

Spartacus

A zine of opinion and blather by GUY LILLIAN
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Juneteenth – and folks are celebrating. It's a new holiday marking the end of slavery, a purely symbolic occasion, not vindictive, not antagonistic, not punitive or divisive, but joyous, affirmative, irresistible. Enough? Of course not. But something absolutely positive on which to build.

Which brings to mind a recent FB post, which I'll quote



Is America a country:

that was built by slavery?
or that abolished slavery at
the cost of 600,000 lives?

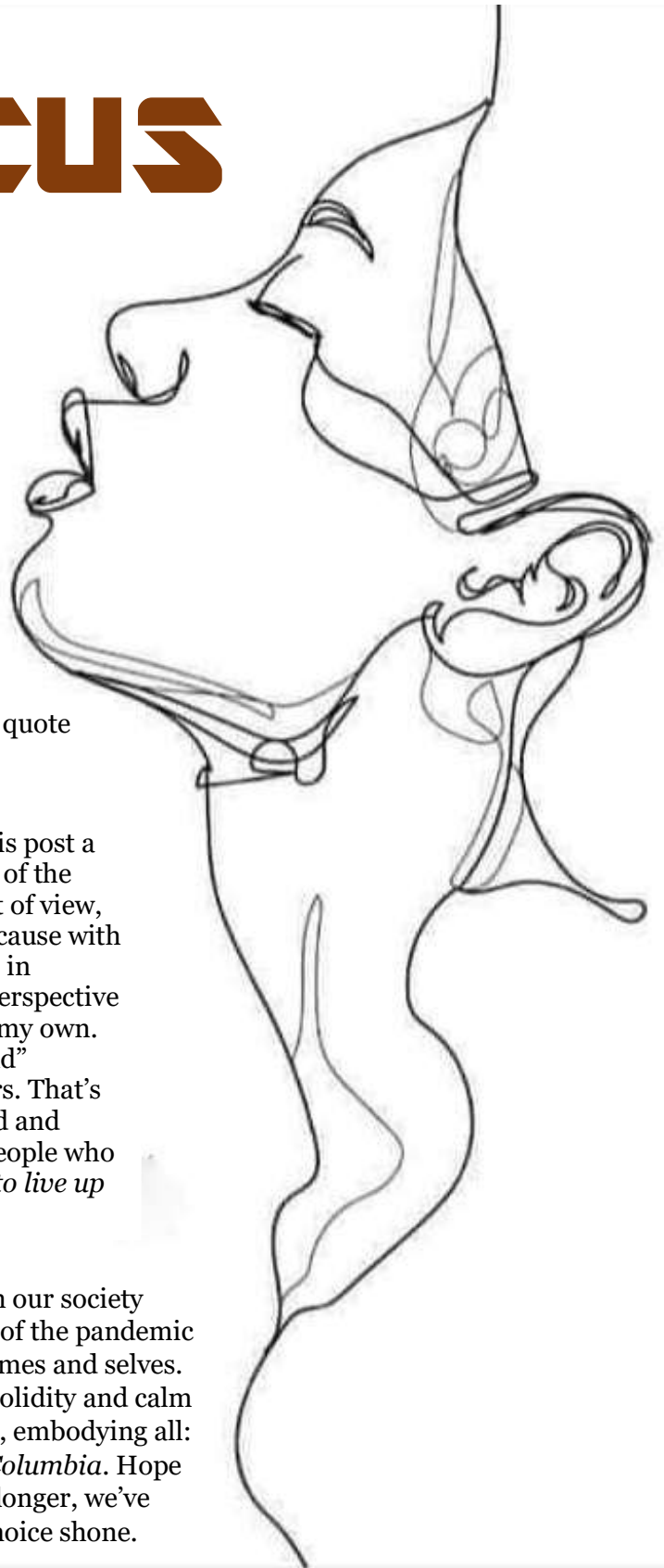
of rampant discrimination?
or an accepting people in
active pursuit of a more
perfect union?

of grinding exploitation?
or a land of limitless
opportunity?

#FlyTheFlag

Someone called this post a perfect expression of the *conservative* point of view, which is funny, because with a universal change in conjunctions, its perspective perfectly matches my own. Change "or" to "and" wherever it appears. That's America – a flawed and violent land and people who are forever trying *to live up to an ideal*.

Juneteenth was quickly followed by July 4th, which our society celebrated with special fervor this year. The worst of the pandemic is past. We're no longer imprisoned in our own homes and selves. Our stolid, everyman President has given us new solidity and calm and decency to look to. America is a land of choice, embodying all: Trump or Biden. Q-Anon or BLM. Columbine or *Columbia*. Hope or Fear, For the moment, and hopefully for much longer, we've chosen, and on Juneteenth and the Fourth, that choice shone.



ARE WE NEVER TO BE RID OF TRUMP? No one can tell whether our beloved ex-President truly believes that the 7 million vote majority won over him in the last election was fraudulent. All evidence, all legitimate testimony says it was not. Serious or not, Trump's Big Lie echoes – inspiring criminally restrictive voting laws in Republican legislatures and incubating more paranoia in Trump's winger support. Prosecution of the January 6th rioters – exemplary true believers – tops the 500 mark, and are met by almost comical reimaginings of the event by Trump's stooges.

The Republican Party and its ghoulish messiah are a laughingstock, but my fear is that they won't stay that way. We Americans often vote by whim, by impulse, by fad – and I'm terrified that we will look Trump's noisy way again in next year's elections. How to counter this? Good works – passage of the voting rights bill, the infrastructure project ... and steadiness at the helm. Whether these acts represent qualities Americans favor ... well, they were in 2020; let's hope – and work – for 2022. The wingers will be passionate as they seek to avenge their idiot demigod's 2020 humiliation. Will good people be as passionate in opposing them?

By the way, in mid-July Curt Phillips, John Mayer and other stalwarts ran a remarkable denunciation of the Trump presidency on Facebook. Author unknown. I'd reprint it here, but it consumes 5 pages or more, and I need to keep my zines *small*. (Unless they're *Challengers* or trip reports or historical tributes or milestone apazines or ...)

BILLIONAIRE BUSHWAH. We enjoyed the flight of Richard Branson – excuse me, *billionaire* Richard Branson – to the edge of space in his Virgin Galactic spaceplane doohickey. The vehicle was sleek and gorgeous and let's face it, about as practical as a toy balloon. The richest-man-in-the-world Jeff Bezos rocket, bearing himself and both the youngest and oldest folks ever to pierce the Karman Line and enter space, gave us another jolly, but frankly, the social and scientific value of the whole billionaires-in-space schtick eludes me. Yes, I've heard the awestruck predictions that this flight, like Jeff Bezos' yet to come, heralds a new era in commercial spaceflight, but to me it seems like the self-indulgence of kids with lotsa spare money and big, costly toys..

Tax these guys. Feed our people. Fix our roads. In space, *explore*, don't putz around.

WORLDCON BUSINESS. After a terrible year of “woke” fascism, draconian missteps and committee turmoil, Discon III has made a possible move toward salvation with the elevation of author Mary Robinette Kowal to its chairmanship. Whether Ms. Kowal will exercise any authority over the spastic Worldcon – and perhaps reverse some of its more repulsive decisions (get that libel against George RR Martin off the Hugo ballot! And *reinstate Toni Weisskopf* – NOW!) – or simply serve as a calming figurehead, who knows? But I can't help but think that her presence is a good sign.

DEEPSOUTHCON was my “home convention” for many years. I started going in 1972, was Fan GoH there in 1983 (Steve King was the pro), won my Rebel award at the 1984 event (which lifted me from a severe post-divorce gloom), and did the program/souvenir book for its magnificent 50th, a book which I believe is available on line. In recent years the con, usually hosted by an ongoing regional, has taken place too far away. The latest incarnation of the DSC – which began with 5 or 6 SFers sitting around Dave Hulan's garage – was in North Carolina, and demonstrated how out of touch with contemporary fandom I have become.

For instance, the Rebel (fan) and Phoenix (pro) Awards for distinguished service to Southern SF went to Cheralyn Lambeth and Allen Wold, respectively. I congratulate both, but blush to admit that their names were completely unfamiliar to me. (Cheralyn is a puppeteer and writer with fine fannish credentials, and Wold ... well, he's been around and productive forever.) The Southern Fandom Confederation, which meets at the DSC, elected **Randy Cleary** as its new President. I know Randy well, and find hope in his elevation. He's had the job before, and I

like his attitude. I was ready to propose that SFC be abolished as without purpose. Clearly sees things differently, and good for him. Quit? Not now! SFC and DSC refuse to die!

DeepSouthCon 61 was chosen to be hosted by LibertyCon in Chattanooga, Tennessee June 17-19, 2023 (<https://libertycon.org/>). Next year's event will be in one of my favorite convention towns, Huntsville AL, sometime in mid-October. Rosy and I want to be there. Hey, we became a couple at the '77 DeepSouthCon, so I, at least, *owe* that convention!

About my **THEODORE STURGEON** binge – the accumulation of his work as research material for *Challenger* no. 43 continues apace. The arrival of Volume 10 of his *Complete Stories* completed that set – about half hardcovers, the rest trade paperbacks. Thwarted and partially blinded by the point-8 type in Joe Green's pb of *More than Human*, considered Sturgeon's best novel, I ordered a trade pb which I found both readable and excellent. As for the famous *I, Libertine*, I have it, too; only \$900 from Amazon. (I got it on Kindle for seven bucks.)

I have all of Ted's fiction – including the three movie tie-ins and his Ellery Queen ghost. I've scanned *The Joy Machine*, Dr. James Gunn's *Star Trek* novel developed from a treatment by Sturgeon, and have *Godbody*, the final book, which the man himself described to me the night he won the Nebula for "Slow Sculpture." That act of friendship and generosity won him my unabashed admiration – an affection only cemented when he happened to be in the room when I won my Rebel Award a year before his death.

What about his non-fiction? My research lucked out when I found a copy of Sturgeon's semi-autobiography, *Argyll*, in father-in-law Green's collection. Actually a letter to Ted's psychotherapist, it's a candid, funny, tragic and deeply personal trip through the great writer's childhood and adolescence. ("Argyll" was his detested stepfather.) Its literary significance beams from his books. I xeroxed a copy for my own therapist, who loved the guy, and hopefully she'll repay me with an article.

Noble chums on **FictionMags** pointed out Ted's book reviews, published in *The New York Times*, (get this) *National Review* and (get **THIS**) *Hustler*. I've written both of those scurrilous publications for copies. I haunt YouTube in search of some of his TV work – not just the two *Star Trek* episodes but the prehistoric live stuff on shows like *Out There* and *Tales from Tomorrow* – the intro to which is ruined by someone coughing in the background. Gotta find his *Land of the Lost* ...

What's next? Joe Siclari continues to direct me to fanzine pieces about Sturgeon – hellish hard to find the authors for reprint permission. I'm collecting critical articles. I have the special *F&SF* issue and Sam Moscovitz' *Seekers of Tomorrow* and Lucy Menger's book of essays. There's another I need to peruse. I found the photos of the man by Jay Kay Klein at Chicon III, where Sturgeon was Guest of Honor – his speech overshadowed by Heinlein's dramatic appearance at the Hugo banquet. (I have that speech in the Chicon III *Proceedings*, a magnificent book.) There's a photo showing him posed buckwheat bare, a typewriter covering his shame, that I have *got* to see.

I need copies of memorials and tributes from 1985, upon his death – 36 years ago, impossible -- and I am trying to get in touch with the following people, all contributors to *Lan's Lantern's* special issue on Sturgeon. Your aid is *greatly* appreciated.

Barry Childs-Helton	Jeanne Mealy	Tom Digby	Tom Dow
Dennis Fischer	David Palter	Laura Todd	Phil Tortorici
Crystal Marvig	Linda Leach	Eric Heideman	Greg Litchfield

Of course, **your** input is sought. Who wants to write about Ted Sturgeon and/or his magnificent, unique body of work?

(Rosy bought me the perfect change from Sturgeon for our recent anniversary: *Project Hail Mary* by Andy Weir. Excellent premise, lots of math and science, a Tweener-level "Gosh darn it!" hero. Utterly sexless – like the protagonist in *The Martian*, he *never* thinks about girls – no underlying profundity or pretense to literary excellence, but readable and good fun.)

Most of our **VISUAL ENTERTAINMENT** continues to flow from the many streaming services. Binge-ing is not something I normally do, but the presence of *Hannibal* on our streaming service was an irresistible temptation. Uncompromising program, brilliantly acted by Mads Mikkelsen, very entertainingly retelling the stories of *Hannibal*-the-film and *Red Dragon/Manhunter* – and giving the saga of Hannibal Lecter and Will Graham a satisfying climax. (I'm only sorry it didn't get a fourth season – or *Clarice* a second!) Also worthwhile, 2011's very strange, very effective *Take Shelter* – and I swear I didn't know until she showed her

lovely face that  had a strong supporting role. The lead, Michael Shannon, is fast ascending to favorite status around here.

A definite quality of the streaming services is their importation of good foreign detective TV. We've gorged on it. Some examples: Israel's *Blackspace*, a Columbine-style school massacre at its heart; Rachel Griffiths' excellent Sydney-based *Dead Lucky*; New Zealand's *One Lane Bridge*, wherein a Maori cop deals with a ghastly murder and his own "second sight" amidst the gorgeous kiwi scenery; *Katla*, a weird and upsetting Icelandic fantasy in which the title volcano is itself a character. Are any the equal of our own *Bosch*? Not really – but the settings and ambience make each unique.

We've started going to actual movies again, too – agreeing that *A Quiet Place II* is a classic worthy of its predecessor, and that *Cruella* is fun nonsense, even if every other scene is set at some fancy-schmancy *soiree*. I worship at Emma Thompson's toenails.

LOVELY LETTERCOL, METER MAID ...

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Justice seems to be done here...I did get to see a little of the Chauvin trial. I honestly didn't have much hope for a guilty verdict, but I was pleased to see it. There are so many more cases of police-sponsored murder yet to be prosecuted.

DisCon ... I have made the comments I wanted to make. I have no Worldcon memberships, haven't had any in about 10 years, and I have no intentions of ever returning. We used to have such a good time there, too, and much of that good time was through participating, and helping to make things happen. I suspect I have joined an ever-increasing group of people who are fed up with a good event being ruined by politics of one kind or another. Honestly, there are days when gaffiation sounds pretty good. That may be my pandemic depression talking. Largely, our focus has switched to being just local fans. Even that is a little tenuous, but we do have a few plans once the pandemic is done, and we can put the masks away.

Maia Cowan is someone I miss. Lan Lascowski and Maia used to come up here for the Mikes' birthdays every year, and we'd talk, and often watch Mike Glicksohn and George Laskowski, both were teachers, compare Canadian and American curricula.

I can't remember who it was (might have been Wallis Simpson) who said that you knew you were getting old when your friends started dying. Guess I am feeling old. We'd lost some friends to COVID-19, but were pretty well unscathed until Sylvain St-Pierre died. Feels odd to write that, I still kinda expect to see him at cons when they resume, but I know that I won't. He was a pillar of Montreal fandom, and one of the more visible Canadian fans at a Worldcon. He would send us some homemade graphics when it was our wedding anniversary, or one of our birthdays. He was talented and considerate, and died trying to save his mother Eva by getting her a flu shot. She died three days after he did. Cathy Palmer-Lister has lost other friends, but I think losing Sylvain is the worst for her. This is the time the least we could do is give her a hug...but of course, we can't. When fannish events resume here, I hope we can all rise to toast our lost friends. The tears of joy at our reunion will be mixed with tears of grief for those who cannot join us, and never will again.

Tom Feller tomfeller@aol.com

I certainly agree with you on condemning Discon's actions regard Toni Weisskopf. I thought they acted too hastily without giving Toni the opportunity to address the issues raised by Jason Sanford's article. It took Facebook and twitter years to address similar issues, and there are many who feel they have still not addressed those issues adequately. How can they expect Toni to address them in three days?

If I Ran the Zoo by Dr. Seuss made such a strong impression on me that I still remember it, and I have a much vaguer memory of *And to Think I saw it on Mulberry Street*. It's hard to imagine anything offensive in them.

Cathy Palmer-Lister

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[Concerning the Hugo nominations:] You wrote: The personal attack on RR Martin is a far worse offense. As Langford suggests, its ugliness, obscenity and irrationality are almost undoubtedly a violation of the Worldcon's own Code of Conduct.

Tried to read it--gave up--it's awful. It's even worse than the rant I had to sit through in Dublin. And just like Jeannette Ng, she will probably win.

You might want to read Joe Aspler's article on Jeanette Ng winning the Hugo for her rant. page 10 of *Warp* 108. http://www.monsffa.ca/a/?page_id=6915 ... I think he really hit it on the nail. The puppies won--we are now giving the genre's highest honour to the lowest common denominator.

Rich Lynch rw_lynch@yahoo.com

I'm not going to comment on the Hugo Awards controversy where one of the finalists is an essay which slings shit at GRRM. Except to say that there is a contingent of Worldcon voters who apparently take delight in figuratively pissing on other people's shoes, especially when the person being pissed upon is a famous writer (or editor, as happened in 2019). It's an ugly essay and needless to say, I voted it below "No Award." Instead, I'll zero in on your brief remembrance of seeing Apollo 11 Astronaut Michael Collins from very close proximity. I've had that experience for Buzz Aldrin, who I briefly spoke with during a book forum many years ago, but I never set eyes on either Armstrong or Collins. There was an opportunity to do so, back in 1989 when they were at the National Air and Space Museum in D.C. for a 20th anniversary Apollo 11 event. I was only about a quarter mile away while that was going on, but I couldn't escape from a long departmental meeting to go see them. It was very disappointing.

*Agony! I would have faked a **bomb scare** to see Armstrong.*

Rich Dengrove richd22426@aol.com

[TONI.] The \$64,000 question is: who were pushing the Worldcon committee to scrap Toni as Guest of Honor? We certainly weren't. Older fans have considered her a friend. It must come from a younger group in this divided Republic. As for Toni, no question that she is a right winger. However, she's an old time right winger. We're friends but we just don't talk politics. Apparently, when she heard what was happening on her company's forum, she shut it down.

[DOCTOR SEUSS.] Just a caprice but I wonder if Doctor Seuss Enterprises had anything to do with 'banning' Doctor Seuss. I am sure the accusation that Doctor Seuss is a racist spurred people to buy his books. Also, Doc Seuss is charging more for the original 'unexpurgated' versions. Banning the Doctor may be great financial move.

[PEPE LE PEU.] For some reason I remember one of my sister's comedy bits. A parody of '90s attitudes.

*All sex is rape
and all men should be in jail
And I mean that nicely.*

I hope you don't remember it.

[MEGHAN AND HARRY.] By Rosie. Maybe by the rules, Meghan and Harry deserve protection a la the other Royals. However, I gather they have refused to take up the duties incumbent on a royal. For that reason, they have been persona non grata with the other royals.

Anyway, I gather they have plenty of money from their California enterprises and can afford to protect themselves. In addition, I don't know if they need to do that in California. They are just two more freaks there.

[LETTERS. JOHN PURCELL.] I disagree with John Purcell. Having worked in Washington for 35 years, I admit, some people in high positions, I wouldn't give you a plug nickel for. Others, I disagree with John about. Going up a ways, some politicians believe in loyalty. If you are loyal to them., they will be loyal to you. As opposed to the first who would just as soon throw you under the bus. Going up all the way, I have met actual decent people in high positions of power. I guess people in even higher positions just liked them.

[THE END.] When I took my last colonoscopy at age 72, the woman who did it said that I should come back at age 75. However, when I called her at age 75, she said I shouldn't worry about it unless there was a lot of colon bleeding. There wasn't so my colonoscopy days are at an end. I won't say shiiitttt!!

*Longtime GHLIII pals will remember **Inge Glass**, Challenger dedicatee and Worldcon attendee. Seeing the terrible floods besotting Germany in July, I checked on her and hers, and heard **good news**.*

I'm touched that you are worrying about us... but, yes we are fine. We are living in south-eastern Germany, near Regensburg, and we were lucky (again). The big flood occurred about 500kms to the west of us, and on the weekend the rim of the Alps, about 150kms south of us, got lots of rain.

After three very hot and dry summers, this year is cool and rainy, but the most exciting local weather phenomenon was a thunderstorm with 60mm of rain in one hour, in June. The corn field to the north of us flooded and spilled over onto the road, the water then proceeded to flood the neighbours' chicken coop and made its way down the slope of our big meadow. We were quite safe on our hillside. Also, no hailstorms so far. (I'm worried about the blueberry crop!)

We have been living here for 16 years, and so far, our local weather has been benign. Keep your fingers crossed for us!

Vale Kenneth Frierson tells us that the memorial service for his mother **Penny Frierson** – Worldcon (Confederation 1986) co-chair, Rebel Award winner and friend to Southern fandom for decades – will take place August 21 at Coaling Baptist Church, 11209 Hagler Coaling Road, Coaling AL 35440. Wish we could be there: Penny was a Great.

The tragic deaths of **Alex Bouchard** and the wonderful **Michelle Zellich** are to be noted – I'll say more in the next issue of *The Zine Dump*, in progress.



April in Paris

That's the plan, anyway, and our tickets have been bought. Our itinerary lands us in the City of Lights the morning of April 4, with a segue to London a few days later. From there, we rail it to Edinburgh, and thence, on the 25th, fly home. In addition to such trifles as the Mona Lisa and Stonehenge, Omaha Beach and Versailles, Loch Ness and the British Museum, we'd love to see some fans. If you'll be around those cities – especially London, where we'll linger most of the time – how about a pint and a chinwag? (C'mon – even if you think *I'm* too obnoxious to be borne, Rosy is a delight, and I want to make this as wonderful a trip for her as possible. Be in touch?)