

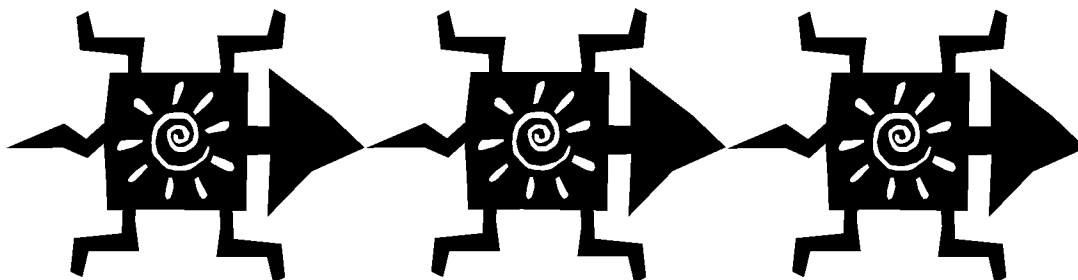
TENNESSEE TRASH #52

Scenes From Concave 24



Tennessee Trash # 52 was mostly produced by Gary R. Robe while spending a lazy weekend in a hotel room in Mexico City. It is a sad commentary that I have to leave home on business to get a day just to do nothing much. Indeed after the hectic run-up and running of Concave plus a frantic week of trying to prepare for meetings with customers on this trip I really need a rest. The odd upshot of this is that I should get most of my SFPA mailing written two weeks before the deadline!

The address information has not changed at least when I am at home. 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 or garyrobe@eastman.com.



COVER CAPTIONS: 1. Vince posing at the Welcome to Glasgow sign. 2. One Consuite – Ready For Action. 3. The First Ever Bring-Your-Own Banquet. 4. The Art Auction Begins. 5. Crack & Cheese in 3-D At Your Service. 6. It's Almost Over!

PHOTO CREDITS: Cover 1-4 and 6, Page 5 #1, by Vince Docherty, Cover #5, Page 6, by Gary Robe, Page 5 #2, Page 7 #1 & 2, by Rod Smith

TENNESSEE TRASH #52

A ZINE BY GARY R. ROBE FOR MAILING NUMBER 232 OF THE
SOUTHERN FANDOM PRESS ALLIANCE

FEBRUARY - MARCH, 2003

One More Convention Under the Belt, Two More Stripes On The Belt, a Stiff Belt of Tequila and Other Signs of Progress...

I think that Concave 24 will go down as The Convention That Didn't Want To Happen. Through a combination of economic conditions, health, weather, failures of others to meet commitments and my own tendency to procrastinate this year's Concave seemed like a disaster waiting to happen right up Friday evening when things got truly underway.

The first Big Job of running the convention is to get the hotel room assignments made and the notification letters out to the members. Since I guarantee that the convention will use all the rooms in the hotel this is a very significant step. About six weeks before the convention I send out letters to everyone who has earned a room in the Hampton Inn either through service, long association or random selection through the room lottery process. In recent years Naomi Fisher has handled the tedious details of assembling the In list and figuring out which room goes to who. Think of seating arrangements at a diplomatic dinner. Setting the tone for the rest of the gear-up stage, this year Naomi and I were not on the same wavelength as to when we needed to finalize the list.

I had to make a trip to Chicago in the third week of January so that waiting until after I got home would be too late. Naomi, however,

had it in her mind that we had more time. After some long late-night calls, comparing of lists, and frantic work we managed to get the letters in the mail, but only by the skin of our teeth.

Once the letters went out most of the people responded quickly and most of the room reservations were confirmed by early February. The next hurdle was to produce the program book and name badges in time to get them printed before the deadline. In years past Gary Williams has done the program layout and has provided the cover and interior art. I thought it strange that Gary had not responded to my messages, but that is not uncommon. He usually does his thing and then contacts me when he is ready to do the copyfitting. What I didn't know was that I had missed the returned e-mail note when my original messages to him bounced! When I finally contacted Gary he was way to busy to do anything for me.

I called Naomi for another shoulder to cry on and like a trooper she volunteered to draw a cover. Since our Guest of Honor was Vince Docherty, famous throughout fandom for wearing his kilt at official functions, Naomi came up with the idea of our traditional cave monster pulling a kilt off our traditional damsel in distress. That sounded great, but I needed the drawing in an awful hurry. The book needed to be in the hands of the printer by no later than 5 p.m. on Feb. 21 so I needed the drawing by the evening of the 20th so that I could fit it onto the book. Well, the drawing finally arrived from Naomi at 2 p.m. on the 20th. It was only dumb luck that

the all-afternoon meeting that I was supposed to attend was cancelled and so I returned to my office and checked e-mail. Also, luckily on Friday afternoon the lab is a ghost town so I was able to finish the program book while I was technically on the clock.



Naomi's Last-Minute Rescue of the Concave Program Book

Saturday Feb. 22 was a very strange day in Kingsport. In 24 hours we experienced every type of precipitation possible with the exception of hail, and there may have been some of that during one of the nighttime thunderstorms. That morning Corlis and I dropped then boys off at a special Saturday school program they have been attending and then headed for Sam's Club to do the bulk purchases for the convention. We started out that morning with heavy rain and a threat of flash flooding. We filled the van with so much stuff that we had to return home and change cars in order to pick up the boys.

The previous weekend I had bought a new car. The lease on my 2001 Saturn was due to expire in July, but GM sent a letter saying

that I could have the rest of the lease forgiven if I bought a new car before the end of March. I traded for a cranberry red 2002 Saturn SL-2. The only thing I didn't like about the other car was the lack of power locks and cruise control. The new car had both plus power windows, a sun roof, and a CD-cassette combo player. They gave me a \$1750 rebate since I was a loyal customer plus the car was an '02 model. That plus 0% interest for 60 months made the deal irresistible. It was the first time in my life that I drove away from a car dealership feeling that they had left some money on the table!

By the time we picked up the boys on the afternoon of the 20th the rain was tapering off. After lunch at the Krystal Bell not only had the rain stopped but the sun was out. We got to open the sunroof on the Saturn for the first time. We dropped they boys off at the martial arts school for an afternoon of sparring practice and did some more Concave shopping. By the time we picked up the boys again the sky was clear and it was so warm that we had to open the sunroof!

That evening was the yearly awards banquet for Isaac's Cub Scout pack and for once it didn't conflict with Concave. Although the food is catered there is a tradition of the scouts making table decorations and deserts for the event. I taught Isaac how to bake a cake and then he got to decorate it by himself. His theme was frosting and Scooby-Doo. During the dinner we noticed lightning flashing through the windows and by the time the awards were all handed out the first of two lines of thunderstorms passed through.

The next morning when we awoke from a night disturbed by constant thunder, we found that an inch of snow had fallen, and more was coming down. Also, during the night there were high winds forceful enough to knock down a row of five oak trees across the back of our neighbor's property line. That was about enough weather for one day!

On Monday I finished most of the details for the convention like finalizing the at-the-door attendee list, the mailing roster, Guest of Honor gifts, and packing all the office

supplies, tools, and miscellaneous paraphernalia into the cars. On Tuesday the weather turned bad again with heavy snow starting to fall at about noon. The schools let out at 11:30 and it was my turn to meet the boys at home. I sat glued to The Weather Channel to decide whether to make a dash for Kentucky while the roads were passable or wait for Wednesday morning to leave. The snow, while quite intense never really stuck to the ground so when the storm blew past at twilight on Tuesday night there was no reason to bug out.

The next morning schools were on a two-hour delay, but we decided to let the kids go on to school so they could pick up their make-up assignments before leaving at noon. I got in a half-day of work, and we managed to make the whole drive to Horse Cave in the daylight for once! When we arrived at the Hampton Inn, we ate supper and Corlis let the boys swim while I went grocery shopping. By the time I returned I was well ahead of schedule for getting everything in place for the convention.

On Thursday morning I had another pleasant surprise. For the first time ever, I had plenty of help for hauling all of the equipment that we have in storage in Annette Carrico's attic in Bowling Green up to the convention site in Horse Cave. We had my van with the seats removed, Kirsetn Moore's SUV and Steve and Mary Franklin's van to move everything. By the time I got to Annette's house Steve and Mary already had all of the art show displays loaded into their van. We put the coolers, kitchen equipment and miscellaneous stuff in my van and then made the liquor store run with Kirsten's SUV. We had all the stuff we needed up to Horse Cave before noon! That way we had lots of time to set up the consuite, storage/prep room and art show before many others started arriving.

By mid-afternoon Steve Francis arrived with Vince Docherty, Pat and Roger Sims, Dick Spelman, Stephen Boucher, Bill and Cokie Cavin, and assorted others arrived. We marked the occasion by stuffing Midwestcon fliers in the proto-consuite until suppertime.



Never a Dull Moment - Stuffing Midwestcon Fliers on Thursday Night

It was not my idea, but the rest of the group decided that Vince needed to experience Country Cooking at Aunt Bee's Kountry Kitchen. As usual Aunt Bee was not there, and there was only one waitress and cook there to cover the whole place. Service was not exactly swift. Vince entertained us by making origami patterns from napkins.

Friday is, of course, when the fun really begins for the convention. People started arriving at noon and kept coming until about 10 p.m. the thing that was really worrisome, however, was that 13 people who had earlier confirmed their rooms called before noon to cancel their reservations. Naomi frantically started calling people on the waitlist and we put up a sign in the lobby that there were rooms available. We managed to fill all but one of the cancelled rooms. Overall registration was down by about 50-75 under what we normally expect. At least half of that was in last-minute cancellations. That made the budget a bit tighter, but we also reduced expenses in several areas just because consumption was down. I don't have the balanced sheet quite completed yet, but my back-of-the-envelope calculations say that we were probably in the black.

Friday night was unusually devoid of parties. Most of the party throwing groups knew that Naomi was having an Art Show reception and didn't want to compete. The revelry in the consuite did, however, manage to carry on until about 5 a.m. I stayed up long enough

to make sure the sodas in the bathtub were replenished once more and that the consuite was minimized to make way for the hotel breakfast bar at 7. I managed to sleep from 4-10, which I thought was pretty good for a con chairman.



**Vince Docherty and Steve Francis Take My Family
Attending Membership Conversion for Interaction
During Opening Ceremonies**

On Saturday morning I arose just in time for the first caffeine heads preparing to switch from coffee to soda. I re-opened the serving area. The hotel was nice enough to move the hours of the breakfast bar to 7-11 a.m. so many more people were actually awake to partake!

One of the major disappointments for the members this year was that the fan-favorite restaurant, The Bookstore, was no longer serving food. On Friday night many people suggested that we just get some take-out and converge on The Bookstore anyhow. I floated the idea with Tom Chaney, the owner, and he was agreeable since the tables were still there and he was still serving drinks and pastries. Thus, we had what we feel was the first ever bring-your-own SF Convention Banquet. About 30 people decided to participate.

Vince gave a very funny speech about the perils of running a Worldcon. Chief of these is possibility that if you prove yourself competent at the job you may be tapped to do it again. He also told the story of Stephen Boucher being asked when Australia could host another Wordlcon and in a moment of

unclear thought guessed that 2010 would be about the first year they could think of it. No sooner did the words pass his lips people started throwing \$20 bills at him and before he could get a word in edgewise he was a Worldcon bid chair. Vince then turned to Steve Francis and said that by the way, there are no bids registered yet for 2008 and last time he heard Louisville was indeed a city. On cue I hurled a crumpled \$20 at Steve. I don't think I've ever seen Steve move that fast. In a blur of motion worthy of Jet Li he avoided the missile, knocked it out of the air, stomped it several times and then flicked it back in my direction with the tip of his shoe.

Another part of the convention that we worried about was the Art Show. Several of our most dependable art buyers were not attending this year and we feared that sales would suffer. HA! I helped to clear the lobby and set up chairs while helpers brought down art from the showroom. And kept coming and coming and coming. At rough estimate we had 150 pieces to auction. We organized into four auction teams of runners, auctioneers, and data collectors. That way each team could follow from the wings the moment each piece was declared sold. Even with this rapid-fire system set up we knew that it would take at least two hours to auction it all. At 7:15 Pat Molloy explained the ground rules to the audience, I unveiled my new tacky shirt (a truly hideous number featuring dancing pink elephants) and the first piece went to auction.

Since it only takes one bid to place a work in the auction with our system, most of the artists put fairly low minimum bids on pieces hoping for lots of bidding. I was worried that with the economy as it is that people would not raise bids on the items. Boy was I wrong! People bid like crazy. Pieces that started with a \$5 minimum bid were going up to \$30-40 every time! Furthermore, bidding was slow. Countless times we were on the third call for a piece when an advance came in. This made the pace of the auction seem very slow to the auctioneers.



The Art Auction Crew Pre-Game Pep Talk

When we passed the two-hour mark with many pieces to go, I was afraid that the bidding would go dead out of exhaustion and boredom. The auctioneers were all excellent in keeping up the banter and energy in the sale and we deliberately held back some of the most attractive pieces until the end. As it turned out the bids kept coming in right up to the last SOLD! at 10:15. As we tore down the auction setting and packed the art to go back to the showroom Pat mad a quick calculation of sales. We had already broken \$4000 in sales and that did not include any of the immediate purchase pieces that had not yet been paid for or any after-auction sales on Sunday morning! That was already a sales record that was certain to be broken again when the dust settled.

As far as we could tell our high-roller buyers actually may decrease our overall take. Most of them buy at the immediate purchase price. Without them this year more pieces went to auction and were bid up over the immediate purchase price. It would be interesting to see if that trend holds. As the art show closed out on Sunday Pat showed me that grand total sales had climbed over \$5000! The big winner was Beth Willinger who sold over \$1200 in her best show ever.

It was great fun to watch Beth check out on Sunday afternoon. Pat Molloy was sitting at the cash box tallying up Beth's take. When finished, Pat looked up grinning and said, "Would you take a check or to paraphrase *Wayne's World* will you take CASH?" Pat then waved a wad of bills in Beth's direction.

Beth opted for the wad so that she could take it home and swim in it.

If Friday night had been slow for parties that Saturday night made up for it. Jeff and Lisa Lockridge from Evansville threw a very nice Tropical Beach Party that I appreciated very much. They had really good food, Jimmy Buffett on the boom box and had kept some of the good stuff back to feed a hungry con chairman who had just finished auctioning art for three hours.

Next stop was the usual Xerpes Party hosted by Frank and Millie Kaliz. Their party was much more mellow than in years past. I didn't make it there until most of the punch had been consumed and so most folks were just laying around looking dazed and watching an old movie on the TV.

By far the most elaborate party was the one thrown by the Zielkes, Toni Weisskopf, Julie Wall, and other Usual Suspects. They had brought temporary wallpaper and had re-decorated their room spectacularly. Unfortunately, they had closed down before I made it so I never got to see their efforts firsthand.



The Galaxy Suite of The Hampton Inn

The award for the most serious party went to the Crack and Cheese 3D Party. These guys had gone so far as to set up a fountain dispenser for their punch, so the drinks literally flowed there. The climax of the party was the 3D effect known as the Crack Judging. As con chairman I was invited to be a crack judge. At 1 a.m. the doors were closed, and the contestants were allowed to

display whatever crack they wished to submit.



Hotel Manager Theresa Blankenship Joins The Party

On Sunday once again there was lots of help for tearing down and packing up all the convention supplies and hauling them back to Annette's house. Unlike other years I only decided to make one trip to Bowling Green with stuff to put in storage. We divided up the consuite leftovers among those who stayed for the Dead Dog Pizza Party. My mother-in-law arrived in the early evening with two spoiled grandchildren to hand back to their parents. Once again, we decided that they needed their own room so that their parents could get a good night of sleep before the drive home.

On Monday morning Pat Molloy and I made one last run to the bank and then mailed out all the unsold art back to the artists. One thing we are proud of at Concave is that we close out the art show and pay the artists promptly. That is because we don't have much choice. We have to do something with all those boxes because there is certainly no space in any of our cars to haul them back home. We were able to get the rest of the stuff packed and ourselves heading toward Kingsport before noon. We arrived home at

suppertime, and I was able to get a full nights sleep with the help of the one thing we forgot to pack, my CPAP machine!

A Mexican Rush-Job

No sooner than I returned home from the convention I had to turn around and prepare for a business trip to Mexico. I had gotten very frustrated with the Mexican sales reps because after repeated requests they had not yet put together a call plan for the trip with less than a week to go before I had to leave. The "anchor" for the trip was a half-day seminar at the request of our biggest customer in Mexico. I knew what to do because they asked me to develop the program and review it with them before hand. I prepared three topics to discuss with them and I just had to hope that that material would be applicable to the other customers.

Two days before leaving the Regional Sales Manager had lit a fire under the sales force and I finally had an agenda for the trip. I really could have used another day to prepare but I went with what I had and that would just have to suffice. I decided to stay at a hotel in one of the Northern suburbs of Mexico City. This hotel is great for me for several reasons. First, it is close to at least four key customer's plants and is convenient for most of the others. Second the hotel is in a relatively quiet neighborhood so I can sleep unmolested (I also remembered my machine this time!). Finally, it is only 5 minutes away from the church I visit when I'm in Mexico.

The trip was pretty standard except for one day in which I had to travel to Puebla to meet a customer. I had never been there before. The thing Puebla is famous for is black mole, probably my favorite Mexican dish. The serving that I had for lunch was worth the two-hour drive from Mexico City. Of course, as I was staying on the northwest side of the Mexico City Sprawl and Puebla is to the Southeast so getting there was not easy. The sales rep asked me to take a taxi to the airport and meet him there. That allowed him to avoid driving all the way across the city four times in one day plus the round trip to Puebla!

On Saturday the rain and clouds that had hung over Mexico City blew away in a stiff wind and the sky became beautifully blue. Most of the pollution in the air was gone and the temperature was cool. It was a beautiful weekend to get out and explore the city, so I stayed in the hotel room and wrote this, watched TV and read books. After the last month of rushing around like mad, I really needed a nice quiet couple of days to myself. On Sunday morning I did go to church in Atizapan. I had sent an e-mail to Steven Carpenter, the head of the mission there to warn him that I would be there. However, with no mustache and wearing my contacts he did not recognize me until I spoke to him!

The church service was long, but it wasn't like I had anything else to do. After the service I helped clean up the church and then we had an after-church lunch of barbeque in a nearby restaurant. It was good to catch up with my friends there and trade church administration stories. Since I have re-joined the Board of Deacons at home, I had lots of trivia to trade with them.



Sunset In the Western Mountains of Mexico City

On Monday the main topic of conversation was the immanent start of the war in Iraq. Everyone wanted to know how I stood on the war in Iraq. It was funny and perhaps hypocritical of me, but I did not come out as against the war. I did say that I wished that the US did not have to go to war but that supported the decisions of our leaders. Mostly I wanted to get home before the war started. I do believe that the mistake was made in 1991 when the Iraqi army was

shattered, and the coalition forces could have driven into Baghdad and removed Saddam Hussein with relatively little difficulty. That was really what the world expected at the time. Certainly, the support for the coalition within the Middle East might have been withdrawn but what were they going to do about a US led takeover of Iraq? We had the forces on the ground, in the air and we had the momentum. That was the time to act. Now it will be much more difficult, bloody, expensive, and time-consuming.

My last day in Mexico was very long since we had to make calls in Querétaro state. That is about two hours to the north of Mexico City. We had one call in the morning then another at noon in Querétaro and then one last appointment back in Mexico City in the afternoon. I doubted that we could make that schedule and I was pretty much right. We finished the second call at 2 p.m. and our next call was at 3! For the third time in my life, I got to see the hills of central Mexico roll by at 110 mph as we tried to make up time. Of course, there was a big car wreck just at the Mexico State border so all the time we made up by driving like maniacs was eaten up in the jam. We arrived for our last appointment at 4 p.m. and most of the people we needed to see had already left for the day.

The next morning (March 19) my flight was at 8 a.m. and since it was obvious that the war would be starting at any moment, I was quite anxious to get back home. As it was the flight was pretty routine. There were no extra security measures in place either in Mexico or Atlanta. I had a very long layover in Atlanta, so it took me ten hours to travel door-to-door from Mexico City to Kingsport.

Another Notch in in My Belt

Assuming that he did not get activated for military duty our Taekwando instructor had informed Corlis, Isaac and me that we were ready to test for our black stripes. This is the last test before black belt. Normally testing is on Saturday morning but since there was a NASCAR race in Bristol that day Joe decided to move the testing to Friday night since it was likely that the National Guard would be called in to do security.

There were 12 people testing that night. Most were for low ranks so we knew that our test would be last on the agenda. Actually, the test went faster than expected because he just had all the kids test in one group and the adults in another. Even so Corlis and I took some time to get through it. We have 32 self-defense responses to demonstrate and even though each one only takes a few seconds we have to pick ourselves off the mat after each one and get back into position. Corlis and I alternated between attacks and defenses, and it still took about 20 minutes to go through all of them. Also, we have mastered more techniques to be demonstrated and the form that we had to perform was quite complex.

I have never had much trouble with board breaking but there is always an element of mystery there since you don't know what break you will have to do until Joe calls you up. Corlis broke with a palm strike and made the break with the first blow for the first time. I had to break with a spinning hook kick at head height. My success depended on how flexible my legs were that night. It turned out that that was a good night, and I made the break on the first try.

Then came the sparring. Since we are nearing black belt, we either have to spar multiple rounds with lower ranked people or one round with a black belt. For Corlis there were other mature ladies there testing, so she had to go three two-minute rounds. Isaac had a tough time with his matches because he was sparring with a significantly larger partner and her kicks kept going past the target and landing on Isaac's unprotected back. Isaac is usually fine in sparring until he feels pain, then he loses it. He lost his temper and had to fight again with the same girl once he got himself back under control.

For me there was nobody testing that was at my level, so Joe brought in a ringer. One of the mid-ranked students lives within a mile of the school and Joe had him come in to fight me. Travis is only 16 years younger and six inches taller than me, so I was in for a tough match. Since I knew I could not touch Travis with reach and speed I decided to go at him with technique. I put together combination attacks with spinning kicks

combined with frontal kicks. That worked pretty well except that that kind of attack is very energy intensive so by the end of the first round I was playing mostly for defense.



Here's a Hint: Don't Fight With your Eyes Closed!

After a rest I decided to change strategy. I started out with another combination spinning back and sliding side kick that let Travis know that I wasn't dead yet. Then I got in close to neutralize his extra reach. Then I tried something that I didn't know if I could do or not. I launched a front-leg hook kick at his head. I don't know who was more amazed, Travis, me, or Master Grosso but I connected with that kick enough to rearrange Travis' head protector. After that he didn't let me close again and pretty much kicked the crap out of me. I threw some more off-the-shelf kicks and played defense until time ran out, but I had lasted through four full minutes of sparring and managed to connect with a head kick to a taller and superior fighter. I was satisfied with my performance.

Now we all start studying for the black belt test. This test took about two hours to complete, and we were mixed in with lower ranks. For black belt the test takes about three hours, and it will be only black belts. We have to write an essay, learn basic Korean commands, do basic hapkido escapes, learn all nine forms, 40 self-defense responses, a four-way sequential board break, a concrete block break, multiple sparring rounds and a

three-on-one fight with no time limit. And I will pay at least \$300 for this privilege.

Reading and Watching

With the conclusion of Concave I was able to once again indulge the book habit. If there is anything in the house to read, I will do that instead of prepare for the convention so I have found that the best remedy is to not have anything around to read.

Of the lot I've read to date my favorite has been *Lamb* by Christopher Moore. This is the Gospel According to Biff, Christ's Childhood Companion. 2000 years after The Crucifixion an angel is sent to Earth to resurrect Levi Who is Called Biff, Christ's best pal from boyhood. Biff is then set to writing his version of The Gospel, filling in the 30 years skipped over by the other Apostles, covering the time from the Holy Family's return from Egypt to when Josh starts his ministry. This book is highly irreverent, funny, and heretical but not blasphemous.

The book covers Joshua bar Joseph's early apprenticeship as a carpenter, his realization that there is no messiah school in Israel, and his wanderings in search of truth. Josh learns mystic truths, meditation, and miracle working from the Three Kings in Afghanistan, China, and India. Biff learns stage magic, kung-fu, and the Kama Sutra. Finally, having gathered the wisdom of the East and incorporates it into the Judaic culture, Josh returns to Israel, calls the disciples and follows the path set for Him. Biff sticks with him to keep the books and keep track of Josh's growing flock. I don't know how many times I had to put this book down because I was laughing so hard. I was also sad to see it coming to an end. I wanted it to keep going. It was also hard to keep a straight face in Sunday School once I finished it.

The Peshwar Lancers is another semi-historical alternate history from S. M. Sterling. The story begins in 2032 with the British Empire relocated to India due to a series of meteor impacts that in 1878 wiped out much of European civilization and plunged most of the Northern Hemisphere into an Ice Age. The King family is an upper-

class member of the Landed Gentry fiercely loyal to the Crown. The eldest son is Athelstane King, a captain in the Peshwar Lancers but soon embroiled in an assassination attempt, recruited into the secret service, and sent on a desperate mission to save the Royal Family. his sister Cassandra is a PhD astronomer/physicist and is also targeted for death due to her involvement in constructing better telescopes.

The country of India and Afghanistan make an interesting backdrop for the story especially in the light of current events. The story is action packed and populated with interesting characters from the heroic King family to the sinister Count Ignatieff to the Royal Family. The story is nicely contained in one volume but with hints that there is more to come.

Corlis dutifully taped *Children of Dune* for me off the SciFi Channel and even edited out all the commercials. I was quite impressed with the job they did with *Dune* two years ago with very little budget to work with. I did, however, wonder why they skipped *Dune Messiah* completely and went directly to *Children of Dune*. The answer to that was that they combined both books into one three-part miniseries. I feel that was a mistake because anyone unfamiliar with the books couldn't follow the story.

Also, they saved money in the casting by using mostly unknown actors with the exception of Alic Kirge and Susan Sarandon. This showed because for the most part the acting was either cardboard or cartoonish or both. Also, they must have thrown out most of the sets and costumes from *Dune* because the continuity between the two was quite poor. On top of that, they only used proper Fremen blue-on-blue eyes when someone was overdosing on spice.

Compounding the problems, the ending was really confusing. They leave Leto in mid-transformation with no explanation as to what he is trying to accomplish other than getting a really bad case of psoriasis. Again, unless they plan to make another installment in the series I doubt if someone who has not read the books will have the slightest idea as

to what was going on. Of course, if they make more episodes then they will get into the really crappy Dune books when Frank Herbert was just turning them out for money, not because there was more story to tell. They would be better off to turn to the Herbert/Anderson Great Houses trilogy if they really want to continue the franchise.

What SciFi did to *Children of Dune* was nothing compared to the hatchet job they did on *Riverworld*. Reading *To Your Scattered Bodies Go* was one of the most memorable experiences of my life and I fondly remember anticipating *The Fabulous Riverboat*, *The Dark Design*, and *Gods of Riverworld* as much as my kids are anxiously waiting for the next Harry Potter book. It took about two minutes of this so-called adaptation to say, "What the hell is this?"

There was no Richard Burton, the resurrection of humanity is stretched over decades instead of a single morning, and Our Hero is an astronaut. Ok, I see what they did to move the story along. Our Hero is a late resurrector so there is time to develop the grail slavery, mine meteor falls for metals, and for Sam to almost finish his boat. There were lots of fights and action but almost none of the spiritual quest for The Reason For it All. Evidently, we are not smart enough to be intrigued by the Riverworld and the re-invention of civilization and the establishment of a utopia where indeed all are equal, and death is banished. We had to get right into the swordfights and slavery.

Actually, the movie resembles *River of Eternity*, the nearly lost early version of Riverworld. I am not quite ready to credit the producers of this mess with enough sense to dig up a copy of a book that had only a 1500 copy limited print run to base their movie on. The Riverworld of my mind is a much better place than any movie will ever be.

The Short Victorious War

Right. That's a David Webber book title. The plan was great, the surprise attack was launched and then everything went wrong for the Peeps from there.

As of today, it looks like the first shot of the war may have been our best. If it didn't get Saddam, it at least singed his nose hair a bit. The first 72 hours were right out of Dubya's playbook. We got the oil fields with minimum damage. The Iraqi army was surrendering by the thousands, and the road to Baghdad seemed open. Over the weekend, however, it became more and more apparent that that nasty Saddam had actually planned to fight this war instead of giving up.

I still don't think the Iraqis have a real chance of winning if the war effort can be sustained. The Republican Guard seems to be obliging us by coming out of Baghdad and engaging the US in a massed attack. So far nothing appears to be holding back the advance except the weather and even then, it is allowing more troops and equipment to get in place for the push into Baghdad.

The problem is that the Iraqis, not being able to fight a conventional war have settled in for urban guerilla combat and have so far been successful in distracting the coalition forces. In the long run all they can do is inflict some casualties but with the kill ratio around 50:1 they can't turn the tide of the battle.

The media coverage had been nothing short of amazing. The embedded reporters in the fighting units are an incredible innovation. For the first time we see war as it really is. There is lots of waiting, moving slowly and then suddenly a burst of hellish action. I have found myself checking the news websites every couple of hours to pick up the latest developments. I'm living part of my life on Baghdad time. Noon here is nightfall there so it must be time for today's bombing videos. Midnight is sunrise so it's time to get moving again.

Like it or not we are now engaged in a war that is going to take weeks if not months to fight. Even if we take Baghdad and manage to pry Saddam loose from his bunker we will still have the problem of the Saddam Fedayeen hiding in the cities and waiting for any targets of opportunity. We can whine about the Geneva Convention all we want but we will be facing a well-embedded fanatical enemy with no rules or ruler to stop them.

MAILING COMMENTS

The Southerner No. 231: Jeffrey Copeland—Looking at the SFPA Rules I think that Number 4 is unfair because it is putting words into Rosy's head and Guy isn't short. I call for a constitutional convention!

The New Port News #207: Ned Brooks—You might not expect coal in a volcano, but what about soap? There was an article in a recent National Geographic about a volcano in Africa that apparently emits a gray soap like compound instead of lava. The temperature of the stuff is so low that it freezes in midair into spectacular frozen fountains. Because it is located in one of the driest places on earth the formations last a while but are so fragile that they eventually crumble.

Still it is perfectly possible to find carbon in lava. As long as there is no oxygen for it to react with then it is perfectly stable and capable of withstanding high temperatures. After all, diamonds are found in extinct volcanic pipes where carbon has been trapped under extreme temperature and pressure.

The programs on Mexican TV are very hard to follow. They do speak very rapidly, often with a heavy accent and use a lot of slang terms that just don't make it into a Spanish class for gringos. After several years of traveling in Mexico I have picked up some of the slang, but it is very difficult to understand. I can, however, follow the announcers in a soccer game quite well. There the vocabulary is limited and it's much easier to follow.

Two times out of three now *Tennessee Trash* in the southernmost SFPA zine. Of course, that only applies to the actual writing, not the mailing address. Gary B. still wins on those grounds.

Variations On A Theme #18: Rich Lynch—For some reason my father had a copy of *The Music of Leroy Anderson* by the Eastman Rochester Pops Orchestra and Dvorak's New World Symphony in our family's collection of mostly popular LPs. These were my introduction to classical music, so I have always had a place in my heart for Anderson's music. I never knew much about him, so I

appreciate the biographical information here. I never connected until now when I checked my record collection that the Eastman Kodak Orchestra recorded the first LPs I ever claimed!

I agree that the three-day trip to Brazil was inefficient, and a penalty flag should have been thrown for unnecessary roughness. I felt that I should have gone there a week earlier, spent some time calling on customers and then attended the conference. The problem is I cannot tell the sales organization how things will be. I travel only at their request and pleasure and really don't have much say as to how trips are scheduled and planned. The Powers have tried to put a new system in place that reduces this kind of wastefulness because the managers have to sign off on travel before it happens. In the meantime, it looks like my next trip will be a very short one. Two days in Colombia! I really want to keep that one short!

Twigdrasil And Treehouse Gazette #79: Richard Dengrove—I'm sorry to hear about the death of your cousin Wayne. There are few things that make us face our own mortality than the death of a childhood playmate. That has got to be hard to handle. It does not sound like Wayne had a very easy life but that he did manage to find places to fit in and make friends. It is good to see that his memorial was well attended and that plenty of people had things to say about him.

It will be interesting to see if Isaac's heart problems will ever hold him back. He had a six-month checkup with the cardiologist in early March. The good news was that even though there was a bit of detectable scarring on one of the valves, the murmur was gone and there was no more leakage. The doctor said that he had made an exceptional recovery. On the other hand, he still has the hole between the atria. That may fix itself with time or it may need a simple surgical procedure to close it once he has finished growing. I think that the military shows you the door if you mention the word Rheumatic Fever but otherwise his prognosis is excellent.

I am surprised that any Christian church offered you the communion elements, Jesuit or not. Were they thinking that it would be like an inoculation and that you would quit being Jewish? Of course, I have always had trouble with the Catholic belief in Transubstantiation. The idea that the wafer and wine transform into actual blood and flesh when you eat them has always seemed a bit silly and gross to me. I am coming from the perspective of a Southern Christian church where we symbolize the wine that symbolizes the blood with grape juice. If I can believe in an abstraction of an abstraction, then I must be pretty far gone too!

Spiritus Mundi # 193: Guy H. Lillian III—The mind boggles at the thought of a houseful of yorkie puppies. That sounds like a really fun house. I'm glad that the gift of the puppy went over well with Harold. T4 indeed! That's a great name. I would have paid admission to see Boo terrorized by the pup.

Don't worry about missing *Suzie Snowflake* with the VCR. It'll probably come out on DVD. I think that it's geezers like us who are supporting that industry as we rush to fill out our collections of old favorites on yet another format. I sometimes feel like Tommy Lee Jones in *Men in Black* when he shows Will Smith the Next Big Thing in data storage. "Damn I'll have to buy *The White Album Again*." I'm anticipating the release of *the In-Laws* on DVD soon. I'm looking forward to introducing the boys to *Serpentine Shelly! Serpentine!*

Gosh, a mother-in-law who gives her son-in-law an original Wally Wood sketch. I'm in Shock and Awe! I thought I was lucky to have a mother-in-law who occasionally takes the kids for a week!

I agree with you about M. Night Shyamalan's work-to-date. *The Sixth Sense* was off the charts, but I have also immensely enjoyed *Unbreakable* and *Signs* too. I was a bit disappointed that in the end the aliens were shown to be indisputably real. I thought the film would have been better if that had somehow been left ambiguous, but that is not Shyamalan's way. One connecting thread in his films is that the beasties all are very real.

I'll put up the Really Bad Civil Engineering of Sao Paulo or Mexico City up against anything that New Orleans has to offer with one hand tied around my back! As I was driving across the city with one of the Eastman reps, I tried to get a sense of

navigating in the beast. I've traveled from the airport to the north side enough times that I could probably drive myself if I had to. I innocently asked what the name of the major street we were using was. It turns out that the name of the street changes at least five times between the exit from the Circuito Interior and Beautiful Downtown Tlalnepantla. There are few signs and the ones there are are confusing. You just have to know the name of the street in the neighborhood of your destination! Exit ramps and merge lanes – forget it! Road *repairs*? – forget it!

Actually, we ate pretty well on the *Yorktown*. The food was fine, there just wasn't much of it. They had scaled the portions to what picky young boys would eat and that was not enough for an adult who had spent the day climbing ladders. Part of the tour included Fort Sumpter and a cruise through Charleston Harbor, so we actually did take in some of the other sights of the city.

Trivial Pursuits #105: Janice Gelb—You can't go wrong with pink plastic lawn flamingos as garden décor! We still have two of them left over from the Orlando bid party from the '96 Worldcon in Baltimore. Colored plastic is God's gift to the brown thumb. We once found a Marvin the Martian lawn statue that we gave to my brother, so keep looking!

My boys have started noticing when President Bush refers to "nooklar" weapons in a speech. It makes me proud to be a parent.

Reviews – Thanks for the review of *Spirited Away*. What I have heard has been good but of course it never appeared anywhere near here. I'm waiting to fine the DVD.

I asked Harry Turtledove for the backstory of the writing of *The Two Georges* once. In his words Richard Dreyfuss is a fallow 'history weenie' and the two of them met at a lecture both of the were attending. They got to talking and apparently Dreyfuss had the idea for the book, just not the time to write it. He did the rough draft and Harry fleshed it out and polished it. According to Harry he did most of the writing and Dreyfuss did most of the plotting.

Re: Document retention – I think that if I has to reserve my office space for a week at a time, I would definitely be looking for a more permanent

arrangement in another company! For the first time in 12 years, I actually had some documents I had to declare due to a legal hold. It turned out that the ones I had were not covered in the hold so I ended up not getting audited.

Revenant #16: Sheila Strickland – I am glad that your encounter with University Administration seems to have passed without leaving any permanent scars. I'm impressed that the dean of your school was on top of things enough to intercede for you without even asking. I can understand why the records office treated you as they did though. Corlis has to deal with the other end of the spectrum, the losers who enroll in general ed. Math classes. In the first week of every semester, she catches at least some students trying to cheat on quizzes. For many of the students, at least at ETSU, there are so many trying to cheat the system that the faculty assumes guilt from day one.

Frequent Flyer: Tom Feller – Nice picture of your empty lot. I hope that there is a lot more in it by now! When is the house due to be finished?

Corlis also had to contend with being a part-time state worker although she does not have to keep track of hours. This spring she does not have a full teaching load due to budget constraints. That actually worked out well for Concave since she only teaches on Tuesday and Thursday. She only had to have her classes covered for one day. Although her hours are down this spring, I think that for the long run she will be better off than if she was hired permanently. As it stands if the university loses any of its full-time faculty, they will not be able to replace them so many part-timers will have to fill the gap.

The Sphere #202: Don Markstein - I had missed the manufactured controversy over the revival of *The Rawhide Kid*. Isn't it interesting how things like this feed on themselves? It's like the eternal battle between Good and Evil. I can just see the comic creators wailing to themselves, "What can we do to stir up some controversy?" Since the conservative press is the loudest and most watched news source in the country it seems logical to use a gay theme to attract attention. Of course, the media lives for a story like this because it fits in so well with their image of artists, gay culture, the Corruption of Youth, and the decay of society. It would be hard to make these arguments if there were nothing they could hold up as evidence. Lo and behold

Marvel Comics Group obliges them for Tarnishing the Memory of a Beloved Character. The two feed on each other and both sides get what they want! Marvel gets publicity and the news analysts get something to gripe about. Everyone is happy.

You are right on the mark about J. K. Rowling becoming un-editable. It is like Stephen King and Tom Clancy. They have enough clout to make the editors back off from their golden words. After all, it is the words that pay the mortgage for all concerned. As long as the public is buying, why change a thing?

I am beginning to think that the later Harry Potter books may be unfilmable due to the length of the books unless they start cutting them in half to film. I hope they do a good job with *Prisoner of Azkaban* because it is my favorite of the set so far.

I Send Them Up #61: Jeffrey Copeland – I'm glad you enjoyed your visit to Washington DC. I'm also glad you share my outrage at the closing of The Capitol. That has to be political egotism at its finest. The Congress does not even appear on Ben Laden's radar screen. What do any terrorists care about a bunch of people gathering in a building to argue? If anything, the terrorists want to decapitate our government through a strike at the leadership but would encourage Congress to go on as always. There is a reason our leadership is called the Executive Branch.

I'm glad to hear that Liz made it through the kidney surgery OK and that she seems to be on the mend. I hope she makes a full recovery.

On the war: With the start of hostilities, I bought a copy of *South Park: Bigger, Longer and Uncut* as the movie to watch as the war started. If only SF writers could be as prescient as Tray Parker was back in 1999! If anyone has not seen this yet, I heartily recommend it. Plot summary: A group of elementary school kids sneak into an R-rated movie that Permanently Warps Their Fragile Little Minds. When the language from the film shows up in classroom discussion the first reaction of the adults is to deprogram the corruption from their sweet, innocent kids. When that fails the mothers start a movement to fix the blame on the source of the problem: Canada. As the US gears up to invade Canada, Catán and his lover Saddam Hussein recognize the coming atrocity as the Seventh Sigh of the Coming of the Apocalypse. The

only thing standing between Earth and Armageddon are the youth of South Park. I didn't think much of the South Park TV series, but this is brilliant!

REYRCMT: Schlosser – Only in Fandom would someone think of averaging zip codes to find the geographical center of the country! I love it!

The loss of the *Challenger* hit me personally because Dave Clark, one of the people I've gotten to know through soccer coaching and Scouts is Dr. Laurel Clark's brother-in-law. I saw Dave there with the family on TV coverage of the memorial service in Houston. Just last mailing there was a comment that we have lost the ability to build new spacecraft. The manned space program has been so effectively dismantled that we no longer have the expertise or manufacturing capability in place to even replace the shuttles should they fail. I'm quite sure that any money that might have been available to build the next generation of orbiters has just been spent in cruise missiles for Baghdad and tax cuts for corporations.

Peter, Pan and Merry #47: Dave Schlosser – It is interesting to hear people lament that good American jobs are going to illegal immigrants. I ask these folks what they think a good American job is? The fact is that we have inflated the pay for lot-end jobs in the US so much that the American economy is no longer competitive in so many areas. Why should a clothing company pay nearly \$10 an hour for a worker when they can get someone in China to do it for 10¢ an hour? The problem now is that too many American consumers are falling out of the low end of the economy. Illegal immigrants seem to be able to survive on the wages paid in the agricultural and assembly industries. They just don't buy HDTV sets or DVD players.

The US economy depends on American consumers to keep goods moving through the system. The problem is that those goods are now almost universally made elsewhere so the compensation for making those goods now flows out of the economy instead of staying in it. We now have too much capacity to produce too much stuff that nobody can buy. The model for that economy is not the US for the last 50 years. It is Japan for the last 10 years! That, I fear, is where we are headed now.

Oblio #144: Gary Brown – It seems like this year there was no one Big Flu but there were a lot of little guys running around to make life miserable. Isaac was the only one in the family to get a flu shot. Many of my co-workers got the flu but Corlis and I were spared. The school system came close to closing down due to illness, but the severity of the winter closed them instead!

I really don't think that the war in Iraq is about control of the oilfields or enriching Dubya and Co. It is about a President who wants to be remembered as the reincarnation of both Teddy Roosevelt and George Patton in one person. It is about Good vs. Evil and George knows he is Good so anyone who disagrees with him must be Evil. In the end it's about cost, sacrifice, blood and death.

I am an exempt salaried employee which means that I am expected to put in at least 40 hours a week but can be expected to work 24/7 if necessary. The exempt means that the company is exempted from paying me overtime. That means that travel time, even if it spans a weekend is all part of my company compensation. In other words, I get squat from travel except for my regular paycheck and some neat stories to write about in SFPA,

Weird Stuff #2: Steve Hughes - I suppose that one of the drawbacks of a mountain cabin is that snow can be a serious problem. Of course, when the cabin is in Georgia that should not be a common problem except for this winter! Yankees don't really understand about a Southern winter, do they? As a Reformed Yankee myself I can remember chin-deep lake effect snowfalls in South Bend from my childhood that never really seemed to disrupt life much.

Of course, in Indiana we didn't have hills and ice storms to contend with either. No matter how good you are at driving in snow you are simply not going to be able to cope with ice and snow mixes and Southern hills. The last three years have been unusually mild, so I suspected we were in for a doozy. They are now predicting a slight chance of snow for March 30!

Of course, the Bostonians got theirs this year with the President's Day Blizzard. Boskone got renamed Snow-Kone this year and 30+ inches of snow will stop even a Yankee!