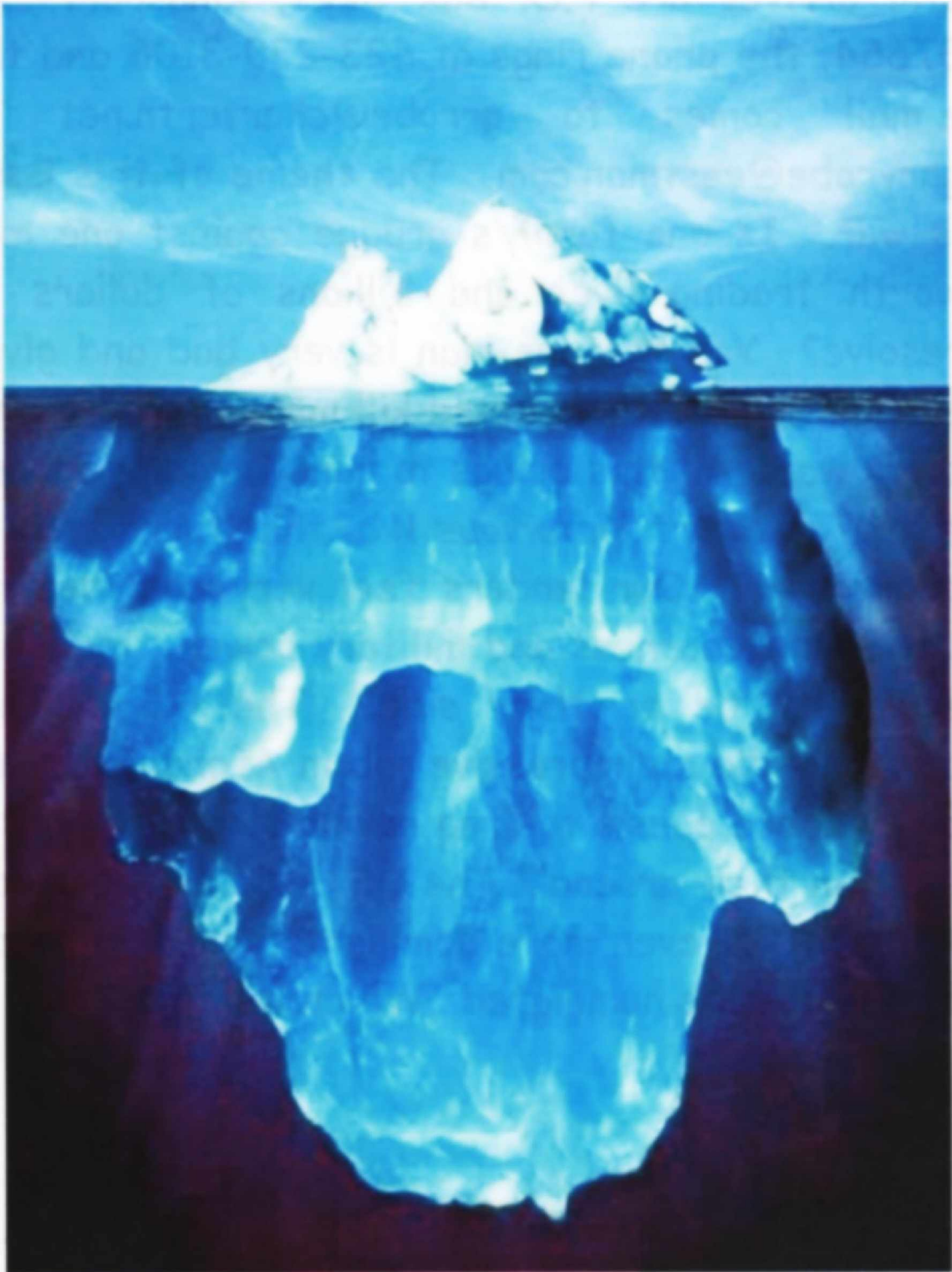


TENNESSEE TRASH #49

Consider the Iceberg as a Metaphor for Middle East War



Tennessee Trash #49 was produced by Gary R. Robe in the usual rush for the deadline. The mail still arrives are P.O. Box 3221, Kingsport, TN 37664, the phone rings at 423-239-3106 and the e-mail comes to grrobe@chartertn.net or garyrobe@eastman.com. The theme of this issue is war. Is one family's grudge against one man worth trading lives and billions of dollars to resolve? Yes the one man is very bad and given time and opportunity could kill more people than a quick war. All this brings to mind David Webber's title *The Short Victorious War* that turned out to be neither. Our leaders feel very confident in their righteousness and military power. Evidence seems to be on their side. The US military certainly did an impressive job in Afghanistan and all evidence points to Iraq having some very nasty stuff in their arsenal. The US could emerge from this conflict even more dominant than we are now or we could be humiliated. Which will it be?

TENNESSEE TRASH # 49

A ZINE BY GARY R. ROBE FOR MAILING NUMBER 229 OF
THE SOUTHERN FANDOM PRESS ALLIANCE

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First Some Bad News:

As reported here in the past Rick Norwood's son James disappeared in April. Now the story has an end, but it is a sad one. In a bizarre turn of events one of the men involved in hijacking James's car for use in a bank robbery apparently had a change of heart and led the authorities to the shallow grave where they had buried James. It took two weeks to identify the skeletal remains.

A memorial service for James was held over Labor Day weekend that at least brought some closure to the whole sad affair. Corlis was right in the middle of all this in the ETSU math department and was at least able to console Rick as much as she could. The department has raised money to plant a shade tree and build a bench under it on the campus as a memorial. The two perpetrators are for the moment only charged with bank robbery although more charges are sure to come. The man who informed claims not to have committed the murder and is probably trying to exchange an accessory plea in exchange for ratting out his buddy. It is going to be difficult to empanel a jury in this region if the case ever goes that far.

Where Are We Headed, When Is Aggression Justified, Is Being Right Enough and Other Questions of the Day...

I am convinced that sometime before the end of the year the US will be at war with Iraq. From a tactical standpoint the only time to wage a war in the Mesopotamian Desert is November through March. Outside that window it is just too freaking hot to roll tanks across. The experience of Desert Storm indicates that we

should have artillery outside of Baghdad within four days at most. How long it would take to finish Saddam Hussein in street fighting is anyone's guess but we can do it. We have the forces and we have the technology. The question is do we have the will and the justification?

At the moment the US military is riding high. I doubt that the Armed Forces have enjoyed an approval rating this high since WWII. We have just pacified Afghanistan, a job that neither the British nor the Russians could accomplish over a longer time with a much heavier commitment. Sure, we did it with inside help, but the Soviets and British also had allies on the ground and look where it got them. Even more than the Gulf War the fight in Afghanistan showed just how big the gap is between the US forces and anyone else who cares to fight. No, the military outcome of an invasion of Iraq is a forgone conclusion at least up to the point of delivering forces to the Baghdad city limits. Should we do it?

If we have learned anything from the technological advances of the last century it is that we should not equate the ability of an action with its desirability. What if The Manhattan Project had never been undertaken? The main justification for building The Bomb was that The Nazis were working on it too and the thought of an undeterred nuclear capable Hitler was a reasonable justification. As it turned out, the Germans were not even close to making an A-bomb at war's end in Europe. Sure the use of the bomb on Japan ended the war in the Pacific quickly and with less loss of life than an invasion but the development of the A-bomb was not essential to the defeat of Japan. Would the USSR have developed nuclear capability if the US had not shown the way? Probably advances in the basic science of nuclear physics made the eventual development of nuclear

weapons inevitable but that begs the question of whether or not it was a good idea in retrospect.

Is it a good idea for the US to invade Iraq? I wish I knew. I also wish our leaders were making it easier to form an opinion. All I can do is list pros and cons, but all of those seem to lead off into gray areas where making a decision comes down to a flip of a coin.

WHY WE SHOULD INVADE

1. Iraq either has or is developing chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons. That's a good one. Scary weapons in Saddam Hussein's hands are not a comforting thought. We already know that Iraq has chemical weapons—they were used in the Gulf War. I don't want Saddam Hussein to have these toys, and his possession of them is unequivocally A Bad Thing. As a citizen of the US, however, I have to ask how much of a threat are they to people here. The problem I see is that our leaders are all lumping Weapons of Mass Destruction into one pile, and as I see it there are three separate threats that must be viewed separately with their distinct probabilities, capabilities and worst-case scenarios:

Chemical weapons are cheap, easy to make, and can be highly lethal. Their effectiveness as a terror weapon was demonstrated on a small scale by the Aum Shinri Kyo attack in Japan. In an enclosed space like a subway chemical agents could kill thousands in coordinated attacks. Attacks on large crowds such as at sporting events or New Year's Eve in Times Square are a bit more problematic since it would take a very large container or many coordinated small ones to deliver a lethal dose over a large area. Gas was effective in WWI because troops were confined to trenches where heavy gases could collect and bombardment could be sustained.

The assumption here is that a chemical attack launched on the US would be a terrorist type operation. I envision a single-shot attack coordinated against the subways in several cities, likely New York and Washington D.C. but conceivably including Boston, Atlanta, and Chicago. I expect that smuggling the chemical agents into the country would not pose a major problem. The feasibility would come down to how good subway security is. I don't want to

bet my life on it. The second most likely attack would be at a big public gathering such as The Super Bowl, Times Square, or a Billy Graham Crusade. (Think about that last one!) Such an attack would be much more easily accomplished but much less lethal.

The bottom line is that Saddam Hussein has chemical weapons and a proven tendency to use them at least on his own turf. He could use them either in against Israel in retaliation for an attack, or supply them to the terrorist network for a sneak attack in the US.

A biological attack is much less likely but could have a potentially bigger death toll. Saddam has biological agents. Weapons inspectors found anthrax and botulism toxin stockpiles after the Gulf War. He destroyed them then but has had four years free reign to rebuild his arsenal. The trickier question is how effective and deliverable those agents are. The three agents most often mentioned as bioweapons are smallpox, anthrax, and botulism toxin. Even though anthrax and botox are biological products, they are really chemical weapons because they are not communicable and that is the key to an effective chemical weapon.

Although anthrax and botox have lower lethal doses than synthetics such as sarin, they still depend on individual victims picking up a lethal dose. With these weapons the big question is just how well they can be deployed. As we found out with the anthrax attacks last year those spores are tough buggers but if you know you have been exposed then a round of *Cipro* stops it dead. The worst-case scenario here is to release spores at a large public gathering clandestinely and wait for symptoms. Botox is faster acting and has no effective antidote. The problem is that botox has never been effectively tested as a battlefield weapon and there is some evidence that inhaled botox is much less lethal than ingested forms.

Does Saddam Hussein have a smallpox virus culture? That is the big question isn't it? If released a smallpox outbreak could be devastating. Maybe. There is new evidence that even without boosters many people retain at least partial immunity to smallpox for decades after vaccination. Most of the boomer generation was vaccinated until the 70's, so there may be more resistance built into the population than is assumed. Still, a smallpox infection has the potential to spread from even one point of

infection. In order to deploy the weapon Saddam has to have gotten access to one of the retained cultures of smallpox. I suppose that it is possible with enough determination, but I have no idea of the likelihood. Bottom line is that Saddam Hussein with smallpox in his arsenal is A Very Bad Thing and if we since we know he actually has them that's enough for me to support a war.

Now how about nuclear weapons? Even Donald Rumsfeld doesn't think they have them now. My feeling is that if Pakistan can develop nukes then so can Iraq. So, in the near future Saddam Hussein will have nuclear capability. How will he use it? He does not have the delivery system to use it against the US, so the likely target is Israel. If Saddam Hussein nukes Tel Aviv then we get to see if Israel really has developed the bomb because Baghdad would get the favor returned. If Israel does not retaliate then the rest of the world will. Would Saddam really risk attack from all sides in order to strike Israel? That is the call that the governments taking a wait-and-see approach to Iraq's weapons of mass destruction are making. The bottom line is that I don't feel that it is justified to launch a preemptive strike on Iraq based on the threat that they will develop nuclear weapons sometime.

There is no question that Iraq has weapons of mass destruction. Saddam has demonstrated his willingness to use them and has ignored the terms that ended the Gulf War. In the law abiding world when one party violates part of a contract then that contract is voided. To paraphrase Mel Brooks, "a var es un ugly sing und I sink it's about time ve had vun!"

2. Saddam Hussein is a scofflaw and continues to defy the UN resolutions against Iraq. George Bush delivered the speech of his life at the UN. He rubbed the world's nose in the fact that Saddam Hussein has systematically defied all the judgments against him. If he was a parole violator in any lawful country in the world he would not be walking free today. If the UN wants to be the world's policeman then it has to back up its pronouncements with force.

This is also a sufficient reason to go to war. The world cannot allow rogue leaders to defy the rule of law. I think it ironic that the German Justice Minister last week apparently

equated George Bush with Hitler in his using a foreign adventure to move focus away from domestic problems. The irony is that if anyone is playing Hitler games it is Saddam Hussein in his flaunting of US resolutions and taking just a bit more each time he cheats and gets away with it. The downside here is that the UN has to give approval for military action and that does not look good. Russia, France and Germany have all vocally opposed any action in Iraq and Russia and France have veto power in the Security Council. Luckily Saddam is not making it easy on them by first promising and then retreating from allowing weapons inspectors back into the country. As long as Saddam continues to remind the world what a rascal he is then opinion will continue to turn against him.

3. Saddam Hussein is oppressing and terrorizing his people. I'm sorry for the Iraqi citizens, but the only thing we can do about that is complain loudly.

4. Iraq is a threat to destabilize the Middle East. I doubt that Saddam is dumb enough to test any other borders at the moment. His well advertised program of financially rewarding the families of Palestinian suicide bombers is state sponsored terrorism but it seems that nobody but the US, Israel, and maybe Hamid Karzai see it that way. It is incredible to me that all the other Middle Eastern countries see Saddam Hussein as someone they can live with. I suppose that they all fear that toppling a ruler might give ideas to some of the people in the region. My feeling is that Saddam likes the Middle East just like it is with the possible exception of Iran. I suspect that his main priorities are to maintain the level of Palestinian violence, support the fundamentalist Islamic instability in the rest of the region, and wait for opportunities to grab power.

5. Iraq could disrupt the production of Middle Eastern oil. The fact is that Iraq could cut off its own oil production and not affect the total oil production equation significantly. The other OPEC countries would thank him for making the price of oil jump up, but would immediately increase production to fill the gap. The only other way that Iraq could affect production would be to invade and that is not going to happen. The only country that would be hurt by cutting production would be Iraq so that makes no sense.

WHY WE SHOULD NOT INVADE

1. The US would likely be alone in the military operation. A diverse coalition of forces as used in the Gulf War looks very unlikely at this point. There is no question that the US forces could pacify Iraq. The problem is that all the casualties, cost, and blame for civilian damage would accrue to the US. Just being in the minority does not necessarily make the US position wrong.

If the US acts alone in Iraq it will be a return to the Big Stick policy of Teddy Roosevelt. Except I don't believe that the US intends to speak softly this time around. The danger here is that the US is starting to act like a world leader and that makes all the others nervous. We may be accused of unilateralism when in fact we are doing what is right instead of what is popular. Gerhardt Schroder just was reelected in Germany last week on the strength of his anti-American rhetoric. France, Russia, and China are showing their colors by treating Iraq policy as an opportunity to play Lets Make a Deal with the US. Being right has nothing to do with being popular. If our leaders have the evidence they claim to have then they should tell all. Just saying it's so is not good enough.

2. There is no clear path forward for the Iraqi government after Saddam is removed. This is a good one. If we oust Saddam only to plunge Iraq into chaos then a significant part of our legitimacy in invading Iraq goes down the drain. Look at the end of WWII in Germany. There we had a plan. The Western Bloc powers got half the country and the Eastern got the other. The plan was to get each sector back on its feet and then let go. Russia had other ideas and didn't let go until it had to in 1988! In Iraq the succession plan is even murkier. Just taking out Saddam and then leaving the area only invites another to take his place or for another Taliban to rise.

3. Taking action will have unforeseen consequences. Will the cure in Iraq be worse than the disease? If the US invades Iraq it will drive the Islamic militants absolutely nuts. Might we eliminate a military threat in the Gulf only to incite an even bigger terrorist threat at home? The Bush administration is saying that any outcome as better than a world with Saddam in it. I see this as an act of hubris on Bush's part. If this plays out in the administration's favor then Dubya goes down in the history books as one of the great

American Presidents. If not then Bill Clinton had it easy.

Risk avoidance is a perfectly valid reason for caution. An invasion of Iraq is certainly a risky venture. There will be casualties, material losses, political repercussions, economic repercussions, and an unknown outcome. Risk by itself, however, should not be paralyzing. It should be weighed against potential gains and carefully considered but now used as an excuse unless the analysis shows that the downside is too big.

This is where I feel that the administration is not doing their job. The impression I have is that Bush has made up his mind to invade Iraq and is not looking for reasons not to do it. For example the CIA has not been asked to prepare a complete intelligence assessment on Iraq. The stated reason for this is that we don't want to tip our hand on intel resources. The impression is that the CIA does not have compelling evidence of an Iraqi weapons program so such an appraisal would not provide a compelling case for invasion. As Corlis is fond of saying, however, negative evidence is not proof. Just because the CIA does not have photos of Iraqi bioweapons factories doesn't prove their nonexistence.

So, after all the soul searching it comes down to this. Do I trust what the Bush administration is telling me about Iraq? If Bush is to be trusted then Saddam Hussein is a dangerous madman surrounded with terror weapons who is just waiting for the opportunity to use them. I know that Saddam is a past military aggressor who has used chemical weapons on the battlefield and against internal resistors. When attacked before he did launch missiles against Israel so there is precedent that he will expand a conflict outside his borders. I am not opposed to the idea of making a move against Iraq. My problem is that I just don't have deep trust in our leaders.

During the campaign Bush was asked directly what he would do about Saddam Hussein and he never hinted that he would consider going to war. Now we find out that war with Iraq was being planned several months before the 9/11 attacks. This was on Bush's mind from the day he took office. That is the other thing that has me uneasy. Bush has a penchant for secrecy that borders on paranoia. It seems to me to be a sign of deep insecurity if he does not feel confident enough about his decision making process to share the facts with the people he is expecting to pay for his

adventures with their lives and retirement savings. The people who voted for Bush supported a candidate who was outspoken on the need to extract the US from foreign adventures and was highly critical of the Clinton policy of involvement in The Balkans, Somalia and Israel. Sure the attacks last year made a response in Afghanistan essential but doesn't that just prove that Bush's stated goal of withdrawing US forces from foreign conflicts was off the mark to begin with? How many deaths in Israel have occurred because Bush decided to follow a hands-off approach to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Now that the US is once again asserting itself in the region I notice that the number of Palestinian suicide bombers has dropped way down. Coincidence?

So where does that leave me? With the support of allies (the UN would be nice, but I would settle for NATO) Saddam should be removed just as should have been done in 1991. Iraq has chemical and biological weapons ready for use and we know they will use them. What I cannot support is an attack just because George W., Dick Cheney, and Donald Rumsfeld say we should. I think the world is terrified that the US is about to demonstrate its superiority. If we roll into Baghdad, remove Saddam, and show the world the underground weapons arsenals and labs then that puts all of the naysayers in the uncomfortable position of having to admit they were wrong. I think that Bush's gamble that the stockpiles are there is a real low-risk roll of the dice. The problem that other countries will have is that if Bush is proved to be right about Iraq it will be much harder down the road to oppose him on environmental issues, globalization, poverty reduction, trade regulation, immigration, taxation, and arms development. This is a battle for all the political marbles. All it depends on is finding a stash of anthrax, botulism, sarin, mustard gas or a nuclear research lab somewhere in Iraq. Would you bet against that?

So, What Else is New?

The last two months have been busy and entertaining enough for The Robe Experience. On the medical front, Isaac had a checkup with the cardiologist in early September and found that his heart has continued to improve and he is left with minimal permanent scarring. We don't have another checkup for six months.

My ankle kept me hobbling around for about six weeks. Luckily that coincided with the height of the drought so my yard didn't even need mowing until the rains returned in late August. I started a project to replace our worn out carpet with *Pergo* brand fake wood flooring. After spending an entire weekend ripping up about 50 ft² of carpet and putting the flooring down I found that my knees, hips and back hurt worse than my ankle. At that point I decided that I was well enough to go back to Taekwondo training.

In early August we participated in a weekend camping trip with the Cub Scout Pack to Roan Mountain State Park. This was a very nicely developed hideaway tucked into the Blue Ridge Mountains on the Tennessee-North Carolina border. The altitude was high enough to make the nights perfect for tent camping, and the campsite was civilized enough to have hot water and showers in the bathhouses. It was also wild enough to have nightly sightings of raccoons and black bears. The feature the boys liked best was the Doe River ran that through the campsite. With the dry weather there was not a lot of water flowing in the river, but the boys made the most of what was there. We also made a short hike on the Appalachian Trail on Saturday. This was the first time that I had ever hiked part of the trail, so it was perhaps a bigger thrill for me than it was for the boys! An unexpected bonus of the hike was that the wild blueberries were ripening, so we were able to pick several containers full of them for use in the pancakes the next morning. We also took some home to include in muffins the next week.

The elementary school year started on August 12. That is quite early, but had to be moved up to accommodate a state mandated testing schedule. At least they are giving us back the time next spring and the boys will be out of school by May 15. This year's schooling had an added twist since Nick was starting middle school and Isaac was still in elementary. The middle school bus goes past our house at 6:45 a.m. for pickup and 3 p.m. for drop-off. Corlis was worried that Nick would not be able to handle getting up at 6 a.m. and had planned an elaborate scheme for driving both boys to school. Nick, however, made the situation easier because several of his best friends were on the same bus and he wanted to ride with them. So far he has only missed the bus once.

Corlis just missed getting hired for a permanent full-time position with ETSU, but still was handed

a full teaching load as a fall semester part time teacher. She is continuing to have to contend with teaching an Internet based statistics class. There was supposed to be a 25 person limit on enrollment for the class but the university goofed and posted it as 40. She ended up with 35 students at the beginning, but these students are really at the bottom of the barrel and attrition took care of the class size within a few weeks. Even though the Tennessee has theoretically averted its budget crisis by raising sales taxes (we are now paying 9.75% once the local options are added on) funding for the university remains hand-to-mouth. At the moment they are not sure they will be able to hire Corlis full time in the spring even though there will be plenty of students to fill the classes she would teach.

In late August Corlis and I attended Conglomeration 2 in Clarksville IN. This was fun for us because our relatives in Louisville expect to have their nephews visit for the weekend. We ended up sharing a room with Kirsten Moore, one of our old friends from Bowling Green Fandom. I had a business trip to Chile that got cancelled after it was too late to get our own room. The convention itself was pretty lame. The committee is made up of some of the old Rivercon crew plus other wannabees looking for the egoboo of running a convention. Their inexperience showed in areas like registration. It took them a half hour make our badges and I was the only one in the line. They insisted in keying in the personal data on site-real time with only one person to do the data entry. The same person had to use another program to generate the nametags after she had the database updated. Urgh!

The one programming item that I did attend pretty much turned me off of going to anything else. The opening ceremonies featured an obviously drunk and rambling Andy Offutt acting as toastmaster. Andy is usually known for his cogent, humorous, and organized public speaking. This time he ran on for over an hour, stumbling from topic to topic, and not being able to read that he was losing his audience. After 20 years of seeing Andy at work in situations like these it was very painful to see him stumbling.

On the other hand the room parties made the convention worthwhile. I parked myself in the Xerpes in 2010 party for the whole night and

found myself engaged in conversations with many people I had either not talked to in years or had never gotten a chance to know well before. I ended up talking until after sunrise on Saturday morning. Saturday night was much the same except I ended up in the filk room. I usually avoid these like the plague, but here the emphasis was on popular songs and audience participation. We ended up drinking beer and entertaining ourselves until about 3 a.m. All told Conglomeration was not among the best run or programmed conventions I've attended, but it was certainly entertaining.

Finally we cashed in on a long standing invitation from Pat Molloy and Naomi Fisher to spend a weekend with them in Huntsville. We got to spend the whole day at the Alabama Space and Rocket center with Pat and Naomi giving us a guided tour. The favorite parts were the various rides. They have a flight simulator, a climbing wall, a centrifuge and a takeoff simulator. My favorite was the takeoff simulator. They strap you into a seat and then launch you 80 feet into the air. At the apex of the shot you get about 3 seconds of simulated weightlessness. Isaac was ready to ride it a second time but Nick didn't like it much. The other fun ride is the centrifuge where the riders are exposed to a couple minutes of 4 Gs. I rode it with the boys and we all independently came up with the conclusion that our Taekwondo instructor would love it as an opportunity to practice high-stress aerobics.

Before leaving Huntsville on Sunday Pat took us to see his other hobby, the North Alabama Railroad Museum. They have a quite impressive collection of rail stock for such an out of the way place. Their collection includes what is probably the last surviving specimen of the first mass-produced diesel locomotive. It looks like a boxcar with a smokestack. They don't publicize it much because they are afraid that the B&O Museum in Baltimore might start a hostile takeover. The other unusual exhibit they have is a post office car. These were unusual because they were literally a post office on wheels. This car is in excellent condition with all of its original woodwork in place. The car is distinctive because it has no connection to the other cars in the train. The cars were federal property and staffed exclusively by postal workers. Many old railroad employees visit the museum because the postal car was the only part of the train they were forbidden to enter.

Well, that's enough natter for now. See y'all in 60!

MAILING COMMENTS

The Southerner # 228: Jeffrey Copeland—The mailing arrived on August 8th. It was good to see 100% participation on the mailing! The page count was pretty good for the middle of the summer too!

Yngvi is a Louse #77: T. K. F. Weisskopf—Reyrcmt Jeff: Good call on compatible mess styles. Corlis and I are both paper pilers (anything less than an avalanche is not a mess) but cannot abide with anything put of order in the kitchen. When the clutter from the rest of the house starts to encroach into the kitchen it is probably time for a cleaning.

The New Port News #204: Ned Brooks—I believe that the restriction on European traveling blood donors is a reaction to CJD. Since the known cases are concentrated in Western Europe and the manner of transmission is unknown I think the Red Cross is just being cautious. Too bad they weren't as cautious with West Nile Fever. They are now admitting that that disease can probably be transmitted by transfusion. That makes sense when the normal transmission vector is mosquito bites.

It is too bad you didn't make it to DSC this year. I think you would have enjoyed and been able to contribute a lot to the FanHistoricon panels.

Derogatory Reference #99: Arthur Hlavaty—I am glad someone else has discovered the Charlaine Harris books. *The Dresden Files* by Jim Butcher capture a bit of the same feeling in an urban setting, although with more pyrotechnics.

Moodling, Canoodling, & Oogling: The DSC Oneshot—Ha! I had to look at that Fifi for a month prior to the convention. I set it out on my nightstand to make sure I wouldn't forget to take it to the DSC. I'm sure I dreamed a couple of times in Pepto-Bismol Pink.

Variations on a Theme #14: Rich Lynch—Geez, we spent two days touring *The Silk Road* during our visit to Washington but we never saw Yo Yo Ma! I think the kids would even

appreciate seeing Ma since he performed on the soundtrack for *Crouching Tiger/Hidden Dragon*. It was a very impressive fair. What was even more impressive was that it was all gone within a day of closing. My favorite part was making the boys eat cold Japanese noodles. I wish we had gotten some pictures of the expressions!

I have noticed something interesting about Yo Yo Ma's cello music. When I play one of his CDs using Windows Media Player with one of the skins that simulates an oscilloscope something remarkable happens when Ma is playing. His Stradivarius cello produces a whole series of high overtones that are simply not present when other cellists play. Either his instrument or technique produces a distinctive waveform. My poor ears can't pick out a difference, but it is right there in the sound picture.

In the bonus material included with the Amadeus CD there is a section that deals with the Saleri legend. Apparently Saleri went quite nuts in his later years and was confined to an asylum as is depicted in the film. One of his rantings was that he killed Mozart. None less than L. van Beethoven himself picked up the story and perpetuated it. Rheumatic Fever would explain why Mozart's health declined so quickly—progressing from a simple cold to fatality in a few weeks.

Twigdrazil and Treehouse Gazette #76: Richard Dengrove—So, basically your strongest memory of DSC is George Wells talking? I hope there was something else that helped to distinguish it from others. The reason that Guy was on the Wigwam Village panel was mainly because he has stayed there repeatedly. Over Labor Day weekend The Robe Experience didn't have much to do, so we decided to stay at Wigwam Village and spend the days caving. By the time we decided to visit all they had left was a single room with one double bed. There was just enough space in the Wigwam to put an air mattress on the floor for the kids. The room was actually quite comfortable although I wish we had brought our own pillows. The surprising thing about the room was that although it was only 100 ft off a busy highway there was no road

noise inside. I guess a foot of concrete is a pretty good sound barrier. Also, we left Kingsport after 5 p.m. on a Friday afternoon so we didn't arrive at Wigwam Village until after 10 p.m. local time. This was long after the manager had gone to bed so he just left the key to our room in the hotel mailbox. That has got to be the easiest hotel check-in I've ever experienced.

J.S. Bach actually had another tune on the charts in the 70's. Procul Harum added words to a Bach melody for *A Whiter Shade of Pale*.

The situation with your mother and father's will does not sound good. Even if she should outlive your father it does not sound like she is competent to execute a will right now. She may be able to muddle through in a familiar environment, but when faced with an unfamiliar and stressful situation I doubt she could cope. If your parents really want to give it all away and pass nothing to the children that is their business, but I hope they have made provisions for being declared incompetent and for someone to have power of attorney. From my experience and that of friends who have gone through it Alzheimer's victims have a huge capacity for denial and tend to become more vindictive and combative as the disease progresses. If they don't want the children to help them in any way that is their decision, but it is also important to minimize the danger to themselves and the community as their condition degrades.

As for having to learn Korean to get my black belt, I look at it as an opportunity instead of a chore. I did learn a bit about Korean when I visited there several years ago. It is one of the few written languages in which the exact time of introduction is known and that it had an inventor. I suppose the only other examples are Esperanto and computer programming languages. I actually have a Korean self-teach book that I bought when it looked like I was going to be visiting there regularly. The Korean I have to know for the Black Belt test is pretty basic. I need to count to ten, know left and right and commands for attention, bow, ready, fight, stop, and warning. I already know most of it although some candidates absolutely sweat bullets over the language requirements.

Murphy Makes a House Call: Sheila Strickland—I am the only one I know who made it through *Perdido Street Station*? If it is

such a hard read how did it make it to the Hugo ballot?

Frequent Flier: Tom Fellen—I hope you and Anita came through your eye problems with nothing worse than having to watch an episode of *Rosie*.

I have also been following the document retention policy of Arthur Andersen with interest. Eastman has a very aggressive document retention policy. Ever since the Polaroid vs. Kodak patent infringement lawsuit in the late 80's - early 90's Eastman has had a very diligent document retention policy. We are required to purge our files, paper, electronic, or whatever of anything dated over two years old. That applies to everything except for research notebooks, technical reports, training materials, reference materials, patent support documents, and externally created material. We have to examine our files, dispose of everything and then sign a document certifying that we are in compliance. There are then spot-checks to verify compliance. Anyone found out of compliance is subject to disciplinary action. (A mark on your Permanent Record That Will Follow You For The Rest of Your Life!)

I feel that the company is a bit overbearing on this policy because we are often required to destroy bits of knowledge that are used over-and-over. The company line is that if something is vital it is possible to get an exemption, but in reality I've never been able to get permission to retain anything. The spirit of the policy is to purge anything that relates to customer interactions. In reality the managers usually find it simpler to say everything must go so that judgment is taken out of the equation. Their argument is that everything of technical significance should be captured in a technical report. The truth is that there's a lot of trivia and detail that doesn't fit into the technical report format that is nonetheless useful. My boss in particular has made it so difficult to write technical reports—they must be fully documented, referenced, and verified—that simple observations cannot practically be captured that way.

Oblío #141: Gary Brown—Related to the Florida rain cycles I read somewhere that Lake Okeechobee was in danger last year of going dry and was down to an average depth of only 17". It is now full and then some. We are on the edge of

the East-Central drought zone that runs from Columbia SC through Maryland. This is on the heels of a rain event that dumped 10% of our average annual rainfall in just three days March.

Baseball may have pulled off a bottom of the ninth tiebreaker with the resolution to the strike, but I agree with you that MLB has lost the game. I think that the real downfall of baseball has been television. For the teams that really control the game now the money really does come from a hole in the air. In the past the viability of a team was dependent on filling the seats. Now the New York, Chicago, Atlanta, and LA teams don't care much about gate receipts because most of their revenue comes from TV. Since the fans that matter are now visible only through TV ratings MLB is convinced that fans don't matter.

It is too bad because this year's division races are interesting. It is especially gratifying to see Minnesota go from threatened contraction to a postseason spot in October. I suppose that The Yankees winning the ALCS is a foregone conclusion and Atlanta will probably wheeze through the NLCS again. I would love to see someone make it different though.

All the Mailing Comments That Fit in Print:

Jeffery Copeland—Re your comments on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* going downhill, there is a website: jumptheshark.com that allows fans to pinpoint the moment where favorite media phenomena peak and head downhill. The title of the page refers to the episode in *Happy Days* when The Fonz jumped his motorcycle over a shark pool. You can add your snarky comments to over 2,000 series. For example *Spock's Brain* gathered the most votes for when *Star Trek* jumped. Tara's death is the most often cited Jump point for *Buffy* (541 votes) followed by *The Musical* (304 votes.) One interesting thing is that for all of the shows that I've looked at Never Jumped is the top response. There are only 16 shows that rate Never Jumped. That requires a 10:1 majority of Never Jumped votes to any other single thing. *The Simpsons* for example has 1,418 votes for Never vs. 105 votes for "Homer gets really, really stupid."

The Sphere: Don Markstein—Thank goodness the fark.com thing was short-lived. I guess it proves that there are people who are passionate about *everything* including the back features of *George of the Jungle*! I suppose the same thing applies to the Jump the Shark site I

mentioned above. For every one of those shows the #1 response was Never Jumped. Even turkeys apparently have their passionate fans. (Oops! Found one that Jump won! Earth: Final Conflict got 37 for the death of Boone vs. 3 for Never Jumped.)

One of the pleasures you have but didn't know about living in sunny Phoenix is that you don't have to endure Patrick J. Gibbs in the flesh. He showed up during the campaign for the '96 Worldcon in Atlanta and has been a fixture ever since.

Offline Reader #29: Irv Koch—I wish there were more investors like you! The real investment of a stock is to let a company use your money to make more with it than you could through interest bearing bonds or CDs. In return the company pays the investor a dividend that reflects how well it has done with your money. A steady dividend that returns more than bond-grade interest is all a wise investor should expect. The whole game with stock prices is that a company that is doing much better than average should pay higher dividends. Since the number of shares of a stock is fixed or decreasing then the price goes up or down depending on the attractiveness as an investment!

Most investors have been treating the stock market like Beanie Baby collecting—the price of the stock is more important than the intrinsic value of the object. The problem is that buying stock based on company performance is something approximating work. You have to read annual reports, market analyses, financial statements, and The Wall Street Journal! Alan Greenspan has been saying for years that the market was overvalued. Now we are getting a taste of what that really means. The Great Crash of 1928 did have a couple days of exceptional losses, however, it was a long-term devaluation over months that signaled the Great Depression.

One of the facts that keeps getting recited to Eastman employees is that we are on the other side of that equation. For us paying dividends is an expense and is figured in to the entire cost of capital. Issuing stock is a much more expensive way to raise money than taking out a bank loan. When you factor in the contributions from all sources of capital the composite cost of capital is around 10% per year. Each of our business units has to analyze its contribution to the bottom line and be judged on whether its returns

are above the cost of capital. It's not pretty when you are below the mark.

Guilty Pleasures: Eve Ackerman—Your insights into college admission are interesting especially since that will be my life in six years. I am still not convinced that an undergraduate degree at a big name school is worth the extra money. Since Corlis works for a Tennessee state university the boys can attend any Tennessee state school for half price. Right now that is \$728 per full-time semester plus books, fees, and living expenses. Unless the boys exhibit some previously unexpressed brilliance in high school and they get an academic ticket somewhere posh, I really don't see where the payoff is in investing 20 times more in their undergraduate degrees. The value of a bachelor's degree in today's market is just not justifiable.

Random Thoughts: Steve Hughes—As I said in the rant to Irv above, when you gamble on stock prices appreciating as your investment strategy then you might as well trade Beanie Babies. My company execs have been saying for years that they truly believe that the stock price should be in the 70s instead of in the 40s. Big investors trade Eastman stock because it is reliably cyclical. It dips about once a year into the mid-thirties and then rallies up to 50-55. If you buy at 38 and sell at 48 that is a decent profit!

One problem I see is that the retirement projections the company provides assume that the stock we receive as part of our compensation will appreciate over the years. With the recent performance of the stock market I wonder of those projections will change. I myself am not expecting that any of those investments will see me into old age.

Trivial Pursuits #102: Janice Gelb—Before *Attack of the Clones* came out I asked Corlis offhand one day at what point in the movie she thought that Anakin would get a hand lopped off. She looked at me like I had green fungus growing on my forehead or something and said something like "Why would they do that? They've already done that one in *The Empire Strikes Back*!"

The point is that each of those scenes in *Clones* has a mirror-image scene in *Empire*. Anakin's bad dreams in II echo Luke's visions of Han and Leah's torture in IV. The whole Star Wars series

must be viewed as a study in which two young men with nearly equal talent, training, and upbringing turn out taking opposing paths. Mind you it's been done, and a lot more economically in other places, but that's it in a nutshell

The trip to Australia sounds really nifty and it was a great touch to work out the telecommuting so you didn't have to take vacation. If an upside of globalization is the ability of taking month-long trips to Australia without burning vacation then I really can't understand the protests.

I'm so sorry to hear about Neil's cancer especially when the news so closely coincided with George's death. I guess I knew somewhere in the cobwebby corners of my brain that you and George were together in the past, but it really hadn't sunk in. I really liked him the few times we met and I always admired his work.

Spiritus Mundi #190: Guy H. Lillian III—Wow, the story of Judge Bodenheimer sounds like part of a Scott Turow novel. I'm a bit surprised the FBI didn't lean on him to help sting the crooked bail bondsman instead of sending him up.

Judge Hunter, on the other hand sounds a bit like Miguel Estrada, the guy who Bush has nominated for a US Appellate court judge. Apparently the guy has a sufficiently conservative profile but has never been a judge. The speculation is that Bush has him marked to be his Hispanic Supreme Court nominee and he has to fill out his resume before that can happen.

I hope y'all came through Isadore with dry feet!

I am now embarked on a new medical adventure. For the past year I have had difficulty sometimes in staying awake through long meetings. My boss loves to put us through two-hour endurance tests in which the main activity is listening to him pontificate. It drives him nuts if someone nods off while he is talking, so he has gone to the trouble of writing me up for dozing.

In order to take the heat off I have resorted to visiting a sleep disorder doctor. Last week I spent a night hooked up to an EKG, EEG, eye movement monitors, pulse monitor, mouth and nose probes and a throat mike. The upshot is that I have sleep apnea. I have to go back in a week for them to try out a machine that should cure it. The reason I've been zoning out is because I often never really get to sleep! More later.