



SPIRITUS MUNDI 191

A SFPazine for SFPA #229 by

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Permit me a moment in the moment.

Today is *September 1st* 9:20 PM. I am sitting in a motel room in Thibodaux, Louisiana, waiting on a phone call. Rosy is at her job with **The Daily Comet**, finishing up work on a special Labor Day edition. I am sitting here with Jessie the Woobie Dog, the TV off, listening to the thudding bass of passing boom boxes, the drone of air conditioners, the clicking of these very keys, waiting for my cell phone to ring.

Even as I write, ConJose should be getting around to presenting its Hugo Awards. Quinn Yarbro should be at the ceremony, a borrowed cell phone in her hand. When the Fanzine Award comes up, she is to call my cell number and let me be there, if not in person, then in somewhat *more* than spirit.

It's only 7:24 there, but the ceremony should still be getting started – getting past the Big Heart and the First Fandom and the interminable *Seiun* Awards. Fortunately the Fan honors go first, so I shouldn't expect too long a wait.

We should be there. We should be sitting there with Quinn.

This week has been agony. Until just the last day or so, we've spent our days imagining where we should be. Friday of last week was especially awful; we'd talked about this trip for 2 years and the next morning, we should have left. Instead we just went to work, every day, as normal. On days when we should have been crossing panoramic desert, visiting my California cousins, riding the exquisite Coast Highway, Rosy did her thing at the little country newspaper where she works, and I droned on at the Public Defender's office in St. John Parish. Working on a Fourth Amendment brief: pretty interesting stuff, if I could keep my mind on it.

The last few days, since ConJose has actually opened, have been better. We've stopped thinking about what was going on 2,250 long miles north by northwest and lived in the here-&-now. We enjoyed a pizza party at Annie Winston's house, featuring the return to New Orleans of Annie's one-time roommate, eternal hippy Caroline Barry. We took my former neighbor Cindy to the movies, and saw **Possession**, an excellent romantic chickflick about literary research, of all things. (Cindy chose a movie about singing bears.) After dropping her off, we noted my nephew Steve's tenth birthday, coming up in late September, and bought him a present I've always wanted to buy him, **Treasure Island**; now maybe he's old enough to appreciate it. N.C. Wyeth illustrations, too; it's a gem. (The poor kid recently broke his wrist roller-blading. He needs a lift.)

9:35. Two hours earlier there. Maybe Quinn forgot the cell number and is trying to reach me at our home number. In that case I won't get the message until tomorrow, unless I call.

Oh yes, it's been an agonizing week. Rosy and I have endured the rush of e-postings from UK in '05 and Resnick listservers, as the convention approached. Like a knife to the heart came a written invitation to the traditional post-Hugo party from Torcon 3. The **Sci Fi Weekly** poll – which practically forced us to fly to Philadelphia last year – saw my genzine **Challenger** overtake first **Mimosa** for second place, and then **Ansible** for first. I got 198 votes – a number greater than the copies I sent out of **Chall**'s latest issue. Who votes in this poll, anyway? I learned last year that it wasn't genuine voters.

We thought of hitting up Rosy's aunt for a \$1000 loan and making last-minute mad dash for San Jose. Looking at the last-minute airfares brought that impulse sensibly under control. Finally, we hauled out a map of the Great Lakes and scanned a scenic route around Lake Superior, and vowed not to let finances keep us from Torcon, no matter what. The trick will be keeping **Challenger** on the Hugo ballot next year. I've been working on the fall issue – it could be pretty good. Will it, plus the momentum of the last three years, be enough?

9:44. I'll give it until 11; then I'll start calling. Lights outside. It's Rosy. We're going out to find dinner. I'll take the cell phone with me.

How's *your* evening?

September 2, 2002

So I called ConJose myself and got the information desk. Whoever that guy with the English accent is, I've talked with him three times during this convention, and he has borne the burdens of Atlas. He gave me the winners just as the ceremony was ending. I may have been the first person in the world to know that **American Gods** won the Best Novel award.

Ansible won the best fanzine Hugo, one of two for Langford. **Challenger** tied for third with **Mimosa** for first place votes, but came in *sigh* fifth overall. Not close at all, of course – frailty, thy name is **Sci Fi Weekly** -- but close enough to feel good about, and to keep going.

And so on ...

On the way home from Thibodaux Rosy and I stopped at the famous and fabulous *Oak Alley Plantation*, possibly the most beautiful and most famous of the pre-war plantations. That's pre-Civil War. Immaculately preserved, and blessed with parallel stands of the oldest and most beautiful trees I've ever seen (aside from Charleston's 1400-year-old Angel Oak), it was a pleasure I'd never allowed myself before. Thanks to Rose-Marie, I can now say I've been there. Rosy carried foo-foo-dawg Jesse in with us, by the way, hidden in a Sherpa Bag, and let her dawdle and carrouse and take a surreptitious poop amongst the roots and boles of the ancient trees. She too found it a mellow way to spend an afternoon.

Rosy covers the crime beat in tiny Lafourche Parish, and has occasionally asked me to interpret a legal question for her. In August I cut a few hours out of my onerous week to join her at a

criminal trial there, a bad one, a child rape case.

Those things are always ugly, but this one was made worse by the fact that the defendant was a friend of the 8-year-old girl's brother, and was, the charge notwithstanding, a fairly likable moron – with a gorgeous sister and a sweet granny, I might add. The defense lawyer was a p.d I've seen often at CLE conferences and in Jefferson Parish, and she gave the case a good shot, pointing out that the girl had other hairs on her body than the defendant's and that the fool's confession had practically been dictated to him. But, when we heard the jury was coming back after only a couple of hours, we exchanged a look, and a surreptitious shake of the head. She got what we call a "lesser included verdict" out of it – an attempt – but the poor boob would still face decades in Angola. For the noble attempt, this **Spiritus Mundi** is dedicated to her – *Susan K. Jones*.

And then in early September, she lured me to Thibodaux's Nicholls State University for a special sitting of the Louisiana Supreme Court, so I could help her understand a complicated criminal issue being argued there. A guy I worked with in Orleans gave the most substantive pitch for the defense, demanding a pre-trial hearing for prosecutorial assertions of earlier non-adjudicated sexual misconduct – that's what I said, never mind what I meant – and I think they won going away. I've given oral argument before the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeal, but never faced the Supremes; it was inspiring.

You know, damn it, if it wasn't for the lousy money and Rosy's ridiculous commute, I'd really be enjoying New Orleans and Louisiana these days. I like my work and I like the new mayor of New Orleans, who is cracking down on graft, and I like the way the pugilistic storm clouds rumble in from the south and southwest, grey and black, shot through with lightning, scouring the turf with their torrents, and the crickets going mad at dusk and the fans spinning in the high ceilings overhead, and the heavy air, and the delicious sense at night of nothing at all to do ... yeah, it's a nice way to live, except for the lousy money, and Rosy's ridiculous commute. And so I've gotten the Tennessee Bar application together again, and it's all but ready to mail ...

With luck – I guess – we could leave for Torcon from Nashville. If we do, I could be making half again as much as I am now, and my beloved wife and I could be living in a more robust economy and healthier environment, and have fireflies to look at in the evenings. But I still don't know how I feel about it. For better or for worse, I made my choice a long time ago ... and New Orleans, this sad old corrupt decaying town, is home.

And still later ...

The Brit from whom I got the Hugo winners read me one statistic neither he nor I understood. *Ansible* 43 ... *Challenger* 42. Now that ConJose has posted all its numbers I understand it easily. Those were nominations. Big and clunky and shallow in its distribution though it is, **Chall** practically *tied for first* with voters naming favorites for the Hugo ballot..

Now *that's* cheering. "Successful people don't quit, baby," said Loretta Lynn's husband in **Coal Miner's Daughter**. No, they don't. Like I said above, **Chall** #17 is in the works. *Sans* the logo, its cover – by Paul McCall – is here. If I can somehow scrape the money together, it'll be published in the fall.

MAILING CAUSTICS - SFPA 228

Best Bit in the Mailing: Moodling, Canoodling & Oogling. The 2002 DSC SFPA oneshot partakes of the same heartening community madness as has every such pub since **Conglomeration** and **Fried Shoes**. Rosy's photo is so beautiful I can hardly put the zine away. Ah.

The Southerner #228 / Jeff Awaiting your explanation of your Rule #4s ...)(Not much in the way of news, or even of comings or goings these days. SFPA is rock stable. That's fine with me, of course, but I wish we could entice some former members into a "How I'm Doing" zine every year or so ... a **Melikaphkaz**, or Hutchinson pub ... just to know what's new. Speaking of former SFPAn, I sent Mark Verheiden a fan e-mail recently praising **Smallville**, and he said to pass on his hellos.)(Thanks again for the proffered printing assistance with **SM**, which took forever to make the transit between NOLA and Seattle. It would have bruised a small pride of mine to have needed help, but many thanks anyway.

Pace Zamboni / Unanticipated Denouement / mike With your permission I'm going straight to **Denouement**, as most of the business discussed in **Zamboni** was either canceled (the Kangaroo job) or continued there.)(Ann Eiffel, the beautiful-but-evil boss from Hell in **LuAnn**, was a rare villain, all right - stranger than strange to see a lesbian on the comics pages, and almost refreshingly un-PC to see her shown as menacing and mean. I was as glad as Bernice to sic her on Tokyo.)(David Drake's **Redliners** sounds utterly splendid. I couldn't pick up from your review whether it's SF or fantasy or straightforward memoir, but as Vietnam was the central public event of my, our, youth, his perspective is invaluable no matter what genre he floats it in. Gimme!)(Glorious filched web-page on Cartoon Women. Don't see Aeon Flux, though. Guess it wasn't a *religious* page.)(Yikes! Too bad about Captain Jack the luckless puppy. Keep us advised as to his recovery.)(Your calculations of the necessary barrel length for Jules Verne's moon-gun are fun reading! Why not write all this up as an article for some New Orleans-based Hugo-nominated genzine?)(The Supreme Court's recent kiddie porn decision make it clear that criminal sanctions apply to porn featuring real kids - not cartoons or prose descriptions or VRs or 40-year-old crack ho's in Catholic schoolgirl uniforms. The point of the law is to protect the young from harm, not protect society from *outré* sexual expression.)(Speaking of which, sweet super-heroines in this issue. DC used to sue outsiders who mimicked the **Superman** logo; however do these artists get away with what they do?)(Ha! Hadn't spotted that "L.A. Graf" acronym before! Betcha it's true. Reminding me of what "J.B. Hunt" means to embittered Teamsters ...)(Justin Winston recently read **The Wind Done Gone**, and his and pronounced it guilty of the super-cardinal sin for parodies: it wasn't funny. A thorough botch.)(Paul Conrad, the late, great *L.A. Times* political cartoonist, once depicted Bill Mauldin's Willie & Joe as ghosts walking past a statue of William Calley, emblazoned HERO. W to J, "Things sure have changed since our day ..."

Yngvi is a Louse! #77 / Toni Rosy and I have started thinking of the same things at the same time, independently of one another, a sure sign - I hope - that we're true mates. For instance, we both thought that I should write an article for **Chall** about the Nolacon bid - and so I might.)(Anakin had a lousy voice and impressed everyone as a twerp. No. Lucas chose a pretty-boy for the role, when he needed an actor of hidden depth.)(It will sound odd coming from a veteran of the '60s, but I say give the National Guardsmen bullets if they're on street patrol. Just make sure they're trained on when *not* to use them.)(Yahoo has started a service whereby spam can be zapped without having to call it up in the inbox. I use it all the time, losing God knows how many chances I've lost to enlarge my wingwang, see Britney Spears' head superimposed on a naked model, and mortgage my non-existent home.)(Instead of rice, the minister at my first wedding had the guests throw birdseed - better for the grass. They blew bubbles at Rosy and me.)(Something definitely needs to change about the Hugos, and I don't *just* mean getting Dave Langford out of the fan writer category. Frank Wu had a margin of *fifty first-place votes* over his

nearest competitor in the Fan Artist category – but because he didn't have a majority, the Australian ballot system kicked in, and eventually he lost. This isn't the first time this has happened, and it ain't fair.)(One huge problem I see with not giving foreigners in America the same civil rights as citizens is that it puts innocents we need to win over in a precarious position. Under the Ashcroft scenario Inge Glass could get arrested for no reason and held incognito without recourse to due process – entirely in secret, completely at the mercy of executive whim. Though most Americans would simply stare stupidly if told of such a situation, it would shock the conscience of those with a conscience to shock. We need to keep our self-advertising in mind. We must live up to our beliefs, and the most cherished American belief is equal protection for everyone under the law. If not, then we're simply the biggest bully on the block, standing for nothing but our own power.

Passages #14 / Janet Nice stream-of-consciousness flavor to this little issue: twins natter → why humans give birth at night → horses controlling their birthing times → riding stories (I'm impressed by your success; bring your horse to the DSC) → Anne McCaffrey. When I retire, you can hire me to slop out the stalls at your riding academy.)(Enjoy Destin – it's where the Louisiana prosecutors have their annual seminars. You can imagine how much gets done.

The Sphere vol. #199 no. 1 / Don John Guidry is wowed by Fark.com; too bad it proved such an anti-blessing for the superb Toonopedia.)(If the purpose of the HIV+ character on **Sesame Street** is to preach to the audience, then it's a P.C. stunt and not worth respecting. If, on the other hand, his condition is just *there*, an understood thing, and ignored, then the point about tolerance and kindness has been made *without* preaching, and who could disagree with that?)(Alas, I must disagree – by the end of his life Al Capp had become a caricature of himself, a Spiro Agnew clone. At his best, he would've done as you say, and had as much fun demolishing the rabid Clinton-bashers as he would have spearing Big Bill himself – but he hadn't seen his best in many years. That best, though, was just about *the* best, and let's hope that's what people remember.)(I have absolutely no argument with your statements about Elian Gonzalez. When I remember the obscene video of him lecturing his absent father about Castro, I'm sickened. Of course, I don't blame the kid if he still wakes up wishing he was still sleeping with cousin Marielysis, a thought that may reoccur more and more often as his voice starts to break.

Guilty Pleasures / Eve My heart jumps for Raphi that he's bound for Brandeis University for his undergraduate work ... and with a scholarship, too. I was just reading about Louis Brandeis in **The Oxford Campaign to the Supreme Court**: he was an incredible individual and scholar. Raphi could do a lot worse than to have such a life as a role model when at university. (Our role model at UC – at least for us liberal arts losers – was Jack London. The physicists admired Oppenheimer.))(Watch them spider bites. 'Round here they're grounds for immediate isolation by the Disease Control Police and summary euthanasia.)(**Requiem for a Dream**, apparently a serious look at the drug culture, sounds worth watching. It'll have to be on video, though; serious movies about serious subjects fare badly in this town.)(**Insomnia** worked better for Al Pacino than did **Simone**, an SF satire of Hollywood celebrity that crept near the top but chickened out before it went over. Pacino played his role, the artsy-fartsy director who creates a VR superstar – as it should have been played, well *over* the top – but no one else even sought his lunatic level of comic focus. Rosy pointed out another flaw. Simone was too pretty. She was so perfect in face and form that she wasn't really interesting or attractive.)(Don't miss the chance to write me into **Smuggler's Gold**. Surely you have a studly hero who wins the redhead. The brunette, I mean! With the curly hair! From Florida!

Home with the Armadillo #54 / Liz Again, sorry to hear of your stepfather, a guy who brought hope and secure love to your mother's house. Your regard is his reward.)(The three decades since I visited Victoria—British Columbia, not Paris – have scarcely diminished my impression of the charm of the place. A tobacco shop, with a blue gas flame on the wall, the better to light your stogie, y'see. A pontoon plane, so cool, so alien, passed overhead. But ah, to have gone whale watching – to contact Leviathan in

the flesh is a pleasure I've never had. Marvelous city – I have no hopes of ever getting Rose there, but her childhood memories begin in Seattle (Joe worked for Boeing) – she may well have been there.)(Since I've grown up and become a bit accustomed to the loud booms, I've grown fond of fireworks. Well do I remember the sky blossoms that greeted me approaching MagiCon in '92 ... the grand show that brought in 2001 (Rosy crammed beside me in Jackson Square) ... the terrific 4th of July exhibition over Greensboro in '82 (celebrating, among other things, Jimmy Connors' victory at Wimbledon). Of course, I also remember the fireworks over the University of Chicago ten years earlier – I'm glad I've put 30 years between then and now.)(So it's James now, and not JJ. Make a note, GHLIII.

Variations on a Theme #14 / Rich I really envy D.C. its Smithsonian Folklife Festival, if most years are as charming and entertaining as the one you describe. (It's not Mardi Gras, but it will do.) Must be nice to live in Washington, at least when lunatics aren't dropping planes onto it.)(One "lesson" of **Amadeus** was its depiction of mediocrity – such as painfully felt by the fictional Salieri – as relative. Do classical music enthusiasts, like yourself, think of the real composer as *mediocre*, just because he was a contemporary of the nearly divine Mozart – and *wasn't* Mozart? Or is there unique and lasting quality to his work?)(I think I'd enjoy the *Seiun* Awards more if I hadn't seen the same slow ceremony so many times; year to year, it never varies. Maybe if they'd come out dressed like the Pink Ladies ...)(BSE? Around here all the (medical) talk is about West Nile Virus, caused by mosquito bites. Pest control trucks tour the streets dispensing fogs of insecticide, and citizens make special efforts to disperse stagnant pools of rainwater. The disease first gained notice here, and is now attracting notice nationwide: Louisiana, on the cutting edge at last.)(Your story of how the hijacked jet chose the Pentagon to attack is fascinating – and infuriating. The White House supposedly has hidden defensive missiles hidden on its grounds; why doesn't the nation's military headquarters – and why, God help us, weren't they used?

Tyndallite Vol. 3 No. 102 / NORM I'll have to ask Tim Marion to write up his visit, with Ned, to Murray Leinster. I never met the gent.)(Speaking of the movie versions of Campbell's "Who Goes There?", I see Howard Hawks' version of **The Thing** all the time; although I prefer the pared-down version I bought at some video store, and the heroes make an incredible, unforgivable blunder at the end of the film, it bears up well, and contains the best performance of Douglas Spencer's career. The blunder? The flyboys not only kill James Arness, who is after all trying to kill *them*, they destroy all the research the obsessed scientist has been doing about the creature – thus leaving us wide open for the next wave of the invasion. Dr. Carrington, the scientist, might well have found a biological weakness in the super-carrot from Mars, but no chance of that now! In the sequel they should have all been busted back to Permanent Latrine Orderly.)(Fun eavesdropping as you and Chester Cuthbert discuss the way the future was. Man sounds like another polymath, few of whom still stomp upon the terra.

Derogatory Reference 99 / Arthur I flipped for Mercy van Vlack's artwork when I worked at DC in 1974, and for the gal herself when she visited our offices (and turned the place turvy-topsy). I crave her address! Hers is a terrific cover to this issue – love those *foxy* caricatures. Who's the moose?)(Of course W didn't *plan* 9-1-1. That's insane. In fact, as I'll be saying often, it was probably his only honest moment in office: every other issue, every other pronouncement, every other move has been phony, hypocritical. But I bore myself bad-mouthing the dullard.)(Stan Schmidt is overdue by decades for a Hugo. Surely an honorary award is deserved.)(Your review of ICFA reminds to inquire after the Lady Bernadette. How's she doing?)(Funny item that Molly Gloss should be misidentified as "Molly Bloom." Like you say, a *long* GoH speech ... and no punctuation! Even though I have an instinctive aversion to most academic treatments of SF, I wish I'd sat in on that Emily Bick session comparing Phil Dick with Bret Easton Ellis, who deserves a perverse sort of credit for being so offensive to political correctness back when that took courage. He really was trying to create a serious novel in **American Psycho**, too. Whether he succeeded is still a touchy question. (The movie was nothing.))(Agreed, **Idea** is an excellent genzine – when it appears, which is all too rarely. Love the itchy mimeotone, too.)(Binker Hughes has an article on Charles Williams' novels in the next **Chall**. Should've been in the last

issue, but I ran out of room.)(Those lines you print of Lafferty's are from "About a Secret Crocodile", a story I dug so much I didn't even bother to notice that it was winger polemic. From Ray, who cared?

Peter, Pan & Merry #44 / Dave Very well put: "SF is the message, not the medium." There can be science fiction movies, science fiction plays – science fiction *artwork*; anything qualifies that's spawned of science fiction *ideas*.)(Dolbear is better read than I on the subject, but the only judges I know of who bespoke absolute opposition to the death penalty were certain Supremes – Marshall, Douglas, Brennan, men I admire so deeply I can accept this excess of moral purity on their part. I'm sure "lower" judges have also opined against the ultimate penalty, but ambition and respect for the majority rule of the Court above them probably kept them quiet; Supreme Court justices cannot be removed short of wild misconduct, and are immune from politics, so they can let fly with opinions as far from the general public thought as they wish.)(Thibodaux (note: no "e") is southwest of New Orleans, LaPlace north by northwest. We're at two points of a triangle; it takes me longer to drive to Rosy's job than to get to work.)(The only SF porn, soft or hard, that I remember from the Ted Mark era was some written by John Cleve. Vic Koman's timeless **Saucer Sluts** showed up a bit later. I still have the original, serialized version – published by SFPA Sister Ruth Judkowitz in a sleazy tabloid she edited – around here somewhere. **I was a Teeny-Bopper for the CIA** was a disappointment, lizard-brain-wise; the Steve Victor books were *much* dirtier, at least in hairy-palmed memory.)(Dave ... your presidential puns suck. Strictly Bush league. Pierced me to the heart. If I had more lines, I'd fill more. Nix on them. *Hmmph*. Maybe your puns *aren't* so bad; I shouldn't polk fun at them.)(My uncle – a devout Southern Baptist Bible-pounder – was my source for the gross of thousands figure for the number of souls to be saved. Must come from Revelations.)(How should we the people have reacted to the Republican theft of the election, after W was inaugurated. With criticality. 9-1-1 notwithstanding, that's the way this administration should still be looked upon, as a political oddity of dubious legitimacy – more and more dubious, as time goes on. 9-1-1 was its only solid – and I would say, honest – moment.

Murphy Makes a House Call / Sheila You're not the only one, of course, to lose fanac to a computer fzzt-out. Dan Knight, editor of a terrific Lafferty fanzine (**The Boomer Flats Gazette**) lost its entire 5th issue to a bad hard drive. The disappointment was so grave he quit fan publishing for years ... but he's been re-energized by Lafferty's death, and issue #6 is in the works. Point being: definitely get that stuff you lost back, run it here, and of course, save to disc in the future.)(#%&^\$ it, we missed CrescentCityCon. How was it?

The New Port News #204 / Ned Always fun to eavesdrop as you and Dengrove talk old books; it's like sitting between Copeland and Hughes when they talk tech. Ignorance adds interest.)("I don't know enough about Jewish theology to evaluate ... Ettleson's **Lewis Carroll Decoded** ..." Neither do I, nor have I ever been the literary scholar I hoped to be in college, but I do know pseudo-intellectual horseshit when I hear it. The ideas you relate from the book remind me of Roger Lovin's contention – cooked up to sell a book idea, undoubtedly – that Carroll was Jack the Ripper.)(I met Mike Luckovich, the excellent political cartoonist, at a local Kinko's several years ago. He was disgustingly young.)(Thanks for the excellent comment to **Challenger** 16 – it'll be printed as a LOC. As for why my crazy client was charged with terrorism when his threats were obviously psychotic drivel, his father had originally called the cops saying that his son was threatening him with a non-nuclear, very believable gun. The A-bomb threats came after the police rapped on his door: "Go away or I'll set off this nuke!")(Georgia Tech's imaginary George Burdette sounds like the Saint Bernard owned by a frat at Berkeley. Members took enough classes in his name to earn him a degree!)(The film of **LotR** did a better job than the books in depicting Sauron. I got a sense of physical power and menace from the movie that the text never got across.)(Your closing paragraph, on why you let your string of DeepSouthCons attended lapse, is the saddest thing in this mailing. No one could doubt the sincerity of your reasons – just too far, just too much trouble – but the demise of your con-above-all fannishness is a downer, like watching a great athlete limp off the field, his knee blown, shaking his head, knowing it's Done. Say it ain't so, Ned!

Twygdrasil #76 / Richard “My most vivid memory at DSC is George Wells.” Mine too – but the DSC in question is from 1972, and most every year since. George, have you missed a year in the last 30? Now that Ned has abandoned his string, yours might be the longest. *String*, I said. (Remember, you’re a Methodist.) Oh. I was talking to Dengrove.)(I can’t imagine a gentle entertainer like Connie Willis being hassled because of her fiction – it’s not like she promotes any sort of political agenda or radical lifestyle. Possibly she is simply paying the price for becoming an SF celebrity; the John Lennon Syndrome striking close to home.)(Julia Morgan-Scott is an excellent fan artist – and a lovely lady, too.)(No, *Rosy* won the Rubble Award, not me. And do note that Robe and I shared the Wigwam Village panel with Rickey Sheppard, re-discoverer of the great side-of-the-road motel.)(Aging parents can be a nightmare. My poor brother still hasn’t recovered from the strain of my mother’s descent into Alzheimer’s, and I doubt he ever will. I just hope he someday forgives me for living on the other side of the country when the shit came down – logically, of course, there is nothing to forgive, but Lillians ain’t Vulcans.)(But your mother was a superbly talented artist, and I wish you’d reprint some more of her sketches. She’s our most direct link to the Ayatollah Khomeini [*sic*], after all.)(Who were those three girls who did that *a capella* version of the Hallelujah Chorus that was so popular umpteen years ago? **Rolling Stone** praised their technical virtuosity, but noted that they obviously didn’t *mean* a note of it, contrasting them with a soul singer’s gospel hits. (I find it interesting – if probably apocryphal – that Elvis’ favorite songs were said to be gospel.))(Who is behind the Nigerian e-scams? Do they still work?)(If W wins in ’04, it won’t be due to luck, unless Gore shows up drunk for the debates and wets himself on stage. It’ll be inertia. He’s still coasting from his initial response to 9-1-1, which was, as I say elsewhere, probably his only honest moment as President. He’s been cozying up to Saudi Arabia recently, possibly to counter the wave of suspicion directed against them by conservatives – who may be right. Someone should investigate the Saudi connection to the hijackers, besides the fact that most of them came from there.)(I’ve come to the conclusion that John Ashcroft may well be certifiable, and that his policies are definitely crazy ... and unconstitutional. The treatment of Jose Padilla is unconscionable; if the guy did something, let the government prove it through due process. If they can’t, *let him go*. I see no reason behind the Attorney General’s decision to stop playing by the rules ... merely a lust for power.)(Methinks Al Queda has had a hard-on for the World Trade Center since the original bombing attack, in 1993, I think, and for many of the same reasons that Cheney wants to invade Iraq now. The rationale behind both is to complete a job botched in the first go-round.)(On to more important topics, like what spot should we choose to designate a “site of SFPA,” from which the rest of the universe could be measured. I suggest either Nashville, whence issued our first mailing, or Huntsville, where Bill Plott and Al Andrews hatched the idea.)(You strike a bittersweet spot when you mention Scottish Rites. I saw Bobby Kennedy at the Scottish Rite temple in Oakland a week before he died.)(Re convincing people you’re brilliant by knowing elementary astronomy: a very bright nurse once asked me the difference between stars and planets. I was aghast at her ignorance, so ran to the encyclopedia, looked up the answer, came back and told her.)(“There are two ways of dealing with friends ... accused of wrongdoing,” you say, and list circling the wagons and tossing the friend to the wolves. Here’s another idea: stand by your friend and encourage them to do the right thing.

Trivial Pursuits #102 / Trans-Pacific Tales / Janice What a truly rotten summer this has been for you, with not only George passing, but Neal in such serious medical trouble. Things have got to improve as ’02 goes on.)(Website, website ... I’m anxious to get **Challenger** onto the net, not that I know how. Richard Brandt’s first effort was noble, but too ambitious; he wanted to cram every page of every issue onto the site. My thought is to restrict the new listing to a best-of format, featuring only one or two articles out of every issue.)(NOLA fandom still congregates most Fridays, meeting first at the Winstons’ before going out for chow. A visit to a local coffeehouse follows, and then, the hour pushing ten, when all nice boomer boys and girls find themselves on the verge of collapse, most of us go home and do just that. Not John Guidry, though. He and Annie Winston often return to Annie’s – Justin having gone to sleep hours before – and watch videotapes. (His current favorite: **The Smiling Detective**.) But the days of New Orleans fandom seeing dawn spread her golden wings o’er the eastern horizon are long, long past.

)(After sending forth some genzines to the U.K., I experienced a flash of worry: I'd used NY firefighter stamps, which bear no denomination. Such postage isn't legal for foreign mail. None came back, though; whether the postmasters just didn't notice, or were overcome by the righteous patriotism of the stamps, or amazed that, for the first time in memory, living persons were depicted thereon, who can say?)(Regarding the folks who decided to start families after 9-1-1, tragedy often inspires such life affirmation. My brother's decision to have kids closely followed a near-fatal car wreck. It's as if the breath of Death were so horrible that people instinctively turn towards its antithesis.)(I did print some tit shots in **Challenger's** Mardi Gras (un)coverage, but I promise not to neglect **Spiritus** again. I'm sure you're smiling about that.)(I haven't seen the architectural designs for the WTC site. A memorial should certainly take up some of the space, containing that spherical sculpture which, dented, survived the holocaust. A segment of the WTC's distinctive siding has been set aside; it too should be there. But not all of the acreage at Ground Zero should be devoted to a monument; after such an attack, a return to normalcy would be a victory. Business buildings *belong* there. No more skyscrapers, though; the skyline is better without them. *Later note:* having now seen them, I endorse the idea which includes the long promenade stretching from GZ to the Battery, on a direct line of sight to the Statue of Liberty. Lower Manhattan needs a great park. That Sphere, by the way, is already in place.)(On to your latest trip report. Another contest: which SFPAn has traveled the most? You? Lynch? Steve?)(I enjoyed this account, thought aside from noting the nifty cricket natter – “natter” sounds like a cricket term, doesn't it? – and a repeat of my conviction that caves are in-every-way cool, I can only express envy for your visit to New Zealand. The surfers in **Endless Summer** were wild about NZ ... better surf than Oz. (Best waves were on a deserted, hard-to-approach beach in South Africa, of all places.)

Everything will be All Right / George Let's hope so.)(I dreamed t'other night that I ran into unexpectedly at a con – and that a guy came along whom I thought to be Tesser (but was not). Amazing.)(Robert Blake may not look *humble* lately, but he's certainly looking old. His face is a morass of canyon-deep wrinkles and his hair is as white as Christmas. You'd almost think he has something on his mind.)(I saw **Frailty**. Took me a minute to place it, though; it wasn't that impressive. McConnahooey was better in **Reign of Fire**.)(That's cool about your great-great grandpa being the Methodist superhero, Richard Poole. A photo, please – should be a cinch for a librarian to find.)(The musical episode of **Buffy** was the only sincere competition **LotR** had for the ConJose Hugo, but even it couldn't approach the Tolkien film in the final voting. A wonderful award.)(A sudden flash: a *real werewolf* shows up at a DeepSouthCon, knowing nothing about what it is and who we are, and bursts into a panel all hairy and snarling – only to retreat like a whimpering puppy when greeted by gales of laughter. The panel? “Scarm vs. Olem”, of course.)(Did you catch that 24-hour **24** marathon? Saw an ad for a second season recently. Hope they don't put it on opposite **Smallville**, else I'll be spending all my fanzine money on videotapes. Speaking of **Smallville**, has anyone seen – or better, taped – the episode where Clark wakes up floating? I mean, in the air? I'm betting he learns to fly this season.)(Thanks for the *lowwww*down on the alien cows. It's a comfort.)(Horrible story of your anti-snoring operation! I live in fear of being sliced, for whatever reason. If my nocturnal caterwaulery ever gets that bad, I'll buy Rosy some earplugs!

Oblivion No. 141 / Gary B. A really good Babe illo on your cover – but it chills me to note that this curvy little super-heroine looks *young* to me now.)(So your folks were married on July 20th. Congrats to them for choosing the greatest day in human history for such an auspicious occasion. (I don't refer to the minor lunar publicity stunt performed on that date in 1969, of course, but to the truly epochal moment that occurred 20 years earlier.))(So Alan Hutchinson went to San Diego with you. I hope you persuaded him to illustrate your trip report! How *are* he and his'n?)(I wish Ryan all the best as he sets forth for college and life on his own. Let's hope he concentrates on the *important* stuff about college life instead of wasting his time with books. (You have my awed admiration for bearing these horrible costs. I couldn't afford to send my *cat* to college if I drove past UNO and chucked him out the window.))(A thought: the **Spider-Man** movie has saved Marvel from total financial collapse. T'ruth?)(Science

fiction would fare a lot better in the public eye if it were seen as a serious prognosticator of the future instead of simply a genre for mindless entertainment. But we can't really blame the "mundanes" for this point of view. We simply haven't been as foresightful as people of imagination should be. How come – for familiar instance – no one predicted the Internet?)(I've heard astronomers ordain such solar systems as you describe – a monstrous planet many times the size of Jupiter orbiting a star – as incomplete binary star systems, wherein the big planet is simply a star that failed to ignite. (Whoops – dangerous word to use in SFPA.))(*Baseball needs heroes* – that was the lesson of the last decade and it's the lesson the game needs to learn now. The Republican-esque arrogance shown towards fans in the All-Star Game needs to be ameliorated by athletes who show they care about their fans. McGwire was perfect – a man without ego problems and a genuinely generous nature. Now that he's retired – well, Sosa is still around, a pleasant guy still swattin' em into outer space, but the games' dominant player, Barry Bonds, is; like you say, a snot, not a hero. (And if the players strike, they can count on zero – zero – support from the people in the bleachers.) If you're enjoying the Ted Williams/cryogenics brouhaha, by the way, check out Greg Benford's piece in the next **Challenger**.)(Speaking of cryogenics, I understand W heard about it and liked the idea of having his head frozen, but decided not to wait until he died. Were we a critical and truly intelligent people, instead of the nation of sheep, his duplicity on the question of corporate ethics and the utterly anti-American totalitarianism of his domestic policy – of which the *insane* TIPS program is only the most recent and obvious example – would have his poll numbers in the single digits. Instead, he coasts on the strength of his tough speech after 9-1-1. I hear that the political reaction to TIPS – from us wimpy al-Queda-sucking civil libertarian types – has forced W's fanatics, once again, to scale back their radical proposals. Some of us aren't sheep. *Re-elect Gore in 2004*.)(Appropriate to move from a discussion of W's idiot worldview to a discussion of Matt Helm novels. Or do I do Helm an injustice?)(The last baseball game I attended was a minor league tilt at Metairie's Zephyrs Field ... and a lady got beamed by a foul ball. She wasn't badly hurt, and I hoped the player autographed it for her. Lawsuit? Of course not. He did nothing wrong, and dammit, you assume the risk of being hit when you look away from the game, as she did.)(I hope you said hi to Julie Schwartz for me at the Comic Convention. I got only two birthday cards when I turned 53 on July 20th; one was from my insurance company, and one was from him.)(It is surprising that gorilla covers sell comics so well. Wonder why that is. In Grodd we Trust.)(Bruce Pelz was a magnificent dude, but boy, he filled a lot of space – in every sense of the word! I don't think fandom could handle more than one such titan at a time.)(Speaking of blue-penciling swimsuit model pictures, *Life* once published a picture of a babe in a bikini – and airbrushed away her navel. There were letters of complaint, including one from the production tech. "Yes, I did the deed," he admitted, "but as a Frenchman my heart wasn't in it.")(Right – whenever I see a "Worldcom" headline I do a double-take.)(I agree that genzines, if distributed prior to the SFPA deadline, shouldn't qualify as membership pages. But *minac* isn't the issue – Box Score credit is. Consistency should rule. How are other non-SFPA zines counted? **AUGHH** Who cares? I'm tired of this discussion.)(I love the Superman of America stuff with which you close the issue. Here is why **Smallville** has hit such an affirmative note with so many of us. Superman has been a constant in our lives. Other media heroes come along, and some of them have been terrific – Davy Crockett, James Bond – but only one has *always* been there, and shows no sign of becoming passé. That said, I must insist that however fine an actor, Jude Law would make a *lousy* Superman, and I hope that the producers of the next couple of movies do what the Salkins did, and opt for someone true to the comics. Speaking of which, I saw a skit on a **Saturday Night Live** recently about the Man o'Steel ... having ignored **SNL** for years, I recognized none of the actors, but the premise was hilarious: everyone at the *Daily Planet* knows that Clark is Superman, and he's so dumb that he gives himself away all the time – his costume is even visible beneath his clothes. Crude and clumsy, as **SNL** almost always was, but I loved the idea.

This old typewriter / Poulette I think you're a deep thinker, Bobby. It's getting *mighty* deep in here.)(Speaking of "crop cercles," the recent movie **Signs** really scored with me, a unique cinematic perspective of a classic movie premise, a space invasion. Usually subject to overblown world-spanning treatments as

in **War of the Worlds** and **Independence Day**, an alien threat is this time seen up close and personal, through the experience of a small family and the changes it brings to their lives. I found it nice and scary in spots (real jolt when Mel Gibson looks through his window), viscerally satisfying ("*Eat bat, E.T.!*"), funny (love those anti-ESP hats!) and emotionally moving (as Gibson regains his Belief). Best movie of the summer.

Tennessee Trash #47 / Gary R. Enormous sigh of relief at learning that Isaac's heart problems seem healed. The world is once again against his oyster.)(Great color photos on the cover, but what happened to your interior repro? Looks like the xerox got drunk.)(Indeed, the only problem with this last DSC was its brevity. No sooner did we arrive than we were packing to return. Perhaps this is an illusion of age, when time *really does* fly when you're having fun. Only solution: get there earlier, shell out for the extra night, hit the Rocket Center – if you're in Huntsville – have a "Dog Birth" party marking the beginning of the con as well as one celebrating its close.)(I wish we had found a good restaurant in Huntsville; the joints we found were awful.)(I too wonder how we looked during our various panels, and imagine viewing Feller's videotapes with some trepidation. I looked like Khrushchev in Rosy's wedding video – people seeing the tapes will probably wonder why I don't pound the table with my shoe. (Note to the youthful in my audience: the above is a baby-boomer joke. You'd have to have been alive and watching TV in the early sixties to Get It – or even known who I'm talking about.))(Don't worry: Rosy *loved* her Rubble Award, and has it prominently displayed.)(That third Wigwam Village is in San Bernadino, California, and I'm rending my memory trying to recall if I saw it when I lived next door in my early teens. Word is that it's in a lousy neighborhood and is mainly a drug hangout.)(*Yoiks!* An ankle sprain! Those can hurt for days. Glad it didn't completely destroy your trip to D.C. Arlington Cemetery a righteous place – especially the Tomb of the Unknowns. Did you need to explain its meaning to the Robettes or do they have a pretty real idea of war?)(I think it effably cool that you got a look at Pococatepetl, one of the first volcanoes I learned of by name. Isn't that the mountain that literally grew in days from a mere hole in the ground?)(Ah, that's sad about your cousin, and such a talented gentleman, too. It's good that you have his recordings.)(An excellent comment about the music of Aaron Copland. I too am very fond of his work – "Fanfare for the Common Man" is so good the Rolling Stones used it to open their Baton Rouge concert in 1974. I once took Linda Krawecka to a performance of the N.O. Symphony, Copland himself conducting, but unfortunately the orchestra sounded weak and tinny and unworthy of the music. For screen music more obviously influenced by Copland, try most anything by the Bernsteins, particularly Leonard's score to **On the Waterfront** and Elmer's thrilling music to **The Big Country** and, natch, **The Magnificent Seven**..)(Your niece is a "bussing" pianist? Interesting typo – one key to the left – that the young bucks of her generation will find encouraging!)(As worldcon approaches, the **Sci Fi Weekly** poll put Gaiman's **American Gods** well ahead of its competition ... one of several winners there that also took home rockets. But it's no guarantee. **Challenger** won that poll last year – and came in 4th in the actual balloting. This year it won again – and came in *fifth*. A couple more such victories and nobody will be admitting they'd ever heard of my fanzine.

Comments 14 / Random Thoughts / Steve Lightning scares me. I've been within yards of three substantial bolts – one hit right outside the room where I was sleeping and knocked me out of bed. Each time I've spent long minutes waiting for my hands to stop shaking.)(*No!* You *cannot* miss DSC '02! Stereoscopic conventions happen every weekend in almost every city in the country – there are three competing ones in New Orleans even now – but DeepSouthCon ... that comes but once a year!)(I wish we'd gone along with y'all on your swamp tour. I've taken Martina Klicperova and Sheila Lightsey on such excursions, and know Rosy would love it. Next time you're here we'll haul you out to Oak Alley, the nifty restored plantation an hour or so upriver. It's way cool. Too bad we weren't able to hustle you into the Confederate Museum, a neat exhibit across the street from the D-Day Museum, now being threatened with eviction from its century-old space. Of course, the threat to it is political; black politicians want to attack it to please their constituents and white politicians don't see it as important enough to fight over.)(After SFFA sees your article on the flawed WTC design, will you consider

letting **Challenger** reprint it? I've always wanted to broadcast your work.)(I think 9-1-1 could have been prevented with more sensible precautions, like vault-solid doors on cockpit cabins. When Rose and I flew back from MilPhil, they actually had the doors open during part of the flight, which amazed me even through my acute inebriation. An almost-empty cross-country flight ... good thing for us the terrorists didn't embark from Philadelphia!)(Justin Winston has a stereoptiscope or whatever they call them. We'll run your "adventure in graphic design" through it. Your dedication in carving each of those many corners out by hand is awesome!)(Very little "random" about your **Random Thoughts** this time. It's the only thoughtful response I've heard to the Enron scandal – which remains a scandal in my eyes, simply because those greedy execs let their employees take a fall they knew was coming. I repeat, you wouldn't treat your people like that, and I hope I wouldn't were I in that situation. *Protect your own* means protect the people that trust you – not just your personal bottom line.

All the Mailing Comments / Jeff Your closing cartoon reminds me of the balmy Canadian hitchhiker girl I once drove to Mobile. Every other word was "Eh?")(You mention Portland, as in Oregon; I need to find the address of their SF club – they publish a clubzine, and I want to trade **Chall** for it. Best way to reach the maximum number of fans – outside of going on the net, of course – hit the clubs.)(As I've said about **Eyes Wide Shut**, one thing that bugged me was that it broadcast Cruise as its star, and then he spent half the movie wearing a mask. Of course, as I also said, there were scenes in the flick when Cruise could've shoved a carrot up his nose and I wouldn't have noticed.)(Car chases – recently caught one of my absolute favorites on the tube: **The Dead Pool**, Clint Eastwood fleeing through the streets of San Francisco, pursued by a radio-controlled *toy car*. The toy was so cool – poppin' wheelies, two-wheelin' corners – that the audience was rooting for it to catch Dirty Harry and blow him up. (Which it did, but he survived, dammit.))(The problem with your criticism of the great **Space Station 3-D** – namely, that it missed an opportunity to proselytize for space exploration – is that no one is going to see the movie who isn't already 100% space-happy to begin with. Why preach to the choir?)(Why is NYC's Natural History Museum the site of "my coolest moment, ever"? Ah ... you fell for it. Well, one time in the early seventies I was visiting there and wandered into its gift shop. A beautiful girl was standing at an exhibit with her boy friend, and as I passed she began a playful swat at his rear end. By sheerest accident, my groin intervened, and instead of her boyfriend's butt she ended up *grasping my schween*. She glanced up at me with huge, astonished and horrified eyes. Without cracking a smile I said, "Oh. Thank you." and moved on, as the poor girl collapsed in embarrassed giggles. I made it outside without laughing, but barely. And that was my coolest moment, ever, or at least, to date.)(Attorney General Ashcroft has indicated that he has no intention of obeying the court orders to release information on the government's detainees – and why should he, since his is an administration devoted to power, not justice, and expediency, not due process ... and which can always rely on its fellow travelers on the Supreme Court for support. Al-Queda has succeeded in destroying American democracy. They've won.)(Granted, **Young Frankenstein** faced lame Hugo competition, although I liked **Phantom of the Paradise** (first seen in rough cut form at the studio offices in New York City). This year, fortunately, we have more than enough worthy flicks to vie for the honor: **The Two Towers** and **Harry Potter II**, unless all indicators are 'way off base, **Minority Report**, **Signs**, even **Reign of Fire**, and **Attack of the Clones** – and the **Buffy**-ites will probably get another episode onto the ballot.)(I understand W's colonoscopy didn't work; they failed to remove his head.)(Hey, how about a critical article on **The Prisoner** -- which episodes stand up, which are dated, and so on?)(**Mallard Fillmore** is at least well-drawn; the guy can wield a pen. Too bad his alleged sensayuma is so mallard-roit.)(Sidney Poitier was better when he had an edge – and he hasn't had an edge since **The Blackboard Jungle**. Since then, all he's portrayed on screen is outrage at racism, with the interesting exception of his Oscar win for **Lilies of the Field**. *That* was a real man.)("Why is Boy George like Lamb Chop?" Neither can sing on their own and both have Shari Lewis' fingers shoved up their -- ...Oh. *A* lamb chop.

Frequent Flyer / Tom Looking to your cover photo – is that your dad?)(Losing weight is a constant goal around here, and we salute y'all's amazing success. Just as we recoil in horror from your story of

eye infection. You could have borrowed your diagnosis of a blocked tear duct from Janice. Yech!)(If World.com (*sic*) deigns *not* to house their Jackson guests at the '97 DSC hotel, they're missing a damn good lobby. No kidding, it was the best *de facto* con suite I've seen since the Iguanacon Hyatt, and I still daydream about the cute teenaged blondes who wandered about it playing vampire. Jackson should bid again.)(The Nashville Parthenon is gorgeous. I wrote about it in one of my **Route** trip reports. An interesting fact about its Athena statue, I understand, is that it's not made of marble. Fibreglass, isn't it?)(Well, no offense to our cheesehead sistern and brethren of Wiscon, but their sercon program sounds like a roaring bore. "Fantasy Religions from Conan to **Curse of Chalion**" ... God, people, smear yourself with cheese whip and play naked Twister, why don't you?)(Professor Moriarty has seldom been done well in Holmes films. Nicholas Meyer insulted the entire canon with his treatment of the arch-criminal in **The 7 Per Cent Solution**, and the Jeremy Brett series cast a nasty-looking old man – missing the point. Moriarty should be like Lex Luthor, at least as **Smallville** and recent DC Comics see him. A worthy antagonist for a great hero should have seductive qualities himself: genius, charm (the last four letters of which ...), civilization ... his evil should be attractive, enticing. George Zucco was a fine Moriarty in the Rathbone film **The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes**, and that glorious character actor Henry Daniells did him a good turn in **The Woman in Green**. But I think his *coolest* appearance was in the surprise ending of **Young Sherlock Holmes** – the best thing about the movie!

Avatar Press 2.22 / Randy Such modesty! The guy publishes a fine account of the 2002 DSC and doesn't even mention his election to the SFC Presidency! Fine photos, by the way – I look like a wad of bread dough somebody dropped out off a building, but the ladies look lovely and make up for it. I'll look forward to your **Bulletins** ... and be sure to run them through SFPA!

Offline Reader Vol. 1 issue 29 & final(?) / Irvin I don't know whether to envy you for having the money to invest or pitch some pity because you're always losing money on the market. If I had it to invest I don't think I'd go *near* stocks; they're too volatile for me, and a friend who plays regularly says no one, no one, has any idea of what is going on. Me for something *reliable* and *stable*, like lotsa lottery tickets!)(I no longer use my glasses to read, and am constantly setting them down and losing them as a result.)(I've attended two NASFiCs – Louisville in '79 and Phoenix in '85 – and let me tell you, big cons *need* the Hugos.)(I doubt I'd recognize Myriad these days. I wonder if any of its members join the worldcon and so should see **Challenger** ...)(Your lost/stolen cell phone crisis plants the fear of God into me; mine shall never leave my side ~~until Rosy decides we can't afford it.~~

Spiritus Mundi 190 / me Thanks again to Jeff for his potential help with this issue. I didn't need it, but it was a comfort to know it was there. My string remains the longest *unassisted* such in SFPA history, the lead item in my resume.)(Judge Sharon Hunter was indeed busted from the bench by the Louisiana Supreme Court. Tears were copious among the New Orleans legal community, and then *feathers* grew out of my head. Seriously, Hunter's ugly, abusive, incompetent tenure is mourned by few indeed. As for Ronnie Bodenheimer, whose lapse into insanity and crime really is mourned, he didn't attempt to qualify for re-election. His next judging activities, I imagine, will be refereeing inmate basketball games at the nearest federal "country club.")(I see that, like everyone else, I avoided mentioning the DSC's preeminent hall costume, the oaf in the baby suit complete with monster pacifier. Yih.)(Rosy's recent reporting gigs for **The Daily Comet** have included a Drug Rehab graduation, a mostly-orchestrated drug bust, an ersatz hostage negotiation, a special sitting of the state Supreme Court, and the child rape trial reported on earlier. Interesting job, sounds to me, but she *hates* the hours.)(As of now, I haven't heard back from Sir Arthur about the **Challenger** article on the Apollo 11 party. Guess my letter got lost in the mail.)(In that first photo from the DSC, Rosy's not only holding Jesse the woobie-dog but her Rubble Award as well. Note the splendid Betty Rubble figure. In her *hand*!

And that caps it, *September 6, 2002*, as we wait for John Guidry to call us with plans for Friday night dinner!

September 11th ...

I just saw a helluva guy on my boss' TV. His name was Steven Morello, the son of a World Trade Center victim, a guy of about 30. Today must be a vicious challenge to him, as it is to everyone who lost people a year ago today, but he was greeting the day with courage, intelligence, and class. The Fox interviewer kept trying to steer him towards expressions of revenge and fear, support for the Iraq invasion, and so forth, but he stayed on message – no one in his family would ever let the terrorist threat curtail them from their lives, and if Bush wanted to get tough with anyone in the Middle East, he said, don't forget Saudi Arabia – the home of most of the hijackers and an ardent supporter of terrorism whom we coddle because of oil. I've been taping 9-11 specials all week, and A&E's **Investigative Reports** has been the best so far – until I saw the sun shine through on this dude.

The Common Man really did behave well on 9-1-01. The firefighters and cops rushed into the WTC Towers to do their jobs and rescue civilians. Office workers carried complete strangers down dozens of flights of smoke-filled stairs. The passengers on Flight 93 – well, they rolled. And Mr. Average American, though shaken to his shoe leather, showed himself to be a lot braver, stronger, and smarter than a lot of us – myself included – gave him credit for. The year of horror at 9-11-01 is over. Our personal situation remains flaky, as Rose-Marie and I work and plan together towards a stable home. But damned if this guy hasn't brought a moment's optimism. Jesus, I'm proud of such people. They're worthy of anyone's trust. America must be doing something right to number them as our fellow citizens.

Well, on to the fall season. Trials next week? Who knows? Hurricanes? Could be. A bad election? Talk about that next issue. Also about the Tennessee application and our Thanksgiving trip to West Palm Beach and the next **Challenger** and God knows what else. After listening to this Morello, damned if I'm not up for it. See you under autumn leaves!

