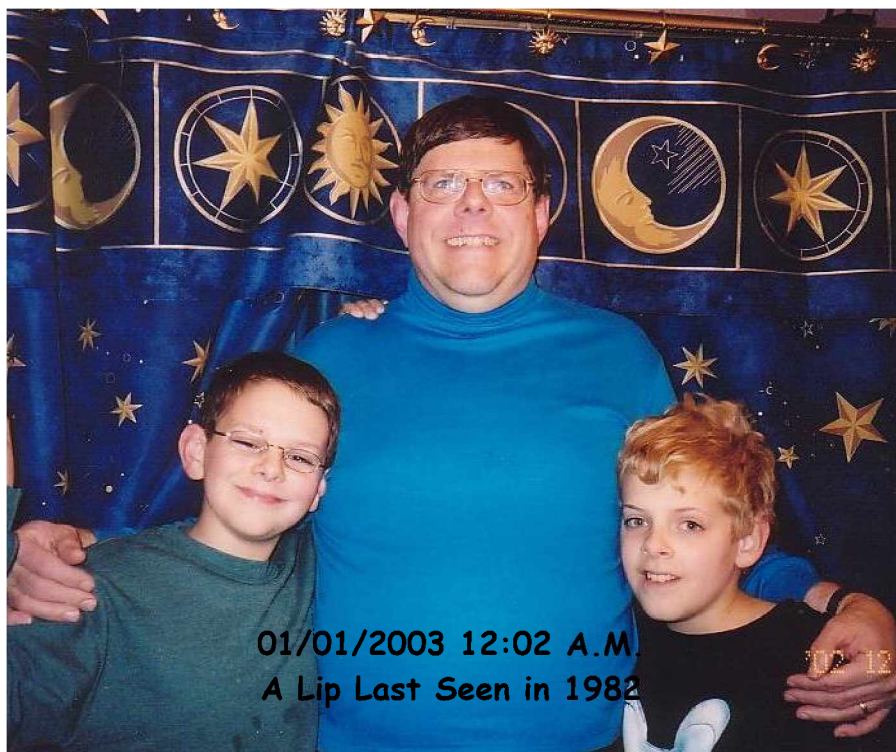


# TENNESSEE TRASH #51

Mustache Free in 2003!



Tennessee Trash # 51 was produced by Gary R. Robe while preparing for yet another international jaunt. International dialing codes are not necessary to reach us at (423) 239-3106 but it might take a small act of God to catch us at home. E-mail is also occasionally received at [grrobe@chartertn.net](mailto:grrobe@chartertn.net).

The pictures on the front are a self-explanatory farewell to the mustache that's adorned my upper lip for 10 years. Many of the hairs in the 'stache had begun to turn the wrong color. While my topknot remains uniformly brown, the mustache had begun turning distinctly salt-and-pepper and thus had to go!

The address information has not changed. The USPS delivers to P. O. Box 3221 Kingsport, TN 37664 and UPS/Fedex comes to 761 Foothills Rd, Kingsport, TN 37663. The phone still rings at (423) 239-3106. E-mail comes to [grrobe @chartertn.net](mailto:grrobe@chartertn.net) or [garyrobe@eastman.com](mailto:garyrobe@eastman.com)



# TENNESSEE TRASH #51

A ZINE BY GARY R. ROBE FOR MAILING NUMBER 231 OF THE  
SOUTHERN FANDOM PRESS ALLIANCE

DECEMBER 2002-JANUARY 2003

## **A New Boss, A Clean-Shaved Face, A New Floor and Other Long-Anticipated Changes...**

The first week of December brought big changes in my department at work. For several years I have felt that the technology management at Eastman had not clue as to what to do with the Technical Service lab. We had slowly been disconnected from customers and changed into a second-class research lab instead of a tech service organization. By far the most obvious symptoms of this trend were the Technology Director, Bruce Gustafson, and our lab supervisor, Guillermo Perdomo. Since I had to deal day-to-day with Guillermo he was the biggest irritation. I won't rant about the goofy way he ran the lab or the stunts he pulled to make our lives miserable. I'll just leave it that there were no tears shed in early December when we were called together for the announcement that the lab was being completely reorganized and that Guillermo and Bruce were being reassigned to essentially non-supervisory positions.

Two years ago, Eastman bought a company that makes coatings resins called McWhorter. Their company headquarters was in Carpentersville, IL (just north of Elgin about 20 miles west of Chicago). For all this time the McWhorter Heritage people had run their business as an independent division of Eastman with separate marketing, R&D and tech service functions. The December announcement was that the labs in Carpentersville were being closed and all the functions would move to Kingsport. The

people in those positions were given the choice to move or find another job. About half of them chose to make the move.

The other big change was that the new tech service lab supervisor would be Andy Simm, an energetic young guy with actual experience in running a technical service lab in another company. Andy is straight forward, apolitical, demanding, and highly ethical in his dealings with others. He also believes in linking the technical service chemists with customers instead of having them do make-work research projects. All of this is a breath of fresh air.

We are also having to remodel our lab in order to make room for all the new people and equipment that will be moving to Kingsport. The upshot of this was that I had to abandon my cozy office and lab bench to relocate in a duplex office area shared with another chemist. We had to move everything out of a 1500 ft<sup>2</sup> lab in two weeks to prepare for the demolition. As soon as we cleared the area the wrecking crew moved in and tore everything out to the bare walls. I actually like my new office because for the first time in 11 years I actually have wall space so I can display all my awards, photos and diplomas that I have collected over the years. I have less space to sprawl in with all my stuff, but it I am getting used to it.

Andy had also implemented some new project tracking systems and a way for us to capture new ideas and suggest new projects to keep us busy. For a change I can actually tell my management what I plan to do, how I plan to do it, how long it will take to do, and how we

can use the data generated. In other words, I am being treated like someone of value to the company who can contribute to the bottom line and who can figure out what needs to be done without being told how to take every step along the way. What a concept!

## CHRISTMAS CHEER

With the changes at work, I was really ready to celebrate the holidays! I worked through the Friday before Christmas and then we decided to get a jump on the holidays by driving through the Bowling Green that night. We stayed for the first couple of days with my mother-in-law, which allowed us to dump the boys with her while Corlis and I went shopping. I had converted all of my Christmas savings to cash so that I got to indulge myself in going on a whirlwind shopping spree and pay cash for all of it. There is a special pleasure in blowing large amounts of cash on things bought just for fun.

After several opportunities to shoot at scout camp Isaac wanted a BB gun with all the fervor of Ralphie in *A Christmas Story*. Just like the movie, Corlis had announced that neither of the boys would be allowed a gun until they were 14. I got around this by mandating that Isaac could only have the gun if he completed his Webelos fitness award. That is a hard job because it takes several weeks of work, and it is one of the required awards for advancement. With more than a little griping Isaac finished the work, so he got the gun.



Of course, I could not make it that simple, so I bought the BB gun plus a toy gun to substitute in the box. Last year we had played a similar switcheroo and Isaac was almost reduced to tears. I wanted to see if he had matured any in the past year. I am pleased to report that he took the joke well.

For Nick the job was a bit harder because there was nothing big that he really wanted. We do, however, have an old Z-Tech keyboard game that is mostly aimed at preschoolers. He still played with it because it had a few games like hangman on it. It turns out that the same company now makes a much more advanced model that interfaces with a computer and can be upgraded with harder questions at the child advances. It also has about 50 games with it. Guess what part he uses more, the games or the educational programs?

For Corlis the job was fairly easy because I had brought her a 27-carat citrine gemstone as a souvenir of Brazil on my last trip. We found a jeweler in Bowling Green that does custom mountings so making the stone into a necklace was an easy choice.

After three days of shopping, we were prepared for Christmas. We actually got to relax a bit and enjoy visiting with our family. Corlis' grandmother hosted a neighborhood party at her house, and we were expected to attend. (To get an idea of Corlis' grandmother, think of Mrs. Bennett in *Pride and Prejudice*). The party turned out to be rather fun because Corlis and I and her aunt and uncle assumed the duties of busboys and dishwashers, so we hid away in the kitchen and amused ourselves with drinking Coke spiked with spiced rum. The same day my family was helping to host the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the parents of one of my best friends from elementary school so I got to not only visit a bit with my family but also with some of my high school friends.

Soon enough it was Christmas Eve and time to move to my parent's house for the big day. Can you find the boys in the picture? This was the pile before my sister's family arrived on Christmas morning with their stack to add to the festivities. The prize for most creative gifts went to my brother. He got Monty

Python action figures for the boys and me. Nick got a Norwegian Blue Parrot, complete with nails in the feet. Isaac got the Dangerous Rabbit with big nasty pointy teeth. I got a Black Knight action figure with detachable limbs.



My father got into the Christmas Spirit by showing off the fur-trimmed boxer shorts that we got for him last year.



I infuriated my family by not asking for anything but Home Depot credit so that I could proceed with my project to rip out the carpet in our house and replace it with *Pergo* laminate flooring. I did finally ask for some

specific tools I needed for the job and a couple of DVDs, but I was very happy to collect \$350 toward the floor project.

After Christmas we had the Observance of New Year's Eve Party (A.K.A. concave X.5) at the Hampton Inn in Horse Cave. This has taken on a life of its own now as we estimate that there were about 85 people attending. When you do something once it is an event, twice it's a coincidence and the third time it's a tradition. I suppose that the New Year's Party is now a tradition. Since the actual New Year's Eve was inconveniently located in the middle of the week, we decided to make this an *observance* of New Year's on Friday-Saturday instead of having it on the actual day.

When we started the New Year's party three years ago, we thought it would be an opportunity for the people in the Kentucky/Tennessee region to come together in a central location. I was bit surprised this year when Pat and Roger Sims and Dick Spelman showed up from Florida and Alan Greenberg arrive from Michigan! We had people from six states show up for our little "family get-together"! It was also fun to plan for something simpler than a convention so that I could just lounge around and visit with friends instead of fighting fires all weekend.

The boys approached the party as being their convention. Although there were not any other kids there close to their age, they did enjoy the swimming pool, watching movies and playing board games all weekend. We gave them a special treat by giving them their own room to stay in. I think that was almost as big a thrill for them as Christmas! Plus, it allowed Corlis and me to sleep as long as we wanted in privacy. That wasn't too bad either.

The boys wanted to stay up until midnight for the opening of the champagne and setting off the confetti poppers Nick managed to make it but Isaac wilted sometime around 11:00 as you can see in the following picture. Notice that the dead parrot and dangerous rabbit are in the bed with him.

There was no shortage of food as almost everyone brought goodies to share. Before



leaving home I just packed up my liquor cabinet and added a couple of partial bottles left over from last year's Concave. Along with the beer, wine and champagne that others brought we had no shortage of holiday cheer for the festivities.



We also arranged to have a Saturday evening group dinner at The Bookstore Café in Horse Cave. Unfortunately, this will be the last meal we have there. Tom Chaney, the owner of The Bookstore found out in January that his insurance company decided to require him to put in a multi-thousand-dollar fire suppression system in his kitchen in order to continue his coverage. That is simply not feasible for a small-town diner, so he will be closing down the food side of The Bookstore. That is a shame, but I can see the insurance company's point. The shop is located in the old Main St block of Horse Cave. If a kitchen fire was to happen in the Bookstore it could take all of Greater Downtown Horse Cave with it.

### **PULLING THE RUG OUT**

We have been in our house for 11 years now and it was five years old when we bought it. When we moved in, we had one infant and were think of having another. Although the carpet was not in great shape, we decided to let it be sacrificial floor covering until the

boys got big enough not to spill their grape juice on it daily. The carpet did take a lot of abuse, but it had gotten to the point of getting actively nasty. Last fall the linoleum on the front door threshold started to fail so I decided it was time to act.

I really didn't want to put carpet back down since we still had boys in the house who cha track in mud in the middle of a drought. I thought about hardwood flooring until I saw how much it would cost. The middle ground was laminate flooring. *Pergo* is relatively easy to install, is harder than wood and is similar in cost to high quality carpet. I started out small last year by replacing about 50 ft<sup>2</sup> of the floor around the front door with *Pergo*. This was, of course, probably the hardest section of the floor to replace since it includes the front door, the basement door and the upper landing for the basement steps.

After Christmas I had enough money saved up for the next phase of the project: about 120 ft<sup>2</sup> of the living from and the central bedroom hallway. I declared the first weekend of January to be Pergo days. ON Friday night Corlis and I? ripped up the nasty old carpet. We were horrified to see where at least one of the cats had been using parts of the hallway as a litter box. We knew that it had been used occasionally and we had bleached the carpet in a couple of spots with pet odor remover. What I didn't know was that the carpet was soaked through and into the floorboard. I did what I could to clean and dry the area and hoped for the best.

The hallway area was a special treat to lay sown the flooring since I had to piece in the plants around seven doorframes and two closets. That took most of a day in itself. Once I got into the open floor in the living room, I was able to put down 50 ft<sup>2</sup> of flooring in about 30 minutes. I certainly got my exercise while completing the project since the waw was in the basement, so I had to make at least one trip up and down the stairs for each piece that needed to be cut. Now we have Pergo installed in about half of the living room and down the hallway. The rest of the job should be much easier since there will be little cutting involved for the living room, dining room and kitchen. Although this is more area to cover, I can probably get it done

in a weekend. The hardest part will be moving the furniture out of the way while we remove the carpet and put down the Pergo. I don't plan to tackle that until at least March.

### **THE DEEP FREEZE**

By early November it was evident that we were in for a colder winter than we had seen for the last several years. My Christmas we had already received more snow than in the last two years combined. In January we, like the rest of the country, dove into the deep freeze. On January 16<sup>th</sup> we got six inches of wet snow followed by frigid temperatures. That closed both the county schools and the university for the rest of the week. This semester Corlis only had classes on Tuesday and Thursday so coping with snow days is much simpler. In the worst case she can take the boys with her and leave them in her office with an Internet connection while she teaches.

On Sunday the 19<sup>th</sup> I had to leave the balmy southland for a week of training in Carpentersville, IL. The only difference between northern Illinois and east Tennessee was that there was more snow in East Tennessee. While in the Chicago area I had to deal with a -25°F wind chill factor. Corlis had to deal with another four-inch snowfall and school closure.

As we head into February, we seem to be heading into more normal weather, but I expect we have not seen the last of the cold either. As long as we don't get hammered on February 27<sup>th</sup> – March 3<sup>rd</sup> I don't much care what happens.

Of course, with all this cold weather we had to go camping! The Cub Scout pack traditionally goes camping on the second weekend of January at a Methodist Church camp in the mountains. This is not exactly roughing it. The camp has heated cabins, a dining hall and running water. Even so the overnight temperatures were close to 10°F and the camp is located in a valley where it gets less than one hour of direct sunlight in the winter months.

### **SEPARATED AT BIRTH?**



**Vladimir Putin: President of Russia**



**Dobby the House Elf**

## THE TWO TOWERS

Corlis and I took time out from Christmas shopping to see *The Two Towers* by ourselves. Unfortunately, it was playing at the crappy Carmike Theater in Bowling Green as we were late getting there so we had to sit on the second row. I felt like I was looking at Aragorn's nose hair through the whole film. Once back home we went to see it again at the best theater in Bristol, which was a much better experience.

The reactions I have seen to the movie are quite polarized. Tolkien pursuits are almost universally upset at the changes to the story and those who have not read the books almost universally rate *The Two Towers* as better than *Fellowship of the Ring*. Even though I have read the books several times I tend to vote with the second group.

One of the things I wondered about the movie before it was released was how they were going to overcome some of the structural quirks of *The Two Towers* in order to make a coherent film. As written, *The Two Towers* is not a very cinematic book. Since the story is divided into two halves, one following the remnants of *The Fellowship* and the other following Frodo and Sam into Mordor a literal translation of the book to film would be quite confusing. I appreciated the decision to intercut the two plot lines simultaneously. That allowed watchers to get a better feeling on the complexity of the story and advanced the plot without backtracking.

I was also worried about what the film would do to the Ents. After a rather disappointing translation of the Whomping Willow onto the screen in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* I was nervous about how *The Two Towers* would handle Treebeard. I needn't have worried. The combination of models and CGI managed to make The Ents into creepy magical creatures instead of simply being moving trees. This was really brought home in the climactic scenes of the attack on Isengard.

The other triumph of the film was the rendition of Gollum. The first time a 100% CGI character was brought to life as

realistically that it seemed difficult to believe it wasn't just tricks of makeup. Indeed the characterization of Gollum and the exploration of his tortured mind was to me the best part of either movie to date.

OK, I wasn't too sure about the interlude between Aragorn and Arwen. I suppose that they did have to find a way to bring Liv Tyler back on the screen and the almost-a-dress that she wears in their parting scene was quite -er- thought provoking. Also, after two viewings I really don't understand what happened in the end to Arwen. Did she actually leave for the Gray Havens or not? Even though this was a major reworking of the story in the book at least the idea for the digression came from Tolkien's own Appendices to *Lord of the Rings*. That alone shows me more about Peter Jackson's dedication to the project because I have never been able to slog through The Appendices!

The other major digression was the reworking of the character Farin. In the book Farin is a paragon of virtue who instinctively recognizes the threat of the ring and rejects it on his own. In the film version he is much more cynical and ready to try and use The Ring. In the end he sees through to the Evil and sends Sam, Frodo and Gollum on their way only after he realizes that he could not resist being corrupted by The Ring. Upon re-reading *The Two Towers* recently I feel that Farin as developed in the book is simply too virtuous to be true. The movie version may be darker and less flattering but in the end rings truer to human nature.

I am impressed and amazed at the job Peter Jackson has done in bringing *The Lord of the Rings* to the screen. As long as we accept that film and print are two different media and things that work on paper don't necessarily work on film then we can appreciate both forms. *The Two Towers* succeeds in building from a leisurely beginning to a spectacular conclusion as four battles play out simultaneously. Helm's Deep and Isengard go to the good guys while Gondor and the mind of Gollum fall to the powers of darkness. It is this last failure, the seemingly least significant, that will have the greatest impact on the rest of the story. I can hardly wait!



# MAILING COMMENTS

**THE SOUTHERNER NO. 230: JEFFREY COPELAND**—Huzzah indeed for three 100% participation mailings in a row. I almost didn't make it. I had to print copies on my mother's printer and hustle to the main Post Office in Bowling Green to make it. The day before Thanksgiving was quite hectic for me. I had to cross four time zones in 24 hours. Normally jet lag is not an issue for Latin American travel, but this time it was!

**HUGO BOX SCORES: JEFFREY COPELAND**—Thanks for compiling these. It may come in handy some time in a trivia contest or in writing a SFPA mailing. I recently was looking for Hugo nominee lists. That is rather hard to find. It is very easy to get the winner's list for any given year, but it is rather hard to find the full nominee list for anything older than Worldcons in the 90's.

**THE NEW PORT NEWS #206: NED BROOKS**—The problem with predicting the effects of firing a bullet in an airliner is that there are too many variables to consider. The caliber of the bullet would be the first thing to consider, and its construction would be another. I large-caliber hollow-point bullet would certainly do a lot more damage than a 22. The other question is what the exit hole would do the plane's aerodynamics. That ragged hole would create turbulence on the skin and would produce considerable drag—perhaps enough to cause a peel-back of the plane's skin. Remember that plane over Hawaii that apparently lost some rivets in the skin that led to a massive failure? Of course, in that case the plane was at fairly low altitude, and I believe managed to land safely if not comfortably. I do think you are right, however, explosive decompression just from the bullet hole would probably not happen immediately.

**VARIATIONS ON A THEME #17: RICH LYNCH**—Thanks for including the information on Dal Coger. I had not realized that he died from surgical complications. I have become alert to resistant infections ever since Isaac battled with Rheumatic Fever last year. That puts him at a 10X higher risk

of getting it again, so he has to stay on a constant program of antibiotic injections. I really worry about how effective those penicillin shots will be over the long run.

Dal was a very interesting man. He and Greta were among the first people I got to know in convention fandom in the late 70's. I believe we met at Rivercon 4 in 1978. I last talked with him a year ago when I tried to get him and Greta to return to Concave after a long absence. I am really sad that he was unable to come so that I could have seen him at least one more time.

**TWIGDRASIL AND TREEHOUSE GAZETTE #78: RICHARD DENGROVE**—Don't apologize for disagreeing with me for heaven's sake! What I wrote was so ambiguous that reading it later I'm not even sure I agree with me anymore. Anyhow, it does not appear that opinions count anymore. I think we are going to invade Iraq and the only one who can stop it is George Bush.

The coming war just got a lot more personal for me because my Taekwando instructor, Joe Grosso, could get activated at any time. This means more than anything else I've heard that we are going to war. Joe is a warrant officer specializing in vehicle maintenance. His division is rated as combat-ready and went through desert training last summer. It would be a real bummer for several months because I am ready to test for my senior red belt level and without Joe in the school I cannot test. Another scary thought is that Corlis and I are among the senior active students in the school. Without Joe we could easily end up teaching when none of the black belts show up!

I feel that removing Saddam Hussein is a noble idea. I do not think for a second that he is anything but a bad man. I think he is bad on the scale of Hitler and Stalin. I'm not sure if he is a danger to the world on that level though. I am not convinced that going to war to remove him will be worth the cost in American blood, dollars and unforeseen consequences. I am not sure the world is ready for Iraq to become the 51<sup>st</sup> state of the

U.S.A. I am sure that within the rhetoric that is flying around right now someone is lying. I also think it is possible that more than one side is lying. I also think that as the situation stands today the only resolution that we will be allowed is war. I am not sure that we will ever be allowed to find the truth at the end of that war.

**SPIRITUS MUNDI # 192: GUY H. LILLIAN III—**

Stephen Ambrose's book on WWII bombers and George McGovern in particular is interesting reading. I recently heard Mr. McGovern on an NPR interview talking about the missions that are covered in the book. Someone once asked him if there was ever a bomb, he wished he could have taken back. He replied that there was one that got caught in the bomb bay that they had to unjam before they could land. The bomb finally came loose over open farmland. The bomb bulls eyed a farmhouse right at supertime. McGovern said that he just knew that poor family was sitting around the dinner table when the bomb hit, and he really wished he could have taken that one back.

Years later he was speaking to a group in Europe somewhere and told the story of the farmhouse bomb. After the speech was over a man came up to him and introduced himself and the farmer that had been hit by that very bomb. He assured Mr. McGovern that the family had heard the bomb coming and ducked for cover in time to avoid injury. He also said that he did not harbor one shred of resentment for his destroyed house because he realized that every bomb that dropped brought Hitler one step closer to defeat.

The Norwood case made the front page of the paper recently. Quoting from the paper: *A grand jury returned a five-count superseding indictment against the two men charging them with carjacking and bank robbery.*

*Although the two men have not been charged with killing Norwood, in the superseding indictment federal prosecutors state that on April 13, 2002, Goins and Jones forcibly stole a car from Norwood, killed him, and then concealed his body in a deserted location in Sullivan County.*

You can probably make more sense out of the legalese, but it seems to me that the prosecutors are ratcheting up the charges probably trying to get the perps to cut a plea bargain.

Good luck in the DUFF race. I know Pat and Naomi are quite ready to hand off the administrator duties to the new delegate(s). I know that we sent in votes for the Robe Experience plus Corlis' sister Ana.

Yes, the Wigwam Village rooms are exactly as you remember. The part thing that really stuck in my mind was how the shower was built into the curve of the wall. In the other rooms the curvature didn't seem as pronounced in the larger spaces but in the confined area of the shower I felt strangely claustrophobic.

I really think that Lucas made a big mistake in not following up with the second trilogy right after the first. In waiting for the special effects technology to advance I feel that he lost momentum on the story line and forgot that the story was about people instead of special effects. I also think the Peter Jackson has come out of nowhere and beaten Lucas at his own game by producing effects that are stunning without being soulless. Episode 3 is going to have to be *really* great not to be lost in the afterglow from *Lord of the Rings*.

**TRIVIAL PURSUITS #104: JANICE GELB—**It is sad to see how mainstream country music has mostly turned into rock with cowboy hats and boots. I am lucky in that ETSU has one of the few Appalachian Music programs in the world, complete with their own bluegrass band comprised of students. This attention spills over to the public radio station that broadcasts from the campus. This has made me aware of what is happening in off-mainstream country music. It has a distinctive sound and more artistry than is evident in most of the stuff on the radio. I doubt that country music will ever be my favorite style, but when it is done well it does make me proud to be an American.

**THE GIANTS WIN THE PENNANT! THE GIANTS WIN THE PENNANT! [THE GIANTS LOSE THE SERIES!]: JANICE GELB—**I am glad that you got to see those world series games even if The Giants ended up losing. At least they won while you were watching so that makes the ticket prices a bit more palatable. Even at the prices you paid for tickets they were cheap compared to Super Bowl tickets!

**REVENANT #15: SHEILA STRICKLAND—**I hope with all that web browsing you have to do that you have access to a broadband Internet connection.

In all that web searching you are doing how often do you find porn sites popping up? I do a lot of web searching at work looking for chemical industry information and I don't think that I have ever seen a porn link show up in a search. Of course, I am searching for keywords that probably don't show up often in porn sites. (I doubt that many porn pages would key into a search for Acrylamac 16-1066 Acrylic Resin Solution!)

I have looked over the boy's shoulders every time they search the web for school projects and even without any kind of filters, I have not seen any questionable links show up. I am starting to wonder if the horror stories of kids accidentally getting into porn is being overblown by the Far Right and the companies making filter software. (Of course, there is the story my father tells of the preacher at his church who was searching for information on ice cream and just entered "cream" into the search engine!) I don't dispute that you can easily find porn on the web, but I have not personally seen the problem be as bad as it is made out as long as you give some thought to search criteria.

**FREQUENT FLYER: TOM FELLER**—It was good to see you and Anita at the party. It was really good to have time to actually visit with people instead of the running hither and yon that dominates conventions. Please remember to keep us informed on the Sherlock Holmes convention that you are organizing. If schedules permit, I'm sure that we will want to attend.

I hope you find a way to work in more exercise into your schedule. I don't know what I would do without Taekwando now that I have integrated it into my life. I realize that Martial Arts are not for everyone, but I hope you can find something similar. My only gripe is that I am currently working out six days a week since I added weight training this month. So far, the effect on my waistline has been exactly zero.

**THE SPHERE: DON MARKSTEIN**—So far, my experience with the sleep apnea machine has been pretty good except that I can't say that I'm feeling much more rested. What I do notice is that I fall to sleep much more easily and quickly since I've been on the machine. I think that it is because on a subconscious level I was fighting sleep since my brain was associating sleep with strangulation. As I understand it one of the side effects of controlling

apnea is that your stress levels go down dramatically. Even though you are not really aware of it sleep apnea is making you fight for breath. That raises the levels of stress chemicals in the bloodstream that in turn can increase the chances of heart attack.

**GUY AND ROSY FOR DUFF: GUY AND ROSY LILLIAN**—I really liked your campaign flyer for the DUFF race. I think it is among the best I have ever seen, even if some of my own words managed to make it in! It certainly convinced me to vote. It would be too much to hope for if Guy got a one-way ticket and Rosy got a round trip. Just kidding and good luck!

**WEASEL CROSSING #60: JEFFREY COPELAND**—It looks like the networks fixed the problems with VNS by killing it. I guess that the winners get to write the history books again!

REYRCMT: Toni—I think you fingered the real reason that Israeli/Palestinian peach has been so elusive. The Palestinians are now really interested in stopping. They will settle for nothing less than the destruction of Israel no matter how much they talk about making peace. I wish that Dubya would take a look at Israel and realize what he is setting us up for with his war. The Netanyahu quite is right on the money. The problem is not crushing individual terrorists. It is locking the country into a lock grip with those who want to destroy us. Even though Saddam's regime is emphatically secular the Islamic world will take our attack of Iraq as a declaration of war that will never end.

I had not noticed that the Fifi was sponsored by Ken Lay and the thing stood on my nightstand for several months so that I would not forget to take it to the DSC. A bad visual pun and sponsored by Enron to boot—how could you go wrong!

REYRCMT: Janice—I recently saw that Wal-Mart has an Apex DVD player that matched the description of Janice's right down to the white Kodak Picture CD logo on the box. The model number was off a bit, but I bought one and asked Janice for the cheat code. Alas, the procedure doesn't work for me. I did get a cheap backup DVD player for our bedroom out of the deal.

I actually have a need for an all-region player. There are some interesting things that I have seen

in stores in South America, but I don't have a player that will accept Region 4. Now we have four DVD players in the house: two component players hooked to the TV sets and DVD drives on two of the computers. At least if the player in the living room dies, we have a replacement at the ready.

REYRCMT: Sheila—Yeah, and if your International Company does send you to New Zealand, it is Robe's First Law of International Business Travel that they don't put paint factories anywhere near tourist attractions.

RE: Your new lyrics for *Springtime for Hitler*. I was very pleased to see that *The Producers* has finally been released on DVD with lots of extras. I have been quoting the "I'm wet and I'm hysterical" for years now but the boys couldn't understand the reference. I also note that Mel Brook's seldom seen first feature *The Twelve Chairs* has also been released on DVD.

**PASSAGES #16: JANET LARSON**—Thanks for the insider's views on the business of medicine. I feel that the big problem with medical tort law is that people have this unfortunate tendency to get sick and die. We have succeeded in educating the public that whenever someone dies someone else is at fault. When faced with their own or a loved one's mortality many people's first response is "Whom can I sue?"

I also feel that many doctors have set up their profession by projecting an image of infallibility. Doctors need to be confident in making a diagnosis but the problem is that so many health problems are ambiguous. When Isaac first got sick last spring the initial information, we got from the doctor was that he had an elevated sed rate. We knew that he had an intermittent fever and joint pain. We had to wait two days to get back to the doctor for a follow-up.

In the meantime, I went to Web MD and looked up sed rate. When looking at possible diseases that fit the symptoms the web site led me to everything from mononucleosis to rheumatoid arthritis to leukemia. What it didn't lead me to was the correct diagnosis of Rheumatic Fever. I am still impressed to this day that Isaac's doctor was able to pull that diagnosis out of the set of symptoms. Of course, he had one piece of information that I could not have gotten on my own: he could listen to the heartbeat and detect the murmur.

I have enormous respect for doctors, but I don't see much good ahead for the profession. The doctors are being squeezed between the rock of managed care and the hard place of malpractice insurance. It is heartbreaking to hear of some grievous, almost malicious, error being committed by a doctor. The problem is that while anecdotal evidence may be emotional and provocative, it is not how the vast majority of the system works. It would be a shame to have the greatest healthcare system in the world but not be able to benefit from it because there is nobody left around to practice the medicine!

**OBLIO #143: GARY BROWN**—Gee I would not have pegged you as either a frat boy or such an athletic superstar! I knew you followed sports and played baseball in the past, but I never clued in that you were such a cross-training wonder!

It is sad to see how many of your fraternity brothers have died. The only reunion I've attended was my 25<sup>th</sup> high school and only three of my classmates had died out of a graduating class of nearly 300.

What does your friend Butch Hite do for a living? I ask because I know a marketing manager at Eastman named Butch Hite and that's not a very common name!

**RANDOM THOUGHTS: STEVE HUGHES**—Your writing about the Georgia Flag Wars brought back memories of my early days in fandom. Back in the late 70's fandom made a foothold in Bowling Green, Ky through the Western Kentucky University Speculative Fiction Society, and I was a charter member. In the early days of the club an idea was raised during our business meeting that we should design a club flag. Why does a university SF club need a flag? I don't remember. Maybe we planned to march in the town Christmas Parade. Anyhow enough enthusiasm for the idea was generated to appoint a Flag Committee, which was duly formed and then proceeded to do nothing for three years. Since we had a Flag Committee, we had to have a Flag Committee report at every business meeting. Months passed without getting a report from the Flag Committee and long debate on whether or not to keep the project alive. We finally decided to kill the issue by declaring the word "flag" to be our official club obscenity. So, watch out for debates over flag design—they can get obscene!