



SPIRITUS MUNDI 192

A SFPazine for SFPA #230 by

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What I said to George McGovern when I finally got the chance was, shaking his hand, "You're still the vote I'm most proud of. 'Come home, America.' No kidding!"

It was October 18, 2002, and that day I also got to set eyes on my 7th President. George Bush the Elder had also come to town for the Stephen Ambrose memorial, and they had sat in the front row of dignitaries before the D-Day Museum, a mere chair between them, rising together when the Master of Ceremonies called for veterans of World War II to stand. Rose-Marie and I had been escorting my cousin Roger, his wife Sue and two of their California friends through the Museum, after spending an hour at the doomed Confederate Museum across the street. We'd hurried through the excellent exhibits to get to the stands. Bush I expected. McGovern – looking very good for his age, especially considering his recent family tragedy – was a surprise.

He shouldn't have been. Stephen Ambrose's last book had dealt with bomber missions during World War II and McGovern's service as a pilot over Germany had been featured. Though Ambrose had seemed more and more conservative as time had gone on, and – knowing nothing of the time of Watergate – had written that Nixon deserved re-election in 1972, McGovern told me that his friend had worked hard for the Democratic ticket ... the ticket which argued in vain for a withdrawal from Vietnam and a return to sanity. A familiar sentiment in these closing months of 2002. *Come home, America.*

As I walked back to Rose-Marie where she waited I passed a man speaking to a four-star general. I noted his ease – the kind of self-confident attitude I've seen in accomplished athletes and successful performers. And the ribboned medal he wore about his neck. The ribbon was red white and blue. The medal was gold, and star-shaped. I begged his pardon and asked him, "Sir, is that what I think it is?"

He smiled and shook my hand. He gave his name but I didn't catch it, quite. Congressional Medal of Honor. I'd never met one of those guys before.

All this and the good George Bush, too. It was quite a day.

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Roger's visit was more than a welcome break from the day to day. It was a reminder of family.

Roger's a good old boy from the Antelope Valley northeast of L.A., or he puts it, "just a redneck from Rosamond." Rosamond ... the once-tiny, now more substantial desert burg where my grandparents lived, and where I spent many a childhood summer romping with my cousins. Except for me, Roger was the oldest, and except for my brother, he's probably the one guy in the world I trust most. It was, as you can imagine, damned good to see him. For one thing, with him I could act like what I am at heart – a redneck from Mojave.

For only such a creature would hide from his relatives when he saw them leaving the airport concourse,

follow his cousin into the men's room, stand six feet behind him as he used the urinal, and choose that moment to call him on his cell phone. "Sorry I couldn't get away from work see you this evening at the hotel ..." And then grinned at him when he turned around.

Tell you one thing, Roger and Sue have pretty good lives going for them. This wasn't their first Caribbean cruise – and they both have nice 401Ks built up back there in the Antelope Valley. Of course, Rog has worked 32 years at the same skilled labor job – but in the process, he's served on the local school board and raised three boys to manhood. He's quite a good guy, and it was fun to show him and his about this old burg, even if Bourbon Street made his feet hurt.

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Drive across the long bridge just west of the New Orleans suburb known as Kenner – we call it the 12 Mile Bridge – over the edge of Lake Pontchartrain, and as you approach the 212.8 mile marker, start looking at the ledge by the shoulder of the road. You should spot a piece of road tar, about seven inches long. I put it there. It's where my car blew up in early October.

My Geo Tracker had only about 120,000 miles on it, and my last Metro made it to 160,000 before its engine popped. Despite what my friends think, I took care of the car, too. When the guy in the pickup started beeping and pointing and shouting into the wind, I thought I had a low tire. But no – there was steam coming out of my tailpipe. Soon it was coming out of everything, including my ears. I called Rosy on our cellphones and looked at the Lake and thought about jumping in until the state trooper showed up and shortly after him, the tow truck. The LaPlace Chevy dealership gave me the grim news. Shit.

Rosy and I hit the Classifieds and started looking for used cars. It was a horrible experience. Two mechanics in Gretna tried to sell us an obvious crack rental for a thousand dollars. A dealership in Metairie offered us a Honda with an engine that – oops – steamed. Seen that before. Depressed and miserable, I insisted we take a break – and after a nap, scanned the ads one more time. Saw a familiar name. Bridge House.

Bridge House is a homeless shelter to which I have sent several clients ~~after taking their last dime~~. Their ad said that they had donated autos for sale, and so, clutching our precious last thousand dollars, we headed down there. The cars were utter trash. They had another lot, on Canal Street – and there we found it. A 1988 Ford Festiva. Once red. 210,000 miles on the odometer, which stopped working some time ago. A hatchback that doesn't open. But! a colored ribbon tied about the radio antenna!

The number on the window read "695". "Let you have it for \$377.50," said the sales guy. *Sold.*

Since I drove the car I affectionately call "the embarrassing eyesore" home I've bought it a new tire, new belts – which have twice needed tightening – an oil change, and resolutely filled its radiator every morning. And over it breathed a thousand prayers. "Please," I beg the Deity. "Let it get me to work and back at least until 2003 ..."

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Work continues, hardly profitable but still ... intriguing. I had some trials, and some victories. Let me tell you, there's no feeling in the world quite like the pride you feel grilling a seven-year-old child about being molested by her beloved uncle. It's kind of a warm glow. Such was the gist of my trial of a huge black guy charged with teaching his tiny white niece the facts of life. I won.

Well, I won a hung jury. The D.A. has the option of trying the defendant again. Considering the jury

split – 5-1, we think – the fact that the kid was not only cute and charming, but held up well under my cross, as well as the pure loathsomeness of the alleged crime, he may well do so. But he needs beware, because he shot himself not only in the foot, but in the kneecap ... with his own arrogance.

After most of the case was over, and both sides had spoken, the A.D.A. dangled a tape of the charming little victim's *second* statement in front of me, something he had not done before. Now, this is a clear violation of the law – prosecutors are required to provide exculpatory evidence to the defense. He sneered that there was nothing on the tape to help my guy, and all but dared me to produce the tape to the jury, thinking I wouldn't dare expose the jury to a second reading of her ugly story. But I read the transcript, and found that the kid had contradicted herself several times ... So I had 13 transcripts run, played the tape, and based my closing argument, the best I've given since I began work in St. John Parish, on the changes and inconsistencies in what the child said.

It was a long night. The jury bumped and clawed at itself for four hours before the judge gave up, and declared a mistrial. A win. Anytime your defendant goes home, and not to jail, it's a win.

No feeling in the world like it. Maybe stomping a kitten to death compares. Because although that kid – who looked a lot like the Van Dam child whose killer won the death penalty this month – couldn't convince the whole jury that she was telling the truth, she convinced at least one person in that courtroom... Inconsistent statements and all, it'll be tougher cross-examining her next time.

My other trial also concerned a guilty man, but that win was plain satisfying. They came at my client with a case as weak as a puppy.

Scenario: the cops received complaints from *someone* in the defendant's neighborhood that he was selling dope out of a trailer parked in his mother's back yard. They got a search warrant and sent in the SWAT team. My client, whom I'll call **Delray**, was caught standing in the street in front of the house. He saw the SWAT team descending on him and ran ... not very far. The cops burst into the trailer and found ... no dope. They did find guns, a couple of pistols and a sawed-off shotgun. They charged my client with being a felon in possession of firearms, which carries a minimum ten-year sentence in this state.

Their problem was simple: little the only proof that Delray had anything to do with that trailer. During trial, the arresting officer said that clothing and food were found, and that the a/c was on – but there was no proof that the clothing was Delray's, that the food was Delray's, that the a/c bill was paid by Delray, or even who owned the damn trailer. No, the only evidence the state could offer to tie Delray to the guns was paperwork – a few scattered receipts and papers dated between two years and ten months before the bust. The only really significant item was a social security card, which might have been lost. And who knew when. Also, although the guns had been dusted for fingerprints – the jury had to wipe the powder from their hands – the prosecution could produce no results. In short, nothing.

If I do say so, I raised the rafters with my closing argument, twice pointing to the flag by Judge Sterling's bench and averring that democracy itself would fall if the jury went along with such a weak case – and, however over-the-top that sounds, it *was* a weak case. I won in an hour, 12-zip. And among those twelve people were black people, white people, men, women, middle-aged people, young people, yuppies, workers ... I sat my client down and told him that the whole community had given him their faith, so – just in case – *Q.F.A.!*

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You may recall that in addition to my cousin, a President and a presidential candidate, Louisiana enjoyed visits from two kindred souls in the early autumn. I am happy to say that the anxious anticipation of their

arrival far outweighed the trauma of their actual passage. Their names? *Isidore* and *Lili*.

It really was scary to watch the storms approach. As you've heard me say often, New Orleans sits right under a Darnoclesean sword called Lake Pontchartrain, which, should a hurricane come in *just* right, could sweep over its banks and inundate the city to a depth of about 10 feet. Isidore and Lili were both fearsome Category 3 monsters when they came a'churnin' through the Gulf of Mexico, a mere week apart, and Lili, especially, had a track that took it right up our alley. A lot of the Orleanian citizenry made like the Red Sea ... and split.

We sat tight, and kept our eyes glued to the tube. While hurricane maestro Nash Roberts has retired from the local weathercasting business, he has some intrepid successors. The best of these was Bob Breck, who had the courage to forego the usual professional blandness of his vocation and be angry, fretful, impatient (especially with idiots who complained that the storm coverage was interfering with the baseball playoffs), and finally, relieved. Isidore never regained its former ferocity after scraping the Yucatan, and ended up giving New Orleans no more than a little extra rain. Lili ran out of gas just before it made landfall, and was actually more dangerous *after* it passed over Louisiana.

During Isidore, we drove up to the shore of Lake Pontchartrain and checked out the raging waves. I wanted Rosy to see the Lake as I remembered it from Hurricane Eloise back in the '70s. *Roar, wind, spray, slosh* ... we called my nephew Steve to wish him a happy birthday, shouting over the wind, and I took back a Styrofoam channel marker which drifted up to my feet and begged for a home.

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Speaking of begging for a home, no **Spiritus Mundi** would be complete without a Cindy update, and at last, I seem to have promising news to impart.

Thanks to the noble efforts of David Capasso, a lawyer friend, and the Arab philanthropists who got Cindy her last placement, she has escaped the termagant landlady who was ripping her off for exorbitant rent. Boo has joined a program which provides her free room and board in return for her staying with an elderly couple who need her help. (Actually, the geriatrics are a brother and a sister.) No sooner did old Boo move in, alas, than did the gent of the couple have a fall-down-shrieking stroke, scaring the poop out of my erstwhile neighbor. Nevertheless, she handled the situation well, the fella recovered, and we actually have hopes of stability for old Boo.

The new pad is a nice house with plenty of room for her stuff, letting us get rid of the boxes of teddy bears, plastic cups and keychains which we've been holding for her all year. On the big moving day, Rosy and I delivered some of her stuff, admired the generous souls hauling her furniture into the new house, left, and tried ferociously to feel guilty about not doing more. We failed.

There is some doubt that the change will keep. But at least we have people on our side, working on Cindy's behalf, who show no signs of surrender. So we'll take her to Thanksgiving dinner and a movie two or three times a month, and for the moment, *stop worrying about her*.

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My cover is a collage, by me, of pewter figures by Boris Vallejo and Julie Hill, as depicted in the 2002 holiday catalog of The Noble Collection. I call it "The Traitorous Amazon". Rosy calls it "Another dumb babe cover." I leave the ultimate question for you to decide.

The Southerner #229 – 2002 Egoboo Poll / Jeff AGGH! Note for the future to all OffEds and archivists: there's no “#” in front of the issue number on *Spiritus Mundi*. There *is* a “#” in front of the issue number of *Challenger* and every other zine I do, but *not* *Spiritus Mundi*! Now ... ask me why I care. I don't know. But nevertheless, please, no “#”! += Yipes! \$25 extra to receive SFPA first class?!? Obviously I need to think about this before next mailing, when my dues are due. There. I thought about it. Count me in, as ever. += I note some screwiness in this version of the SFPA Constitution. Article III Section 2 has a confusing first sentence. Too many “bundles.” Some legal genius should concoct a new version to present to the membership. And Article IV Section 2 is missing a word or two here and there. Shouldn't it read, “Any member of five (5) year continuous *membership* may run for Official Editor”? Again, asking me why I care is an exercise on futility. I'm well aware that everyone on our roster has either been with us for decades or is Sheila or Randy, and what do they care? Nevertheless ... += After poring over the Egopoll ballot, I *think* I've found the key to your mysterious “Rules #4.” I won't embarrass myself by making a public guess, but I promise to admit the truth once you Reveal All.

Variations on a Theme #15-16 / Lynch I may have written here about the youthful pianist I watched play a difficult piece at a local mall – by memory. Such prodigies make me feel like Alley Oop. += Loved all the photos of the elephant and donkey sculptures scattered about Washington. Let's see ... Chicago had cattle, which began this trend, and our fish (featured on a *Spiritus* cover at the time) still pop up from time to time ... += I've seen a trailer for the new version of *Solaris*, but the SF elements were toned ‘way down in favor of romance. What it has in common with the stunningly dull Russian movie of some decades back, I don't know, but that movie dealt with reality and illusion in some unfathomable fashion, and George Clooney is seen wailing “But she was

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real!” in the ad. += I too like Dvorak's “New World”, but am ashamed that I know so little about the body of his work. Thanks to you, though, I now know something about *him*. += My only memory of Skyline Chili is of stopping at an outlet north of Cincy on one of my driving trips to Buffalo. I was the only customer and didn't enjoy it. Next time I'll go with a native and perhaps catch on – appreciation for a city's food often requires a guide. += No! Keep your postcard diaries going! The pictures are so cool!

Revenant #13-14 / Sheila A person I don't think I mentioned in my DSC report was Adrienne Martine-Barnes, who was indeed great fun to listen to. You give a good report here with lots of nice tidbits to comment on. I look forward to seeing *Apollo 13* on an IMAX screen. Thanks for buying stuff for DUFF! And it's disturbing that Connie Willis' abduction novel has been “put on hold” since 9-1-1 because it's critical of certain government agencies. So what? Who put the book on hold? Her or her publishers? += Yes, DSC was Jesse-dawg's first con, but despite all the attention lavished upon her, I don't think she enjoyed it all that much. After all, she's 9 years old – which translate to 63 in human age. Possibly the con was a bit wild for her advanced years. += “What [Osama bin Laden] needs is a shot of compassion”. I'll give him a shot. += Good for you for returning to LSU for your masters. I spent a semester of law school there, and while I admired the rigorous law curriculum, the campus life gave me a pain. It's a beautiful place, of course, and if you like college football LSU is Nirvana (how about that Hail Mary against Kentucky?), but the campus cops are unprintable dipwads, and there's no place in all of Baton Rouge to buy a magazine.

"Yngvi is a Louse" & Other Graffitos #78-79 / Toni Considerate of you to clue us in on the classic trivia question, "Who is Yngvi anyway?" (For my own reference, the epithet is from "The Roaring Trumpet" by Platt & deCamp, **Unknown**, 1940.) Did anyone I wonder ever ask deCamp if it was he or Pratt – whom I'll always think of as author of certain Landmark Books – who came up with the name? += The van Hartesveldts echo Charl Proctor's endorsement of the Aubrey/Maturin novels by Patrick O'Brian. As for **My Big Fat Greek Wedding**, I expected to be nauseated by a chick flick, but roared with laughter and approbation all through it. I understand that it's one of the most profitable movies of all time; since it's also skillful and superb, Hollywood will not ignore it at awards time. I predict Oscar nominations for best actress (Nia Vardalos), supporting actor (Michael Constantine), screenplay (which it will win) and picture. += Thanks for the support in my bid to have **Challenger** count in my pagecount, but it isn't an important issue. Just so nobody thinks my genzine is just another frank. Reminding me of when Ned tried to send hot dogs through SFPA during my second Oeship, and I had to tell him that we just didn't have room for the franks HAHAAHA I'm lying. += Trains are indeed the *only* civilized mode of travel, at least en masse. I'm investigating trains running between Perth and Melbourne, thinking about next April's DUFF, although driving with fans would be more fun, wethinks. (Read my musings on DUFF throughout these mc's and near the end of the zine.) += You got *Hank* to see **The Ya-Ya Sisterhood**!?! *snicker* No ... no, I'm not laughing. I'm not ... *snicker giggle* laughing ... += I continue to be astonished by revelations about Judge Ronnie Bodenheimer. The latest headlines quote from wiretaps of conversations held with restaurateur Al Copeland (founder of Popeye's), effectively promising him advantage in a divorce proceeding in exchange for Copeland's purchasing all of his seafood from Bodenheimer's company. Damn! I liked Ronnie, too. But the pleasant,

effective prosecutor had dark and twisted depths. += Forget about plowing all the way through **The Faerie Queene** and restrict yourself to the Red Knight's encounter with Despair. Una's response to the monster's "Die soon, oh faerie's son" is unforgettable. At least for me. It's been thirty years since I read it, and it's still with me. += That was #79 I just mc'ed. Okay – back to #78! I enjoyed your DSC report, but for the mysterious phrase "My beautiful husband Hank." Let's hope Reinhardt never finds out about this *second* Hank you married – or maybe there's just a first time for every adjective. += Cool that you got to meet Ross Chamberlain and Arnie Katz. They were the human highlights of my trip out west in 1993. Ross' covers for Arnie's zines are simply *magnifique*, and have been for forty years. Another great fan artist that's never gotten his Hugo due. += In response to Hank's interesting technical comment about the effect of a bullet in a plane's fuselage, I'd point out that the bullet in **Goldfinger** went through a *window*. I'm more concerned in one going through *me*. Why wouldn't stun guns be just as effective as regular gats in such a setting? += Love seeing Terry Jeeves' work in SFPA. 80 years old, ¾ of that doing fanzines ... he's a wonder. He likes **Challenger**, too.

The New Port News #205 / Brooks So you were once suspected of having ringworm. Book by Larry Niven, wasn't it? Didn't care for it – glad you only had something else. += Speaking of alleged kiddy porn, you say there's a photo of you "as a naked infant on a bear-skin rug." Now that's abuse! Not of you. Of the *bear*. += B'r'er Hughes' dedication to SFPA and to quality, shown by his hand-cutting all of those stereoscopic cards – reminds me of Dian Crayne's like dedication, patience, and skill in cutting out the "gold" patches in her famous howdah cover, back before even *you* joined SFPA (I think). Awesome. += Rosy & I received our first *joint* Nigerian scam spam the other day. I let her push the delete button. += Damn – don't mention "old newsprint." Reminds me of that wonderful volume of

New York Times issues from the 1920's I secured from a library once, and hauled around for years. Had to dump it finally, and never got around to clipping the ads for illos, as was the plan. += Pat Gibbs saved my neck once when I had a minor car disaster in Atlanta, and is a fine Hearts player, but he can indeed by extremely officious handling a tourney. No table talk! Games begin *now*! And of course his opinion of the Elian Gonzalez affair is ridiculous. Still, no lawyer who collects Ansel Adams prints can be all bad! += Rose-Marie admits to Louisiana's supremacy over Florida in one matter only: the size of our roaches. She calls on me to deal with invading palmetto bugs, often larger than our dog and occasionally challenging the cat. += Among the SFPA mlg's Carlberg gave you was our magical centennial, 1750-page no. 100. Forget this last DSC, Nedster; that Satyricon in April '81 was the con you *really* should've been at. I need to write up a remembrance for **Challenger**.

Tyndallite Vol. 3, No. 103 / NORM! All of this research and argument over Captain Nemo and the *Nautilus* deserves to be concentrated and published in **Challenger**. I see you're considering it, and really wish you'd give it a shot. I can see it now: "Is **20,000 Leagues Science Fiction?**" += To my disgrace, I have never read van Vogt. Saw him once, at the L.A.Con Retro-Hugos, if that counts.

What I Think of Evoltion / Poulette What's obvious from this zine is that evolution *doesn't work*.

Home with the Armadillo #55 / Liz That is a truly gorgeous quilt design on your cover. Earth colors, right? Whatever, it's beautiful. += A spectacular trip you took with Allie, checking out universities north of the border. I thought about Canadian *graduate* schools when I hit my senior year at UC, probably because of my antiwar sentiments, but fortunately a professor mentioned his alma mater in North Carolina to me, and there I went. I hope Allie stays in the States – and

maybe tries a more southerly school. She'll be glad she did come those insane Canadian winters. Of course, Victoria is such a lovely city that I can't fault her looking there. Could be that the physical beauty of a place of learning is important – relaxes and energizes the wits. Cal's architectural variety was always a joy for me, as was the glittering fantasy of San Francisco, at nights across the Bay – when we could see it through the tear gas. += **Panic Room** was directed by a director I dislike – David Fincher. He's made one stunningly great film (**Seven**), a couple of misfires (**Fight Club** and that goofy gamesmanship movie with Sean Penn and Michael Douglas), and one atrocity (**Alien 3**) that should have been burned in the can. He's an overt nihilist with nothing to say but nothing. However, **Panic Room** was diverting, if derivative (of **Wait Until Dark** among other flicks) so no more gripes about your recommendation. += I'd say that lady who urged you "not to call them quilts" has a *quilt compl-* ... Oh. You've heard it.

Osushigumi – Historical Hugo Hysterics – Night of the Living Stats / Jeff I appreciated your stats, as ever (they helped me remember my choice for Zine of the Year), and have been mulling over your list of fiction Hugo nominees with nostalgic glee – most of the time. It still hurts to see **Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade** given the winner's checkmark over **Field of Dreams** – another absurd "victory" for the Australian rules ballot. The unremarkable **Boy and His Dog** given a win over **Dark Star**. And much as I love Fritz Leiber, I'll never forgive the worldcon for honoring **The Wanderer** over Brunner's **The Whole Man** or Edgar Pangborn's masterpiece, **Davy**. Well, occasional lapse or not, the Hugos are *our* award ... and I love this encapsulation. += One of the major news stories of the past bi-month involved the psychotic snipers that terrorized the Washington area, a sociopathic Muslim ex-GI and his ... well, how can we describe John Malvo and his relationship to John Muhammad? Their rampage seemed unconnected with any agenda except escape – they attacked black,

white, male, female, young, old and had no message except "I am God." Two dudes merging themselves into one identity, and that claiming deific power ... more reminiscent of Leopold & Loeb than other black serial killers or mass murderers, like Wayne Williams or Mark Essex, the creep on the Howard Johnson's, also a sniper, also trained in the military. Anyway, Muhammad had ties to both your area and mine – he lived for a time in Seattle and was born in Baton Rouge. += Got a question for Ursula LeGuin: why no new Hainish novels? There was **Left Hand of Darkness**, there was **The Dispossessed**, there's been the occasional short story, but no fully developed work in that extraordinary universe. Wonder why. += I didn't like the original **Sabrina**. Bogart was too old for Audrey Hepburn. += Best thing about **XXX**: the Prague scenery. E-mailed Martina Klicperova about it. Sudden thought: wouldn't Vin Diesel make a righteous Gulliver Foyle? += Nicole Kidman doesn't look at all like herself in **The Hours**, which I predict will be the quality chickflick of the autumn (as **Possession** was for the summer and **Greek Wedding** was for the whole century, so far) and an Oscar contender. She's reached the age when she knows her gorgeousness won't last forever, and even if it does, she's already put every inch of her epidermis on display *and* there are new boom-booms up-&-coming all the time. So: she's going for the dramatic roles, and obviously isn't adverse to slapping on some face putty to hold her own against Meryl Streep. += Why a Hugo nomination for **Amelie**? I loved the movie, of course, but there was no fantasy element. += Unlike his niece, who just went to jail, W's own daughters impress me as little more than party-hearty farts. David Brock's **Blinded by the Right**, while on that topic, seems almost passé, now; the evil wingers who yanked his chains as he worked his slanders on the Clintons and corrupted the 2000 election have won, and all of our complaints about their dishonesty, their truly depraved ambition and despicable tactics, are by the board. America has happily given itself over to dictatorship, and the common man is so

numb, so manipulable, so blank of concern outside of the extent of his own arms that the truth about his masters is not only unknown to him, it's of no interest. Oh, America will crush Iraq easily enough, with "acceptable" losses to our troops, and that stunted alky in the White House will establish Dick Cheney's new *pax Americana*, and the average lunkhead will still think that makes us strong, still stooge for corporations that rip him off, still follow, follow, follow ... Good for Brock for speaking the truth, but phooey on the people for not listening to him. += I recently went around and around with the UK in '05 people about what they should call their in-house newsletter. Because their convention center resembles one, and because the locals don't want to endure a convention bedecked in "tartan tat," some of the new Glasgow worldcon committee wanted to use an *armadillo* as its symbol. I pointed out that the roly-poly critter was already co-opted by Armadillocon, and argued that they shouldn't be ashamed of their Scottish site. For some reason my suggestion fell on deaf ears. I'm baffled; I liked "Brogue Moon." += Bonnie Dunbar's quote about the dangers of exploration – and the refusal of pioneers of whatever era to surrender to them – is wonderful. She could be a worthy successor to Christa McAuliffe. += **Esquire** described that evil French skating judge as a woman they loved – even though they knew they shouldn't. For some reason Nanci Griffith has never made that list ... += Alas, I understand that **Nero Wolfe** has been canceled. Rosy was a big fan, too. += W recently removed North Korea from his "axis of evil" ... again, probably because he's afraid of a country that could actually fight back. That was, to be fair, before his crack State Department discovered that the North Koreans had nukes. += Thanks for the encouraging words on running **Challenger** – by no means a "frank," since I have editorial control over the pub – through SFPA. There was enough good stuff in #16 to justify one of my special editions – lacking the zine reviews and the lettercol, which add up to

about half the bulk of the zine. I hope I can afford it sometime soon.

Frequent Flyer / Tom Eye surgery! Yuck! I remember your speaking about a blocked tear duct, but blocked that information from my eyes, horrified at the thought. I used to panic at televised public service announcements about multiple sclerosis and polio when I was a whelp; pals discussing their ills still affects me the same way. Anyway, get better soon. += I can hardly believe anyone would be so crass as to go to court over 9-1-1 insurance, but when three and a half billion dollars is at stake, maybe it's best to have a court decide whether the attack on the WTC was one incident or two. I'd guess one, since the two planes hit the two towers as parts of a single plan. += It's nifty how well Shakespeare translates into modern dress – or even dress from 1910, as in that production of *All's Well* that y'all saw. Burton's *Hamlet* was performed in black tights, Branagh's disappointing film in Elizabethan garb, Ethan Hawke's in stuff you or I could buy off the rack. Doesn't matter – Willy's work is timelessly human. += I never heard of a food/beverage minimum at a concert. I wonder if it was the hall or Gabe Kaplan, whom you saw, who came up with such a stupid rule. += So far you and I are the only SFPAnS who admit to liking *Signs*, which I did, very much. Only movie besides *A.I.* and *LotR* I've seen more than once since my marriage, and *A.I.* I only repeated so I could take notes for my *Chall* article. += Note to self: see *The Dark Wind* for the Wigwam Village scenes! += I will be glad to quote your *Weekly World News* comment. But I've forgotten it. E-mail me the line again, please? += Being perhaps three times as intelligent as his opponent in the 2000 election, Al Gore pointed out that if India applied the Bush doctrine towards Iraq, it could invade Pakistan any time it wanted. Hell, we could invade Canada! Hmm ... shouldn't say that too loud. Might give W ideas ...

Peter, Pan & Merry #45 / Dave To answer the question you address to Copeland, yes, I

do believe that Poulette is related to the gentleman you mention, in short, that Poulette is a Crock. += Hmm – “meaty character actors.” These are guys who do better in supporting roles than out front, carrying the movie. Tommy Lee Jones is an excellent example. Martin Landau. The guy who starred in *Lone Star* (and several other John Sayles films) and played the homosexual Marine in *American Beauty*. Too many to mention. += The Fourth Amendment has long been a joke. Judges sign warrants based on pure conjecture. Cops search pedestrians with no more probable cause than the color of their skin and the reputation of the street. (Just what does it mean to be a “high crime area”?) Middle Americans quiver in fear and let it happen, let it happen, let it happen. += Talk of being “better off” than a year and a half ago is problematical here. Emotionally, there's no comparison; I feel like I've awakened from a nightmare. Financially, we're making more than ever and are worse off than ever. I'll never be able to retire. += Terrorists, to me, would act without the sanction of declared war. Their targets can be civilian or military (the attack on the *Cole* was a terrorist act). Their purpose is punishment and generalized intimidation, not the achievement of some sort of strategic aim. += *Forbidden Planet*, which I just watched yesterday, indeed has parallels to *The Tempest* – but not so many and not so obviously as to make the statement at all pretentious. And the ending is different: Prospero controls all and conquers all in Will's play; Morbius is destroyed by his own Id in the movie – which is, I repeat, my favorite SF film of all time. += That *TZ* you recall about the man walking his dawg to heaven starred Arthur Hunnicutt as a hill fella drowned with his hound while coon hunting. They came across a gate in the fence with a dude claiming to be St. Peter – who told Hunnicutt that sorry, dogs weren't allowed. The pooch was barking like a maniac anyway, so Hunnicutt declined the honor and walked on – finally meeting an angel (a guy in coveralls), who told him that the man he'd talked to before was actually

the Devil, heaven was just up the road, and of course, coon dogs were perfectly welcome. += I have neither the brains, the ambition, the money nor the contacts to become a judge. My only ambition in the law is to make enough money at it to afford a reasonable lifestyle for Rosy and myself – enough to eat, pay bills regularly, publish my fanzines, go to worldcons and/or places my wife wants to go. And maybe write a book. And flap my arms and land on Mars. += Our Jesse-dawg hasn't run into skunks yet, but with my luck a family of them will move in underneath the house. += Sea Lion Cave sounds ineffably cool. I'm constantly astonished at how many west coast wonders I missed during my decade of life in California – I didn't even see Yosemite until I'd been away for 20 years! At least I got to see Crater Lake, and oh, what a sight that is. I don't think I've ever seen anything more beautiful that didn't talk to me, or *refuse* to talk to me.

The Sphere vol. 200, no. 1 / Don Actually, the reason I reacted differently to Harlan's shit-fit towards Janice than I did to his 1978 anger at you is because I know the difference between a lady trying to defend a friend and a dipweed trying to piss off a celebrity to make a name for himself.

Twygdrasil #78 / *Dengrove* You mentioned Troy Donahue, and I racked my remaining brains trying to think of a role he's played since that awful Manson ripoff back in the earliest '70s. Then I remembered: he was Connie Corleone's fiance in **Godfather II**. Not such a long way from **Surfside 6**. += Walter Brennan always played old, or at least older. Earliest performance I've seen by him was in a W.C. Fields movie (as a burglar who finds a still in Fields' basement, gets drunk, and sings barbershop with his partner until captured). += That flower illo on page 5 is supposed to be a header for a lettercol. See the letters "LOCS"? += W indeed is getting a free ride in the press. Andrea Mitchell of NBC was on a call-in show recently, and was accused of being a mere flack for Our Beloved Comrade Leader; the

scorn on her face admitted all. += **American Psycho**, like **SotL**, owes a lot to the publicity for Ted Bundy. What *if* a serial killer were a successful Republican sleaze? What *if* a serial killer were a mutant genius? Yeah – but what if a serial killer was a superficial, spastic brute who got away with it for so long out of sheer luck and official incompetence? He wasn't that bright and he could only get by in the world on trivial, day-by-day level. That's the true Bundy story. Buckle up, Ted; it's the law. += Rice University may have had "style" when dealing with football issues, but didn't they also have the world's record for most consecutive losses? += I wasn't impressed with Tommy Lee Jones' performance in **MiBII** either; a couple of years ago it seemed he was appearing in every movie made; maybe he's semi-retired now, and that's why he seemed so lethargic and bored. += Of what were the James Bond movies parodies? Of *themselves*, I think: the attitudes and expectations of the viewers. Like all parodies, they were best when they were the most subtle: **Goldfinger**, for prime instance. Occasionally they were superb spy movies too: **From Russia with Love** and **For Your Eyes Only**, my favorites. += I've heard of only one case where AIDS was transmitted by saliva, and then there was blood and an open wound involved. yih I still hate talking about AIDS. += Algernon Blackwood struck me as a superb *mood* writer, which is I think the secret of good horror writing. Thought: the horror genre requires *style* much more than any other of the outlaw genres, i.e. SF, fantasy, mysteries, porno- ... well, actually I'm not too sure about porno. += With the right wing in control in Congress, litmus tests for judges are coming up. Look for abortion rights to be restricted – perhaps even obliterated. Look for 4th Amendment issues to be universally decided in favor of cops. Look for contract disputes to come down hard in favor of big business. Look for free speech ... += Easy enough to look up the length of **The Alamo** and **Ben-Hur**. The tape box for the latter says it runs about 3 hours 31 minutes. **Lawrence of Arabia**, even in its original, shorter, superior

version, is supposedly longer, the longest Oscar winner. += I repeat: the best solution to hijackers is a locked cockpit that cannot be opened in flight from the outside. Easy enough to install video cameras in the cabins so the crew will know what's going on – in case clever hijackers force a stew to fake an emergency call. += That prison cartoon reminds me of the feature in the Louisiana state penitentiary **Angolite**, "Cellie of the Month". Truth is wilder than any cartoonist's imagination. += "Patriotism" is indeed defined nowadays as unquestioning support for W's stupid little war against Saddam. Or were there other issues in the Georgia Senate race besides whether a man who lost three limbs in Vietnam was patriotic? The public is indeed confused about Iraq – they want to give W his sense of toughness (which is most of what this nonsense is all about) but they really can't see why Saddam is such a threat – now, anyway, let's not forget that he has done active evil in the past. But now? The American people go along ... it's their pride. += Yes, we could probably spot and deflect an ELE meteor while it was still safely in space. We're lucky to live in such an age. Read **When Worlds Collide** or Max Ehrlich's **The Big Eye** for how people would feel in an earlier time, knowing doom was coming but being unable to do anything about it. yih += James Watt ... there was a nutcase for you. I can understand Reagan appointing him, because Ronnie was as dumb as my socks, but didn't RR have people screening his appointments for outright lunacy? Missed that one. += Nobody would have cared about Chandra Levy had she not been involved with Gary Condit? Her family – the cops – the courts – they would have. That's plenty. I hope they nail her killer and stick him to a tree with spikes. += Speaking of the torture of contacts, my first wife Beth said she *had* to wear *hard* contact lenses, and was constantly slashing her eyeball with them. I hope matters have improved for her. += I've been watching a few minutes of **Fear Factor** lately – it leads into a show I like. Much of the action is loathsome, but the girl contestants all have

spectacular racks. Part of the appeal of the show may be misogynistic glee at watching unattainable girls eat worms for money. += Believe me, crack has not diminished in popularity. It's as common and as accepted as beer in many urban underclass neighborhoods, even though it's ruining black lives. Neglect and contempt and segregation will do that: make poison a comfort. += **American Gods** won a Hugo and a Stoker and was nominated for the World Fantasy Award. No other book has ever been so honored across the board. I voted for it: it brought me stuff I'd never seen before on the page. += **LuAnn** ranks second on the comics page only to **Rose is Rose** for me. I hope she tears out Tiffany's heart and eats it. += **Bladerunner** became Phil Dick's movie only during Rutger Hauer's dying speech. Then Dick's central theme, the love of life, came through. The flick probably won the Hugo because Harrison Ford made hearts throb, but Hauer made my eyes tear, and the movie resonate in a way Phil's fans found familiar.

Oblio No. 142 / Brown Boy, is this a spiffy zine! I predict high placing in the egoboo poll for both it and its author. Central, of course, are the trip reports to San Diego and Vegas for the Comic-Con and the Fantasy Football League – great photos, great times, great accounts. To the details momentarily. += First, good for Ryan for taking that humongous step of moving out and heading for college. My advice from last issue maintains – but I hope he enjoys the *books*, too! += Michael Moore's **Bowling for Columbine** suffers from the *auteur's* taste for cheap shots, most tastelessly of Alzheimer's patient Charlton Heston, but it does have some truth to impart through its contempt. Its clear point is a criticism of America's "culture of fear." The Iraq War-to-Come is the most shameless exploitation of the tendency to irrational nervousness in our society since Vietnam, but it's hardly a new political tactic. The right keeps power in this country by keeping the people terrified, promising dire consequences should the country turn away from their rule. Do the

people buy it? Look at the election. A dedicated public servant who lost three limbs in Vietnam was thrown out of office in Georgia because a Republican said he wasn't patriotic enough. Judge for yourself. =+= By the way, I found out that my cousin-in-law Sue King was at the San Diego comics convention – she goes every year! I didn't even know she *liked* comics! =+= Classic photo from that event of yourself with Bradbury and El Julie, although I can't tell if Schwartz is smiling or scowling. Rather an atypical picture of Julie, who is six years at least older than 80 (the age our man Alan Hutchinson ascribes to him). I've seen (and published) pictures of Schwartz dating from 1932, when he was 16, and with rare exceptions (like this photo) his essential humor always shines through. I do believe that's the secret to his longevity. Good for him – and t.s. for depressives like me. =+= Ah, such great names you encountered – Sergio Aragones, one of the most talented and genial fellas imaginable, telling tales on Bill Gaines, founder of **Mad**. Gaines had an office at DC in 1974 when I worked there, and I put dents in his letter opener thwacking it against the corner of his desk. You see, when Gaines wasn't in Sol Harrison had me sit at his desk to open mail with money in it, and DC's offices always carried this insane load of static electricity, and whenever I moved a spark would jump to my fingers *zit zat*, and ... never mind. =+= I regard Alex Ross' vision of Superman as definitive for this era. Despite its convoluted and somewhat confused story, **Kingdom Come** still ranks on my top ten list (soon to appear in **Challenger**) because of the stature he affords the Man of Steel. =+= Speaking of Supes, here's our man Mark Verheiden, scion of **Smallville**. I bet he danced around the room when they came up with the segue from the "When Heroes Weep" comic cover to Tom Welling's face in the November 12th episode. =+= How do you like **Birds of Prey**? Haven't even tasted it yet, myself. =+= The Vegas trip also reads fun. I wonder, do Blue Men have blue b- ... well, I suppose they do, even in Vegas. =+= On to SFPA stuff. I'd support a shift to individual

mailing accounts, as you suggest to Copeland. Among other things it would insure that I'd never run for the OEsip again: that math would give me a stroke. =+= There was a wonderful book published in the sixties called **An Exaltation of Larks**, giving names for groups of various critters. (Inspired by the brilliance of "a murder of crows," no doubt.) For us I'd suggest "A Mailing of SFPAns." =+= Of *course*, Sadie Hawkins was a real person! Great-granddaughter of **Treasure Island**'s Jim 'Awkins, great-grandmother of *Star* Hawkins from **Strange Adventures**!

Traveler's Tales – Comments 16 / Steve & Suzanne Where did you get this paper! I would love to run my next color **Challenger** cover on just such stock! =+= I love this picture of Bear Bear conferring with the White Rabbit. Looks like the shot was taken in Central Park. But you went so many places in the course of this beautiful zine – places that defy your anguish on the opening page about the repulsive uniformity of America coast to coast. Charleston – with its long, winding bridge, Fort Sumter on its artificial island in the harbor, those strange houses with the porch on the side, and my old pal Sandy Burley on Isle of Palms. New Orleans – and what can I say about this dilapidated old burg that hasn't been said a zillion times before? (The manager of the Confederate Museum had hopes that it would survive its current crisis, thanks to a visit by the governor.) Even Riverside, where I went to junior high school (the place is still there, though no longer a school) – it is indeed close to Disneyland. I like your restaurant reviews – the Louis XVI here in NOLA is owned by the parents of a friend of mine, and I took Benford there when he visited the city. And when you mention the Mission Inn in Riverside, you bring forth visions of luxury that it inspired in my youth. It's a famous place, you know: the Nixons were married there. =+= I keep hoping you'll do an article for **Challenger** about hang-gliding, rocket-building, or the challenge of early retirement. To that list of requests we may now add stereo cards! What a cool hobby. Don't

worry, I wouldn't ask you to hand-cut 250 of the things to go with each issue I send forth!

Trivial Pursuits #103 – Cruising ConJose / Janice Sad, sad, sad news about your former husband, Neil. It was enviable and it was admirable how well you got along following your attempt at life together, and I hope you carry good memories of the guy and pride in what you tried. I second, by the way, your salutes to Eve for her assistance to you at the time: she's true blue. += Thanks for the advice regarding our potential bid for DUFF. The questions you raised are potent indeed – but for Rosy's sake, they're questions I can overcome. For instance, the flights – more than 24 hours each way. Twice recently I've dreamed about them – once, I was on stand-by for a plane, with someone, alternatively Rosy, my mother, and – get this – Larry Niven. We never made the plane. In the second dream Rose-Marie and I boarded the aircraft and took off. Our plane was decked out like a hotel suite. We were served Brussels sprouts, which we'd had for real-life dinner a day or two before. To assuage my anxiety of the ether in which we rode, I lay flat on the carpet. Mindful of how psychotic this all is, when/if the time comes I plan to consult a hypnotist and/or juice myself dumb with heroin just before embarkation. *Anything* for la belle Rose. += I hesitate to mention the term "World Series" to a Bay Area baseball fan, but – there it is. Do you agree with Bonds that the Giants let it get away? += "Running" nominations for the Hugo would be a logistical nightmare. How could a committee prevent someone from loading up the nominations for a particular favorite? As for the other big brouhaha going on in Hugo affairs, the short-form dramatic presentation likely won't be "a **Buffy** Award," at least not for long, since I understand the show has been axed – or staked, as the case may be. Here's to **Smallville**, then. += Just for the sake of a poor Methodist's education, what's "Tisha B'Av" and does she have a sister? += Thanks for the info on website construction. It'll be used. += We've heard enough about this retouchable *kof* photo of

the loose-jointed runner. *GARY BROWN – PRINT THE DAMNED THING!* Let us judge for ourselves and give the girls some thrills. += Ricky Williams is still having trouble developing into a consistent player, to judge by his recent performance with the Miami Dolphins. Maybe – I hope not, but maybe – the problem isn't with the coach or the organization, but inside him. += Miss Gelb, I'm afraid that cartoons like Don Wright's and columns like Paul Slansky's impugning the judgment of Beloved Comrade Leader W are now verboten in the Amerika of 2002. The TIPS line has been notified, and YOU have been WARNED.

Confessions of a Consistent Liar 78 / Arthur "I do remember noticing back in the sixth grade one of my classmates already had tits." The poor fella! += **Crouching Tiger** became far more than a high-budget martial arts movie for me, and I think it was during the retelling of the bandit legend. I have the tape, of course, for my Hugo collection, so I'll have to try to analyze my reaction more rationally. But I loved it. += One appearance by Al Capp on **Tonight** brought me up short about him, when he talked about his father-in-law, a conservative New England (?) legislator who was taken aback when his daughter married a Jew. Capp praised the man's fairness and tolerance and how, once he had grandchildren that could be considered Jewish, he took a public stand against fascism when that wasn't a popular position to take. And then there was the time Capp compared James Bond unfavorably to Fearless Fosdick. += Good point: how do we *know* the 9-1-1 hijackers used box cutters? They could have smuggled more deadly weapons aboard; security certainly seemed lax enough. += Speaking of Ted Mark reminds me of the **Man from O.R.G.Y.** ripoff written by Gardner Fox back in that era; the porn was nothing special, but I was freaked because one of my favorite comics writers had sunk that low. += I could have sworn Busby wrecked your name at Iggy, but of course you know best. The incident did convince me to

rehearse the pronunciation of people's names if I ever had a toastmaster's job.

Guilty Pleasures 25 / Eve Raphi's "learning experience" involving his keys, his roommates, and the sad advice given him by a bitter patrolman to trust nobody remind me of a story from my college days which I'll be telling in the next **Challenger**. That guard is right; college kids live for the delight of *destroying* their best friends. Raphi's only chance is to *destroy them first*. =+= You and Janice supply excellent reports on ConJose, which hurt to read, no matter how many snafus afflicted the convention. (Their restaurant guide talked about food *in New York?!?*) Cool news about the 2010 Melbourne bid; if this DUFF idea comes about, and my sanity survives the trip, maybe we'll go! =+= Dan Simmons can do anything; his writing stretches across the genres. A private eye would have to be "hard-boiled" to work out of Buffalo – it's so cold he'd either be hard-boiled or freeze!

Avatar Press 2.23 / Randy You did a super job on your first **SFC Bulletin**, and I thought SFPA should see what I wrote about it in The Zine Dump:

Southern Fandom Confederation Bulletin Vol. 8 No. 1 / Randy Cleary, 138 Bibb Dr., Madison AL 35758 / A new face at the helm ... or under the helmet ... or whatever, Randy brings a load of artistic talent and personal wit to the SFC presidency and zine. His wry humor invests this whole issue, with, for example, a "Separated at Birth?" feature involving Don Knotts and Jeri Ryan and a brilliant acronymic razz at Toni Weisskopf for adding another initial to her abbreviated name ("Toni Keeps Far Way Right"). Other good stuff: Julie Wall exults over her Rebel Award – this should be an annual feature in the **Bulletin**, getting the new winner to express what the award means to him/her; Tom Feller and Mike Kennedy provide reports on Southern conventions; Mike Rogers discusses the new SFC website; regional news, con dates, clubs, and a listing of SFC members. The lettercol is surprisingly powerful and surprisingly cosmopolitan: many if not most of the writers hail from other countries (including Russia, but the letter from my friend Mike Rogers, disparaging the value of the Constitution in today's world, is

blood-chilling. Randy went to pains to make this issue resemble those of predecessor Wall's, but a unique voice like his will eventually find a unique visual style on the page. It's almost inevitable; Randy not only edited this issue, he drew the cover!

In other words, good stuff. Keep it up. =+= Good for you for losing weight. It takes a lot of discipline to do that. Eventually, you may give Brown competition in that wise – over the years he's shed more than I've gained! =+= You're feeling old? That's depressing. But look at Reinhardt – he just hit 110 and is feeling great! =+= Never will forget the DSC in Huntsville when Andre Norton was the first face I saw upon entering the hotel – a complete surprise. Thanks for relating your visit to and the photo of the wonderful lady. An e-mail came in some time ago telling us she'd fallen very ill ... and then another, telling us she'd recovered. Let's hope we all get the chance to see her again.

E-mail Filler / George Ouch – too bad about the backache. Get better. By the way, salutes to the OE for inviting this method of saving your string.

Passages #15 / Janet Your son has gotten married? *Your* son? I am five thousand years old. But these are beautiful photos and you make a beautiful mother of the groom. The fantasy costumes are 'way cool, although I must say that I wouldn't have known how to handle Uncle Bowen's Marie Antoinette outfit. I came in costume to *my* wedding, as Nikita Khrushchev. I was completely convincing. =+= You look impressively straight and regal atop your horse. I wonder how I would do in the saddle ... probably end up with my face in the mud.

Tennessee Trash #49 / Robe The iceberg illo with which you open this issue is truly magnificent; when I first saw it, I drew back, awe-struck – and a little frightened – by the sheer power of *size*. I recently heard someplace that icebergs can "live" for hundreds of years in a Northern clime: austere, silent gods of the sea. =+= The loss

of Rick Norwood's boy James is a sad, ugly story, painfully familiar: it reminds me of good J.J. Johnson and Annie Winston's brother, both victims of greed and violence. You're closest at hand to the scene: please keep SFPA posted on the investigation and trial. == You do a fine job balancing the arguments for/against invading Iraq, but I have yet to see any evidence to counter my suspicion that the only reason we'll be sinking lives and treasure there is to make that scurrilous lush in the White House look tough. If he wants to deal with a dangerous state, why not invade North Korea? Obvious reasons... they have no oil, they represent no past embarrassment to the actual powers in the administration, and hey – they can fight back! We are making a major mistake in our Iraq policy – the US is not acting like a world leader, but a world *bully*, and the day will come when we will be pulled down. == Glad the lad (Isaac) continues to heal and prosper, and yes, the Blue Ridge Mountains are some of the most gojuss turf this country has to offer. Rosy aches to see it; I ache to return. == andy offutt has pulled his drunken MC act before – at the last Washington DC worldcon, I believe, which ended with Ellison storming the stage and a complete frou-for-all. I like andy and am wild about his wife, so I'm glad I missed the Conglomeration disaster. == Pat & Naomi (Molloy & Fisher) have been frequent visitors to the Lillian e-mails, discussing DUFF. More details later. == Even a musical illiterate like myself finds interesting the question of why Stradivarius violins are so superior to those created by anyone else. Has anyone figured it out? == Methinks the reason I was on the WigWam Village panel at DSC was not merely that I've stayed at the place a few times, but that I started a "WigWam for Worldcon" movement in **Challenger**. When you stayed there, did they still feature the original wicker furniture? And did you notice that the bathroom mirror slopes inward? == Easy enough to pinpoint when my media favorites, **Twilight Zone** and **Star Trek**, headed downhill. After **TZ** went to a one-hour format, with only two or three

decent episodes, it completely lost its groove, and even returning to a half hour didn't save it from pointless, meandering, preachy scripts. For **Trek**, it came with the third season, and the shows boldly went where no one had gone before, to whit, no place. Seeing poor DeForrest Kelley's name appear in the beginning credits of a rerun has often caused me to click off the TV, without giving the show the three or four seconds normally required to identify the episode. == My boss' kid had a choice between attending local Tulane University on full scholarship, or Brown University in Rhode Island for \$35,000 a year. Guess which he chose. == You make an excellent point about the two **Star Wars** series, that they tell parallel stories about young Jedi coming of age and choosing a life's path. So far – even with **Attack of the Clones** being pretty good – I'd say this second trilogy has been a mistake. Of course, it hasn't helped that in the first two movies, the great and terrible Annakin Skywalker has acted like a twerp.

Ticklish Situation, Indeed – Remembering 9/11 / mike Your cover illo raises an interesting question, one I'd like to see the teenaged Clark Kent pursue on **Smallville**, preferably with Lana: are Kryptonians tickle-able? == As I said before, recent Supreme Court rulings seem to establish that kiddie porn forbids depiction of *real* children, not drawings – the point of the law is the protect kids from abuse, not society from bad taste. The long-running fanzine devoted to video porn, **Batteries Not Included**, recently stepped into the quagmire of "intergenerational" sexuality, printing perspectives ranging from Richard Pacheco's typically intelligent point of view to opinions lifted straight (so to speak) from NAMBLA, so repellent even **South Park** condemned it. After seeming to champion child sexuality in a review of a photographic book – anything remotely gay is holy to **Newsweek** – **Newsweek** has backpedaled from its tacit endorsement, and it was reassuring in a way to see Pacheco, father and former porn actor, support my own thoughts on the issue. Which are: sex is adult, and any grown

person who foists or forces it on someone too young or too limited to handle its emotional and physical demands is doing massive harm, and should be tied to a rock and rolled into the nearest waste treatment plant. += The DSC tribute to Meade Frierson was nothing historic. We called it off early. Too grim a loss. += I'm not surprised Chuck Jones & Co, timed Wile E. Coyote's falls to *the frame*. The essence of comed- *timing*! += Right: Hiroshima wasn't terrorism. Hiroshima was total war. The act wasn't supposed to convince the Japanese of anything except one thing: *they lose*. It worked, too, and though I wouldn't have dropped the bomb on Nagasaki – the point of that attack seemed to be “Well, let's see if *this* one works” – “Little Boy”? ‘Fraid so. += I will not take the bait and guess your weight. Turnabout would then be fair play. If you insist ... “More than your cute stepdaughter, less than a fully-loaded bus.” There. += First DC-Marvel cross-over? Wasn't it Supes and Spidey? Or was it the time Chris Reeve's Superman appeared on the cover to Marvel's fanzine? += Lucas Kovar's “Electron Band Structure in Germanium, My Ass” is hysterical – it wins this mailing's **Best Bit Award**, particularly if he had the nerve to submit the paper.

Spiritus Mundi 191 / *me* Paul McCall's cover, depicting Professor Challenger, is terrific, and I hope I get to present it to fandom at large atop **Challenger** #17 by the end of January, when the Hugo ballots come out. The recent Bob Hoskins movie of **The Lost World** surprised us by being not too bad. The FX were superb – it's rare these days that they're not superb – and the script was fairly faithful to the novel. Which I recently read, by the way. More humor from Doyle than Holmesians are used to, and except for a rather Victorian attitude towards slaughtering and enslaving inferior races, quite good fun. += Later newspaper assignments on which I've accompanied my reporter wife have included the local elections and a meeting of the parish council, local democracy at work. The latter event was particularly instructive. Though it may

be easy to sneer at the small issues – drainage ditches and the like – which took so much time and provoked often acrimonious debate, the people affected by those ditches don't think the issues that trivial, and government has the duty to see to their concerns. Multiply those elections and that meeting by a thousand times, and you've got a country going. By the way, in New Orleans elections, every local incumbent judge was re-elected, some tragically, and Leon Cannizzarro, in whose court I have never lost a case, was deservedly elevated to the Circuit Court of Appeal. += After a wonderful start, it looks like the New Orleans Saints are fading with the season. True, only two teams have beaten us to date, and Detroit was just lucky, but Atlanta owns us, and we will have to get through Vick & Co. before we can even think about fulfilling our glorious destiny. += **Challenger** #17 is done except for two essentials: artwork for the various articles and money to pay for printing. As some of you know, I yanked out the fanzine review section and published it as a separate zine, e-mailing it to as many fan editors and interested parties as I could find. It goes against my grain to distribute even part of a zine electronically, but the price was right, and it got people their reviews much earlier than waiting until the printed **Chall** was ready. += That finishes my mc's, on 11-17-02. One thing more to discuss ..

GUY & ROSY FOR DUFF!

When Naomi Fisher e-mailed me with an invitation to add our names to the Down-Under Fan Fund competition, I was hesitant. Australia is 20 hours of flight from here, and you know the way I feel about flying. DUFF covers the airfares, and the Aussie National Convention covers your hotel bill over that weekend, but the rest of the time, you're on your own. We have a worldcon to attend that year, and damn little vacation time to cover it. So why run? Simple. Rosy thought it would be fun. I *owe* the lady ... and so far, I haven't shown her the good time she deserves. So: will you vote for us? I promise a *splendid* report!

MOVIE NOTES

We have seen **Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets**, and found it pretty good – rather slow in its pacing, like the first film, but with better action and a better story. The kid actors, though, are growing far too quickly – Potter is supposed to be 12 in this tale, and the actor looks well into his teens. Other films seen of recent: **Frida**, a superb performance by Salma Hayek as the artist wife of the great Diego Rivera, featuring some nifty cameos by Edward Norton as Nelson Rockefeller and Geoffrey Rush as Leon Trotsky – look for Hayek to be short-listed for the Oscar, likewise Alfred Molina as Rivera; **Auto Focus**, the somewhat pitiful story of the descent of TV lout Bob Crane into sexual addiction – nice job by Greg Kinnear as Crane, but he seems a bit insubstantial next to Willem Dafoe's intense presence as his cohort in crumminess, and the direction is interesting, if obvious; **The Ring** and **Ghost Ship**, one incomprehensible horror flick, another simpler, and more successful. Looking forward to **Gangs of New York**, the new **Star Trek**, and something about *towers* ...

A SADNESS

Rosy and I spent the first weekend of November in Pensacola, Florida. We were attending the funeral of Charley Wise, lifelong friend of Joe Green, Rosy's father, and the official photographer at our wedding.

Charley and Joe had known each other since they were four, and of course, Joe was very upset – but I think the ceremony, and our visit, helped. The religious blandishments of the minister seemed rote, but the chapel was packed with Charley's friends and the presentation, if I can call it that, was superb. The family had brought the funeral home Charley's Navy uniform, a scrapbook of his deft cartoons (from a service magazine), one of his cameras, and some portraits, and the home had arranged them beautifully. I particularly liked their placement of the camera next to Charley's casket – his tool of choice, as if he'd just set it down.

With his daughter and con-in-law Joe could talk science fiction and TV and Florida politics, and get his mind off his loss. It was the first time we'd seen him and Patty since our wedding, and Joe's been wrestling with – and beating back – an ailment, so I think everyone was glad of the trip, despite the circumstances.

By the way, on their way home Joe and Patty planned on visiting Shelby Vick, famed in these pages for doing the very first artwork to appear in the very first mailing of SFPA – a sketch atop Bill Plott's zine. I've never met Vick, but I asked Joe to pass along our respects.

BYE BYE BIRDIE

"For everything there is a last time, lieutenant." Isn't that what Spock told Saavik in **Star Trek II**? Something like that. It's true, of course, although I never thought there's be a last time I'd walk into New Orleans' Hummingbird Grill for a cheap feed. There was, and it came on Friday, October 25, 2002.

The Bird, as we knew it, was a trip. It was located in a rough part of downtown, in a ramshackle brick building next to a garage. It took up the ground floor of the Hummingbird Hotel, and there used to be a Hummingbird Lounge next door – but that closed years ago. The Grill seemed eternal – but "seeming eternal" is an illusion.

Fans knew the Bird from late, late nights when we couldn't find anyplace else to eat, or from times when visitors came to town to whom we wanted to show the *real* New Orleans. Or we just went there on our own to eat. In 1979, when I lived in the French Quarter, I'd hike up

there almost every night to get one of their three-dollar ground steaks, or an anytime-breakfast of pancakes and ham. It was grease, of course, but as Beth my first wife said, it was "good grease."

That last night I had pancakes, chosen as usual from the big chalkboard menu on the wall. Just beyond that wall were the bathrooms ... from Hell. I never saw the Ladies' Room, of course, but I did see the expression on Judge Miriam Waltzer's face when she returned from it.

Aside from fans, and judges, the Bird's clientele was just about what you'd expect from a diner open all night in a seedy part of New Orleans. Taxi drivers and cops, working transients, non-working transients, and *illegally*-working transients, if you get my drift. I never had to worry about the rattiness of my blue jeans when I went to the Hummingbird. If anything, I had to avoid liberal condescension towards the regulars. On October 25, the place crawled with slumming yuppies, taking photos – like I did – giving interviews to anyone with a video camera, reminiscing loudly about the time the Hummingbird installed a salad bar for the World's Fair. People had lamented that the Bird had gone to the yuppies, and now it really had. Some 20-something developer had bought the building to convert to something "upscale." The Bird as we knew it had to go.

We cursed him loudly, and the cook and the waitress regarded us with silent, patient disgust.

I never had any trouble with other patrons at the Bird. 99 times out of a hundred I could eat my chopped steak and write in my diary in peace. Once a drunk at a nearby table had started a fracas, leading his equally besotted girlfriend to calm him by imploring, "Give me some *sugar*!" A thug manning the register once chased away a complaining customer with a 2x4, and a smartass once pissed me off by howling along with my record from the jukebox. That was a good jukebox, too; for years it carried my favorite Bob Dylan, "Tangled Up in Blue". I'd play it every time I walked through the door.

On the day they closed the beat-up juke featured a wide selection of CDs – but not Bob Dylan.

I liked to go there at Carnival time; the parades came right down the street. I didn't like going there on the loneliest Christmas morning I hope I'll ever spend, when I sat across a table from a street boy. He looked lost, abandoned, frightened, feelings you feel forcefully on a day like Christmas in a place like the Hummingbird. He looked as grateful for the newspaper I gave him as if it were a bicycle. Maybe I was projecting; maybe I was grateful to have somebody to give something to.

That last evening Rosy and I joined our usual crowd – John Guidry, Dennis Dolbear, Annie Winston, Lee Young. They'd met a fellow at a play whom they'd brought with them, a literate guy who said "William?" when we spoke of Burroughs and "Ralph?" when we mentioned Ellison. Justin Winston was home asleep, which I regretted; he was with Dennis and me on one of the nights when we'd walked out of the Bird and someone said, "There's something you *do* see every day!" "What's that?" "Dawn."

It wasn't that late, or that early, when we left on October 25th, and stood together for a moment on the sidewalk. As we said our goodnights a couple came up. The man was shabby, and heavily unshaven, and the woman wore a loud, many-colored outfit almost as skimpy as a bathing suit. She told us, "Just droppin' my old man off at work!" as he went inside. From her eyes and demeanor it was obvious that she was off the wall.

She trundled down the street. One of the ladies made fun of her harlequinish outfit. Tonight she was dropping off her "old man" at his job. Where would he go tomorrow night? Where would they *all* go? The night people who filled the Hummingbird, the transients, the runaways, the poor and petty evildoers who would have no place in the brave new upscale world coming to this building. Where would they go now to get a cup of coffee?

Going our separate ways, we left the shelter of the dilapidated Hummingbird marquee, from which bulbs were missing, and which wasn't lit anyway.