and which should be pegboard, but the orientation wasn't specified. Mark Olson (who had also turned up to help) and I thought that we could probably deduce the orientation by assuming that Michael Whelan's panels were facing the entrance, rather than facing away from it, but Gary thought that wasn't definite enough to go on. So we only set up the sections that were symmetric and left the others for Elayne to finish up on the following day.

Things got particularly interesting when some union "help" showed up and ranted a bit about how they were letting us (the convention) get away with murder. We played dumb (it was easy because we really didn't know anything) and said they should talk to the committee. Finally a four-man crew was assigned to work with us. They were fast but not very careful, and didn't seem too pleased when we tried to give them directions.

Ruth Sachter dropped by and we chatted a bit about how the con was going. She said that the committee people were good and working hard, but there wasn't enough intra-committee communication. One of the big problems was the film program; the fan who put together the program had sudden personal problems and couldn't see it through, so the committee was scrambling to put together a new program entirely from scratch. Ruth said she was planning to get a button made: "In Over My Head" (and I did see her with such a button later in the con).

We finally broke for a late lunch at a decent Mexican restaurant across from the Moscone Center, then I fought my way back to the Marriott through hordes of some sort of foreign convention group, all studying red sheets of instructions and waiting in neat little queues to get on a fleet of buses lining the streets. I rested and recuperated for several hours, took a hot soaking bath, read magazines, and napped a bit.

Feeling much better, I headed out to try to find people. I first tried Moshe Feder's party in the Parc 55. This was clearly the main convention hotel; its small lobby was seething with fans I didn't know. But no luck at Moshe's; I was probably too early. On my way out, I encountered Paula Lieberman in the lobby, waiting for her roommates to show so she could get into her room.

I checked out the Nikko and the Hilton, all on adjoining corners with the Parc 55. The Nikko was very Japanese modern, with an expensive authentic Japanese restaurant on one of the upper floors. (The Japanese influence was very pervasive throughout San Francisco. All the hotels seem to have Japanese restaurants or Japanese items on the menu. At the Marriott you could get a Japanese breakfast via room service. There were also lots of sushi bars and noodle shops.) The Nikko lobby produced several Japanese businessmen, but no fans were in evidence. The hotel felt a little sterile and unfriendly, although I liked some of the Japanese touches, like the polished black stones that were carefully arranged in a random-seeming cluster at the edge of one of the stairs. The Hilton was also empty of fans; their lobby was occupied by a loud and giggly group of Japanese students who clustered together behind their teacher/tour guide. (I found out later that the Hilton wasn't very heavily used by the convention.)

Finally, I took the long trek back past the Marriott to the ANA. This time I took a slightly different route, and passed two sidewalk chess games with people clustered around watching. Along the way, I encountered Robert Sacks, who was upset that there was going to be a meeting of some sort of "anti-Sax group" that the convention wouldn't put a stop to; he was threatening to sue the hotel for allowing them to meet there. I stayed noncommittal because I didn't know anything about it.

The carport of the ANA hotel was filled with a large group of slightly drunken men in tuxedos smoking cigars and waving money around to try to attract taxis (but there weren't any to be had). In my slightly exhausted state, the scene was terribly amusing. For some reason I thought of penguins. There were no fans in sight here, either; and the tobacco stench in the lobby was overpowering, so I quickly left. On my way back around the corner, I nearly got sprayed by a power hose which was being used to clean a building facade on Market Street. By this time, I was getting the idea that it just was not my night. So I enjoyed a nice bowl of chicken soup with

crusty sourdough bread at the Marriott coffee shop and went to bed.

Thursday

When I woke up on Thursday morning, my legs were so sore that I decided that I needed to find a sit-down job for the day. I checked the progress report and saw that Registration was scheduled to open at 9:00 and I had just enough time to get over there and volunteer.

At Registration, the first job they offered me was line triage. (This is making sure that people are in the right lines, answering questions, and generally facilitating.) They offered a chair, but I felt that there was no way I could do triage properly sitting down - you need to constantly roam up and down the lines. So instead I took a job of handing out badges to new registrants.

It was still a few minutes to opening, so I had time to sneak through the pre-reg stations and pick up my badge without standing in line (one of the benefits of volunteering to work!). The badge itself was a handsome black-and-white production with the "bridge spanning the globe" logo done as a silver hologram. (During the convention various people handed me various ribbons to attach to my badge; in the end I settled on three for day wear: "Past Hugo Winner," "Past Worldcon Chairman," and "Volunteer." I really liked the combination of the latter two. For evening party wear, I used my Boston in '01 badge and ribbon.)

The pocket program (actually called the "Quick Reference Guide") was done in an interesting style that most people seemed to like. It was about 128 pages, printed on heavy paper in a 4 x 6 format, with a spiral binding along the shorter edge. It contained locations and hours for all the functions, program descriptions, program grid, maps, dealers and artists lists, and a lot of local area information, including a brief restaurant guide. The layout was attractive, and it used bleed index tabs (or whatever those things are called) to make it easier to thumb through and find the schedule for the appropriate day.

The registration job turned out to be pretty easy, except that people kept asking me questions I couldn't answer. New registration appeared to go pretty smoothly; most people didn't have to wait very long for their badges to come out, and I gave them copies of the pocket program to read while they were waiting, so most were pretty patient. Every so often, though, someone's badge didn't get through, and then I had a hard time trying to fix it. I couldn't leave my station, and one of the big flaws with this registration setup was that it was impossible to communicate with the people in charge without walking halfway across the big lobby. One of the things they really needed to do was to have supervisors circulating around to check on things, answer questions, and generally supervise. This turned out to be even more critical when I switched to working preregistration later in the day.

The lines for preregistration were huge. The preregistration setup wasn't all that bad, and actually managed to process over half the memberships within a few hours of opening. The problem was that all of the programming was in the Moscone and you needed a badge to get into anything, so everyone tried to register first thing in the morning. By the opening time of 9am, the lines were

already long. ConFrancisco registration failed to learn from the lesson of past Worldcons, which was that you must open earlier than you say in the program book to keep the lines from building up in the first place.

And again, the lack of supervision hurt. For example, when I was doing preregistration, the woman I took over from was taking the time to put the clips in the badges, even though there was a long line and she could have just handed the member the badge and the clip and got the line moving a little faster. Someone supervising could perhaps have convinced her to process people a bit faster, or could have replaced her with someone more efficient. Another example: when I got low on items, there was no one I could ask to get me replacements. At one point I stood up, faced the Problems desk, and waved my hands in the air for several minutes without anyone noticing that I needed something.

And there was just a general lack of knowledge of process that made people make mistakes. For example, it wasn't until the end of my shift that someone told me that a green dot on the registration card meant that the person owed money and should go to the "Solutions" desk. Up until then, I had been happily handing out badges to people with green dots. (Of course, the problematic badges shouldn't have been in the registration boxes in the first place; if they had been held at the Solutions desk, there would be no way they could have been accidentally handed out.)

But in spite of all these organizational problems, it's generally fun to work registration because you get to meet all sorts of people - pros and BNFs and people you know from another life who have turned up at the convention. I only encountered one really obnoxious person (a dealer who had apparently had a bad time earlier in the process and thought that he could convince me to hand him a badge worth lots of money without ID or receipt simply by yelling at me loudly). But I also met lots of really nice people who had worked on cons themselves and were really sympathetic and even helped out a bit when things didn't go quite right.

Although it was fun, after about 9 hours, I found that I was losing track of the order of the letters in the alphabet, and I took this as a subtle hint from my body that I'd done enough work for the day. I spent about 10 minutes trying to tell someone that I needed relief, and headed off to a very late lunch with Alex and his friend Charles.

When we got back, I finally had a chance to see what the exhibit hall looked like now that it was all set up. The Moscone Center is mostly underground. You enter at ground level into the large lobby where registration was located. Then it's down a huge bank of escalators into a lower lobby full of activity with aisles heading off in all directions. The lower lobby itself contained the freebie tables, message and party boards, volunteers table, and sales to members table. Several aisles led off to the various meeting rooms, and there was a large entrance to the big exhibit hall, which, like MagiCon's exhibit hall, contained dealers, art show, exhibits, fan lounge, bid and club tables, food concessions, and so forth. There were some neat balloon sculptures hanging from the ceiling, and one innovation, a series of "local color" exhibits about San Francisco. I particularly enjoyed the USGS exhibit on earthquakes, which was staffed by USGS personnel answering questions and had an interactive terminal showing all sorts of interesting

earthquake data.

The sales to members table was badly set up, in my opinion. They had a whole bunch of various souvenir items (tote bags, cloisonné pins, engraved glasses, mugs, books, t-shirts, luggage tags - you name it, they had it), but they employed a very novel sales technique: they didn't display anything. If you were interested in something, you had to ask someone about it, and then they rummaged through boxes in the back and came out with a sample to show you.

The volunteer table, on the other had, was perhaps over-organized. When you volunteered, you signed a standard disclaimer form, and got a blue card to keep track of your hours. The blue card was the same size as the convention badge and had a hole punched in it so you could wear it on your badge clip behind your badge. You were supposed to turn your blue card in every day and get a new one, and they actually entered your hours immediately so they always had a running list of how many hours everyone had put in. There was a list of perks you could get as you hit various hour levels. If you worked 4 hours in a day you would get a pass to the staff lounge for one day (you could pick the day). If you worked 14 hours, you could go to the staff party in the SFWA suite on Sunday morning. If you worked 20 hours, you would get a t-shirt. And all of these various forms and cards were beautifully designed and typeset.

Alex and I joined Mark Olson, Tony Lewis, and John Guidry from New Orleans for dinner that night. Unfortunately, we all had pretty different ideas of what type of food we liked and how far we were willing to trek to find it, so we ended up with a compromise that did not optimize over-all satisfaction. But I enjoyed the company in spite of the lack of culinary delights.

This evening was one of the best party nights of the con, in marked contrast to the previous night. I stayed up late and had a great time. The Boston in '01 party was in a fantastic suite: the bedroom had huge windows with a great view and the bathroom was also huge, with a Jacuzzi tub. I would have loved a chance to stay overnight in that room. All of the bid parties were clustered in the top floors of the Parc 55, so they were easy to get around; you just needed to use the elevator once to get up to the general area and then you could walk between parties. The San Antonio party was particularly nice: the food offerings featured excellent chili, and the decor included cacti and a huge set of longhorn horns that had to be transported by car to San Francisco. St. Louis in '97 picked up on MCFI's chocolate theme, but they served *three* big blocks of chocolate: one dark, one milk, and one white. And there was a MagiCon thank-you party on the theme of "Black Magicon," with Black Magicon badges bearing the membership number 666, and so on.

Friday

I have gotten into the habit of attending the WSFS business meetings at the Worldcons. Although it sometimes seems a waste of time to sit through hours of parliamentary maneuvering, it's often entertaining, and every so often something important gets decided. In past years, the business meetings have started at 10am, which has been fine by me. I usually get up fairly early anyway, and having the meeting over in the morning leaves more time for conventioning in the afternoon.

But at ConFrancisco, the business meetings started at noon. This was part of an effort to make the meetings more "accessible" to the rank-and-file fan. It was a nice try, but I don't really think the hour matters as much as the fact that the business meeting is usually filled with turkeys who enjoy wasting other people's time. Over the years, techniques have been developed to deal with this situation, but the cost is a strict formality in the conduct of the meetings. If you loosen that formality, as John Lorentz tried to do this year, you just open the door to the time-wasters. So when people who aren't used to business meetings attend one, they usually get the feeling that there's no chance to really talk about things because all the time is taken up by parliamentary maneuvering of one sort or another.

The later starting time did give me an opportunity to have a leisurely morning, at least. Alex and I had breakfast at a cheap Chinese restaurant we'd noticed on Market Street (I got wonton soup and steamed pork bun for under $3) and then headed over to the ANA hotel, where the business meeting was held.

I don't want to give you a blow-by-blow description, since after the fact these things seem pretty dull. Just a few general comments. John did a pretty good job of running the meeting, although he sometimes lost track of where we stood in the proceedings. Kevin Standlee was a fine parliamentarian, although I think he overdid the ribbon-collecting bit somewhat. (He wore a multi-layer collection of ribbons, including one elaborate production labeled "The Ribbon Bruce Pelz Doesn't Have." This ribbon made the rounds of the convention, being handed off from one BNF to another throughout the weekend.)

The business meeting secretary, David Levine, was not very familiar with the standard procedures, and was taking notes directly onto a PowerBook, so he sometimes slowed things down by getting confused about what was going on and requiring explanations from the parliamentarian before we could proceed. He also got people really annoyed by insisting that the meetings end on time because he had business elsewhere.

The audience was pretty undisciplined most of the time. Robert Sacks was his usual self (if you don't know what that is, I can't try to describe it). There were four really outrageous motions submitted by Chris Carrier and Michael Hopcroft. Luckily, all four got an "Object to Consideration," so we didn't have to waste time on them. (Object to Consideration is one of those parliamentary maneuvers that allows the body to throw out a motion it doesn't even want to consider before having to debate it. It requires a 2/3 vote, and in my opinion has been the saving grace of WSFS business meetings by preventing long debates over things that have no chance of passage.) This set of four really stupid motions included a motion to censure Robert Sacks (for no particular reason except for being Robert Sacks), a motion to prevent the Worldcon from being held within 100 kilometers of Robert Sacks' home (now, really!), a motion listing a whole bunch of activities that would be banned at Worldcons (sexual harassment, cruelty to a disabled person, etc. - how this would be enforced I have no idea), and a motion changing the rotation plan to limit non-North-American sites to every fourth year only (*very* offensive to overseas fans).

The high point of Friday's session was when someone asked the chairman what the effect would be of a particularly convoluted piece of business. After a little thought, John announced, "Defeating it and adopting it have the same effect." (This quote later turned up in Seth Breidbart's parody newsletter on Monday. I'm beginning to get the feeling that most of the items in Seth's newsletter that seem to be made up actually do happen at some point during the convention!)

After the business meeting, Alex and I checked out the staff lounge, each using up one of the tickets we had earned for 4 hours of work. The lounge wasn't very impressive. It was a small hotel room with only a couple of comfy chairs, and the main point of it seemed to be a place to get a free sandwich, which I wasn't really interested in.

I spent the afternoon in the Moscone, checking out the dealers' room and the exhibits. I also put in a stint at the Boston in 2001 table, which wasn't very busy. I had to explain the '98/'01 situation a few times, and sold a couple of pre-supporting memberships and one asteroid. (Century 2001 Real Estate is a fund-raising shtick which sells ownership of various planetary bodies and provides the buyer with a fancy sales brochure. I'm told that Rick Katze has demonstrated an ability for a second career in real estate by selling lots of Century 2001 properties.)

Alex went to a *Star Trek* program item that, inevitably, was put in one of the smallest program rooms. This is something we have observed at nearly every convention we go to - the *Star Trek* program item *always* gets put in the smallest room and it always ends up overflowing with people unable to get in. This time Alex was sufficiently fed up that he actually went to program ops to point this out and get them to change the room assignment.

Dinner that night was a great sushi dinner with Alex, Nancy Atherton, Jim Young, and a writer friend of Nancy's who was attending his first convention (unfortunately, I've forgotten his name - I have a terrible memory for names). The conversation was really interesting, as Jim is in the foreign service and has been working in Russia for the last several years. He was in a great mood because he had just finished a new novel and it got an enthusiastic response from the first agent he showed it to. It was also fun introducing the writer neofan to science fiction conventions. After dinner, Nancy and I chatted with him for a while and then took him around to the bid parties. It was another good party night, ending up at the Minneapolis in '73 party in the fan lounge. From there, a group formed to walk back to the Marriott and ANA together. (I later heard that there were serious elevator problems that night, and that the Parc 55 management moved mountains to get them repaired quickly, but I never ran into them.)

Saturday

This morning I nearly walked into the SFWA business meeting, which was in the same room as the WSFS business meeting and still running when I arrived. We had to wait in the hallway for SFWA to clear out before we could get started. Today's meeting started out a bit raucous, but eventually settled down and actually debated some stuff more or less rationally. Mark Olson had proposed an interesting motion to do away with the rotation system, replacing it with a simple

rule excluding sites within 500 miles of the current Worldcon. This motion had a lot going for it, but it was a pretty major change, so there was little chance that it would pass. Mark was just hoping to get it discussed a bit and get the idea into people's heads. And to some extent, that happened, although most of the time was wasted arguing about exactly what the exclusion distance should be.

Two major pieces of business were passed. The first, which was passed on from MagiCon, was to reduce the NASFiC lead time from three years to two years. This means that if a non-North-American bid wins, we have one year to think about the NASFiC decision, instead of the crazy current situation where the NASFiC voting has to happen immediately. The second item was passed for the first time here and needs to be ratified in Winnipeg. It allows the awarding of "retrospective Hugos" at the Worldcon 50, 75, or 100 years after any Worldcon that did not award Hugos. This motion was originally proposed by the LA in '96 bid, which would like to award retrospective Hugos for 1946 at the '96 Worldcon.

When I got to the Moscone after the business meeting, I ran into Sharon Sbarsky, who asked me if I could spend some time at the NESFA table. She was concerned that it was being covered by someone she didn't know. I hastened over to the table with visions of some poor neofan trying to staff it, and was pleasantly surprised to discover JoAnn Wood, an old-time NESFAn and Noreascon II area head. She and her husband Ed had left New England for Texas many years ago, and it was good to see her and touch bases with her.

She had an interesting time while covering the table, since Harlan Ellison (who had dropped into the convention for a single talk and autograph session) had come by to complain about our use of a particular story in our Cordwainer Smith anthology, *The Rediscovery of Man*. He wanted the book removed from sales, but JoAnn was in a good position to say that she didn't know anything about it.

I spent the rest of the afternoon at the ANA having a great talk with Nancy Atherton and Andi Shechter.

After that, I ran into Alex, who suggested that we go stand in line for the masquerade. A friend of a friend had agreed to save seats for us in the press section, but we needed to join them in line before the doors opened. Oh god, a line, I thought. Do I really want to do this? We went to the Moscone and found that the line to get into the Esplanade Ballroom was already snaking around the block. And even worse, the doors didn't open until the stated starting time for the masquerade, and then the ushers let people in in small groups a few at a time. So it was well past the starting time when we finally entered the hall and got to sit down, and the actual masquerade started nearly an hour late.

The hall was divided up into lots of special seating sections: for Hugo nominees, convention staff, press, handicapped, and whatever else you could think of. In fact, one of the ushers noticed my "Past Hugo Winner" ribbon, and offered to seat me in the Hugo nominees section (although I elected to stay with the previous plan). The press section was way down in front and a little off to the side - pretty good seats.

The masquerade itself was rather disappointing. It was well-run technically (except for the segment where the house lights kept turning on and off at random intervals, which was some kind of malfunction apparently not under control of the masquerade staff). But there were only about 50 costumes, and not very many were really striking. What's happening to the Worldcon masquerade? Are all the good costumes going to the costume cons? For this level of costuming, it hardly seems worth all the work and effort.

There was some interesting video programming in the break during the judging. First there was a live video feed from Sri Lanka and a real-time interview with Arthur C. Clarke (and his little dog, too). That was pretty neat. And then they showed a video of the Delta Clipper test flight (a new space vehicle under development that can take off and land vertically). That was pretty neat, too. But we left after that because the judging looked like it was going to take forever (and we found out later that it did). The results were announced in the following day's newsletter, and as usual the judges managed to give an award to just about every decent costume in the show.

Sunday

On Sunday morning I woke up to the sound of incessant church bells, starting at 6:30 am. (One of the drawbacks of the Marriott was that it was right next door to a church, although the bells didn't start quite so early on weekdays. And in the late afternoon, we regularly got serenaded by a street person playing the saxophone out on the corner. He wasn't bad, though.)

When we finally got moving, we checked out the volunteer appreciation party in the SFWA suite in the ANA (the one we had to work 10 hours to get admitted to), but weren't too impressed. I fail to understand how someone could serve a breakfast buffet that did not include orange juice and offered bagels <u>without</u> cream cheese. I guess there's no such thing as a decent free breakfast.

This morning the business meeting had to wait for the ASFA meeting to finish before we could move into the room. The meeting began with people chanting "Sit down, John. For God's sake, John, sit down," an allusion to John Adams in *1776*, a great musical about the parliamentary maneuverings surrounding the Declaration of Independence. (Somehow it wasn't too surprising that the business meeting mavens would be familiar with it.)

The official business began with the announcement that LA had won the 1996 Worldcon - not a big surprise, as they were running unopposed. They handed out their PR 0, announcing chair Mike Glyer, guests James White, Roger Corman, Takumi and Sachiko Shibano (a great choice), Elsie Wollheim, and Toastmaster Connie Willis. They are giving voters until August 15, 1994, to convert at the lowest rate ($40; less for pre-supporters). I was particularly pleased to see that they planned to continue the Concourse "tradition." "We've seen that exhibit halls can be made playgrounds of the imagination, like Noreascon 3's concourse with its virtual trees dotting the astroturf in Jekyll and Hyde Parks, and MagiCon's miniature golf course, both transforming vacant concrete expanses into fannish neighborhoods. We agree that concourses help focus Worldcons in huge convention centers." It's a great feeling to know that you helped to start something that looks like it's going to become a tradition.

This was followed by presentations from future Worldcons and Worldcon bids. It was interesting to see that there were maybe two questions for Winnipeg, whereas the questions for Glasgow used up their full five minutes. Could it be that no one is planning to go to Winnipeg? I understand that John Mansfield succeeded in annoying quite a few people at ConFrancisco by behaving rudely or being obnoxious in one way or another.

Lunch was at a fast-food sushi place near the Moscone. After lunch I roamed the dealers' room again and spent the rest of the afternoon resting and reading in my hotel room, serenaded by the church bells and the saxophone player.

For the record, the morning newsletter had membership figures as of Saturday night: 6034 attending (623 of these at-the-door), 781 one-day, 454 children and others, for a total of 7356 warm bodies.

I wanted to see the Hugos, but I was pretty tired and not thrilled with the idea of waiting in line again and wasn't even sure if I could manage to sit upright for several hours. I missed having the awards ceremony on the video feed; it would have been great to be able to watch it from the comfort of my hotel room. Then Alex returned and suggested a quiet dinner in the hotel, which sounded great to my weary bones. So I skipped the Hugos and spent Sunday night catching up on my sleep.

Monday

Since I missed the Hugo ceremony, I read the Hugo results in Monday morning's newsletter. You've certainly seen them already, so I'll only mention the surprises. *Science Fiction Chronicle* put an end to *Locus*'s 13-year winning streak in the Fanzine and Semiprozine categories. (The joke going around was for a new button for Charlie Brown: "One-time Hugo loser.") It was also surprising to see that there was a tie for novel winner between Vernor Vinge and Connie Willis, that Connie Willis won a second Hugo in the short story category, and that a *Star Trek* episode, "The Inner Light," won for Best Dramatic Presentation. I was happy to see that Harry Warner, Jr., won the Non-Fiction award for his history of science fiction fandom in the 50's, *A Wealth of Fable*.

The newsletter, by the way, was very good throughout the convention. It was published mostly on time, was distributed widely, was easy to find, back issues were mostly available, each issue was on a distinctive color paper, and it contained all the required stuff: program changes, party lists, notices, awards, and even some reporting on what had happened at things you might have missed, like opening ceremonies, business meetings, and some of the program items. The only fault I found with it was that the typeface used was awfully small. The reason was that the budget limited them to one sheet per issue, so they tried to cram in as much as they could. But it was a very nice effort, overall, produced by editor Alan Winston, who graciously credited his staff in the final issue.

Later in the day, I stopped by the Hugo exhibit to see a sample of this year's Hugo. It was quite

an original design. The rocket sat on an octagonal base that was ringed by small rectangular plaques with relief sculptures of giants of the science fiction field: Wells, Gernsback, Heinlein, Asimov, etc. (Of course, the plaques weren't quite finished in time for the ceremony, and will have to be sent to the winners later.)

In the afternoon, I attended the two-hour gripe session, called a "Feedback Session." It was fairly low-key, compared to the heated and angry sessions that I'd seen at some cons, like Nolacon II. (As I recall, even I had been known to raise my voice at the Conspiracy gripe session.)

Committee members on the hot seat were Kevin Standlee (convention Secretary), who seemed a bit edgy and defensive (he was probably overtired); Sarah Goodman (Programming Division Chief), who was assertively confident; and Tom Whitmore (Chairman's Aide), who was more laid back and ready to admit mistakes. The comments from the audience could be divided into the following categories: things people liked, perennial complaints, complaints unique to this convention, and suggestions for improvement.

Things people liked included the pocket program, the newsletter, the Hugo ceremonies, having exhibits and programming together in the same area, the Victorian Ball, and the kinesthetics programming track (morning Tai Chi, aerobics, and so forth).

Perennial complaints are those things that seem to be a problem with almost every Worldcon and that no one ever seems to do right. A number of people were unhappy because they had volunteered for one thing or another - to work on the convention, to be on the program, to set up an exhibit - and hadn't gotten a timely response. This was blamed on lack of staff, poor committee organization that let things fall between the cracks, and an upper limit on program items based on space available and the cost of reimbursing program participants.

There were complaints about the film program, pointing out that whatever the special circumstances here, it seems clear that recent Worldcons haven't taken the film program very seriously. Someone complained about the program items that were scheduled in the wrong size rooms (he actually compared this to playing that scenario in "If I Ran the Zoo..."). Sarah explained that Harlan Ellison had only given 2½ weeks´ notice that he was coming, and since he specified the exact time he was willing to appear, he had been assigned the biggest space that was still available at the time.

There was the usual question of why couldn't the auditorium doors have been opened in advance before the masquerade and Hugos, so people could just come in and sit down instead of standing in line? The answer blamed the situation on the technical setup, which apparently had to take place in an empty auditorium. (I've never understood why this is the case.) There were also complaints about roving video cameras blocking people's view of the masquerade, and excessive ushering during the Hugos, so that Hugo nominees were not allowed to sit with their friends.

Another typical complaint was about the lines at registration, and confusion over which line to stand in. People also complained about program ending too early (according to Sarah, because none of the participants wanted to be on program during the dinner hours). Other program

complaints included not enough microphones, programs getting cut off at the scheduled time instead of continuing elsewhere, the absence of a daily printed program schedule ("pink sheets"), and the lack of availability of audio tapes. Someone suggested staggered program hours, but the rest of the audience seemed to disagree (groans were heard).

A complaint unique to this convention was the city location, which some people felt was unsafe. (Although others were thrilled to have a Worldcon in an interesting city!) Someone wanted to know why there were so many guards in the Moscone, and none on the intervening streets. (The answer was that the Moscone guards were required by contract, of course.) One interesting fact that came out was that on some nights con security ran an escort service. The audience pointed out that if the con provided a service but didn't tell anybody about it, it didn't do a whole lot of good. One person mentioned that if they had simply posted a sign in each hotel lobby saying "Gather here to walk at night," people could have easily set up their own walking groups.

Another long discussion was about why the convention didn't get the Marriott. The official story was that the hotel required a $5000 deposit before the site selection voting, and then committed to another group when the committee didn't pay it. Later, when that other group backed out, the convention had already signed with the other hotels and felt that it would be impossible to switch.

Someone suggested that a gripe session should be held earlier in the convention, where there was still a chance to correct problems. Someone lamented that lessons learned at one Worldcon never get passed on to future Worldcons, but Tom pointed out that the next two Worldcon chairs were there taking notes. Someone suggested that the gripe session should have an agenda, and points should be discussed by area (like the Boskone debriefing), but my opinion is that would make things take a lot longer. As things are set up now, people talk about what's important to them, not just what's next on the agenda.

Other suggestions included advertising non-800 numbers (800 numbers don't work from overseas); cross-referencing dealers by type of merchandise; and requiring organizations sponsoring awards to provide information on winners to the newsletter and the press office.

After the gripe session, Alex and I had a late lunch with Nancy Atherton at a dim sum place, Yank Sing, that was listed in the pocket program. They had a wonderful assortment of dishes that were brought to our table at an incredible fast clip, servers who understood enough English to explain what things were, and lovely bright decor. The only problem was the price: since there were no menus, we spent $24 each without even realizing it.

Alex went off to help pack exhibits to rack up the rest of the hours needed to earn his helper t-shirt. I decided that I didn't want the t-shirt that badly, and spent the rest of the afternoon visiting with Nancy, until she threw me out so she could take a nap.

I had made the mistake of not finding out where the dead-dog parties were going to be, so when I headed out to try to find them I encountered nearly total failure. There was supposed to be an ex-Worldcon-chairs party in the SFWA suite, but I got there either too early or too late, since I

found no ex-Worldcon chairs there. I hiked over to the Parc 55 and wandered the party floors, finding nothing much. I finally headed back to the Marriott and stopped by the Cincinnati Fantasy Group suite, which was low-key and friendly, before heading off to bed.

Tuesday

On Tuesday, Alex and I picked up our rental car, and headed off for a few days of sightseeing, mainly at Yosemite Valley, which is about a 4-5 hour drive southeast of San Francisco. Most of the drive through California's Central Valley is pretty boring, although there's a wonderful array of modern windmills on the hills outside Livermore, just east of San Francisco. And we had a truly outstanding lunch in Livermore, at Wente Vineyards. An excellent Caesar salad was followed by a wonderful grilled chicken sandwich with basil aioli, grilled eggplant, and red peppers, on a fantastic light cheese-encrusted roll. It was probably the best thing I'd eaten on the whole trip.

When we finally turned east toward the mountains on Route 140, things got more interesting. We drove through grassy foothills, and gradually the haze lifted, the trees got denser, and the slopes got steeper. We followed the valley of the Merced River, which is the stream that flows out of Yosemite's waterfalls, as the road got more and more twisty, the valley walls got higher, and the light gradually faded from the sky. We arrived after dark at the place we were staying, which was just a few miles west of the park entrance.

Wednesday

It was a gorgeous bright day as we drove into Yosemite Valley the next morning. And it was breathtaking! We were eager to get out of the car, so we parked on the valley floor and took a big looping walk, viewing El Capitan (with tiny dots of climbers dangling halfway up the sheer cliff face - you could only see them through binoculars), the Merced River lazily flowing through grassy meadows (complete with a picturesque family of mule deer), and Yosemite Falls. The falls were slightly depleted due to the dry summer, but were still pretty spectacular. The odd thing was that the water appeared to be falling in slow motion because the scale was so immense.

After getting completely tired out and overheated (it was surprisingly warm in the valley), we went back to the car and took the long winding drive that brought us up to Glacier Point, an overlook directly above the valley. From there, we could look in one direction about 4000 feet straight down into the valley, or in the other direction out over the mountaintops of the Sierra high country. While walking around up there we encountered a coyote that was following people around apparently looking for handouts. We didn't see any bears, though.

On our way back into the valley, after dark, we stopped at an overlook to look at the stars. I've seen the night sky without city lights before, but this was Alex's first view of the Milky Way.

Thursday

Yosemite Valley seemed a bit more crowded today, as we got closer to the weekend. We left the

main part of the valley and drove south to the Mariposa Grove of giant sequoias. A few miles out, we saw a sign warning that the parking lot was full and we should stop and take shuttle buses, but we ignored it and found that it wasn't really true.

Even from the parking lot you can recognize the giant trees, which stand out from the other trees in the forest, not only by their massive size, but also by the wonderful reddish color of their bark and the way their roots seem to grip the ground. I had seen the coast redwoods, which are the tallest trees in the world, but this was my first glimpse of the sequoias, which are not quite as tall, but broader and more massive. They live nearly forever, because they are fire- and disease-resistant, but they have shallow roots and usually die by being blown over by winter storms.

The Mariposa sequoias are grouped into two groves that are spread out over thousands of vertical feet of hillside. So we followed the advice in one of my guidebooks: we took the narrated tram ride to the upper grove and then started walking. We began by walking uphill another half mile or so, to a lookout point giving a view of the Wawona Valley on the other side of the mountain, and then worked our way down through the two groves. It was pretty rough going, because of the altitude, my sore legs, and the fact that I hadn't anticipated such a long trip and hadn't brought enough snack food. But the trees were awesome to see and I'm glad I did it.

Many of the trees have names relating to their shape or commemorating early explorers. The "Wawona Tunnel Tree," the one with the road cut through it that used to appear on postcards, fell down in the 60's, but you can still see its shattered remnants because sequoias take forever to decay. The largest tree, the Grizzly Giant, is in the lower grove. A park ranger said it is estimated to weigh between 1000 and 3000 tons. I asked if anyone had ever seen a sequoia hit the ground. He said the old lumber men recorded that when a falling sequoia hits the ground, rocks would bounce 100 feet into the air! (Some 90% of the existing giant sequoias are now under government protection and are no longer logged. Luckily, the giant sequoias are not as useful as the coast redwoods for lumber because the wood is too brittle.)

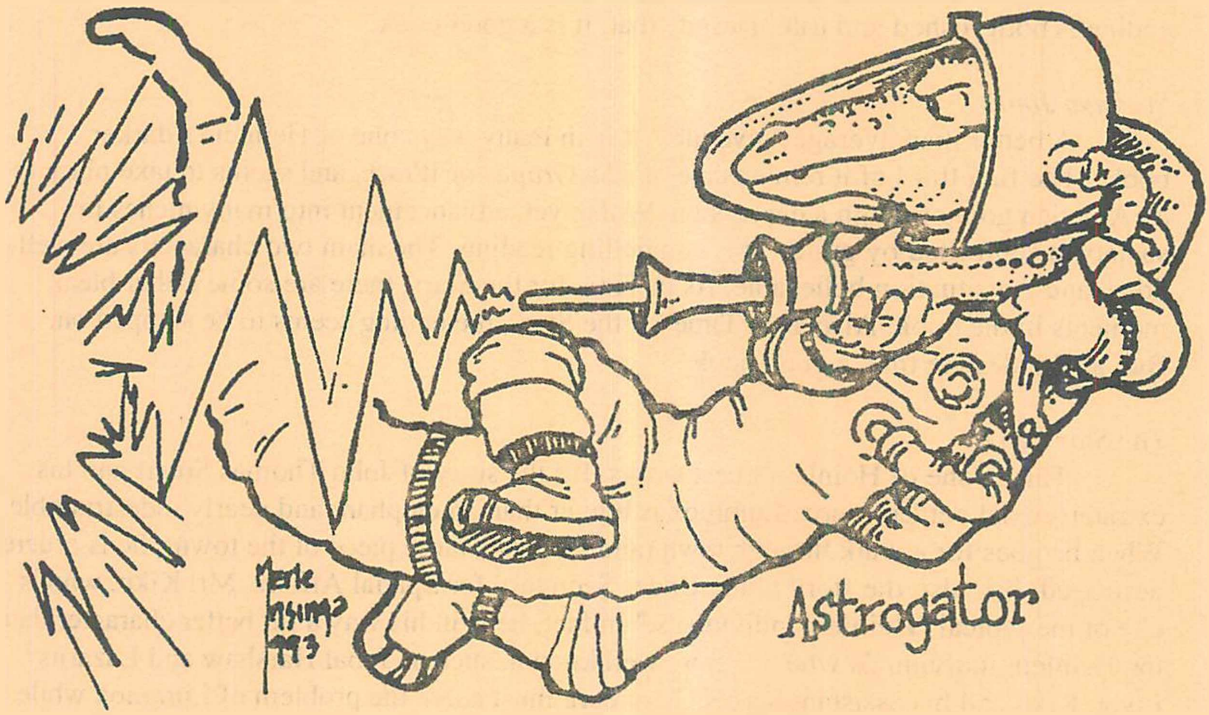
There was a lot of information about how the park service is doing controlled burning of the underbrush. After a hundred years of suppressing forest fires, they've finally figured out that wildfires are actually beneficial to the forest in various ways. But when you haven't had a natural fire for a hundred years, the situation is actually quite dangerous because the underbrush has grown so big. If there were a natural fire now, it would be far more dangerous to the sequoias than if there had been a small fire every ten years or so. So they've been setting controlled fires to clear out the underbrush. The upper grove was done some time ago, and now it's very open with lots of wildflowers growing under the trees. The lower grove is currently in the process of being burned, and we walked through a section of a controlled burn that was still smoldering.

By the time we worked our way back to the parking lot, I was starving, but Alex had a plan. He'd noticed a mention in the guidebook of a Szechuan restaurant in Oakhurst (about 15 miles south of the nearest park entrance), and he'd decided that it was time to enjoy the fruits of civilization. We found the restaurant, and it was pretty good. Even better, we found a bank cash machine to help us get through the next few days. Sometimes civilization has its benefits.

Friday and Saturday

Friday was a leisurely drive back across the Central Valley to the coast. By the time the day was done I think I saw every sort of vegetable and fruit I've ever eaten - artichokes, tomatoes, almonds, garlic, grapes, you name it, we probably saw a field of it. I also had an unprecedented streak of bad luck in selecting highways that were undergoing construction work. After a lunch break, we got to Carmel at 4:30 and got stuck in traffic trying to go south toward Big Sur.

The first section of coast we reached was fog-shrouded, and we were buffeted by some pretty amazing winds while rounding a high promontory. But then things cleared up, and we enjoyed the scenic drive to Big Sur. After stopping at Nepenthe, which is a restaurant with an outdoor deck and a superb view south along the coast, we faced the music and turned back north towardg San Francisco. Traffic was better through Carmel and we rounded Monterey Bay in a hazy sunset. We got as far as Santa Cruz before dark, and then crossed the coast range into Silicon Valley. It looked like it would have been a lovely drive in the daylight. We stayed overnight in Sunnyvale, and in the morning it was off to the San Francisco Airport and back to Boston.



On Rereading Heinlein

by Jim Mann, FN

A recent Heinlein discussion on Usenet caused me to go back and reread a lot of my favorite Heinlein. In a way, this is a bittersweet experience, because reading the good Heinlein always makes me think of his eventual decline. However, the best of Heinlein is very good indeed. His "peak" period, which lasted for about 20 years, was longer and better than that of most other SF writers.

I didn't reread two of my favorites, *Double Star* and *Citizen of the Galaxy*, since I had just reread them about six months ago. Both rank among Heinlein's best, and I could make a good argument for either one being the best Heinlein novel.

The ones I have reread so far are:

Time for the Stars

A good novel, and one of the few that really looks at the implications of relativity and instantaneous communication. Twins can communicate telepathically, and this communication is instantaneous. Thus, it becomes the only way for starships, moving at just under the speed of light, to communicate with Earth or each other. The society is nicely drawn, the situation interesting (and in a few places rather dark), and the characters reasonable. The book's greatest weakness is the ending. It is one of several Heinlein books that give the impression that Heinlein decided he had to end it somehow. The ending is both rushed and trite. Despite that, it is a good book.

Starman Jones

A better than average "juvenile." It is in many ways one of Heinlein's darker books. The first third of it reminds me of *The Grapes of Wrath*, and seems to take place in an America going though a depression. Worse yet, advancement into many niches in society is controlled by guilds. It is compelling reading. The main two characters are well done, and the situation believable. As in Time for the Stars, there are some rather bleak moments in the book. Also as in Time for the Stars, the ending seems to be slapped on. But, again, despite that, a good book.

The Star Beast

This is one of Heinlein's best works. It's the story of John Thomas Stuart and his extraterrestrial pet Lummox. Lummox is bigger than an elephant and nearly indestructible. When he goes for a walk through town (and wrecks a large piece of the town), he is ordered destroyed. It is also the story of the Under Secretary for Spatial Affairs, Mr. Kiku, who is one of the typical "Heinlein individuals." In fact, he is in his way a far better character than the Heinlein individuals who are more well known, such as Jubal Harshaw and Lazarus Long. Kiku and his assistant Sergei Greenberg must solve the problem of Lummox while also solving the problem of the Hroshii, an alien race that is threatening the Earth if their lost member isn't returned to them. While this seems rather predictable, the devil (or the real joy of the novel) is in the details. It's well paced, full of good characters (including Betty, one of the few good strong female characters that Heinlein created), often humorous and serious at the same time. It is highly recommended.

Have Space Suit--Will Travel

Alexei Panshin calls this one of Heinlein's two best books (*Beyond This Horizon* is his other choice). I agree, at least on the former. *Have Space Suit--Will Travel* is a tightly crafted novel. Unlike many other Heinlein novels, it is beautifully structured, with no loose ends, no parts that don't quite fit, and an ending that flows from the rest of the novel. The characters, particularly Peewee, the 11-year-old genius, are well drawn and memorable. The aliens too are well done. In addition, the novel manages to take a bunch of SF ideas that you would swear wouldn't work and makes them work: mankind on trial, flying saucers full of aliens who want to make humans into dinner, etc. It's a wonderful book, and probably Heinlein's last truly great book (with the possible exception of that diamond in the rough, *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*).

The Past Through Tomorrow

This is a collection of the Heinlein future histories, though one minor story ("Let There Be Light") is not included, and at least one story that doesn't seem to fit with the others ("We Also Walk Dogs") is. The collection contains a number of good short works: "The Green Hills of Earth," "The Man Who Sold the Moon," "Requiem," "Logic of Empire," and "The Menace from Earth." It also contains one good novel, *Methuselah's Children*, as well as a minor novel ("If This Goes On -") and some minor stories. A few of the stories are below average--"Searchlight," "Life-Line," "Blowups Happen"--but even these are fun to read.

The Puppet Masters

The Puppet Masters is one of the better alien invasion stories. It is certainly one of the most chilling stories of its type. Alien "slugs" land on earth. They attach themselves to humans, taking them over, in such a way that the humans act normal in most ways but are really thoroughly controlled. A nice touch here is that Heinlein has his main character fall under the control of the slugs for a short while, so that you see what it is like from the point of view of the controlled. Effective, chilling, and upsetting, it is a good, memorable novel. (Side note: this time through, I read the "complete novel"--that is, Heinlein without the benefit of the editors. Most of the stuff added [or, looked at the other way, that the editor had removed] really adds nothing to the novel. For example, in scene one of the original, the hero wakes up and heads off to work. In the restored novel, he wakes up, finds that he is in bed with a woman whose name he doesn't remember, then heads off to work. Really, it's no big loss.)

The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress

The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress is the only really good, really satisfying book that Heinlein wrote after 1960. All of his other books after *Have Space Suit--Will Travel*, even those that I rather like, leave me with a "Yeah, but..." feeling: that is, even the good ones leave you with the feeling that they could have been much better, if only Heinlein could have written as well as he did in the forties and fifties, if only he had had an editor, and so forth. This is not true with *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*. Oh, it has a little bit of flab, but not much. It avoids or minimizes most of the flaws of post-1960 Heinlein. The lectures are kept at a minimum and seem to be tied to the plot, rather than long sidetracks with the author up on a soapbox. It is not obsessed with sex, like many other Heinlein books of the period. (In so many of his other post-1960 books, Heinlein comes off as an adolescent boy who has just discovered that he can get away with talking about sex and therefore does so at every opportunity.)

The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress has many things going for it. The plot is good and fast-moving. The details of the society are interesting, as are the details of the revolution. And Mike remains one of the best sentient computers ever done. All in all, one of his best, just below the level of *Double Star, Citizen of the Galaxy*, and *Have Space Suit--Will Travel.*

The Door Into Summer

Nobody has a ever done a better job with time-travel-paradox stories than Robert Heinlein. He excelled at the loop-within-loop story, in which the protagonist travels in time to help himself somehow. The ultimate example of this was "All You Zombies," in which every character in the story is the same person, and he's also his own mother and father. "By His Bootstraps," another member of this sub-genre, is one of Heinlein's best novellas. But perhaps the most satisfying of the trio of time-travel-paradox stories that Heinlein wrote is *The Door Into Summer.* The main character, an inventor-extraordinaire, goes into cryogenic sleep in 1970 to be awakened in 2000. There, he finds signs of inventions of his that he had not finished when he went into deep sleep. He also finds a professor who has a somewhat functional time machine. He uses this to go into the past, fix some problems in his own life (and save his cat), finish his inventions, and go back into cryogenic sleep.

The entire book is very clever, and filled with a number of marvelous details about how things work and about the future society. I liked it even more the second time around than I did years ago, when I first read it.

Beyond This Horizon

Alexei Panshin considers *Beyond This Horizon* one of Heinlein's two best books. I'm not sure why. While the book has some interesting points, the writing is very clumsy. There are some places where the point of view (which is mostly that of the main character) suddenly just switches over to someone else for a paragraph or so, then switches back to the main character. This is jarring, to say the least. The book also has far too many lectures on genetics. Granted, this is an early novel, but *Methuselah's Children* (from the same period) is much better, and even "If This Goes On -" is a tad less clumsy.

The book's main strengths are in the society it sets up and the details of that society. Heinlein does a good job of making a very different society feel real.

Overall, however, this book is only average. Of all the Heinlein books that I reread, it is the only one that was not nearly as good as I remembered.

Not Worth Rereading

Most Heinlein is worth reading at least once, since even bad Heinlein usually moves along and has some interesting elements. Alexei Panshin noted that Heinlein's laundry lists would probably make compelling reading, though to be fair to Panshin he wrote that before *I Will Fear No Evil.* However, there is a list of mediocre to bad Heinlein that really doesn't seem worth rereading:

1. *I Will Fear No Evil*

Heinlein's worst, and one of the worst books by a major SF writer I've ever read. (I used to think it was THE worst, but then I read *Gods of Riverworld.*) Dumb and overwritten. The only interesting part is the newspaper headlines that start many of the chapters.

2. *Farnham's Freehold*

This one's not as bad as *I Will Fear No Evil*. Mostly, it's just sort of so-so and rather dull.

3. *Podkayne of Mars*

The worst written of the Heinlein juveniles. The only other juvenile that's near this bad is: [Note: The current printing has both the first published and the original endings. KK]

4. *Rocket Ship Galileo*

Boys build a rocket in their back yard, go to the moon, and find a secret Nazi base. Silly.

5. *The Number of the Beast*

I have real mixed feelings about this one. It was fun to read, once. It has some fun parts and some bad parts. But in the end, the endless chatter of the characters was so annoying that I don't think I can bear going back to it again.

So-So, but I'll Probably Reread Someday

The following fall somewhere in the middle. They aren't great, but they had something that makes me feel I'll probably go back to them someday.

1. *Time Enough for Love*

There are really a couple of nice novellas buried in this one. If Heinlein could have kept this to half its current length, it would be one of his better books. The chatter of the characters and the obsession with sex get in the way of what could have been a much better book.

2. *Stranger in a Strange Land*

The half-way point of this novel marks, for me, the real collapse of Robert Heinlein. The first half of the book is tight and rather interesting; the last half wanders away in unfocused fashion. The ending is dumb.

3. *Friday*

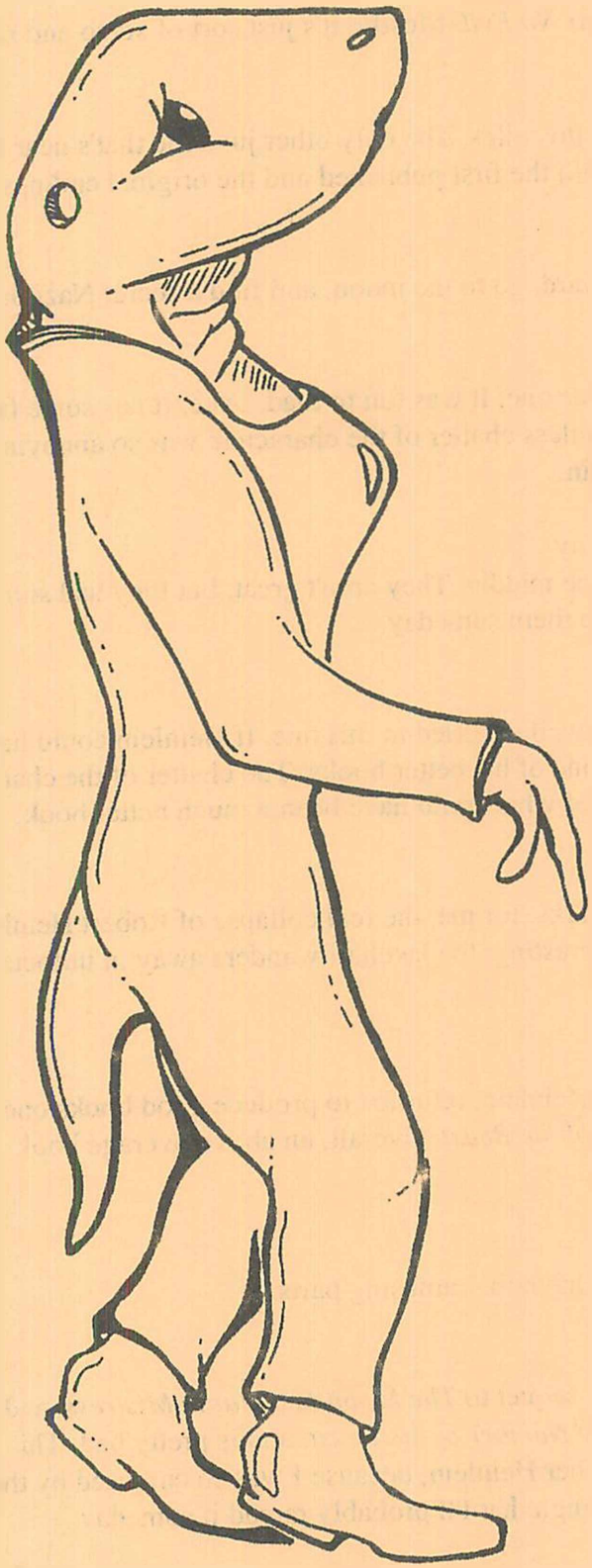
Parts of this book read like the old Heinlein, returned to produce good books once again. Other parts were as chatty as *The Number of the Beast*. Overall, an above-average book, but below-average Heinlein.

4. *Job: A Comedy of Justice*

Too long for what it is, but it has some rather amusing parts.

5. *The Cat Who Walks Through Walls*

The first two thirds of this book is a sequel to *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*, and is pretty good. The last third is a sequel to *The Number of the Beast*, and is pretty bad. This book probably disappointed me more than any other Heinlein, because I was so enthused by the first part. However, I liked the first part of it enough that I'll probably reread it someday.



Summary: Heinlein
(in alphabetical order in each category)

His Best
Citizen of the Galaxy
The Door Into Summer
Double Star
Have Space Suit--Will Travel
The Star Beast

Very Good
Between Planets
Methuselah's Children
The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress
The Puppet Masters
Red Planet
Starman Jones
Time for the Stars

Good
Farmer in the Sky
Orphans of the Sky
The Rolling Stones
Space Cadet
Starship Troopers
Tunnel in the Sky
Waldo & Magic Inc.

Average
Beyond This Horizon
Friday
"If This Goes On -"
Job: A Comedy of Justice
Sixth Column
Time Enough for Love

Below Average
The Cat Who Walks Through Walls
Glory Road
The Number of the Beast
Stranger in a Strange Land

Blah
Farnham's Freehold
I Will Fear No Evil
Podkayne of Mars
Rocket Ship Galileo

ConFrancisco 1993

Con report by Evelyn C. Leeper

[Mark Leeper has offered to write up some of the panels he attended that I missed, so this is actually a joint report.]

ConFrancisco, the 1993 World Science Fiction Convention, and the 51st World Science Fiction Convention, was held September 2 through September 6 in San Francisco, California. The attendance was calculated as 7642. Being that San Francisco is harder to get to from Europe than East Coast conventions, there were fewer Europeans in evidence than usual.

We took the train up from the peninsula Thursday morning and checked into the Nikko, our hotel, which was about a fifteen-minute walk from the Moscone Convention Center.

Facilities

The convention facilities were on the whole excellent. The rooms for the panels were right outside the large "concourse" where the dealers' room, the art show, the exhibits, and so on were located. This made dropping into the dealers' room or checking the message board between panels a real possibility (although the message board seemed less utilized than at previous conventions--people I knew were there never checked in, and so on). However, the films were in the Nikko and the masquerade and Hugo ceremony were in the other section of the convention center, across the street. The latter was far too small--set up with sufficient backstage area, there was seating for only 2000 people. This meant enormous lines for the masquerade and many people turned away, with the result that a lot of people didn't even try to make it into the Hugo ceremony. I don't know what attendance they were expecting if they thought 2000 seats would be sufficient. Even worse, it was flat seating, as opposed to ramped theater style, so people in the back couldn't see anything. I know, because we ended up in the back for the masquerade. (There was VIP seating for Hugo nominees, but having stood in line with our friends, it seemed crass to dump them. We did move up during the intermission though.) For the Hugo ceremony, we had front-row seats, but I had to write 110,000 words last year to get them. The parties and con suite (open only in the evenings) were in the Parc 55, which was right across the street from the Nikko, convenient for us, but not for people in the ANA, the main hotel right near the convention center.

The restaurant situation was infinitely better than last year: loads of restaurants within walking distance, including more Japanese restaurants than I've ever seen in one location. We went to a Cambodian restaurant (the Angkor Wat) the first night by car, but after that made do with the sushi places and other restaurants between the Nikko and the convention center. The one problem was getting breakfast on Sunday and Monday--many of the breakfast places in the area cater to the business crowd and were closed.

Registration and All That Stuff

Registration was incredibly slow. We arrived at 11:15 AM Thursday and it took an hour. One problem was that the materials didn't arrive until late Wednesday night, making a practice run-through with staff impossible. They could have used more stations, and I would strongly suggest that future conventions have the materials on hand by Tuesday morning, with early registration on Wednesday afternoon and evening to ease the crush. Also, the signs indicating the alphabet range from each station should be between six and ten feet off the floor, not resting on the floor, where they can't be seen through the crowds.

Another problem was that after registering, we had to get in another line to pick up the souvenir books and other free books. This was equally long, and someone came by saying people should leave the line and come back later--there was plenty of stuff and more was being brought in constantly. Silly us, we believed him. The result was that by the time we went back to pick up our stuff (later in the day), they were already out of the free copies of Connie Willis's *Doomsday Book*.

There was also a third line, albeit a short one, for picking up program participant material. At that point I also got what was labeled my "Hugo nominee pin," which turned out to be a square of silver with black paint on it forming a rocket silhouette. The paint flaked off when I peeled the backing off to attach it to my badge. It turned out that these were merely temporary: the real rocket pins were very similar to previous years' (though lacking the year engraved on them), and had been delayed when the luggage they were in was misdirected on the way from Russia!

For the first time at any Worldcon I have been to, the newsletters were almost always on time, and never more than an hour late. The main drop-off point always had a complete supply of all newsletters.

As always, there were lots of flyers on the freebie tables, and free issues of *Analog* and *Asimov's* were being handed out. The usual movie buttons were also there. There must have been a sufficient supply: there were still some on Monday.

Program Books

The Pocket Program was universally acclaimed as one of the best ever. It was a 4-inch-by-6-inch spiral-bound booklet containing the complete schedule (with descriptions--something which had been missing for the last three years), daily grids, convention center and hotel maps, restaurant listings, and just about everything else. (It did take a somewhat larger pocket than some other "pocket programs," though.) The one thing missing (and handed out separately) was the index by participant. As before, I had pulled a copy off the Net before the convention, but I still found the Pocket Program useful.

The Souvenir Book went back to its traditional format of essays and information, with no fiction such as was included last year.

Green Room

The Green Room seemed well laid out, with sufficient coffee and sodas. There were schedules available and it was right across from Program Operations, where one picked up the name cards for the panels.

Dealers Room

As usual, the Dealers Room (a.k.a, the Hucksters Room) was very large, and seemed to have more books than last year. However, I had made myself a promise not to buy a ton of books which I would have to carry back, and having bought a few at used book stores before the convention, only bought two or three books I had been seeking for a while.

One interesting side-note: NESFA was selling its Cordwainer Smith collection, *The Rediscovery of Man* (edited by James Mann). The rights to one of the stories in it had originally been sold to Harlan Ellison for the (infamous) *Last Dangerous Visions* anthology. When Ellison heard they were selling it, he claimed he owned the rights to that story and apparently threatened to go over to the table and punch the first NESFA person he saw there for stealing a story they had no right to. What I heard later was that Ellison thought he had bought the rights in perpetuity, but had actually bought them for a ten-year period, with an option to renew for five more (which he didn't pick up), and that this was twenty years ago. The net result of all this, however, was that everyone who was at Ellison's panel rushed over to the dealers room and bought a copy, and NESFA ended up selling out their entire at-the-con stock and taking orders to ship a whole lot more.

Art Show

I didn't get to see very much of the art show. Had I realized that the staff was not requiring that people check their bags, I might have tried to fit in some short trips between panels, but I was so used to having a visit to the art show take a minimum of ten minutes just for checking and unchecking bags that I never even tried. I did see a bit of it, especially the Hugo nominees exhibit. A friend commended them on their computerized purchase procedure, but wished that there was a way to pick up purchased artwork before 10 AM Monday, since her flight was not much after that. Also, art show close-out was only an hour before the Hugo ceremony, and given the lines (see below), that meant people bidding on artwork had to sacrifice any chance of getting a decent seat at the ceremony.

Programming

There were 492 program items listed (not counting readings and autograph sessions). MagiCon had 420 program items, Chicon V had 520 program items, ConFiction had 337, and Noreascon 3 had 833 (all not counting films or autograph sessions). I have no idea how many videos and films there were: due to family problems, the head of media programming had to withdraw shortly before the convention and the schedule was totally changed, as the convention had to start from scratch at that point. (John L. Flynn came through with what must have been only hours notice with a series of lectures to go with the "Dracula" film festival that was shown one day.) There were also 33 autograph sessions and 29 readings. Once again, there were a *lot* of panels at this convention of interest to me, and I ended up with no time for lunch (and occasionally no time for dinner!).

Panel: Mainstream/Slipstream
Thursday, 3:00 PM
Jonathan Lethem, Mark V. Ziesing

"'Mainstream' fiction hovering on our borders": Ziesing began by saying that he thought the New Wave was slipstream; Lethem gave only the example of Steve Ericson (*Arc d'X* and others). Other examples were Paul Auster (who wrote *The Music of Chance*, the film of which we coincidentally saw Monday

after the convention ended), Anthony Burgess (*A Clockwork Orange*--though this is more into the science fiction area--and others), Jonathan Carroll (*Outside the Dog Museum* and others), Jim Dodge (whom I couldn't find in *Books in Print*), Thomas Palmer (who someone claimed wrote *Dream Science*, but I could find neither the author nor the title in *Books in Print*), Thomas Pynchon (*Gravity's Rainbow* and others), Lewis Shiner (*Glimpses* and others), and Jonathan Lethem's own upcoming *Gun, with Occasional Music*. Judith Merril claimed recently that slipstream fiction wasn't really a new phenomenon, but that the sales potential for slipstream books was low and so they never really made a splash.

In an attempt to define slipstream, one panelist said that it is marked by the reader's difficulty in distinguishing fantasy from dreams. (Having seen *The Music of Chance*, I understand what he meant.)

Lethem noted that in literature, fantasy had always been the dominant mode, and that it was only recently that "realistic fiction" became the mainstream. Borges and Kafka are examples of fantastic authors who are accepted as mainstream (i.e., "legitimate") authors, but their work was described as mainly pre-genre (whatever that means).

Another related category is non-science-fiction written by science fiction authors for science fiction readers. Lucius Shepard's Central American stories and Bradley Denton's *Blackburn* would probably fall into this category.

Slipstream was also characterized by Ziesing as being used by "aging hippies and beat-up love puppies" as a "literary rather than chemical way to alter their consciousness." It tends to produce psychological discomfort.

The panelists cautioned that it was a mistake to think there is a monolithic mainstream, about which the various genres cluster; even the "mainstream" is fragmented. Unfortunately, at this point the panel degenerated into the usual discussion of publishing and marketing.

Panel: State of the Short Story
Thursday, 4:00 PM
Maya Kaathryn Bohnhoff, James Brunet, Scott Edelman, Rick Wilber

"How does this form fare in science fiction and fantasy magazines and books, and in the rest of the literary world": Edelman began by saying that in his opinion, short fiction is where everything important happens first, it is the cutting edge. Other panelists felt that this might be connected to the fact that short fiction gives the author more immediate feedback or gratification. While a novel could take a year or more to write, a short story can be written in a much shorter length of time. So writers are willing to make the investment in experimenting in the shorter forms. In addition, there are more markets for short fiction now than there were ten years ago. This does not mean it's easy to break into the market, but it is easier than before.

Because it is true that short fiction is not as profitable as novels, many people seem to feel that authors "graduate" from short fiction to novels. (See the introduction to Karen Joy Fowler's collection *Artificial Things* for a description of this phenomenon: she says she prefers short fiction and even got a reputation as "the person who wouldn't write a novel for Bantam.") Wilber also thought that short stories were not only "a good place to get started, but ... also a good place to be." And Harlan Ellison, one of the most respected writers in the field, has never written a science fiction novel (though he has written a couple of non-science-fiction novels).

One problem with short fiction is that magazines have a definite shelf life. Stories may be popular, but after their month or two is up, they become impossible to find. While anthologies have a longer lifetime, they are

less predictable or reliable. As Brunet put it, "The anthology is the hot date; the magazine is a long-term relationship." It is true that inclusion in one of the "Year's Best" anthologies will probably assure a story of being available for at least a couple of years, but original anthologies are trickier.

The panelists pointed out, however, that science fiction magazines at least have a readership. Literary magazines stay alive because of the pressures of academia: they provide a place to "publish" instead of "perish" for professors, and they are pretty much required reading for other professors. Science fiction magazines, on the other hand, stay alive because people *want* to read them. The opinion was expressed that this might even explain some of the hostility toward science fiction from academia: jealousy.

One recent phenomenon is the stand-alone novella from publishers such as Bantam. Priced below the cost of a novel and offering readers a chance to read a "book" without committing to a 600-page odyssey, they are also giving authors more market for novellas, traditionally a hard form to place.

Above all, though, Wilbur says, if you want to break into the short fiction market, "embrace rejection." In agreement, Brunet said that the best experience he got for selling short fiction was his experience dating in his early twenties.

Panel: Introduction to Computer Networking

Thursday, 5:00 PM

Seth Breidbart, Daniel Dern, Tom Galloway, Mark L. Olson, Martha Soukup (m)

"Discussion of the world of electronic mail and beyond--CompuServe, GEnie, Prodigy, BIX, the WELL and the Internet": The first item of business was asking what networks audience members were on. All the networks seemed to be represented except Prodigy, which got a bunch of loud boos instead of hands raised. The room was packed, mostly with people already networked, though there were a few people who had not gotten connected and were hoping to get some advice.

After a brief history of computer networking (with the note that *SF Lovers Digest* was originally a secret because of the restricted nature of the early Internet, and went public only in January of 1984), discussion turned to the recent announcement that some cable companies were going to start providing Internet connections via cable (at a fairly high price compared to public access services, though). The popularity of the Internet in general was thought by some to be leading to "death by success," to which a large number of people responded in chorus, "Imminent death of the Net predicted...." (With every change or growth spurt, people have been posting to the Net predicting that this would be the cause of the final collapse. Yet like that pink rabbit, it keeps on going. Or if you're older, like Timex, it keeps on ticking.)

Differences between commercial networks and the Internet were touched on. The commercial culture is a very top-down culture with rules and organization being dictated from above. The Internet is a "cooperative anarchy"; everything is bottom-up. If you want a connection, you just find someone already on it willing to provide one, as opposed to having to contact a central organization.

The major problem--how to solve infoglut--was not addressed.

There are so many panels on computers and networking, one wonders when conventions will start providing terminal rooms.

Panel: Today Is Tomorrow's Yesterday
Thursday, 6:00 PM
Barbara Delaplace, John Hertz, Harry Turtledove (m)

"Likely errors in future historical fiction about our era": The panel started by defining "today" as the period from 1945 to the present. The most obvious errors, they said, would be simple anachronisms: pot-smoking free love in 1951 or a Beatles concert in 1947. Authors writing about a historical period need to throw in details like this to create verisimilitude--as Hertz said, "Verisimilitude is very tricky stuff"--but it is very easy to get it wrong. Suggesting a few details allows the reader to fill in the rest, and authors aren't always careful about the details, especially if they think their audience is unfamiliar with the period.

Of course, unfamiliarity may not be the case. After all, there is a flood of information available for the present. Byzantine history (Turtledove's specialty) requires inference from the documents surviving, but we are absolutely swimming in documents. Even with some of them unreadable due to obsolete media (such as music stored on eight-track tapes), there will be so much that it will be possible to avoid verifiable errors with only a finite amount of research.

Another error is that people forget how quickly attitudes can change. This is what Mark calls the "Happy Days" Syndrome: the show took place in the 1950s, but everyone had the attitudes of the 1980s. This is also one reason that feminist Regency novels don't work very well. (Hertz suggested that you think of a viewpoint as a geographic thing.) It's easy to eat the food of people of another period and wear their clothing, but it's hard to think their thoughts and feel their feelings. Turtledove warns, however, that you often have to tone down attitudes or the audience will be turned off by them. For example, the attitude that blacks were sub-human was very common in earlier centuries, yet having a "hero" who espoused this attitude, however accurately, would not be acceptable to modern audiences. Rest assured, though, that we will suffer the same fate or, as Turtledove put it, "Whatever you think about X will be considered absurd five hundred years from now," where X could be religion, abortion, meat-eating, or any other subject. Yes, we think we have proof that our beliefs are right, but then previous generations also thought they had proof. Panelists also noted that some facts need to be left out--they are too convenient and people will think you have made them up.

One thing that Hertz felt characterizes our period as different that might very well seem absurd in the future is that we are as compulsively casual as previous cultures were formal. Whether the pendulum will swing completely back is not clear, but he feels that some return to formality will occur, and we will look absurd to future readers.

On the other hand, novels written about their own period can often skip important details that would be obvious to those of the author's time, but completely lost on an audience a hundred years later. As one panelist said, he could tell when reading a Jane Austen that *something* important was going on, but he didn't have the knowledge of the period to figure out what. Writers writing about earlier historical periods have to give the reader enough to understand what is happening. Georgette Heyer is supposedly good at this.

Turtledove observed that writing about the past was dangerous because "you have more excuse for making mistakes about the future than about the past." Even so, some literary license is permitted since "historians deal with facts, novelists deal with truth."

More basic questions raised were: Will anyone care about us? Why do we do the strange things we do? What are the future stereotypes of our age? These were not

answered, but the last one brought about the observation that an era of history is only noticed after it is over. (As Kim Stanley Robinson noted in his lecture on Postmodernism, people didn't sit around in Europe and say, "Well, last year was the Dark Ages, but now is the Renaissance.") Someone compared this to the cloud in Poul Anderson's *Brain Wave*: you only realize it exists once you're out of it.

Parties
Thursday, 10:00 PM

We returned from dinner at the Angkor Wat too late for the opening ceremonies, so I settled for dropping in to a couple of parties, the MagiCon Thank You Party (where I won a water bottle in their free give-a-ways), and the Boston in '01 Party. At the latter I discussed the various bids for 1998, none of which fills me with confidence. I have heard a rumor that Atlanta might throw its hat into the ring for 1998 (since their 1995 convention is the NASFiC rather than the Worldcon, they can do this). By the way, voters should realize that if Boston wins in 1998, it is ineligible in 2001.

Panel: Should SF/F Strive for Literary Respectability?
Friday, 10:00 AM
Gregory Benford, David G. Hartwell, Ron Montana (m)

"A debate over whether or not mainstream literary respectability is a desirable goal": Benford began by saying that he was working under a disadvantage, because English was not his first language--he's from southern Alabama. But he worked on getting rid of his accent because he realized at age 14 that people deduct twenty points from someone's IQ if they hear a southern accent.

The panelists felt that one approach to literary respectability was that of Deena Brown: "Let's get science fiction back in the gutter where it belongs." That seems to be the literary establishment's view: a proposal submitted to the National Science Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts to use science fiction to teach science was rated high by the NSF and low by the NEA. But all is not lost, Hartwell reassured us: "Science fiction has escalated from the respectability of pornography to the respectability of the average Western." However, Hartwell, who teaches a science fiction course at Harvard during the summer, was turned down when he offered to teach one during the regular school year. "Hell would freeze over before Harvard would allow science fiction to be taught during the regular school year," he said he was told (though perhaps not exactly in those words).

Benford doesn't think respectability is worth very much, because it is too easy to compromise one's art to gain respectability, and quoted Dylan as having said, "To live outside the law, you must be honest." (That's Bob Dylan, not Dylan Thomas.) For one thing, he thought much of the cynicism in today's mainstream was un-earned. People point to today's crises, such as AIDS, as the reason for this cynicism, but he reminded the audience that the 1919 influenza epidemic was much worse.

I asked if fantasy was more acceptable than science fiction to the literary establishment and Hartwell said that was certainly true. (This meshes with Lethem's comment yesterday on the "Slipstream" panel--literature was mostly fantastic for a long time.)

Speaking of the limitations of writing science fiction, especially strictly accurate science fiction, Benford felt that a genre flourishes because of its restraints. He did allow authors to make *one* change to current science if they had to, but he himself tries to avoid that. He is, for example, one of the few science fiction authors who won't use faster-than-light travel.

From the audience, Maia Cowan pointed

out that it was somewhat futile to try to write books that would have respectability: books written to be literary classics aren't, and books written for a quick buck have outlasted them. Arthur Conan Doyle is the perfect example of this: he assumed his fame would rest on his historical novels (quick, can you name even one of them?), while his Sherlock Holmes (and Edward Challenger) stories were written to pay the bills. And tastes in literature change. James Fenimore Cooper's works used to be considered classics; today no one reads them (except possibly to make a movie of them--and then they make a lot of changes).

Talking about best-sellers, Hartwell said that he loved Michael Crichton's *Congo*, but Benford complained that Crichton, Robin Cook, and Stephen King use "the sizzle of science" to preach that science is bad for you.

Someone asked whether anyone would ever win a Nobel Prize for science fiction, and were told that it had already happened (Harry Martinson for *Aniara*). Other possibilities for the future are Stanislaw Lem and whichever Strugatsky brother is still alive (Arkady or Boris). In other countries, science fiction is respected more in general.

Benford said he wasn't sure what "literature" was: "If literature merely means pretty sentences, count me out." (Someone noted that Ernest Hemingway is considered literature, and as the "Grandfather of Minimalism" was *not* a purveyor of pretty sentences.) For the scientifically-inclined in the audience, Benford said that one problem is that "the literary world is dominated by the inertial term."

In a side note, Benford said that one reason John W. Campbell liked dictatorships so much in stories submitted to him was that that was how he ran his magazine. (By the way, Benford has a new book out, *Chiller*, written under the pseudonym of Sterling Blake. I believe it's being marketed as a techno-thriller.)

Lecture: Postmodernism and SF
Friday, 11:00 AM
Kim Stanley Robinson

Well, coming out of this I felt that I finally understood what Postmodernism was.

Robinson began by saying that all the adjectives being used to talk about Postmodernism today used to be used to talk about science fiction, so it was natural that there should seem to be a connection. But Postmodernism is a historical period, not a style. Now is different than the Modernist period, and so needs a new name. (Robinson described this whole process as periodization," and noted that people did not suddenly say, "It's not the Dark Ages anymore; it's the Renaissance." Only later did these labels get applied.) A period corresponds to a structure for feeling. But even within a period there are "residual" and "emergent" aspects. For one thing, he said, this allows people to dispose of anomalies easily.

Postmodernism, as a period, follows Modernism. Modernism, in turn, followed Romanticism, which was represented by Realism. Various aspects of Modernism included Impressionism, stream of consciousness, existentialism, and the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright. This is not to say everyone was Modern; rural areas were in most cases pre-Modern (still feudal in many ways). But in the arts the basic "structure of feeling" or zeitgeist was alienation. People found themselves between the modern city and the rural area, and not really *of* either. Modernism was also characterized by a functioning avant garde and a concern with history.

The change "point" between Modernism and Postmodernism was the period from 1939 to 1969. This was the end of the old world order, brought about partly by World War II, and partly by the end of colonialism, or as

Jean-Paul Sartre put it, "All the natives of the world proclaimed that they were people." Fragmentation is the basic "structure of feeling" or zeitgeist in Postmodernism. There is a loss of purpose or of self. Robinson later said that to deal with this loss, we have a nostalgia for tribal cultures, because tribalism is an attempt to create social groups we can recognize and deal with.

We are now fully modernized, Robinson said. (I might dispute this, having seen rural farms in China. Actually, Robinson did later qualify this by saying there were still unmodernized areas. But communication has changed a lot of that. When we were trekking in northern Thailand a couple of years ago, our guide turned out to be a Bon Jovi fan and to play in a heavy metal group.) Our architecture is learning from Las Vegas. Robinson pointed to the Marriott near the convention center that looks like a 1950s jukebox. (This was also mentioned in the "Future and Movies" panel.) Architecture is now historical jumbles or melanges. I find this amusing, as there is a painting which shows a city with just such a jumble of styles, and it is titled "The Architect's Nightmare." Architecture now shows a sense of humor: in Atlanta there is a ten-story Gothic castle as the base of a seventy-story skyscraper, which is in turn topped with a cupola.

Pop art (such as Andy Warhol's work) is another aspect of Postmodernism. In fact, there is no big split between high art and popular art. Movies have glossy production values, even when portraying Depression dives in *The Sting* (which Robinson said looked like Hollywood fern bars) or the life of migrant farm workers in *Of Mice and Men*. New art forms arise. Fiona Jones in Boston hired people to go around and make other people happy as an art form. (It ended when the bank clerks she hired started giving money out to customers to make them happy!)

This lack of division between high art and popular art means that science fiction is the equal of any other art; there is no hierarchy any more. But this lack of division also means that to a Postmodernist, *Reader's Digest* joke columns are equal to James Joyce. And much of the academic study of Postmodernism is horrendous writing, and what's more, it considers itself art just as much as what it is discussing. (Robinson said that just about the only person worth reading on this topic was Frederick Jameson [*Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*], though he was tough going.) What's more, the criticism tends to be political, even if Postmodernism itself isn't. There is also no avant garde, because it's impossible to shock the bourgeoisie. Mapplethorpe is not avant garde so much as nostalgia for the avant garde.

Now, consider science fiction in the 1970s. It had shallow characters,a distortion of time and space, and so on. In fact, it looked like an emergent Postmodern art form, especially since art forms can go through periods very quickly to catch up with the prevailing feeling. Elvis was Romanticist/Realist, the Beatles were Modernist, and Madonna is Postmodernist. In science fiction, John W. Campbell pushed Realism, the New Wave pushed Modernism (with John Brunner's *Stand on Zanzibar* modeled after John Dos Passos and Brian Aldiss's *Barefoot in the Head* modeled after James Joyce), and now we have Postmodernism. From the outside science fiction looked like an emergent form; from inside, it appeared to be an accelerated form. In science fiction art we have gone from the 1950s and Richard Powers's Modernist art to Realist art. Or is it just Postmodern glossy? Sometimes it's hard to tell.

Science fiction is an intermediate form between high and low art. (The nostalgia for the science fiction ghetto is really residual.) One reason that Postmodernism is often confused with science fiction is that

"Postmodernism" literally means "after the now." "After the now" *is* science fiction, but in this case (as in many others) a literal translation of the component parts of a word gives an incorrect meaning.

But science fiction is really anti-Postmodernism. Postmodernism says that we are beyond historical styles because history has stopped--in other words, it takes an ahistorical view of the world. It is First-World-oriented (as was noted earlier). But science fiction has a sense of history proceeding into the future, and is *not* apolitical.

Science fiction is interested in utopianism. As Robinson said, "The future is going to be different depending on what we do," a theme I later stressed in the panel "Turning the Wheels of If." (And a theme of Robinson's work in general as well.) "The world is a braided science fiction novel," he added, "that we're all co-authoring right now."

The reading protocols of science fiction have to be explained to Postmodernists. It may appear to be part of the "movement," but appearances are deceiving.

Although cyberpunk claims to be an emergent form, Robinson said, we cannot predict emergent forms; they can only be recognized in hindsight, the same as historical periods.

Panel: Ahoy, Have You Seen the Great White Archetype?

Friday, 12 noon

Mary J. Caraker, Howard Frank, Katharine Kerr (m), Mike Resnick, Carol Severance

"What are they? Uses and abuses? Are there 'styles' in archetypes over the years?": The panel described archetypes as "ripping off mythological themes," as well as Christ figures and primitive legends. Most science fiction and fantasy is dominated by white European cultures and archetypes, though Severance uses Pacific Islanders and their archetypes. (Severance did note that she realizes that "Pacific Islanders" is a very broad term, encompassing many different cultures.) Severance felt that using different cultures made the fiction more interesting, because "every culture carries the rhythm of the physical setting that it's in." She mentioned in passing the large number of words for snow in Inuit languages, but also said that every Pacific Island language had a word meaning "death by falling coconut." Caraker is using the *Kalevala* (Finnish), European, but not really over-used.

The panelists tried to distinguish between stereotype and archetype by saying that an archetype is a function within a pattern of story (e.g., quest stories have a hero). As Maia Cowan noted, archetypes don't have to be people; they can be the quest itself, the journey, the generational ship, the wild place, or the clean village. (Someone noted that Earth *is* a generational ship, and someone else observed only poor villages were clean, because only rich villages would have garbage.) Olaf Stapledon was an author with a lot of archetypes and no characters whatsoever.

One danger in talking about archetypes is that people will find things in writing that were never (consciously) intended by the author.

H. Rider Haggard was an author cited whose work was almost entirely archetypal. But Frank noted that Haggard's best-known work was not his best, and that Haggard had the utmost respect for black culture in Africa, contrary to many people's impressions. Haggard also had a Victorian view of women but not, Frank claimed, a negative one. (Frank recommended *Nada the Lily* and *Eric Brighteyes* as Haggard's best. *She* was written in six weeks on a bet.)

Doyle used archetypes: the wise old storyteller in Watson (and others). In fact, the wise old storyteller is a very popular archetype among authors, undoubtedly because they *are*

storytellers. Wells has his wise old professor (Cavor). Romulus and Remus are the feral children, which we see later in Rudyard Kipling's Mowgli and Edgar Rice Burroughs's Tarzan. But now these characters are usually given some flaw, usually for comic effect. Even so, science fiction still has noble characters, according to Frank, while most literature doesn't. Kerr felt that women authors often play against archetype as well as against stereotype in their female characters.

We now have the wise and compassionate alien and the creation that destroys its creator. They may seem new, but they really go back to the angel and the golem. There's also the master navigator, which shows up with Maoris as space-farers. And Heinlein's "competent man" is another archetype.

Someone asked if archetypes are what prevents science fiction from becoming a literary artform, or at least accepted as literature. This seems unlikely; there is much archetypal literature that is accepted as literature.

Anti-heroes are also found in science fiction: Alfred Bester's *The Demolished Man* and *The Stars My Destination*, Clifford Simak's *City*, and David Lindsay's *A Voyage to Arcturus*.

The prophet as archetype is now often replaced by the author himself or herself, as when someone writes an "if this goes on" tale. This observation led someone to wonder if a Calvinist (or other believer in predestination) could accept a cautionary tale. On the other hand, what are all the warnings of damnation in the Bible if not cautionary tales?

Apropos of not much else, someone noted that in 1966 a survey of science fiction authors was taken and only Robert Heinlein and Robert Silverberg were making more than $10,000 a year from their science fiction writing. (Isaac Asimov was making more, but mostly from his science writing.) Things have improved: a recent survey shows several authors (unnamed) making more than $50,000 a year from their science fiction writing.

Panel: Using Literary Techniques in SF/F
Friday, 1:00 PM
Nicholas A. DiChario, Jean Mark Gawron, Eileen Gunn (m), Michael Kandel

"Is there room for stream of consciousness, self-referentiality, fractured time schemes and so on in SF?": The short answer seems to be yes, but focus on the task and choose the technique to fit rather than vice versa (according to Kandel, anyway). But it is the story-telling that is important, not the artsy-fartsy stuff.

The panelists agreed that writers pick up techniques by reading other writers and that therefore it is probably inevitable that these techniques will appear in science fiction. And some writers are more naturally stylists than others. The example given was that Mike Resnick is a storyteller and Lucius Shepard is a stylist.

How well do techniques translate from one language to another? This was a question perhaps better suited for the "Language" panel later, but Kandel said there were some techniques that translated easily and others that were very difficult.

Regarding stylistic tricks, Kandel said that often one should "take out the goop" to improve things. This is true in the mainstream as well as in science fiction, since the dichotomy between the two implied in this panel's title doesn't really exist. Kandel also warned against "expository lumps," which seem inherent in science fiction, but can be handled well. As an example of an author who could handle these "lumps," Kandel mentioned James Schmitz. Gunn said that you should "cut out the boring, tedious stuff and leave only what interests you."

People asked about specific techniques. Regarding foreshadowing, one panelist said

that it has to come from the text, not be applied to it like lipstick. However, a beginning writer may have to do this consciously for a while before it becomes an automatic process.

In answer to my question, DiChario said that he had chosen the diary format for "The Winterberry" as the best way to show the main character's mental state and also to skip large chunks of time. I didn't ask, but it seems obvious that this technique was inspired by Daniel Keyes's *Flowers for Algernon*.

Panel: Gender Bending: What's Good?
Friday, 2:00 PM
Michael Blumlein, Suzy McKee Charnas, Jeanne Gomoll (m)

"Exploration of gender and roles isn't as popular in science fiction as it used to be. Are the issues too imponderable or have we explored this area thoroughly?": Blumlein started out by reminding us that the major debate about gender roles is still nature versus nurture. One of the best examples using the nurture theory in recent books is Sheri Tepper's *Sideshow*, in which the one of the two (hermaphroditic) halves of a set of joined twins is raised as a boy and one is raised as a girl.

Charnas noted that women can fill the spectrum of behavior, but that most fiction doesn't provide enough templates for this. However, if one writes about a society composed only of women, one finds that there is no problem in writing about a *complete* society. One doesn't find parts that women can't fit. (One assumes the same would be true for a men-only society, assuming some form of artificial reproduction. In fact, someone said that Lois McMaster Bujold did this with *Ethan of Athos*.)

One function of gender roles is to provide people with an anchor of stability. Most people are uncomfortable in free-floating masses of people (according to Charnas) and so groups form. (This hearkens back to Robinson's comments about tribalism in his Postmodernism lecture.) Charnas gave Nicola Griffith's *Ammonite* as a good example of this group dynamic.

The discussion drifted into "gender dysphoria," or the psychological condition of feeling that your psychological sex doesn't match your physiological sex. Someone said that, while transsexual surgery used to be considered a solution to this, such surgery is becoming less popular, though many people are taking the necessary hormones and living as the "other" sex. One suggested reason for this is that the easier of the two surgeries is male-to-female, but being a female in society today results in a loss of power, and people aren't ready to do that permanently. (Though I would think living as a female would have the same effect.) With this, as with a lot of the discussion, a lot of generalizations were thrown around.

Someone pointed out that even if someone did change their sex later in life (such as happened in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*), they would still have experienced the first part of their life as their original sex. In the case of Orlando, he had gone through adolescence as a boy, and so did not have the same life experiences as someone who went through adolescence as a girl, even after he changed into a woman. (The panelists felt that the movie left a lot out that the book had.)

Regarding gender roles, someone observed that society makes rules because the rules *aren't* fixed within us--if they were, we wouldn't have to make artificial ones. Someone else cited *Rainbow Man* by M. J. Engh, in which women were *defined* as people who could give birth. So a "woman" who had some physiological problem which would prevent her from giving birth would not be considered a woman by that society.

One belief expressed was that there is a lot of emphasis placed on the societal pressures put on girls and women, and less placed on the

corresponding pressures on boys and men. At least one panelist said that we pretend we can "skip the angry part" of problem-solving, but that is not true; we need to confront the pain.

There was some book-flogging at the beginning of this panel. Blumlein, who has an M.D., has written *The Movement of Mountains* and *The Brains of Rats*, and has a new book (called *X, Y*) coming out soon from Dell which will deal with a gay man who wakes up one day as a woman.

Panel: Computers and Class
Friday, 4:00 PM
Lisa Mason, Tim May, Althea McMurrian, Jack Nimersheim, Richard Weiss (m)

"In an increasingly technology driven future, will the computer illiterates be the next underclass?": The discussion centered more on whether the current underclass would remain that way because they were denied access to computers than whether the "computer illiterate" of any class would become the new underclass. Interestingly, all the panelists were in the computer field, meaning that there was no "voice of the opposition," or in this case, no input from the people who do *not* use computers.

One feeling about computers and networking that most people seemed to agree with was that on a one-to-one basis it was a great equalizer, but overall it can be a stratifier. One question asked was, if the problem is exacerbated by the fact that upper-class people have more access to computers than lower-class people, does this mean that upper-class parents should stop getting their children the computers and other advantages they can afford?

Some people felt that the problem was not computer literacy or illiteracy, but literacy in general, and that was far more accessible to everyone.

On a more positive note, someone said that even the lower classes have Nintendo, which is a computer, so it is not the case that they are completely cut off from technology.

Panel: Nema Problema
Friday, 5:00 PM
Lynn D. Maners (m), Larry Roeder

"The Worldcon is not in the former Yugoslavia this year, but many fans still live there. Who are they, and what's happened to them?": Well, the good news is that as far as Maners knows, none of the well-known Yugoslav fans have been killed in the war there. Other than that, information is sketchy. The two major science fiction magazines, *Alef* and *Sirius*, have folded. The clubs still meet--since none ever got any cultural funding anyway, the break-up didn't disrupt that aspect of their organizations. (Of course, the runaway inflation in many of the republics must be damaging in general.)

Maners thought Slovenia was the only one of the republics to have turned into a democracy; the others are still dictatorships of one form or another. Apropos of this, I am reading Rebecca West's *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, her description of her travels through Yugoslavia in 1937 (complete with large chunks of history--those "expository lumps" that Kandel warns against in fiction writing, but which are marvelous in non-fiction). In her prologue, she says, "English persons, therefore, of humanitarian and reformist disposition constantly went out to the Balkan peninsula to see who was in fact ill-treating whom, and, being by the very nature of their perfectionist faith unable to accept the horrid hypothesis that everybody was ill-treating everybody else, came back with a pet Balkan people established in their hearts as suffering and innocent, eternally the massacree and never the massacrer. The same sort of person ... often set up on the hearth [their pet people as resembling] Sir Joshua Reynolds's picture of

the infant Samuel. But ... to hear Balkan-fanciers talk about each other's Infant Samuel was to think of some painter not at all like Sir Joshua Reynolds, say Hieronymus Bosch." But I digress.

There was some discussion of Yugoslav science fiction, where Maners said that it tended towards the philosophical rather than towards the more hardware-oriented versions. This he attributed to the fact that the country was not a major technological power, and he says this tendency is found in the science fiction of most smaller countries. In addition to being less technological, it is often less optimistic. It's easy for a citizen of a super-power to be optimistic about the future; it's more difficult for someone in a less powerful country. For one thing, they may feel that much of their future is in the hands of the super-power, who may decide to take action against them, or at any rate, ignore their welfare when making decisions.

Towards the end Larry Roeder came in and added a darker tone to the proceedings. He said that he expects there to be a lot more war in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, particularly since we have taken away the ability of the Bosnian Muslims to defend themselves. Ethnicity, he says, is *the* issue of the next decade, not just in the Balkans, but everywhere. Or, as D. Keith Mano said, "If Wilsonian self-determination were applied strictly to Yugoslavia there would be no kingdom larger than Greenwich Village. Yugoslavia isn't a nation: it's some form of ethnic and political supercollider." (*National Review*, June 30, 1989) The current plan to divide up Bosnia-Hercegovina certainly seems headed in that direction. However, Americans are not terribly unpopular (a delightful change). In fact, we are loved in Albania. Roeder claimed that this was because Nixon was related to King Zog, though he didn't say how.

Panel: Turning the Wheels of If
Friday, 6:00 PM
Charles K. Bradley, John L. Flynn, Evelyn Leeper (m), Brad Linaweaver, Paul J. McAuley

"A discussion of likely change points for alternate realities, universes and histories": Although usually the panelists for a topic are authors who have written about that topic (and that was true here of Flynn, Linaweaver, and McAuley), Bradley was on the panel for a more unusual reason: he uses alternate history as a way to teach students regular history (though he did admit that sometimes he had to make sure they weren't getting confused about what was real and what was imaginary!).

I started by asking the panelists to pick one change point they would like to see dealt with, with the caveat that it *not* be European or North American, and especially not the American Civil War or World War II.

McAuley thought that something involving Chinese expansionism might be good, although the feeling was that the Chinese philosophy did not lend itself to exploration; the Chinese had more of a feeling that other people should come to them. I suggested that if this came out of Confucianism, then a timeline without Confucius might have some interesting results. (Someone later suggested that the Chinese stopped exploring because they saw no monetary benefit from continuing.) Flynn said the one alternate history story he had written ("Paradox Lost") assumed that the Library at Alexandria hadn't been burnt and that the Egyptians conquered the world. I pointed out that what Mark was always reminding people was that the amount of time since the fall of the Egyptian empire was shorter than the time the empire existed (or as Mark says, "We are in the umbra of the Egyptian empire"). Linaweaver said he had just written "The Bison Riders," in which the Aztecs are not

defeated by the Spanish, but instead become high-tech and expand into North America. (Strictly speaking, this is still a North American change point, but not a Eurocentric one.)

Bradley thought that something interesting could be done with General William Walker, who tried to seize Baja California and Sonora in 1853. He failed, but set himself up as president of Nicaragua in 1856, but was expelled in 1857. In 1860, he invaded Honduras, where his luck ran out: he was captured, court-martialed, and shot. Even today, he is hated by many factions in Central America. Another suggestion Bradley had was what if we had supported Ho Chi Minh, though again that is too close to an over-used change-point. My personal favorite (having recently read about prehistoric animal migrations) is what if the Bering land bridge had not existed? Not only would the Americas have been unpopulated when the Europeans (or Asians, or Africans) arrived, but the animal life of the Americas, and of Europe/Asia/Africa would have been vastly different. For example, as someone noted, horses and camels were New World animals which migrated *back* to the Old World and then died out in the New World. Imagine a Europe/Asia/Africa without horses or camels or donkeys. Other ideas for change-points batted around through the hour included what if Kaiser Wilhelm's father had lived longer, what if the Roanoke Colony had never existed, what if Carthage hadn't been defeated by Rome, what if Peter the Great hadn't turned Russia towards the West instead of remaining Eastern, and what if Huey Long had been elected President (Virginia Dabney had this happen in a 1936 story which also assumed the South won the Civil War, and Barry Malzberg did this last year in "Kingfish"). Bradley noted that there are still people who believe that Roosevelt had Long killed, leading to a brief digression into conspiracy theories and secret histories, with Linaweaver suggesting that maybe Roosevelt also flew the lead plane at Pearl Harbor.

There was some subsidiary discussion about the Aztecs. Political correctness these days blames the Spanish for conquering them, but the fact is that the Spanish had a lot of help from the Aztecs' neighbors, who were tired of being captured for human sacrifices. Linaweaver claims the Aztecs were vicious fascists. (Note that he speaks from a libertarian perspective, though I suspect he's right in any case.)

I asked the panelists' views on the "tide of history" versus "great man" theories, noting that the former was in some sense the Marxist view and the latter the capitalist view, leading the former to be somewhat in disrepute these days. I placed myself somewhat in the middle: some things happen because of a unique individual, but there is also truth to Robert Heinlein's "When it's time to railroad, you railroad." McAuley wondered if Marxism itself would have gotten off the ground without Marx to write *Das Kapital*. Since it was based on technological acceleration, would Marxism have arisen if we never got beyond water power? Flynn agreed that the "great man" theory seems the most likely to be true. Linaweaver agreed with me that a mix is the most reasonable guess. He suggested that without Hitler, there probably would have been a World War II, but it probably would have been very different, and the Holocaust would almost definitely have been greatly reduced. He noted that Communism had been based on the work of many people, but National Socialism was entirely Hitler's concept. Other "great men" he listed were Einstein and Tesla. When I suggested that if Einstein hadn't discovered relativity, someone else would have, Fred Adams from the audience said that was true--that relativity was in the air. I gave the further example of Newton and Leibnitz discovering calculus independently and almost simultaneously. (Christopher Ambler said this

sort of simultaneity happens all the time.) Bradley was also middle-of-the-road, giving as one example of the "great man" theory the idea that without a Lincoln, the United States would not have survived intact.

Someone commented that the rise of chaos theory has led to "fast" alternate histories, in which change occurs much more rapidly than it did before. It used to be that even after fifty years, things looked much the same as in our timeline, but now things become unrecognizable in a short time. This, of course, makes it more difficult for the reader to connect with the story.

At Flynn's suggestion, I asked the panelists why they thought there was such a fascination, especially now, with alternate histories. Flynn suggested it was wish fulfillment. (Bradley noted that alternate histories strike a basic chord in the human psyche; he is descended from Aaron Burr and might have been king.) Ambler disagreed, saying that we may be interested in some of these alternate histories, but we don't necessarily wish for them. Regarding this, I noted that there are two categories of alternate history: the pessimistic (things could have been better) and the optimistic (things could have been worse). The French seem to like alternate histories almost as much as the English-speaking world, yet their alternate histories tend to be more pessimistic (according to Mark Keller). In particular, they focus on how much better things would be if everyone spoke French. Linaweaver thought that the British, on the other hand, portrayed more dystopias than we did, partly because we are still an empire.

Someone said that most alternate histories focused on people; what about some that focused on diseases, natural disasters, and other events? I noted there have been several based on variations to the spread of the Black Plague (especially Robert Silverberg's "Gate of Time"), but other ideas included what if Hurricane Andrew hadn't hit (too soon to show radical change, in my opinion), what if the storm hadn't delayed the Spanish Armada (done by Joseph Edgar Chamberlin as an academic study in 1908), and what if space aliens had invaded us? I noted that regarding plagues, 90% of the deaths in the New World after the Spanish arrived were from disease, not warfare.

We cautioned was that changes had to be somewhat reasonable, a constraint that many authors don't seem to recognize. Many people look at what might have happened if the South had won the Civil War or Germany won World War II, but close examination usually shows there is no way for their scenario to have happened. Prospective authors should watch James Burke's television series *Connections* to get an idea of causality in history.

I also observed that in alternate histories changing the past changes the future, and maybe this was popular because we want to believe that changing the present changes the future as well. We want control over our destinies, and alternate histories (in general) say that there is *not* predestination, but rather free will. (This may have arisen out of Kim Stanley Robinson's comments in his lecture on Postmodernism, when he noted, "The future is going to be different depending on what we do.") In traditional Judaism it is a sin to wish for something that is not possible, e.g., to want to change history. Yet alternate histories give us a way (vicariously) to do this. I also thought that part of my interest was based in my Jewishness--what if the Holocaust could have been prevented?

We never actually figured out why alternate histories were science fiction, although Linaweaver said they were part of the "speculative fiction" aspect of "SF." In history and economics they've been around for a while, as "counter-factuals." In any case, the panelists (especially the authors) said they hoped people kept reading them. Linaweaver also added that he enjoyed alternate histories

because he still believed in human genius, and I suggested that the lesson to be learned from them is that one person can make a difference.

Panel: The 100 MPG Engine: Legends That Will Not Die

Saturday, 10:00 AM

Gregory Benford (m), Rick Cook, Steve Howe, Daniel L. Marcus

"'Suppressed technology.' How do stories get started about cars that run on water, carburetors that allow 90 miles per gallon, and anti-cancer drugs made from common household chemicals?": Well, I had expected a panel talking about technological "urban legends," but instead got one talking about how some of these "wildcat" ideas are real, but not marketable. For example, there are cars that can get eighty miles per gallon of gasoline, but they are undrivable under street conditions: they have no acceleration and constantly backfire. The Wankel (rotary) engine was another idea that failed on its own merits (rather than being suppressed); its fuel consumption was high (about fourteen miles per gallon) and it generated a lot of pollution because the seals were never perfected.

And then there was the nuclear- powered airplane. Oh, it would have worked, but sufficient shielding around the fuel would have made it too heavy, so it would only work if you had a crew that didn't mind getting fried by the radiation, *and* it would also irradiate all the land it flew over. But the designers had thought of what to do with it when they were done--they would land it in Antarctica and use that as a nuclear-waste dump. (Luckily, this idea never got off the ground--so to speak.)

And remember SDI? This was described by one of the panelists as a "Fast Eddie" Teller idea, and eventually people concluded that it also had more flaws than virtues.

Other ideas probably were more workable, but not wise. Small nuclear bombs, weighing less than a hundred pounds complete, could be used by guerrilla forces in Europe after it was overrun by the Soviets. Well, that was the original idea, but someone apparently realized that given the state of the world, having bombs this small that people could smuggle around was a *really* bad idea.

On the other hand, the L5 solar power satellite sounded crazy initially, but turned out to be a good idea.

But why do we believe all the fantastic stories of great inventions and discoveries, even when they are bogus? (Cold fusion comes to mind, naturally, although it was pointed out that the whole cold fusion thing did teach us a lot about sub-quantum states.) Well, for one thing, we *want* to believe them. Someone (Thomas Hardy, I think) wrote a poem about how there was a legend that on Christmas Eve, animals could talk, and said at the end that he didn't believe it, but that if someone say it were happening in the barn, he would go, "wishing it might be so." Certainly there must be some explanation of why people believe what they read in the *Weekly World News*.

Howe said that one problem is that science nowadays is all done as "big science." His analogy is that it's as if the government of the 19th century decided to explore the West with an army that marched together as a unit instead of with lots of small exploration and settlement parties. So the "small science" is left with more than its share of cranks. Benford said that at his school (University of California at Irvine), the crank calls are doled out to the various professors. Most fall into two categories: 1) "What was that thing I saw in the sky last night?" and 2) "I have a new energy source that will save the world." Howe asked whether Benford wouldn't be sorry if he rejected someone who turned out to be a genius. "Would I be sorry? Yes. But what are the odds?"

One panelist noted that he is more bothered by stories of suppressed cancer cures

than stories of suppressed energy sources, because the latter are usually just humorous, but the former touch people personally in matters of life and death. Someone asked about Linus Pauling's theories about anti-oxidants, and the response was that since he was still walking five miles a day at age 92, they shouldn't be written off too quickly.

One audience member noted that the panelists were referring to crackpots as "he" and asked if they had ever run across any female crackpots, to which Benford responded, "I've dated some." Cook noted, however, that female crackpots seem to be more conspiracy theorists than scientists.

One problem with the whole "suppression" and "conspiracy" theory these days is that suppressing an idea in the United States doesn't do much about suppressing it globally. Of course, there is suppression here, but it is more from the Food & Drug Administration and liability laws than from any secret coterie. In addition (as was noted earlier), the public suppresses things by not buying them and hence driving them off the market. Most products represent a trade-off: you can get more miles per gallon, but only if you are willing to buy a smaller, lighter, slower car. Other products are monopolized (the example given was forceps, invented in the 14th century but monopolized for a hundred years by one family).

Along the lines of the suppression theories, I recommend David Mamet's *Water Engine*, recently made into a movie for TNT.

Panel: When Fandom and Real World Politics Collide
Saturday, 11:00 AM
Abi Frost, Jeanne Gomoll (m), Andi Shechter, Ben Yalow

"What should fandom do about boycotts, strikes, war, and real world politics?": Clearly, fandom does need to take note of them: this year's Eurocon was moved to the Channel Isles from Zagreb. But not only lately is there the possibility that conventions will get involved with real-world politics--this has always been the case. The split in fandom at the first Worldcon (when several people were turned away at the door and went across the street to hold their own convention) was part of a larger dispute between the Left (those turned away) and the Right (those running the convention).

It's convenient to think that fandom is united on social issues, but fandom isn't united on *anything*. There are plenty of left-wing fanzines and right-wing fanzines and other-wing fanzines. The best we can say is that fandom is self-policing and self-censoring: most conventions these days try to avoid taking a stand on one side or the other of any issue. (Iguanacon was a major exception to this, and many fans still resent the "co-opting" of that convention as a political statement. It's true that there are smaller conventions which are specifically feminist or otherwise specifically directed, but these are announced as this way up front.) Fandom is *not* apolitical, perhaps (someone suggested) because fans think about and care about the future.

One need only look at the various awards given out in science fiction to see the breadth of the politics: the Prometheus Award by the Libertarians, the Tiptree Award for examination of gender roles, the Gryphon Award, and so on. There is no consensus on anything.

However, labor disputes are another matter. Given that conventions need to deal with unions in hotels and convention centers, they must keep abreast of current disputes. And someone mentioned that fans sometimes need to be warned not to be arrogant toward unionized employees--sometimes our elitism is showing.

Panel: Will the Future Look Like the Movies?
Saturday, 12 noon
Martin Brenneis (m), Evelyn Leeper, Bill Warren

"If a present-day cinematic art director could fast-forward to the future, how disappointed would he or she be?": Well, I think the conclusion was that he or she would not see anything like what was portrayed, but probably wouldn't expect to either.

One of the things we noted at the start was that what was portrayed in films didn't actually have to work. The automatic sliding doors in *Star Trek* were actually operated by people behind the set pulling and pushing on them, and the blinking lights on computer panels are often just someone sitting under the panel randomly pushing buttons. Of course, sometimes it's real: *Colossus: The Forbin Project* used the studio's payroll computer for the title character. Warren noted that in the movies, computers had large tape reels long after it ceased in real life (no pun intended) because viewers expected it. And no one really predicted PCs. (For that matter, you have at least half a dozen computers in your house in some form or other.)

It was agreed that in general the future goes at a pace nobody can comprehend. I noted that Bob Lucky (a director of research at Bell Labs) has been quoted as saying that scientists creating the future have no idea what is coming. They thought the Picturephone would be popular years ago, but it was a complete flop (even though the way they showed the future in movies in the past was with Picturephones). On the other hand, they totally missed out on how fax machines and cellular telephones would catch on. Nobody knows what will be popular.

Someone mentioned that the future is often too clean. Brenneis liked the idea that the hydraulics in *Star Wars* leaked, leaving spots on the hangar floor. Warren commended Rob Cobb for his work on *Alien* and *Leviathan*, saying Cobb understood the objects he was working with better than the director.

As far as objects go, I commented that they are frequently designed more with an eye for style than with any notion of utility. Citing Donald Norman's book *The Psychology of Everyday Things* (a.k.a. *The Design of Everyday Things*), I noted that this is somewhat true even in actual objects in use (like clock radios with flush, identical buttons for all functions), but said that even so, the idea of putting the planetary "blow-up switch" in a child's classroom in *Forbidden Planet* seemed like a bad idea. Warren agreed, but felt that *Forbidden Planet* (credited to Cedric Gibbons) was in general a good depiction of a future house and seemed to look like someplace a human being might want to live. Most other films, he felt, showed something totally unlike what a human being would want. Someone in the audience asked when we would see ergonomic designs, such as the pyramidal keyboard--I suspect the pyramidal keyboard will be about as popular as the Picturephone was.

There was also discussion of crazy architecture designs in real life. In Texas there is a building shaped like a dollar sign. I said that reminded me of the old June Taylor Dancers on *The Jackie Gleason Show*, who did synchronized routines that made sense only when viewed from above; to the studio audience they must have looked like random motion. I also remarked that someone at Chicon V had commented that with the shopping mall connected to the hotel connected to the office complex, the "domed city" of the future had arrived. We just don't always recognize the old ideas from science fiction when we meet them in real life. Brenneis said that future cities will be a blend of the old into the new. For example, the Marriott near the convention center looks like

a 1950s jukebox. He felt that the future will always have some element of the past, and this was often lacking in films. Too often, everything looks as though it were constructed in the two years immediately preceding the time of the film. Brenneis said it was fun to see holdouts from the past in real life: a CPM computer does as well for typing in as a Cray, so you have a blend of old and new. The old will not go away.

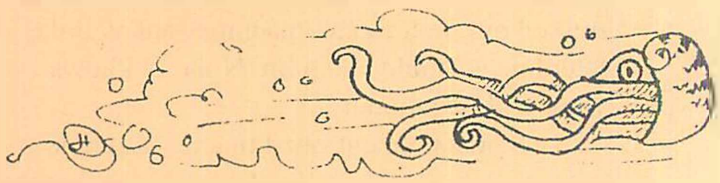
One person noted that they are waiting for roads to look like they do in the movies. Brenneis said he had a friend who worked in a building that had been built to fit into a curve of an old Los Angeles freeway. After the freeway was torn down, the building had a very odd futuristic look to it! I noted that films always seem to have a lot of working mass transit, in spite of the fact that the sorts of things they show (e.g., moving sidewalks) would break down very quickly under heavy use. Althea McMurrian commended *Blade Runner* on doing a good job of portraying a future city, and Bill Warren said that Sid Mead deserved the credit for that. Someone else mentioned *Demolition Man* and Warren said not to expect a lot from that, though it seems to have the idea of the megalopolis: Santangeles, which runs from Santa Clara to Los Angeles. (I assume there has been some earthquake that wipes out the cities north of Santa Clara on the peninsula.) *Wild Palms* was interesting and maybe not too unrealistic, though the technology seemed a bit too advanced.

Someone said that people who make films actually have a strong influence on the future. For example, everyone who saw an LED watch in a James Bond film wanted one. (Of course, just because everyone wanted the jetpack in *Thunderball* didn't mean everyone was going to get it.) Sometimes the futuristic items are current technology, used as product placement (though sometimes the set designer will use them without being paid by the company).

On the whole, clothing predictions are wrong, though Warren reminded us that *Forbidden Planet* did predict the mini-skirt. I remember a "predictor" on *The Tonight Show* predicting that sometime around 1979 all the women in St. Louis would shave their heads. They didn't, but that was the year *Star Trek--The Motion Picture* came out, with a leading actress with a completely bald head. Someone claimed that clothing was very conformist--we were all wearing jeans. This was not entirely true, but it is true that skirts seemed largely to have gone away. I noted that Arcosante, a "planned community," succeeded only by making money from groups of visitors touring it--people wanted to be individuals, and a planned community made everyone's homes and lives look alike.

If the future does look like the movies, in part that will be because the movies influence the people designing the future. Or occasionally the people making the movies will do real research (such as for *2001: A Space Odyssey*). When it was noted that this didn't carry through to *2010*, Warren said this is because Kubrick is a genius and the director of *2010* is a hack.

I said I expected to see a more global view of things in the future. John Carpenter does a good job, for example, of showing that not everyone is white in the future--his films' casts reflect the diversity one sees in daily life. (*Time Trax* did this also, but failed on many other counts.) Also, different countries have different views of the future. A Third World country's view of the future would undoubtedly differ from ours.



Panel: Language: Barrier or Bridge
Saturday, 1:00 PM
Thorarinn Gunnarsson, Gay Haldeman (m), Michael Kandel, Yoshio Kobayashi, Maureen F. McHugh

"Translation helps bring works to audiences who can't read them in the original, but how are works affected when the words and the grammar change?": The panelists had some commentary on why they thought they were chosen for the panel and what their *real* qualifications were. Gunnarsson said, "I've never done translation work, but I've been annoyed by enough of it." McHugh said that she thought she was on the panel because so many of her stories were about China that people thought she spoke Chinese. She claimed she didn't, but it was clear from things said during the rest of the panel that her Chinese was certainly more proficient than most folks' second languages are.

The first, and perhaps obvious, point made was that translating is not a one-to-one thing. You can't sit down with a dictionary and a grammar and hope to get any sense of what the original meant in the translation. Kandel noted, for example, that objects (nouns) in some languages can have gender, which can lead to interesting word-play if these objects are animate. If "wall" in Spanish is masculine (*el muro*) and in German is masculine (*der Wand*), then if a Spanish author writes, "The wall said to her, 'Wake up, dear,'" that will have a different connotation than it would in German (or in English). (I should note that going in the other direction, there *is* a feminine word for wall in Spanish (*la pared*), so that translator would have a way out.)

Kobayashi said that in Japanese there is no swearing (or certainly not the variety we have in English), so translating strong language into Japanese can be a problem, particularly when the literal and figurative meanings of the words are both important. And often etiquette is tied up in language, according to Kandel--for example, whether the formal or familiar "you" is used matters in other languages, but there is no such distinction in English. Sometimes the difference is even more subtle: someone mentioned that Anne Frank's diary was much "livelier" in Dutch than in English, but was unable to explain just quite how.

Other, non-translation-specific changes can creep in. McHugh said that when the German rights for her novel *China Mountain Zhang* were sold, her agent wondered whether all the characters would sit down to a nourishing bowl of Brand Something soup. When McHugh asked what he was talking about, he explained that in Germany, they sell product placements in books, so the characters might all stop their conversation to sit down to a bowl of their equivalent of Campbell's Soup, and then resume their discussion. (This apparently is the case in the German edition of Kim Stanley Robinson's *Pacific Edge*.) Speaking of product placements, Gunnarsson thinks they are one reason that historical films aren't as popular any more--you can't sell product placements in them.

Sometimes a knowledge of other languages can affect the English original as well. McHugh said that since in Chinese everything is in the present tense, with a "tense marker" at the end of the sentence to say whether it is past, present, future, or what, she wrote *China Mountain Zhang* in the present tense to give it that feel. She also thought that, while science fiction may be partially global, it's not yet Chinese. Many concepts which we assume are understood around the world--such as faster-than-light travel and time travel--are unknown outside of science fiction circles and perhaps not known even there.

Science fiction poses its own special pitfalls for the translator. A translator needs to know some science, otherwise you get something like "brown movements" for

"Brownian motion." But in Japan (and other countries, no doubt), translators are not educated in science, and scientists are not educated in languages. The result is that it is very difficult to find someone who can translate science fiction well. One thing Kobayashi said was that good style and characters are not important to Japanese science fiction readers (this is undoubtedly a result of the division of education as well), and that the literati hate science fiction. I suppose this makes translating a bit easier--one needn't spend as much time searching for just the right phrase.

Someone of course noted that sometimes it may be necessary to translate English into American or vice versa. "He was left standing outside her door in his pants and vest" means one thing to an Englishman and another to an American.

The panelists agreed that the best translations are the ones you do yourself, but that it was impossible to learn that many languages and translate your work into them and still have time to write anything new. The translators on the panel said it took them about six months to translate the average novel. Kobayashi said Lucius Shepard's *Life During Wartime* took him a year, due no doubt to Shepard's heavy use of stylistic devices. A film novelization might take only one month.

While most translators don't talk to the authors whose work they are translating, sometimes it can be very helpful, as when Joe Haldeman's Japanese translator called up to ask just what he meant by "Unitarians on quaaludes."

Kandel noted that in Italian there is a proverb: "To translate is to betray." Ironically, the words in Italian for "translate" and "betray" are very similar (*tradurre* and *tradire*), forming a word-play that is entirely lost in English.

Panel: Time Travel in H. G. Wells and Mark Twain
Saturday, 2:00 PM
Poul Anderson, Mark Twain, Lili Tyler (m), Connie Willis

"Twain sent his Yankee back in time and Wells sent his adventurer forward. Why did each chose the approach he did? Are the conventions of literary time travel still set by these early examples?"

I guess I have to explain Mark Twain as a panelist. ConFrancisco found someone (Jon DeCles, if I interpret *Norton Reader* #9 correctly) who could imitate Mark Twain (much as Hal Holbrook is known for doing) and had him as the "Dead Guest of Honor" for the convention, during which time he officiated at functions, served on panels, and gave speeches. The speeches and officiating would be fairly straightforward--write a script and stick to it. But the panels are much more demanding, and Mr. Twain was well up to the task of not only remaining in character as Mark Twain but also discussing the topic and answering questions that were raised. In this case, for example, when Poul Anderson said, "I have been writing longer than most of you have been in this world," Twain responded, "I've been dead longer than Poul Anderson has been alive." His performance is going on my list of Hugo nominees for Best Dramatic Presentation next time around.

Twain noted that time travel stories get involved with the fact that people believe that they are the end of evolution and the pinnacle of achievement. So backward time travel usually focuses on how ... well ... "backward" people were, and forward time travel often assumes that technology will change but people won't improve. This is probably less true now than in Twain's time--or is that just my making the same error? Willis said this reminded her of *What Happened to Emily Goode After the Great Exhibition* by Raylyn

Moore: a woman attending the Great Exhibition in 1876 finds herself suddenly a hundred years in her future in 1976. But contrary to what people might think, she wasn't thrilled with being in 1976 and really wanted to return to her own time, when things were much better. All this proves is that there is a certain inertia to people, and whether or not what they are accustomed to is better (on some absolute scale, assuming there is one), it *is* what they are accustomed to. As Tyler noted, the most important things in life to you are *your* problems. What happens to you if you time travel and discover that they don't matter any more?

The panelists pointed out that time travel has many uses. It can be just a puzzle, or a romp, or a study. Tyler said she thought there were more stories about going forward in time than backward, but I doubt that.

Connie Willis said that she used the time travel to the past in *Doomsday Book* to cast light on the present (which is, of course, just what Twain did in *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*). Willis said that we are often blind to something right in front of us, and that rather than looking directly at a problem, we need to look at it with peripheral vision.

Someone noted that we are, of course, all travelers into the future at one second per second. But there have been legends of people sleeping into the future even before Rip Van Winkle and even before Sleeping Beauty. Mark Twain, however, is thought to have been the first author to send his character back into the past.

A brief discussion of changing the past ensued, with people saying that the theory that time is constantly branching can get you out of a lot of paradoxes. Someone proposed the idea of an expanding spatial field of effect, where a change in San Francisco doesn't have an effect in New York until some period of time later (presumably longer than is demanded by Einstein's theories on simultaneity).

Twain felt that time travel should also include those moments when we suddenly realize that time has passed and we are old, or those other moments when we find ourselves pushed back in time (like when as an adult you visit your parents and when you come to the dinner table they ask you if you washed your hands).

Various stories were noted and recommended including *Timescape* by Gregory Benford, *Time Out of Mind* by Pierre Boulle, "The Yehudi Principle" by Fredric Brown, "A Little Something for Us Tempunauts" by Philip K. Dick (Willis's all-time favorite--on reading it, I can see why), "Child by Chronos" by Charles Harness, "All You Zombies" and "By His Bootstraps" by Robert A. Heinlein (the two classics of the genre in short fiction), *The Door Into Summer* by Robert A. Heinlein, "Sideways in Time" by Murray Leinster, "Vintage Season" by C. L. Moore and Henry Kuttner (made into the film *The Grand Tour*; it has also appeared under various combinations of their names and their many pseudonyms), *Portrait of Jenny* by Robert Nathan (which weaves back and forth in time), "Compounded Interest" by Mack Reynolds, *Millennium* by John Varley, and the backwards-flowing-time section of the film *Zardoz*. Anti-entropic (time running backward) stories that were mentioned included the legend of Merlin, *Time's Arrow* by Martin Amis, *Counter-Clock World* by Philip K. Dick, and "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button" by F. Scott Fitzgerald. *The Alexandria Quartet* by Lawrence Durrell gives a "multiple view" of time (much as the film *Rashomon* did). And the "Back to the Future" films were full of ideas about time travel.

Presentation: Bantam Books
Saturday, 3:00 PM

Most of this presentation was just a

description of what was coming up in the next year or so from Bantam. There's *A Plague of Angles* by Sheri Tepper (the presenters noted that a review in *Analog* had called her "one of the greats of human literature," which says as much about *Analog* as it does about Tepper). Coming up for the holiday season is *The Art of Michael Whelan* (priced at $60, it's something you ask your *good* friends to buy for you). Daniel Keys Moran has *The Last Dancer* coming out around the same time, for those Moran fans. Already on the stands is *The Death and Life of Superman* by Roger Stern ($20 for a novelization of whatever caused the big fuss in the comics). Along with that there is also *The Further Adventures of Superman*, an anthology in paperback, probably edited by Martin H. Greenberg. David Zindell's second novel, *The Broken God*, gets its American release in December in mass-market paperback.

All sorts of new "Star Wars" novels are coming out: Timothy Zahn's third comes out in mass-market paperback in February, and Kathy Tyers has one coming out in hardback in January, with a mass-market edition in December 1994. These have been selling so well that Bantam is accelerating their "Star Wars" program.

Connie Willis's second collection, *Impossible Things*, appears in January, chock full of great stories (I've seen a galley). Robert Silverberg has a major new ecological novel, *Hot Sky at Midnight*, appearing in hardback in February. In February, we also get the long-awaited *Rama Revealed* by Arthur C. Clarke and Gentry Lee in hardback, and *Full Spectrum 4* in mass-market paperback. (Someone in the audience said that *The Economist* had reviewed one of the *Full Spectrum* anthologies and found it "too literary.")

March has a new, extremely thick novel by a new author, *Rhinegold* by Stephen Grundy. This is a retelling of the tale of the Nibelungen. Even better, in March Bantam issues *Green Mars* by Kim Stanley Robinson in a trade paperback edition. (This is the novel, not the novella of the same name and author.)

Further down the line are an alternate history/time travel novel by Lisa Mason titled *Summer of Love*, in which someone goes back to June 21, 1967, in Haight-Ashbury, and Stephen Bury's *Interface*. Stephen Bury is a pseudonym for Neal Stephenson and J. Frederick George; Stephenson wrote the fascinating *Snow Crash*, so I'm looking forward to this one. There's also a new John Crowley coming out, *Love and Sleep*, and Michael Bishop's baseball fantasy *Brittle Innings*.

On a more general note, their novella series (which includes Frederik Pohl's Hugo-nominated *Stopping at Slowyear* and the I-hope-to-see-nominated *Deus X* by Norman Spinrad) seems to be doing fine. The latest is *Out of Time* by James P. Hogan, coming in November. The Bantam Spectra "Special Editions" line has been discontinued, though the books that would have appeared there are still being published, just without the special label.

And on an even more general note, Barnes & Noble reported that business was up in 1993 over 1992, even after discounting the Michael Crichton - John Gresham phenomenon. What's even more interesting is that the increase is almost entirely due to an upswing in science fiction sales.

By the way, if you like the artwork on Bantam's books, thank Jamie Warren, who is the art director.

Panel: Economics and Daily Life in Elizabethan Times

Saturday, 4:00 PM

Hilary Ayer (m), William Foss, Josepha Sherman, Karen Shearer Voorhees

"The age of Elizabeth I serves as a model

for many cultures we imagine in other universes or on other planets. What was it really like to live in the time of Shakespeare?":

Well, of all the panels I went to, this certainly classifies as "the panel title most likely to surprise someone who has never been to a science fiction convention." While there was some mention of science fiction (or more accurately, fantasy), this was mostly a background panel on the history of the period, so that writers would understand it better before they used it willy-nilly as background in their stories.

The Elizabethan Age was described as an age of transition. It marked the rise of the middle class. Though in many ways we look on it negatively now, it was a society that worked. The whole system of formal social rank resulted in a sense of belonging and a sense of being in place. This sense of belonging was also mentioned by Kim Stanley Robinson in his lecture on Postmodernism and in the "Gender-Bending" panel, so it seems to be a common concern now. I would propose this is because we are a much more mobile society now than ever before, and people don't feel they belong anywhere particular. This supposition is somewhat supported by what the panelists talked about a little later: that in Elizabethan times people did not move around very much--in fact, often never went more than ten miles from their village in their entire lives--and that meant that your reputation was important and long-lasting. If you cheated someone in business, you couldn't just pick up and move to the next county and start fresh. A woman's chastity was important because of this life-long reputation, but also, of course, because before contraception, sex usually produced babies. So people cared about what other people thought of them, more than they do now. And people felt that they belonged where they were.

The class system led to a lot of the fashions carried through even until today. Long nails meant that you had someone else to do your manual labor. White skin meant that you didn't work out in the sun. It also meant that you covered your face with a lead-based make-up and probably died of lead poisoning, but what's a little thing like that in the name of fashion? When most work moved indoors during industrialization, suddenly a dark tan became the sign of the upper class--people who had enough spare time to sit around outside and get a tan. Now, of course, a tan means that you're not worried about skin cancer. Women may have followed all these fashion fads, but they were beginning to gain power in the Elizabethan Age as well. In London, the head of the Bakers' Guild and the head of the Brewers' Guild were both women. (One of the panelists recommended *Women of Action in Tutor England* by Pearl Hogrefe for more on this subject. I couldn't find that title in *Books in Print*, but I did find one by Hogrefe titled *Tudor Women: Commoners & Queens*, so perhaps the panelist mis-remembered the title.)

The best-seller of the time was Erasmus's etiquette book, which suggested (among other things) that people dull their dinner knives so that guests couldn't stab each other. This is why we have dull dinner knives to this day, and also tells us that there was some reasonable chance that guests *would* try to stab each other.

The Elizabethan Age also marked a move from intolerance to tolerance (more or less). There was a break-up of the power of the Church, which led to a wider range of opinions being tolerated. This was not an all-encompassing toleration; the Jews, who had been expelled from England in 1290, were not permitted to return until the 1650s under Cromwell, and I don't know if the expulsion order was ever formally repealed.

The economy of the period was an economy of scarcity. Clothes were re-fashioned, cut down, re-used, and so on. The

largest person in the family got the new shirt, because that way it could make its way down through all the sizes.

The Elizabethan Age was when empires were extended beyond Europe. (This, of course, is a very Eurocentric view of things. The Mongols might have had a few comments here--or even the Romans.) Before Elizabethan times life was collective; in Elizabethan times it became individual. This means that the Elizabethan Age is really the first period we can understand, or at least that there is a quantum leap in our understanding of it over earlier periods. And this is no doubt why this period serves as a background for so many stories.

Panel: Have Special Effects Taken Over?
Saturday, 5:00 PM
Martin Brenneis (m), Daryl Mallett

"Have character, concept and story taken a back seat to splashy SFX?": Yes.

The panelists did point out that many special effects are not obvious, and gave the television series *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles* as an example. It uses photo collages instead of matte paintings, but it does use a lot of them, and people don't think of the show as a "special effects" show. The same is true of a lot of films as well. (By the way, the feeling is that what killed *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles* was not its "academic" nature, but the fact that it never had a consistent time slot or schedule.)

Even though the panelists liked special effects (and Brenneis, at least, is involved in producing them), they agreed that special effects are not the meat of films. The analogy I used was that special effects are like the rides at an amusement park: there's nothing wrong with them, but they shouldn't replace libraries.

Too many films rely entirely on special effects and want to use everything available. This gives them a look not unlike the flyers and fanzines one sees done on PCs by beginning "publishers" that use every font available and look like ransom notes. Now that $10,000 can get someone started in the special effects business with the "video toaster," everyone wants more special effects. And with outlets such as MTV for special effects people (and others) to experiment with different techniques without risking a large-budget film, we will start to see more varied effects. (This is not unlike what was observed in the "Short Story" panel, where it was pointed out that authors can experiment more freely in a short story than a novel, because the time investment is less.)

Of course, the computerization of special effects and animation has led to an interesting rip-off. Those animation cels that are sold in dealers rooms and shops at Disney World and other places for recent films such as *Beauty and the Beast* are produced (according to Brenneis) solely for those markets. No one does animation cels for the actual production of an animated film anymore.

And the fact that special effects are taking over (or appear to be) is due in large part to the audiences. As big a flop as *The Last Action Hero* was reputed to be and as successful *A Room With a View* was reported to be, the fact remains that many more people went to see *The Last Action Hero* than *A Room With a View*.

One audience member felt that people continued to see special effects films in theatres because theatres provided the "total movie experience." Perhaps, but all too often the "total movie experience" includes sticky floors and rowdy audiences. One good reason to see films like *A Room With a View* is that the etiquette of the audience tends to be much higher than that of the audience at *The Last Action Hero*.

Masquerade
Saturday, 8:00 PM

As I noted earlier, there was a 2000-person limit on attendees. We waited in line from 7:30 PM to 8:15 PM to get in, and were somewhere around #1500. One good thing was that they were counting the line so that once it reached 2000 people, they could tell late-comers not to waste time standing in line. They also announced how many places/seats a person could save in line, saving embarrassing incidents. The VIP seating was not announced ahead of time, which probably should be done if there are in fact seats set aside. [This has been explicitly disputed by the committee, who say there were about 3000 seats, but after 2000 they told people they'd have to search for a place to sit. KK]

There were fifty costumes. The *Norton Reader* (the daily newsletter) the next day listed forty-six awards. The costumes were almost uniformly (no pun intended) excellent, but that's far too many awards. With that many, they're more certificates of participation. I would suggest perhaps first and second place in each category (Novice, Journeyman, and Master), first and second place workmanship in each category (Novice, Journeyman, and Master), and Best of Show.

There were also a few costumes listed as original that I would have described as "re-creations": "The Wedding" (based on the Charles Addams cartoon characters), "Vulcan Barbarian," and "Klingon Ceremonial" (both from *Star Trek*).

It was also unnecessary to have a fifteen-minute intermission (which of course stretched to a half-hour) for only fifty costumes. Having the Moscone Center lights randomly cycle on and off during the second half was interesting, but not actually desirable.

After the first run-through, there was supposed to be a videophone hook-up with Arthur C. Clarke in Sri Lanka, but this was preceded by a couple of short films and a lot of waiting. Eventually we left before it was finished. I heard that the final judging and awards ceremony wasn't done until after 2 AM!

Panel: Northern California in SF/F
Sunday, 10 AM
David Bratman (m), Don Herron, Pat Murphy, Diana L. Paxson

"The where and why of using real world locations in speculative fiction, with examples drawn from the world right outside the convention's doors": I arrived a little late to this, and missed the beginning, but Paxson was comparing using northern California to using Britain as an inspiration. In Britain, she said, there are a lot of structures, ancient and not so ancient, that can be used, and northern California lacks those. But northern California does have legends, and those can take the place of buildings. One of the stories set in the area that she talked about was Ursula K. Le Guin's *Always Coming Home*, set in the Napa Valley in the far future after an earthquake has changed the contours of the land. To get the geography right, Le Guin had a cartographer friend of hers (George Hirsch) construct a three-dimensional map of the area, then tilt the appropriate sections and flood it with water to see what the new shapes of the bodies of land and water would look like.

Many authors have used San Francisco as a setting. But do they really have that "sense of place" that is so important? Philip K. Dick had it in *Martian Time-Slip* and other stories, according to the panelists, but Dean R. Koontz's *Shattered* (written under the pen name K. R. Dwyer) made it obvious that Koontz had never been in San Francisco. *The Net* by Loren J. MacGregor did a good job of describing the bars south of Market Street. Perhaps the classic use of San Francisco in science fiction/fantasy is Fritz Leiber's *Our*

Lady of Darkness, though Pat Murphy's own *The City, Not Long After* certainly ranks up there.

Regarding her work, Murphy said that her work in the Exploratorium trained her to observe and "see beyond the surface," and that is what lets her see the potentials of settings. Someone apparently mapped out all the places mentioned in *The City, Not Long After*, though Murphy says that the map would probably be a disappointment to try to follow; for example, the vacant lot where the refrigerator sculpture is in the book has no such sculpture in real life (yet!). Murphy also warned that she and other authors often change some details (such as house numbers) to protect the people who live in the houses. You can claim that room 1247 of the Marriott is haunted--it's a public building and "fair game." But if you claim that 1726 Fairlawn Drive is haunted, the people who live there may not like the reputation their house gets. (Does the name "Amityville" ring a bell?)

And of course this sort of desire has spawned the "literary tour" movement, which has two subcategories: tours that visit places mentioned in books, and tours that visit places connected with the authors of these books. Some tours combine both, perhaps showing you where Dashiell Hammett lived and also the places he wrote about. The places connected with authors are often a disappointment--someone said that you go to some house where a famous author wrote his first novel, and you discover that it's being inhabited now by a Vietnamese family who can't understand why you are standing on the street taking pictures of their house. (It's sort of like going back to your childhood home years later. People think you're casing the joint.)

Panel: The Holocaust in F & SF
Sunday, 11:00 AM
Eve Ackerman (m), Esther M. Friesner, Lisa Goldstein, David M. Honigsberg

"Does SF/F serve as a useful forum to discuss the Holocaust?": Well, the first question asked was whether you can write about the Holocaust in fantasy or science fiction without trivializing it. Elie Wiesel has claimed that any fiction about it will trivialize it, but Friesner said any fiction about it will keep it alive, and that's important. (The actor Robert Clary, a Holocaust survivor, had also said that it is up to people to make sure it is known that it happened.) As for using science fiction or fantasy, others thought that maybe you needed to approach the Holocaust through metaphor (as in *Maus*) rather than head-on. (This sounded like Connie Willis's comment on the "Time Travel" panel about using time travel to look at something with peripheral vision. Similarly, someone said that even though we know what's going on in Bosnia, we can't quite grasp it in the present and will only understand it in retrospect.) Goldstein thought fantasy had a particular virtue to bring to a story about the Holocaust, because "fantasy deals with archetypes and deep emotion and can get to places realistic fiction can't." Fiction about the Holocaust tends to be somewhat unpopular, panelists said, because people want to be comforted, not disturbed, but Honigsberg said that "fantasy and science fiction readers have a greater capacity for reading disturbing works."

Ackerman said that in her classes she used *The Devil's Arithmetic* by Jane Yolen to teach teenagers about the Holocaust. She said that it helps American teenagers to connect with that period and those events. The "traditional" book, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, doesn't work as well, because it doesn't have any characters like American teenagers today--American teenagers just don't identify with Anne Frank. Outstanding writers can make events personal to the reader, and that is what is important. Can a writer who has no personal connection write a Holocaust book? Well, at Boskone, Jane Yolen said she would not want to see a situation where only Jews could write

about Jews, only blacks could write about blacks, and so on, in part because if that is the case, then you can never have a book that includes people from many groups. What people seem to forget, she continued, was that writers *create*. That's what writing is about. Writers are supposed to be able to write characters other than themselves. Shakespeare may or may not have been Francis Bacon, but he was not a Jew *and* a Moor *and* a teenage girl *and* a Danish prince *and* an aging king .... And here Friesner also pointed out that a writer needs to be able to write about people other than herself or himself.

Members of the audience noted that there have been other holocausts. (I was surprised no one had mentioned Jane Yolen's other Holocaust book, *Briar Rose*, notable for showing other victims of the Nazis besides Jews. One of the main characters, for example, is a gay Holocaust survivor.) In addition to the non-Jewish victims of the Nazis, there have been holocausts in Cambodia and other parts of the world. *The Unconquered Country* by Geoff Ryman is an allegory for the Pol Pot era in Cambodia, but on the whole these have been overlooked by science fiction and fantasy writers. (Someone else mentioned *Year 0* as a good non-fiction book about Cambodia. Though I am reasonably sure that's the correct title, I couldn't find it listed in *Books in Print*.)

Honigsberg decried the trend toward books about "Nazi vampires," feeling that they take the blame off human beings. He felt that one of the lessons to be learned from the Holocaust was "the banality of evil." Perhaps, but the message can also be read that the monsters we invent and the evils we attribute to them are no worse than ourselves and the evils we do. It's all in how it's written, and in whether the reader can make that jump in understanding. The book *Paris Trout* by Pete Dexter was given as a work that studied the matter-of-factness of an evil person.

Friesner said that to some extent people had foreseen the possibility of the Holocaust. Jerome K. Jerome at the turn of the century said that "the German people will follow anything in a uniform," and that this was fine if they had a good leader, but what if they got a bad one? Other people, however, then reminded us that it was important in all this to talk about or show individuals, not "the Nazis" or "the Germans," or we are guilty of the same faults.

People were also looking for something that could explain why or how the Holocaust happened. (This is equally true outside of science fiction and fantasy, of course.) There have been some studies done on this. One was the "Milgram Experiment," in which subjects were asked to inflict an electric shock on a person in an isolation booth who couldn't see them. (Unknown to the subject, the person in the isolation booth was actually one of the team administering the test, and there was no electricity flowing in the wires, but the "victim" would simulate a reaction when the subject pressed the button.) The subject had a dial that could set the intensity of the shock and was told that a maximum-intensity shock would kill the "victim." Even so, a surprising number of subjects would follow the instructions given them by the tester to increase the intensity, regardless of the screams of the "victim" and regardless of the warnings given them ahead of time, even up to inflicting the maximum intensity. The conclusion of the testers was that people are conditioned from early childhood to follow instructions, particularly instructions given them by someone in authority (including people in white lab coats), and this often over-rode any "common-sense" morality they might feel. There was also an experiment in a high school in which some of the students were formed into an "elite" group and were indoctrinated as to their "superiority" to the other students. This experiment was ended ahead of schedule when it got out of hand, with the elite students

beating up some of the other students who didn't show them the "proper respect."

There have also been studies about why some places fought against the Holocaust. The film *Weapons of the Spirit* is about the village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon in France, which hid as many as five thousand Jews during the Holocaust (and its population was only about five thousand!). The Italians also were more protective of their Jews than other countries. On the other hand, the United States turned away the ship *St. Louis*, full of Jewish refugees who could find no country to take them in and which eventually returned to Germany, where most of its passengers perished.

Other books recommended included Janet Gluckman and George Guthridge's *Child of the Light*, Steve Lipman's *Laughter in Hell: The Use of Humor During the Holocaust* (about the use of humor during the Holocaust as a means of fighting back), and Thomas Keneally's *Schindler's List* (based on the true story of an industrialist who saved many Jews by concealing them on the employment rolls of his factory).

(In addition to being an interesting panel, this was also when we ran into Chuck Belov, Mark's distant cousin and about the only other member of his family in fandom.)

Lecture: "My Fellow Savages of the Sandwich Islands"
Sunday, 12 noon
Mark Twain

"Mark Twain was famous not only for his writing, but for his tour on the lecture circuit. Come see him give his most popular speech 'in the flesh'": Compiled from the best of Twain's speeches and writings, it was enormously entertaining, but I will not attempt to relate large sections of it. One representative quote I noted down was his observation that "chamomile tea has nothing on the *Congressional Record* for restfulness." For the rest, ... well, go read all the Mark Twain you can lay your hands on. (If someone videotaped this, let me know if there's some way to get a copy.)

Panel: Getting Around the Solar System
Sunday, 2:00 PM
Jim Baen, Suzanne Casement, William S. Higgins, Gentry Lee, Jonathan V. Post (m)

"What will life be like when we're not confined to Terra?": The panel started with the members introducing themselves. Gentry Lee was director of scientific analysis on the Viking Mission and a co-author with Arthur C. Clarke. Bill Higgins is from Fermi Labs. (Personal note: He also put together the science program at Chicon, which in my humble opinion was the best at any Worldcon I have ever attended.) Jon Post works on research into nano-technology, worked on the Magellan space mission and also Voyager 2. Suzanne Casement is a graduate student at UCLA. (In general Lee is more an advocate of unmanned robotic information-gathering

missions. Higgins, active in the National Space Society, wants man to become a spacefaring race and would much rather see manned missions than mechanical proxies.)

Post suggested that the first half of the discussion concentrate on what is currently being done in space and what will be done for the next thirty to fifty years. Later they would get to longer term. Lee thought that in the short term the emphasis would be on unmanned missions mostly. Manned missions would be mostly "Antarctica-type" colonies. With robots we can do a lot more. Decisions have to be made: who will pay for space exploration, where are we going to go. The *Challenger* disaster was a real tragedy for the program, and now engineering foul-ups, like on the recent Mars mission, are making things worse for funding. The Mars Observer was an important linchpin and would lead to a lot of future planning. Losing it will cause a huge problem in deciding on new missions needed. We are now going for smaller craft that will have smaller ranges.

Post asked what major changes did members see coming. Higgins said there will be more of a push from the NSS to make hardware that is small and smart. He suggested that there would also be a look at other methods of propulsion. We still seem to be using the same old chemical propulsion rockets, and we are nowhere near trying some other propulsion. He expanded on the National Space Society's position saying that they are working to create a spacefaring civilization and that they will really push for anything that will forward that goal. Particularly favored are plans to do prospecting on the Moon and asteroids. However, the NSS is not particularly pushing for the missions to map Venus, since it seems unlikely that Venus will be a near-term source of resources.

Casement said that in November a wide-field camera will be put in the shuttle for the Hubble telescope. It will be used to look at the planets and design missions. However, the problem with the Hubble is that its designs were frozen about ten years ago in order to be able to build it, and it would be much more effective with up-to-date technology. From there the discussion moved to Post's work experiences. He talked about his work on the Titan 34D. They worked to improve designs on that. His group made basic improvements to the shuttle, like using multicolor displays. They also worked on error detection to predict component failure. Among the things that he worked on were a proposal for advanced launch systems including single-stage-to- orbit. One scheme he proposed included using a huge ground-based laser to power a craft. However, he feels that even if there is research into other propulsions, it will be a long time before rockets have much competition for sending things into orbit. He did discuss using solar sails once equipment is in space. Also he said he had invented a magnetic sail using magnetic field to push a huge loop of wire. One of the long-term proposals was to build a craft out of solid hydrogen, cryogenically frozen, so that when it gets to its destination the entire structure could be used as fuel. If there is ice at Mercury's poles, he suggests that we purify the water and use the poles as a fuel depot near the sun.

Lee considered all the possibilities and said we are at a sort of Burgess Shale point in technology. In the period of the Burgess Shale being formed, there were many and very diverse life-forms. Some seem very strange to modern eyes. Evolution pared them down to a few successful types of life-forms and the rest died out. Technology is at a similar stage, when there are many baroque ideas for how to solve problems of space travel. The vast majority of these will be discarded. With all the different possibilities for powering cars, we have basically one kind of car, one powered with the petroleum-fueled internal combustion engine. We have basically one kind of rocket,

and we will find which of the current weird ideas for space travel are the best of the lot and the rest will all be discarded. There will be one or two space transportation systems in the future. There will be one or two kinds of propulsion. Lee thinks that in the future we will be seeing primarily robot-control in space. People will fly but not be doing the driving. He sees no compelling reason to put people into space.

Higgins responded with a defense of placing people into space. He said that we are in a time of rapid technological evolution. There will come a time when it will be cheaper and more convenient than today to send people into space. At that point far more people will want to travel in space. Scientists would like to be near what they study. And the biggest product from space will be information. A lot of people on earth will want to learn about new places. Post asked the panel what is it that calls to us from beyond the solar system and how will we answer that call.

Casement said that people have an interest in finding other solar systems. JPL is already investing in interstellar exploration. But if there is an explorer mission to the stars, it will take a long time to get data back. Closer to Earth there are Voyager and Pioneer sending data back about more distant destinations, and they are still finding interesting things.

Post observed that Gentry Lee sees no compelling reason to send people to the stars, but that does not mean that people will not want to go anyway. Post asked what it is that pushes people. Why did people in the United States head west? Most were not looking to get rich, they were fleeing a society they could not stand.

Lee countered that they could breathe in California--they will not be able to do that in space.

Post asked if price came down, would people go? In the days of the Western expansion the cost of a covered wagon and the provisions to go west would be about $300,000 in modern money. If the cost comes down to $300,000 to go to Mars, he expects people will go. And everything said in this panel assumes nothing big is going to happen. If we find proof of alien intelligence, everything changes. If things get so bad on Earth that we will have to escape, that will also push us into space.

Lee did not envision a massive move into space. He polled the audience as to how many people they thought would be living off Earth in 500 years. Most said they expected the number to be more than a million.

Panel: The Past Seen Through Fictional Eyes

Sunday, 3:00 PM

Stu Shiffman, Susan Shwartz (m), S. M. Stirling, Harry Turtledove, William F. Wu

"How historical fictions (including alternate history ones) really reflect present day concerns": The panel did not really address the specific topic, though the first observation here was that xenophobia is the most universal human value, and that's what we see the most of. We have a tendency to see most victories in the past of one group over another as good, and the losers as wrong in their beliefs or attitudes, but that is because the victors write the history books, and as L. Sprague de Camp said, they write it with "satanic gusto." Perhaps we realize this, because Stirling claims that "there's a tendency these days to go overboard on the cultural relativism thing" in compensation. For five hundred years, Columbus was great and the native Americans were savages; now the native Americans are great in spite of their many flaws (such as human sacrifice) because "that was right for their society." Oddly enough, the cultural relativists aren't so forgiving of the Europeans and their cultural quirks, such as imperialism. Then again, someone pointed out that it's easy for the victors to flagellate themselves

symbolically and say how guilty they feel. After all, it costs them nothing once they've won to say how sorry they are.

Regarding the whole issue of non-interference in other people's customs, Stirling cited Napier's comment when he tried to ban suttee in India and was told that suttee was the custom there and he shouldn't interfere. Napier said that it was an Indian custom to burn widows, and it was a British custom to hang people who burned widows. They could carry out their custom and he would carry out his. (In science fiction, Sheri Tepper's *Sideshow* is set on a planet where cultural relativism and noninterference are carried to an extreme, and should give cultural relativists some pause.)

But in spite of this theoretical trend toward cultural relativism, it is still very difficult to make a culture with very different values sympathetic to the reader. Stirling can certainly relate to that; in attempting to portray his Draka fairly, he's managed to convince a large number of people that he is a fascist, when he's trying to say the Draka are the *bad* guys.

The panel warned against imposing our values on other cultures. By this they were not suggesting cultural relativism, but rather saying that when we study a period or a people we should understand that those people had different beliefs than we did. For example, during the Inquisition, people thought that torturing people to get them to accept the Church was reasonable, because that would save their souls from eternal torment, and what was a short period of pain on Earth compared to what they would suffer if they didn't accept the Church? We may not agree with this, but we need to realize that the people of that time frequently were acting out of what they saw as love, and not from an innate cruelty. This doesn't make them right, but it does affect how we view them.

The panelists also warned against historical revisionism. They were not talking about the obvious things (like those who claim the Holocaust never happened, though these are the first people that come to mind when the term "historical revisionism" is mentioned), but also such books as Jean Auel's *Clan of the Cave Bear*, in which a single character discovers just about everything of value to civilization. Or as Stirling expressed it, "A rock. A rock. If I put them together--a porch!" (Turtledove is guilty of this in his "Agent of Byzantium" series, where in each story the main character discovers or adopts from barbarians some amazing new invention: the telescope, inoculations, etc. He at least has the defense that this is an *alternate* history, but I find it stretches the bounds of probability.) People agreed that it was okay to change some details (especially in an alternate history, as I noted), but (as Stirling put it), "you have to know when you're not being true."

Someone asked what historical periods we were especially interested in. Turtledove said that World War II and the Civil War seemed to be the most popular; Shiffman added the period of our expansion westward across the continent, and Shwartz added the Vietnam War era. As for who or what would be remembered from our time two thousand years from now, the only person the panelists could agree on was Adolf Hitler.

For a good book that talks about how to look at history, I would recommend Josephine Tey's *The Daughter of Time*.

Panel: Mark Twain as a Character in Science Fiction

Sunday, 4:00 PM

Mark Twain, Jody Lynn Nye, Hayford Peirce, Bruce Holland Rogers (m)

"Twain has been a major character in many SF/F stories. Why? What are the advantages and disadvantages of using a well-known person in fiction?": The advantages are somewhat obvious. The author has a ready-

made character, with a background that the reader already knows, and does not have to do any of the work of filling that character in. The disadvantages are perhaps less obvious. With many characters, the reader will have pre-conceived notions that are at odds either with history or with what the writer wants the reader to think about the character. The example given here was Richard III, who was nowhere near as evil as Shakespeare and others portrayed him, but that image has become so firmly fixed in people's minds that using him *authentically* will probably not ring true with the reader. Also, in fiction one cannot always stick strictly to the truth about a historical character, especially if one wants him or her to interact with fictional characters. So authors must change some details, and picky readers (such as myself, I admit) often object to this. Both of these relate to how one deals with "the history we know that just isn't so." If everyone believes George Washington chopped down a cherry tree and then told his father he could not tell a lie, does an author write that, or does he write what really happened (assuming that anything even remotely similar to this did occur)? Robert Silverberg in *Up the Line* has a bit of fun with this, when some of his characters go back to hear someone deliver a very pious line at the dedication of Hagia Sophia, and instead hear him swear most colorfully at whoever left the scaffolding up by mistake.

One way to use real people without changing details is to use the "missing periods" in their lives. For example, one panelist suggested using the period of ten days that Agatha Christie was missing in a story if you want to use Christie, because no one can say that she was doing something else instead of what you say. (Well, if you have her fly to Mars, they may object.)

Another disadvantage, especially in writing about current figures, is that the references may be transitory, or local. A reference to Jesse Helms may be meaningful in the United States now, but it's not going to go very far in Europe now, or probably even in the United States in twenty years. And references to people in the entertainment media can be even more transitory. Would having Marlene Dietrich as a character in a story do much for the average reader under the age of thirty?

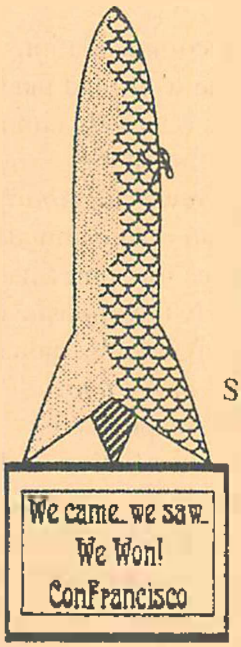
Regarding Twain, at any rate, one panelist (not Mr. Twain) said that using Twain as a character at least guaranteed good dialogue. Of course, it also guarantees cliches--Mark Twain as a character in a novel will say all the things that everyone knows Mark Twain said. Using Oscar Wilde as a character has the same benefit, and the same drawback. If the reader *knows* when Twain (or Wilde) said a particular thing, then reading him saying it at some other occasion entirely is particularly jarring.

Of course, one reason we see Twain and Wilde and other literary figures as characters is that authors like to write about authors. John Kendrick Bangs used Twain in *The Literary Guillotine* and also wrote *A Houseboat on the Styx*, a precursor to Philip Jose Farmer's Riverworld, which also used Twain. Twain (and others) remain popular as characters, according to Nye, because the author (and the reader) needs a "larger-than- life character, one who leaves larger-than-life footprints."

Historical personages as characters can get tiresome. Ellen Datlow has said that she never wants to see another story with a famous person as a character unless it's written by Howard Waldrop, and I have a similar feeling about all those Sherlock Holmes pastiches in which Holmes has to meet Teddy Roosevelt, or Sigmund Freud, or Lenin, or whoever. Still, it's possible to do a story well with a famous person as a character, even if you're not Howard Waldrop, and so you should probably take this as a caution rather than an outright ban. It would help if people wouldn't always

pick the *same* historical people to write about.

Of course, with alternate histories or time travel stories it's very easy to use historical figures. But you need something besides the gimmick of the person to make the story work.



Hugo (and Other) Awards Ceremony
Sunday, 8:00 PM

And the winners are:

- Novel: *A Fire Upon the Deep* by Vernor Vinge (Tor) and *Doomsday Book* by Connie Willis (Bantam) (tie)
- Novella: "Barnacle Bill the Spacer" by Lucius Shepard (*Asimov's* July)
- Novelette: "The Nutcracker Coup" by Janet Kagan (*Asimov's* Dec)
- Short Story: "Even the Queen" by Connie Willis (*Asimov's* Apr)
- Non-Fiction Book: *A Wealth of Fable: An Informal History of Science Fiction Fandom in the 1950s* by Harry Warner, Jr. (SCIFI)
- Dramatic Presentation: "The Inner Light" (*Star Trek: The Next Generation*) (Paramount Television)
- Professional Editor: Gardner Dozois (*Asimov's*, various anthologies)
- Professional Artist: Don Maitz
- Original Artwork: *Dinotopia* by James Gurney (Turner)
- Semi-Prozine: *Science Fiction Chronicle* edited by Andy Porter
- Fanzine: *Mimosa* edited by Dick and Nicki Lynch
- Fan Writer: Dave Langford
- Fan Artist: Peggy Ranson
- John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer of 1991-1992 (Sponsored by Dell Magazines): Laura Resnick
- Special Committee Award: For building bridges between cultures and nations to advance science fiction and fantasy: Takumi Shibano
- Seiun Award for Best Novel Translated into Japanese: *Tau Zero* by Poul Anderson
- Seiun Award for Best Short Story Translated into Japanese: "The Groaning Hinges of the World" by R. A. Lafferty
- Seiun Award for Best Non-Fiction Translated into Japanese: *The Minds of Billy Milligan* by Daniel Keyes
- Big Heart Award: Marjii Ellers
- First Fandom: Ray Beam

This is the first year there has been a tie for best novel since 1966, when Frank Herbert's *Dune* and Roger Zelazny's *And Call Me Conrad* (a.k.a. *This Immortal*) shared the honor, with 702 ballots cast in this category. (841 people voted in all, down from last year's number.) *Science Fiction Chronicle* beat *Locus* by one point (out of 623 ballots cast in the category)! This broke a very long streak for Charlie Brown, and Andy Porter got the only standing ovation of the evening, and wearing his formal academic garb, declared, "These are not the robes of a Doctor of Divinity, but bless you all." Peggy Ranson won by two points in a category where 361 ballots were cast. At the other end, *Dinotopia* was a runaway winner, with 327 votes to the next closest's 85.

Warner's book had 203 points to the next closest's 100. Connie Willis got a big laugh in her thank-you speech for "Even the Queen," when she said she had complained to Gardner Dozois on winning the Nebula for it that she would now have to go home and tell people what it was about--and she didn't know what to say. "Tell them it's a period piece," suggested Gardner.

The Seiuns were moved back with the Hugos, leaving the rest of the other awards flapping in the breeze. The Prometheus Awards (*The Multiplex Man* by James P. Hogan for Best Libertarian Science Fiction Novel of 1992, and *The Dispossessed* by Ursula K. Le Guin for Hall of Fame) were announced at "Speakers' Corner" in the Concourse, the Electric SF Awards didn't seem to be announced except at the ClariNet booth (I assumed I would have been told, since I won the Best Fan Writer award), and I have no idea when or where the other awards were given out. (The Rhysling Award for Long Poem went to "To Be from Earth" by William Daciuk; for Short Poem, to "Will" by Jane Yolen.) The planners did separate the non-Hugos from the Hugos with a ten- or fifteen-minute retrospective of the Hugos, which was similar to what was done last year in Orlando. Ironically, during the retrospective, Toastmaster Guy Gavriel Kay talked about the many Hugos *Locus* had won, and referred to Charlie Brown as "always a bride, never a bridesmaid"! Kim Stanley Robinson holds the professional "Always a Bridesmaid" record, by the way, having been nominated nine times without ever having won.

The traditional "Hugo Losers Party" afterward, hosted by Conadian, was remarkably under-attended, many of the pro nominees having apparently decided to go to the big Dell party being thrown in the con suite. However, they missed some great food: smoked whitefish, cheese, fresh vegetables, pickerel cheeks in a sauce being cooked to order by a chef, and fresh raspberries. Since I hadn't had dinner, I was quite pleased with this arrangement.

Panel: Books You Should Read
Monday, 12:00 noon
Janice M. Eisen, David Kyle, Eric M. Van

"Some personal recommendations, not limited to SF, of what the well-read fan should read and why": This is a relatively commonly given panel. In this installment the participants were: Janice Eisen, a reviewer for *Aboriginal Science Fiction*. Eric Van is a co-founder of Readercon. Eric is famous for somewhat idiosyncratic tastes, nearly the opposite of those of third panelist David Kyle, member of First Fandom and author of *A Pictorial History of Science Fiction*. Kyle's expertise is predominantly in the science fiction of the pulp and sense-of-wonder days.

Van started out the panel by distributing a sheet he wrote for the occasion called "Books You Should Read." Included are such odd choices as Graphic Novels: *Cerebus* [*The Aardvark*], *Daredevil*, and *Watchmen*. His humorous must-reads include *The National Lampoon High School Yearbook Parody*, Firesign Theater's *Big Book of Plays*, and any collection of Bob and Ray. He includes a guide to rock 'n' roll by Paul Williams. He also lists two baseball must-reads. Under the category of "Change Your Worldview" he includes a Miss Manners etiquette book. Let's be fair: some of his must-read list includes some very good books, but it is clear his tastes are not necessarily shared by most people.

Van began by picking a book at random from his sheet. "*Arslan* [by M. J. Engh] *really* blew my mind." It is about a despot who wants to do terrible things. In reading it you will understand a little better how a Hitler could do the things he did.

Eisen had made a list of the core of the best standard science fiction books. Choosing

at random, she found Cordwainer Smith's "Rediscovery of Man" series. Smith is an acquired taste. Nearly all of his science fiction is in the book *The Rediscovery of Man,* which was being sold at the NESFA table.

Van talked about "slipstream," a term applied to mainstream writing that has fantasy elements. He said Kurt Vonnegut is epitome of slipstream. He also recommended *Krazy Kat: A Novel in Five Panels* by Jay Cantor. He says the novel works on about four levels; it is humorous, serious, poetic. The comic strip character Krazy Kat witnesses events in history like the Trinity bomb.

Eisen said she did not like angst-ridden superheroes in comic books, then she saw *Watchmen*. She said she "was knocked over by it." It did things she didn't think were done with superhero comics.

Van said he agreed with every word and strongly recommended *Watchmen*. The most ambitious thing in the comic book field is *Cerebus the Aardvark*. Each of the books is thick like a phone book. Each ends with closure, but the next one picks up seamlessly. He calls the books "mind-bogglingly ambitious." He suggested that readers try to get the first one. It does not start profound but gets so as it goes along. He also recommended Frank Miller's redefinition of the Batman story with *The Dark Knight*. He attributes to Miller the current rebirth of popularity in Batman and the resulting Batman films. Earlier Miller took over the comic book *Daredevil*, Marvel Comics' worst-seller, and turned it into their best-seller.

Eisen wanted to recommend two books of science fiction criticism. She likes Damon Knight's *In Search of Wonder*. She really likes Knight's writing style, which could often be humorous and perceptive at the same time. The book contains a complete "dissection" of A. E. van Vogt, and not to van Vogt's advantage. He can be cruel. She also recommended Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Language of the Night*.

Van said he was going to recommend a book that sold three million copies but never got respect, *National Lampoon High School Yearbook Parody*. He has read it cover-to-cover. The more you read, the more you get out of it. It really captures the spirit of the 60's.

Bridge of Birds by Barry Hughart was Ms. Eisen's next recommendation. It is hilarious. She also thought very funny David Langford's *The Dragonhiker's Guide to Battlefield Covenant at Dune's Edge*.... It seems like a parody of every popular fantasy/science fiction novel within reach.

Van then revealed what he said was "the best book ever written," John Crowley's *Engine Summer*. He had read the book and then circumstances forced him to reread almost immediately after finishing it. He discovered "all the stuff [he] missed." (One wonders if he had been forced to read more books twice in succession, if there would not be more "best books ever written.") The book is "a utopian novel set after civilization has fallen apart. That is only the tiny tip of the iceberg."

The next books recommended by Eisen were Raymond Chandler's *The Long Goodbye* and *The Big Sleep*, and *Kim* and *Captains Courageous* by Rudyard Kipling. She also suggests people read Dickens, but choose one you didn't have to read in school.

David Kyle, just arriving, said Dickens is a pulp writer who made it. He talked about the pulps and their precursors, the penny dreadfuls. Many pre-SF writers used a great deal of imagination. In *Gulliver's Travels* there are islands in the air and many strange worlds. Many of the classic fantasies are forerunners of modern fiction. What many people think is dry and outdated is not dry at all. The basis of much modern fantasy is right there.

Van seconded this testimonial for the classics. "*Paradise Lost* did not blow my mind but it was good. I got a real buzz from it." The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were Eisen's recommendation.

Van suggested *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is great fantasy.

Kyle said that for more examples read *A Pictorial History of Science Fiction*. Someone in the audience asked the name of the author. Kyle pretended to be searching his memory, and then as if he found it said brightly, "David Kyle."

Van called David Pringle's *Science Fiction: The 100 Best Novels* "a superb book." The same publisher published *100 Best Fantasy Novels*, which Van said was good up to Tolkien, then not so good. Pringle found a different publisher for his hundred-best fantasy novel list.

Eisen said that the one book she wanted to get to in this panel was *How to Suppress Women's Writing* by Joanna Russ. Kyle responded to the earlier mention of T. S. Eliot. When you mention poetry Tennyson comes to mind. His "Locksley Hall" is almost a song to science fiction.

Eisen thought the best post-holocaust novels were Walter Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz* and Edgar Pangborn's *Davy*. (I wonder how much consideration she has given to Leon Uris's *Exodus*.) She recommended two publishers: the Collier Nucleus series and the publisher Carroll and Graf are both putting good older works into print. And with that comment, my Worldcon came to an end. I rushed to the Huckster Room to buy one last book--published by Carroll and Graf, by the way--and returned to my hotel.)

Panel: Gripe Session
Monday, 12 noon

Several people said that they had been contacting the convention with program ideas and offers to work, but never got any response, or got a response just a few weeks before the convention (when they had first written over a year earlier). One problem seems to be that if someone suggests something that doesn't clearly fall into one particular section (for example, something that isn't quite programming, and isn't quite exhibit), then it gets batted back and forth and no one wants to take responsibility to follow up on it.

The claim was made that using the larger hall in the Moscone for the Masquerade and Hugo Awards Ceremony would have added at least $20 to *each* membership in the convention. This seems hard to believe, but it underscores the fact that Worldcons are getting too big to be handled in any reasonable and cost-effective way by more than a handful of cities.

Ellison's panels were in such small rooms, according to the committee, because Ellison came to the committee two and a half weeks before the convention (after all the programming had been laid out) to tell them that he was attending and what time-slots he wanted to speak in.

There was a lack of intermediate-sized rooms: Larry Niven's Guest of Honor speech was in a room holding about 140. The next largest was one holding about 1500. It was decided that it was better to have him speak to a crowded room than a half-empty one, but future conventions should make sure they have at least one room for mid-sized events.

The letters to people who volunteered to be participants but were turned down were a point of contention. No matter how delicately they are phrased, they still will sound like the recipient is being told he or she is not important enough. As it was, ConFrancisco said they had more participants than MagiCon, and possibly more than Noreascon.

People were encouraged to volunteer; the committee claimed it took 10-20% of the attendees to help run a Worldcon. For their part, committees are reminded to touch base with volunteers at least every three months, even if only to say, "Yes, we have your name and will be sending more specific information soon."

The daily newsletter should carry all the various awards presented at the convention, and obviously this means that the presenters of awards must have press releases or the equivalent to give the editors of the newsletter.

Various Media Presentations
by Mark Leeper

In the media presentation there were several teasers for the television series *Lois and Clark*. So far the cleverest thing I have seen about the series is the title, though I suspect some of the audience will not recognize the allusion to the famous expedition. Of course when I say that is the cleverest thing I have seen, it is about all I have seen. The whole presentation was three teasers implying that Lois Lane and Clark Kent would end up in bed with each other. Presumably it should be obvious that there are logic problems inherent in this inter-species coupling. Also poor Lois would probably be badly damaged by the man whose flesh is harder than steel. The same idea was explored in detail in the Larry Niven story "Man of Steel, Woman of Kleenex." My enthusiasm for the concept of sexy Superman stories is highly bounded.

Similarly we saw little more than teasers about *SeaQuest DSV*, an expensive new series set in the ocean, starring Roy Scheider and something that looks a lot like a rubber Flipper stand-in. There is lots of nice looking hardware but no sign that anything of great value will come from the program. Steven Spielberg is producing.

Sylvester Stallone looks like he is aiming for *Terminator* with his *Demolition Man*, but it sounds like he will end up closer to *Freejack*. The concept is that the worst criminal in all the world (played by Wesley Snipes) is captured by a reckless but effective cop nicknamed the "Demolition Man" (played by Sylvester Stallone). Unfortunately a bunch of innocent people are killed in the process. to both criminal and cop are sentenced to cryogenic suspension--freezing. (Moral: In a topsy-turvy world, a good cop is treated like a criminal.) For Stallone the sentence is just some fifteen years in the freezer, which implies the congealing of all that body oil into grease. For Snipes the sentence is eternity. It is not entirely clear why waste the freezer space on someone who is never going to thaw, but I guess there are precedents. (Also I guess some of the stuff at the back of our freezer at home is in pretty much the same state.) Flash forward some long time to a pristine and crimeless future--don't ask me how we got there from our present with ever-growing numbers of criminals, bad inner cities, racism, and ever-increasing library overdue incidents. Society is too effete to handle real crime, but through a nasty freezer accident Snipes escapes and is terrorizing utopia. Luckily we have a macho greaseball on ice in the fridge. It's at times like this that society learns to value its macho greaseballs. This is not a film to look forward to.

We saw a trailer and little more for *Robocop 3*, and what we saw made it look like little more than the mindless shoot-em-up that *Robocop 2* was. This time the evil system is against Robo and has made him a criminal. (Moral: In a topsy-turvy world, the good robocop is treated like a criminal.) I don't expect much here.

One of the longest running of the great super-heroes is Lamont Cranston, who learned in the Orient the ability to cloud people's minds so that he is essentially invisible. When he is invisible he is his alter-ego, The Shadow. We did see some production sketches on this one, and the production seems to be in the hands of people who would rather emulate successful films about Batman than try to understand the persona of the Shadow. At least one mistake: in the long-running radio show, which is where the Shadow became best known, all of his powers and all of his tools came from between his ears. He had no special

cars or gas pistols. Everything he did was by mental powers. Well, we saw a sketch of his office where an iris opens up and his chair sinks down when he wants to make a getaway unseen. As if he couldn't walk out right in front of his secretary and simply cloud her mind. He is, after all, the Shadow. Or he was before they started the film. Mechanical gimmicks are right for Batman but all wrong for the Shadow.

Stan Winston, an Oscar winner for special effects like those of *Jurassic Park*, was on hand to defend the casting of Tom Cruise as the Vampire Lestat in *Interview With the Vampire*. He talked for a long time about the film but at the same time said very little. He had brought a slide of what Cruise will look like as Lestat, but could not show it since it might be videotaped, and of course it must be kept in extreme secrecy for whatever reason filmmakers always like extreme secrecy. We heard how *great* Cruise was as Lestat, but learned little else of value.

J. Michael Straczynski was present to show what was coming up for *Babylon 5*. I want everyone to remember that after the pilot was broadcast, it was me who said that I was willing to trade two episodes of any *Star Trek* series for any one episode of *Babylon 5*. Reactions to the pilot were very mixed, but I was really impressed by what I was seeing. We saw about twenty minutes from one of the episodes and forget the series, I really want to know how the episode will come out. It involves a conflict between two species, one good, one evil. The problem is that you can only determine which is the good species and which one is evil if you know if the spirit dies with the body, or if souls are somehow reincarnated to live again. And *Babylon 5* isn't going to tell you. It seems like a lot of the episodes are going to hinge on philosophical principles that the viewer is going to have to decide for him/ herself. Straczynski says his goal is to start arguments and perhaps a few good bar fights with his series.

Of course *Babylon 5* will have its "toaster graphics," which certainly are impressive. They substitute a sort of artistic feeling for the realism of effects that the current *Star Trek* shows seem to use. They are imaginative, and for the time being it is very impressive to see sights like spaceships unfolding solar sails like giant metallic insects. The special effects are not going to be that much of a draw after the first six months, but I think that the story will be. I am just a little concerned about a series that is going to be hard to join in the middle because of what the viewer has already missed. For now I intend to watch faithfully, and I suspect that once the series gets going, I will not be alone.

Miscellaneous

At each of the last three conventions I've gone to, someone has mistaken me for Connie Willis. I almost got through ConFrancisco without this happening, but just as we were leaving the convention center for the last time, someone passing us asked his friend, "Do you have *Doomsday Book*?" and when she handed it to him, held it out to me. I probably just should have signed it, but instead I said, "I am not Connie Willis. I am not as tall as she is, I do not have the same hair color as she does, and I didn't win two Hugos last night." Maybe I'll have a button made!

The WSFS Business Meeting was at noon instead of the traditional 10 AM on the days it was held, and at the ANA Hotel, making it very difficult to get to. As a result, attendance was down. The Northwest Territories Division Amendment, the amendment clarifying the best fan writer definition (making it clear it is for work in the previous year), and the amendment reducing NASFiC lead time passed. These had previously been approved at MagiCon, so are now adopted. Passed and passed on to Conadian is an amendment authorizing

retrospective Hugos for 50, 75, or 100 years previous to a given convention, so long as Hugos were not awarded for that year already.

The Information Desk was not always helpful. In particular, a friend of ours asked them about parking on Sunday and Monday, because the Moscone Center Garage, which was recommended in the Pocket Program, was closed those days. First the person he talked to said he should look in the book. When he pointed out that he had, and that it was wrong, they basically told him to try checking with some other garages, at which point he thanked them for their help (no doubt somewhat sarcastically). As he was walking away, the person behind the desk (who must have thought he was out of earshot) said something extremely uncomplimentary about him. The Information Desk should have information, or be willing to find it, perhaps asking the person to check back later. It should under no circumstances be rude and offensive. (This applies even if the "customer" is, though knowing the person involved here, I doubt that was the case.) I would like to think this was a single individual rather than a constant problem at the Information Desk, but a convention should make sure that only people who have the right personality for that job work at the Information Desk.

Panelists were signaled with a "YIELD" sign when there was fifteen minutes left, and a "STOP" sign when time had run out. This was confusing--many panelists thought the "YIELD" sign meant they had to yield the room. It was a good idea to keep panels to fifty minutes instead of an hour, because that gave people time to get to the next item and maybe even have a bathroom break.

ConFrancisco did not provide a free drink to participants at the "Meet the VIPs" party, as had been done by previous conventions. Frankly, this is probably a good thing. It seems a better use of the money to spend it on something for the con at large, and I doubt anyone's attendance or nonattendance at the party is determined by whether they get one free drink.

As is traditional, I'll list the Worldcons I've attended and rank them, best to worst (the middle cluster are pretty close together, and it's getting harder and harder to fit the new ones in, perhaps because the cons of fifteen years ago are hard to remember in detail):

Noreascon II
MagiCon
Noreascon 3
Noreascon I
MidAmeriCon
L.A.con II
ConFrancisco
Chicon V
Discon II
Seacon
Confederation
Chicon IV
ConFiction
Conspiracy
Iguanacon
Suncon
Nolacon II
Constellation

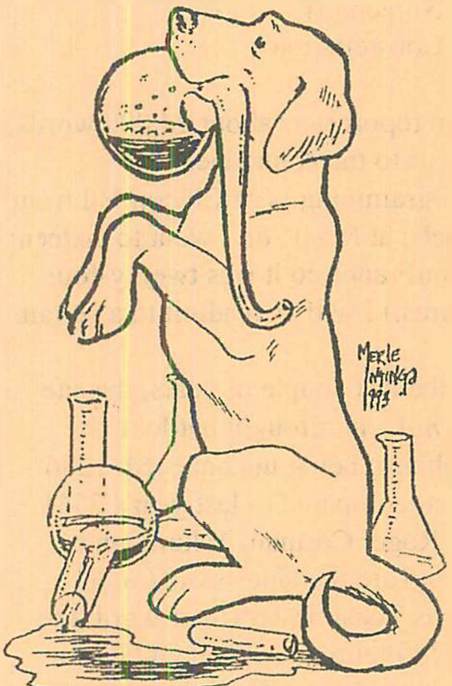
This con report runs about 24,000 words, due in large part to the abundance of interesting programming. (At Chicon V I went to twelve panels; at MagiCon I went to sixteen; this year at ConFrancisco it was twenty-four plus two lectures.) I will also admit to a certain verbosity.

Unlike the last couple of years, the site selection was *not* a hardfought battle, Los Angeles (Anaheim) being uncontested. 1286 votes were cast, compared to last year's 2541. James White, Roger Corman, Takumi and Sachiko Shibano are the Guests of Honor. Connie Willis is Toastmaster (their word, not mine). Elsie Wollheim is the Special Guest. (The Fan Guest of Honour for Intersection

(Glasgow 1995) was supposed to be announced at ConFrancisco, but wasn't--at least not that I heard.) The convention will be called L.A.con III (this is what is known as the "typography from hell") and will be August 29 to September 2, 1996. In spite of the uncontested nature, it was apparently decided that people could *not* buy attending memberships at voting time (as was done with MagiCon), so on Monday there was quite a long line of people wanting to upgrade to attending membership. Bruce Pelz found himself working alone for a while until help arrived, but I'm surprised that the LA committee didn't realize their table would be swamped. (Contact address in the United States is L.A.con III, c/o S.C.I.F.I., P. O. Box 8442, Van Nuys CA 91409.)

Next year in Winnipeg!

[Editor's note: Well, Evelyn did it. A conreport so long I had to edit it for size. For the record, this report started at 47 pages, 28207 words. After editing it is now 42 pages, 25174 words.]



Selected Upcoming Conventions

January 21-23, 1994
Boston Park Plaza, Boston MA
Spider and Jeanne Robinson
ARISIA '94
1 Kendall Square, Suite 322
Cambridge, MA 02139

February 18-20, 1994
Sheraton Tara, Framingham MA
Emma Bull and Will Shetterly
Boskone 31
P.O. Box 809
Framingham, MA 01701

March 4-6, 1994
Radisson Inn Rochester, Rochester NY
Jack Chalker and Kelly Freas
Astronomicon III
The Rochester Fantasy Fans
P.O. Box 1701
Rochester, NY 14603-1701

March 11-13, 1994
Sheraton Tara, Braintree MA
Siddig El Fadil and Nigel Bennett
Bash '94
P.O. Box 1108
Boston, MA 02103-1108

May 27-30, 1994
Sheraton Premiere Hotel, Vienna VA
Lois McMaster Bujold and Steven Johnson
Disclave 94
P.O. Box 677
Washington, DC 20044

July 8-10, 1994
Worcester Marriott, Worcester MA
Ursula Le Guin and Terri Windling
Readercon 7
P.O. Box 381246
Cambridge, MA 02238

Books by Clifford D. Simak

The Creator [a 48-page pamphlet]
- Crawford 1946

Cosmic Engineers
- *Astounding* Feb-Apr 1939
- Gnome Press 1950
- Paperback Library 1964
- Methuen 1988

Time Quarry
- *Galaxy* Oct - Dec 1950

ALSO TITLED

Time and Again
- Simon and Schuster 1951
- Dell (titled *First He Died*) 1953
- Heinemann 1955
- Ace 1963
- Penguin 1967
- Methuen 1977

Empire
- Galaxy Novel #7 1951

City
- Gnome Press 1952
- Weidenfeld Nicolson 1954
- Permabooks 1954
- Ace 1958
- Ace (one story added) 1981
- Methuen 1988
- Mandarin 1991

Ring Around the Sun
- *Galaxy* Dec 1952-Feb 1953
- Simon and Schuster 1953
- SFBC 1953
- Ace D-61 1954
- Ace 1959
- Avon 1967
- Mandarin 1990
- Carroll & Graf 1992

Strangers in the Universe
- Simon and Schuster 1956
- Berkley (7 of 11 stories) 1957
- SFBC 1957
- Faber (7 of 11 stories) 1958
- Panther 1962

The Worlds of Clifford Simak
- Simon and Schuster 1960
- SFBC 1960
- Avon (6 of 12 stories) 1961

ALSO TITLED

Aliens for Neighbours
- Faber (9 of 12 stories) 1961

The Fisherman
- *Astounding* Apr - Jul 1961

ALSO TITLED

Time Is the Simplest Thing
- Doubleday 1961
- SFBC 1961
- Fawcett Crest 1962
- Methuen 1986
- Collier 1993

The Trouble with Tycho
- *Amazing* Oct 1960
- Ace D-517 1961
- Ace 1971

Other Worlds of Clifford Simak
- Avon (the other 6 stories from *the Worlds of ...)* 1962

All the Traps of Earth
- Doubleday 1962
- SFBC 1962
- Macfadden (6 of 9 stories) 1963
- FSB (4 stories) 1964

The Night of the Puudly
- FSB (the other 5 stories) 1964

They Walked Like Men

Doubleday	1962
Gollancz	1962
SFBC	1963
Macfadden	1963
Pan	1965
Manor	1974
Avon	1979

Here Gather the Stars

Galaxy	Jun - Aug 1963

ALSO TITLED

Way Station

Doubleday	1963
SFBC	1963
Macfadden	1964
Gollancz	1964
Pan	1966
Manor	1969
R. Bentley	1979
Del Rey/Ballantine	1980
Easton Press	1988
Collier	1993

Worlds Without End

Belmont	1964
H. Jenkins	1965

All Flesh Is Grass

Doubleday	1965
Berkley	1966
Gollancz	1966
Pan	1968
Avon	1978
Methuen	1986

Why Call Them Back From Heaven?

Doubleday	1967
Gollancz	1967
SFBC	1968
Ace	1968
Avon	1988

The Werewolf Principle

Putnam	1967
Longmans	1967
SFBC	1968
Gollancz	1968
Berkley	1968
DAW	1982
Avon	1988

So Bright the Vision

Ace H-95	1968
Severn House	1986

The Goblin Reservation

Galaxy	Apr - Jun 1968
Putnam	1968
Berkley	1969
Methuen	1987

Out of Their Minds

Putnam	1970
Berkley	1970
DAW	1983
Methuen	1987

Best Science Fiction Stories of Clifford D. Simak

Faber & Faber	1967
Doubleday	1971
Paperback Library	1972

Reality Doll

Worlds of Fantasy	(Spr #4) 1971

EXPANDED AS

Destiny Doll

Putnam	1971
Berkley	1971

Nebula Award Stories Six ed. Simak

Doubleday	1971
Pocket Books	1972

A Choice of Gods

Putnam	1972
Berkley	1973
Del Rey/Ballantine	1982

Cemetery World
- *Analog* Nov 1972 - Jan 1973
- Putnam 1973
- Berkley 1974
- DAW 1983
- Methuen 1987

Our Children's Children
- *If* Jun - Aug 1973
- Putnam 1974
- Berkley 1974
- Mandarin 1991

Enchanted Pilgrimage
- Putnam 1975
- Sidgwick & Jackson 1976
- Fontana 1977
- Del Rey/Ballantine 1983
- Mandarin 1990

The Best of Clifford D. Simak ed. Angus Wells
- Sidgwick & Jackson 1975

Shakespeare's Planet
- Putnam 1976
- Berkley 1977
- Del Rey/Ballantine 1982
- Methuen 1986

Skirmish: The Great Short Fiction of Clifford D. Simak
- Putnam 1977
- Berkley 1978

A Heritage of Stars
- Putnam 1977
- Berkley 1978
- Methuen 1986

Mastodonia
- Del Rey/Ballantine 1978
- SFBC 1978

ALSO TITLED
Catface
- Sidgwick & Jackson 1978
- Mandarin 1991

The Fellowship of the Talisman
- Del Rey/Ballantine 1978

The Visitors
- *Analog* Oct - Dec 1979
- Del Rey/Ballantine 1980

Project Pope
- Del Rey/Ballantine 1981

Special Deliverance
- Del Rey/Ballantine 1982

Where the Evil Dwells
- Del Rey/Ballantine 1982
- Mandarin 1989

The Marathon Photograph & O. S. ed. Francis Lyall
- Severn House 1986
- Methuen 1987

Highway of Eternity
- Del Rey/Ballantine 1986
- SFBC 1986
- Mandarin 1989

ALSO TITLED
Highway to Eternity
- Sidgwick & Jackson 1987

Brother and Other Stories ed. Francis Lyall
- Severn House 1986
- Methuen 1988

Off-Planet ed. Francis Lyall
- Methuen 1988

The Autumn Land and Other Stories ed. Francis Lyall
- Mandarin 1990

The Immigrant & O. S. ed. Francis Lyall
- Mandarin 1991

Selected Non-Fiction

The Solar System: Our New Front Yard
St. Martin's Press 1962

Trilobite, Dinosaur and Man
St. Martin's Press 1966

From Atoms to Infinity (ed.)
Harper & Row 1965

Wonder and Glory
St. Martin's Press 1969

The March of Science
Harper and Row 1971

Prehistoric Man
St. Martin's Press 1971

Awards Won

1953 *City* International Fantasy Award
1959 "The Big Front Yard" HUGO
Best Novelette first appearance: *Astounding* Oct. 1958
1964 *Here Gather the Stars (Way Station)*
HUGO Best Novel
1976 Grand Master (Nebula)
1980 "Grotto of the Dancing Deer" Nebula
first appearence: *Analog* Apr. 1980
1981 "Grotto of the Dancing Deer" HUGO
Best Short Fiction

As you can see, most of Simak's best work has never left print. I have listed only the first printing of a given publisher: for example, Paperback Library published *Cosmic Engineers* in 1964, 1967, 1969, 197... I hope you get the idea. Even the list given here is far from complete. You should not have trouble locating his books.

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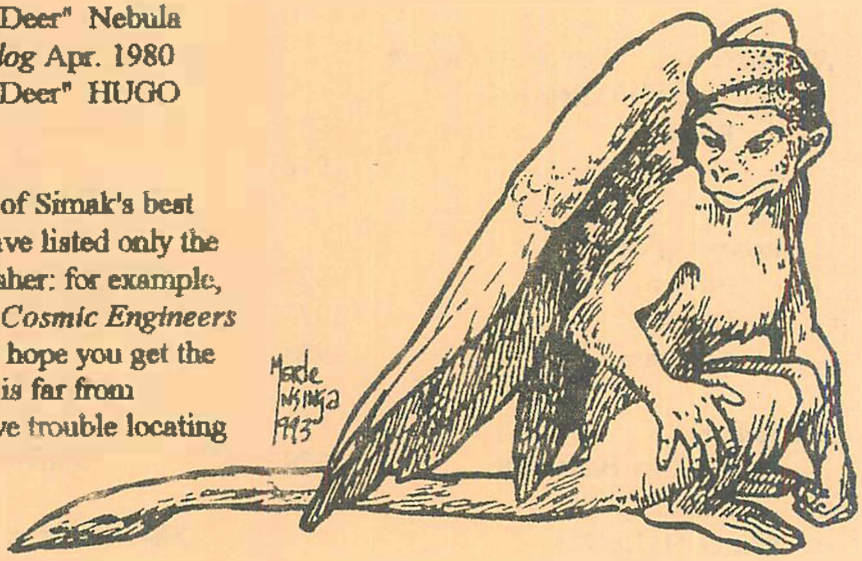


June 28, 1993

Dear Helmuth and the gang:

It is always interesting to read different reports on a convention. Taras Wolansky's report on Boskone 30, published in *FOSFAX*, for some reason left one with the impression that someone other than Connie Willis was the Guest of Honor there. Oh, right, Evelyn Leeper says that Joe Haldeman was the Guest of Honor.

Since the works of Sir Clements Markham on the subject were written, in the late nineteenth century, a manuscript by one Dominic Mancini, an Italian commercial traveler in England during the crucial year of 1483, was discovered. Mancini is considered to be a prime source on the beginning of the reign of Richard III. Mancini also contradicted Tey's (and Markham's; he being her principal source) thesis, so in a fashion more like today's research style she decided to pronounce him wrong, not to mention irrelevant. (I recall that Penguin brought out Mancini's chronicle under the title *The Usurpation of Richard III.)* So I really can not endorse the "History in SF" panel's endorsement of *The Daughter of Time* as "a good book demonstrating how to research history."

Also, if you accept the "Columbian" theory of syphilis, that being that the disease was brought back from the Caribbean by the crew of his expeditions, then the Americans struck back first in the biowars, but not quite as hard. (This thesis is becoming less accepted, the alternative theory being, as I recall, that syphilis originated from a disease similar to yaws.)

A general problem of "Responsibility and the Arts" is the deliberate confusion of private and governmental areas of responsibility. Censorship is a governmental act. It would seem that those who wish to equate private decisions not to distribute a work with censorship are intending to justify obliteration of that distinction, and all distinction between private like and governmental action. If "the personal is political," then the political-political can have the right to control the personal-political.

To me, the most amusing thing about *Fat Man and Little Boy* was how the two stars played against type. The concerned liberal progressive hero Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer was played by Dwight Schultz, one of the few conservative actors in Hollywood. While the fascist villain of the flick, General Leslie Groves, was played by Paul Newman.

As for *Dances with Wolves*, I always thought it mildly amusing that the movie was set in the Dakota Territory in 1863. Now 1862 had seen the biggest Lakota ("Sioux") uprising in recent times, sparked off by some of the more activist Lakota noticing that so many of the white-eyes were off fighting each other and here was their chance. Locals called President Lincoln a redskin-symp because he reviewed the convictions and only consented to the hanging of thirty-eight Lakota for various atrocities.

Some comic notes: I presume that thousands of Opus fans will note that "Bloom County" was done by Berke Breathed, who spells his name "Berkeley Breathed" for his current strip "Outland." Nicholas Yermakov, author of "Melponeme, Calliope . .. and Fred," has changed his name to Simon Hawke, citing prejudice against science fiction authors without Western European names. I presume (or at least hope) that the panel approved of the original "Pogo" strips by Walt Kelly and not the current revival by a rapidly shifting groups of fans and artists.

The Sherlock Holmes parody by Mark Twain that no one at the "Shared Worlds and Sharecropped Worlds" panel could remember is "A Double-Barreled Detective Story," available in most large collections of Twain's works.

Lin Carter in *A Look Behind Tolkien and The Lord of the Rings* listed the lost books of the Homeric Cycle, the works written by other writers as prequels, sequels, and fill-ins to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, so we can date the beginning of sharecropping to before the beginning of literacy.

Actually, H. Beam Piper's *Uller Uprising* started out as a Twayne Triplet, so that might be considered as another one of those cases. One of the other two stories based on that background was Judith Merril's "Daughter of Earth," which only goes to show that the whole idea was questionable.

What I find noteworthy about Bova's *Cyberbooks* was that he had earlier written a novella on the topic of cyberbooks. And instead of stretching it out into a novel, he went back to the beginning and wrote a whole new book! Well, he makes in different form much the same comment about the problems of American business. As opposed to the new riff on mystery writers. Sheryl Birkhead did not say half as many good things about the book as she could have.

For what it is worth, *Commentary* had a long article recently touching on the Library of America's problems in bringing back to print the works of American classic authors. It sounded remarkably familiar, somehow, even to the odd problems. Did you know that Emily Dickinson's poems are still under copyright?

Námarië, Joseph T Major

July 31, 1993

Dear Kenneth:

I've read virtually everything Clifford Simak had published. Many of his stories seem to end with a somewhat unrealistic upbeat tone. If you can accept that, I think his best are "The Big Front Yard" and *All Flesh Is Grass*.

Merle Insinga's scribe illo is intriguing with its mix of medieval quill pen, 20th century light bulb, and 25th century robot.

Best wishes, Teddy Harvia

June 28, 1993

Dear Kenneth:

I hadn't known before looking at the inside front cover that NESFA was making *Warhoon* 28 available again. I hope the price doesn't scare away prospective purchasers. They can console themselves while writing their checks with the knowledge that eventually this enormous fanzine will be sold out and unavailable and then its price will soar to enormous heights in secondhand condition because there is always a huge mob of fans who don't buy desirable things while they are in print but feel an unquenchable lust for them as soon as they go out of print. [Also I hope there are always new people coming into fandom who are interested in learning about its past and reading works such as this one. KK]

Pam Fremon's article is amusing and a good example of a very important type of fanzine material that rarely appears: full descriptions of fannish matters that will be lost to future fenerations if not put down in black and ~~white~~ blue by some thoughtful person while they're contemporary. Your clubhouse doesn't seem to have quite as many desirable attributes as the Tucker Hotel, but it's an obvious choice for listing on any catalog of fannish historical monuments.

I would amend one sentence in the Lewises' talk transcript: "Campbell's accession to the editorship of *Astounding* signaled the first major change in the field since Gernsback...in 1926." Not so: *Astounding* had previously created a huge change in the field when it was first published (in 1932 or 1931, I believe) because it was the first science fiction periodical to feature science fiction written in the same general pulp fiction style that prevailed in the other magazines devoted to westerns, war stories, detective fiction, and so on. *Astounding*'s emphasis on stories aimed at a young, action-hungry audience pioneered in the direction taken a few years later by *Thrilling Wonder Stories* and the Ziff-Davis issues of *Amazing Stories* and still to be found today in the Star Wars trilogy.

I've read that a good bit of Cliff Simak's fiction is coming back into print, which takes care of a wish expressed several times in this issue. I fear that many of today's younger readers of science fiction will have difficulty adjusting to what they find in the Simak novels: stories complete in one volume rather than being padded to fill a series of six or eight books, different plots in different novels, and stories that are imaginative, not just thinly disguised commentaries on today's situations and problems.

Yrs., &c., Harry Warner, Jr.

August 2, 1993

Dear NESFAns:

NESFA and LASFS are lucky clubs to have a clubhouse. Toronto doesn't even have a club, but once one is set up, perhaps the Merril Collection building can serve as the next best thing. The Toronto Public Library plans to consolidate all of its special collections, including the Merril Collection, in a new building, which should be built by 1996 (ha, ha). In this building, plans call for six or eight meeting rooms, and we might be able to claim one for our own if we bat our eyelashes and smile pretty. If nothing else, we should be able to have regular meetings there.

For the Upcoming Conventions list, enclosed are some Ad Astra 14 flyers. Don't let the flyers fool you, we really are a science fiction convention and not a Star Trek convention. These flyers were specifically tailored to appeal to the members of the big fan-run Trek con held here in July. [Ad Astra 14 will be held June 17-19, 1994, in the Toronto East Sheraton Hotel and Towers. The Guests of Honour are Diane Duane and Peter Morwood. For information write to: Ad Astra 14, P.O. Box 7276, Station A, Toronto, Ontario CANADA M5W 1X9. One flyer has been posted. I have held onto the other as a reminder to ask Tony Lewis to include it in a March issue of *Instant Message*. KK]

David Thayer's comments on Joe Mayhew's cartoon on the first fan interview remind me of a panel I was on recently...the topic we eventually settled on was "The Fan and the Press." The press has pre-set expectations of who the average science fiction fan is, and will zero in on the person who most closely fits those expectations. The reports the press produces reinforce those expectations in both the press and the public. Any relatively normal person the press sees will make a dull interview, they assume. Many newspaper and television journalists are looking for a funny feature, or a human interest story that will take the readers'/viewers' minds off the litany of bad news they've had to present. The Trekkies and space cadets are perfect fodder for this; too many human interest stories cater to the public's desire to point a finger at others and laugh, and reinforce their own shaky normality.

Yours, Lloyd Penney

WAHF: Sheryl Birkhead, who was pleased with the art and sent me some "left over" Phil Tortorici art. (I did write to Phil for permission before using it.) Also, Harry Cameron Andruschak sent me his latest perzine (very interesting) along with a letter saying how he was dropping out of three apas, leaving him in just three others. I hope he does not mind me adding to his backlog.

Next Issue: The art of Joe Mayhew, the tabulation of your Hugo recommendations (please try and include reviews or comments), and more letters from you. Remember the deadline for material is February first or delivery at Boskone.

Noreascon 3 Video Tapes

The Brunch

Isaac Asimov is Master of Ceremonies for Science Fiction's 50th Anniversary Brunch

Hear him and others speak about their years in the field.

To celebrate the Worldcon's Golden Anniversary, 1300 members of the Science Fiction Community gathered for a 50th Anniversary Brunch. On this hour-long videotape of the event, giants of our community, both fan and pro, talk about what SF has meant to them:

- Hear Arthur C. Clarke, speaking from Sri Lanka, reminisce with Isaac.
- Shiver as Betty Ballantine tells about first reading SF as a young girl camped in the jungles of India.
- Hear Mike Resnick talk about the SF Community as family.
- Laugh with Terry Pratchett as he tells how he became a full-time writer (he was Public Information Officer for a nuclear power station which had this minor problem...)
- Listen as Michael Whelan tells how he first learned about SF art.
- Enjoy hearing Emma Bull tell of her first meeting with Will Shetterly.
- Share Samuel R. Delany's experience at his first con.

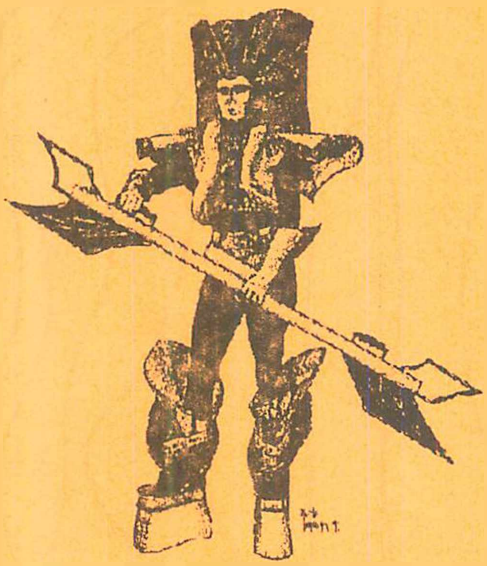
All this and much more, with an introduction and colorful commentary by the incomparable Isaac Asimov.

The Masquerade

Better than you remember it, because you get a front-row seat!

All 52 costumes!
Pauses and delays edited out!
All the awards!
Close-ups, freeze frames & credits!

After only 4 years (a new definition of Real Soon Now) we are very pleased to announce the publication of the Noreascon Three Masquerade tape. It includes all the costumes, all the music and all the color of a Worldcon Masquerade. It runs 90 minutes and has been mercilessly edited by Masquerade Director Suford Lewis to remove all the pauses and blank spots, to combine three cameras together for the best views, to add freeze frames and credits, to restore missing music, and to show worksmanship and performance awards.



Also included is an 8-page booklet listing the costumes in order, with full participant, design and construction credits and a complete list of winners.

To purchase either videotape, write to Noreascon 4 – Boston in 2001, PO Box 1010, Framingham, MA 01701. The Brunch videotape is $20 and the Masquerade tape is $25. Buy both for only $35. Please add $2 per order for postage and handling. We accept checks, Visa and Mastercard.