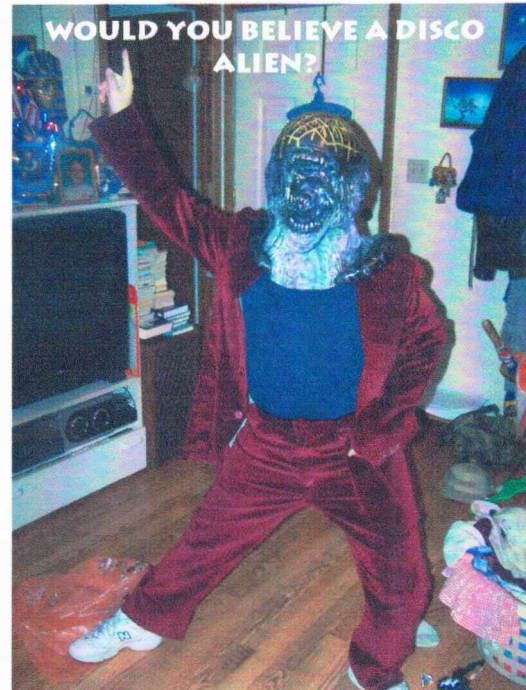
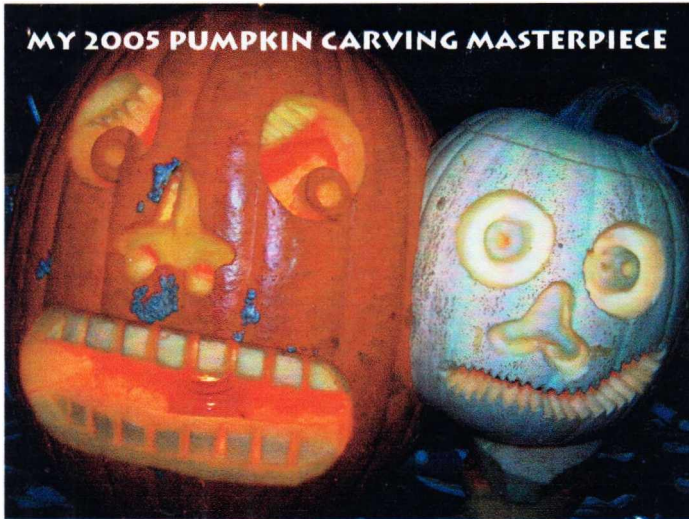


# TENNESSEE TRASH #68

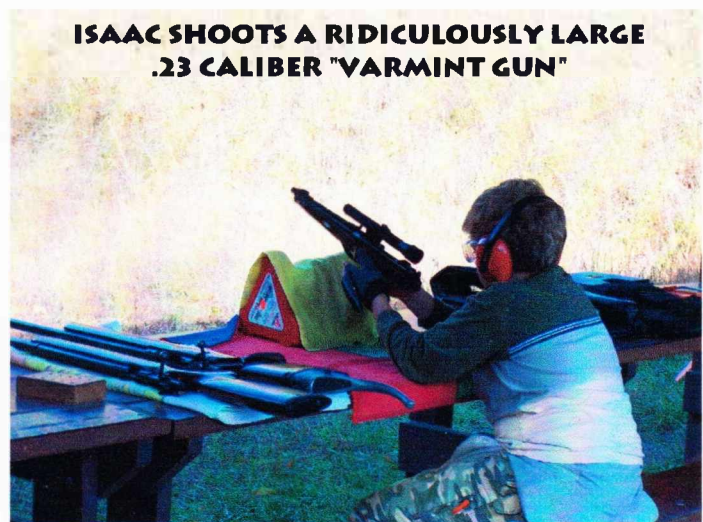
Now That's What I Call An Eyesore







Tennessee Trash Number 68 was written the week before the Thanksgiving holiday since I'll be leaving for Brazil on the Sunday after and won't get home until mid-December. When I get back I'll collect the mail P. O. Box 3221, Kingsport, TN 37664 and the phone is answered at 423-229-4956 if you want to talk to Corlis.





# Tennessee Trash #68

A Zine by Gary R. Robe for Mailing Number Two Hundred and Forty Eight of the Southern Fandom Press Alliance

October - November, 2005

## **THANK GHU THE SUMMER VACATION SEASON IS OVER SO I CAN SLOW DOWN AND RELAX AS BIT AND OTHER DISTURBING REALIZATIONS...**

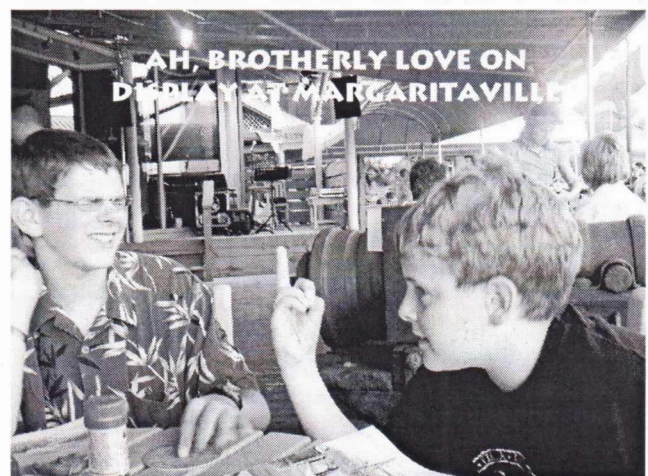
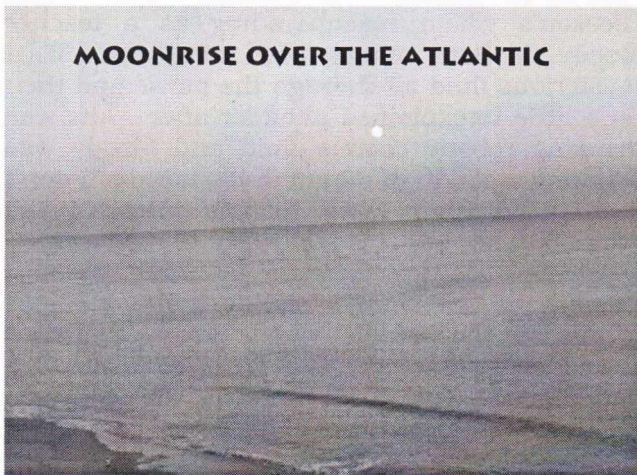
Once a year Corlis demands restitution for all the weekends that us guys leave her at home for Scouting expeditions. Her price is a weekend in Myrtle Beach during the ETSU fall break in mid-October. Last year we discovered the splendid Coral Beach Resort and we made plans early this year to return there. We timed the vacation perfectly, just one week before Hurricane Wilma came up the Eastern Seaboard.

We couldn't have asked for a finer weekend to enjoy the beach too. Once we arrived in Myrtle Beach there wasn't a cloud in the sky for the whole time we were there! Furthermore, the water temperature was still right at 80° so after

a few screams while getting wet, the ocean was quite nice to play in. Finally, we were treated to a spectacular full moon each night and a dramatic sunrise over the ocean each morning. Our room was on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor of the hotel, so we had a great view of the beach, but were far enough up that we also had privacy.

Since our suite had a kitchen, we were able to cook ourselves breakfast and lunch each day. That extended our play time at the beach as well as saving us enough money that we could justify eating somewhere nice each night. We fell into a routine of getting up at about 9, having breakfast and then playing in the ocean until about 11. We then got out of the midday sun by playing in one of the 10 swimming pools at the hotel.

### **MOONRISE OVER THE ATLANTIC**



The first night we all wanted to return to the Margaritaville restaurant where we had such a good time last year. This time there was

nothing as spectacular as the boy's air guitar concert on the stage, but it was still fun, the food was good and we spent too much in the gift shop before leaving.

After a very hectic summer, several Scouting trips, a family wedding, by mother-in-law's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday party, and the daily frustrations of work, it was very nice to get away for four days of just the family, relaxing and playing without an agenda.

## REVIEWS

This has certainly been a great fall for animation, and the Best Animated Film Oscar race this year will certainly have lots of contenders.

**The Corpse Bride:** This Tim Burton film came out with very little pre-release hype, but after Burton's stop-motion masterpiece, *A Nightmare Before Christmas*, this was a must-see film. Both of these share similar character designs and mood, although *Corpse Bride* owes more to *Beetlejuice* than *Nightmare*. The story of a reluctant groom accidentally "marrying" a dead girl was at once both strange and yet fairly predictable. I never really felt that the film's protagonist, Victor, would ever actually choose the dead bride over the living, but Emily was certainly a more interesting person than Victoria. I wasn't surprised to learn that this film was inspired by an old Jewish folk tale. While not the out-of-the-park home run of *Nightmare Before Christmas*, this film was certainly very entertaining and a worthy companion to the earlier film.

**Wallace and Grommet: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit:** This was a movie I was looking forward to from the moment I heard it was in the works, and it didn't disappoint a bit. Once again Nick Park works magic with clay and stop motion and an obvious love of his story and characters. I won't bother summarizing the plot here. It involves giant vegetables and humane pest control. If you are familiar with W&G you don't need me to convince you to see this one. If you don't, you should. Of the three animated films to debut within a few weeks, this is by far the best.

**Chicken Little:** Since I've grown up with Disney animation I rarely miss a new offering from The House of Mouse. The trailers for *Chicken Little* were amusing, and the final film pretty much lives up to the promise of the trailer. Still, there's no big surprises in the story line, and while there were some very nice scenes, the film ultimately seemed padded. Indeed, the whole baseball sub-plot seemed to be stuck into the middle of the film just to give it enough substance to play for 80 minutes. While *Chicken Little* was decent afternoon entertainment, there wasn't much left in the end.

**Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire:** My main question going in to this installment of the Harry Potter saga was, how are they going to condense all that book into a single film? The answer is that the plot of the book was ruthlessly weeded out for everything that didn't directly advance the story, combined with a breakneck pace that didn't leave much time for the audience to catch its breath. I don't know if someone unfamiliar with the books would be able to understand this movie, but maybe the filmmakers are crazy like a fox. You really have to see this one a couple of times to get all the nuances.

One of my favorites was Brendan Gleeson's portrayal of Mad Eye Moody. A few weeks ago I let the boys see *Alien*, mainly so Isaac would stop bugging me about it. Their reaction to the film was a classic – Isaac had to sleep with mommy that night. Anyhow, without that recent viewing of *Alien* I doubt I would have picked up the parallel between Ian Holm's android-pretending-to-be-human, Ash, and Gleeson's villain masquerading as a teacher Moody. Both characters take sips of a mysterious fluid all through the movie and then do a little unexplained shudder after. Ahs was drinking robotic cooling fluid and Moody was drinking a potion to maintain his façade. I don't know if director Mike Nichols intended the parallel there, but it is really cool to notice.

Despite the GoF being a very dark film, it comes to life in the middle when Harry, Ron and Hermione have to take dancing lessons and find dates for the Yule Ball. Here the film captures all the teen angst and clumsiness of a John Hughes film in an otherwise dreary storyline.

Without that section to break up the drama the film might have drowned in its own seriousness.

We've come to expect special effects to be eye-popping, so the dragons and merfolk come as no surprise. Still the hedge labyrinth scene brings to mind *The Shining*, especially since at the end of the maze is pure evil. The resurrection of Voldemort and his battle with Harry are creepy and riveting. In this film Lord Voldemort joins Darth Vader and Hannibal Lechter as screen embodiments of evil.

All of the young actors have improved greatly as their characters have aged. This film goes a long way in making some of the other Gryffindors into more than just props, especially Matt Lewis as Neville Longbottom and Oliver Phelps and Chris Rankin make us believe they are the Weasley twins even though they are apparently not even related.

The Potter movies have just gotten better as the series has moved along. I was never too keen on the selection of Chris Columbus as the first director for the series, and it has certainly been doubly demonstrated now that his stepping aside was the best thing that could have happened to this franchise.

## **HALLOWEEN**

Preparing for Halloween is always a big deal at the Robe house. Many of our neighbors decorate their houses more for Halloween than for Christmas. This year I questioned if a high school student should really be going Trick-or-Treating, but apparently the answer was yes. Isaac originally wanted to construct a Scarecrow costume from *Batman Begins*, but we were never able to find a gasmask to build the costume around. We ended up going to the Halloween Express store and picking out masks. Isaac settled on an *Alien* mask as his second choice. I found a truly ghastly hat – a black skullcap with spikes and eyeballs hanging from the spikes. The costume you see on the front cover came from that. Nick, in the true spirit of Halloween, improvised a Redneck Jedi costume on Halloween night.

The Alien mask alone was not enough to make a presentable costume for Isaac, but in the week before Halloween inspiration struck. In the days before Halloween the junior high had

dress-up theme days. One week before the 31<sup>st</sup> Isaac announced that it was retro day at school and did we have something tie-dyed for him to wear? I remembered that I had something way better than that. Way in the back of a closet I still had the red crushed velvet suit my mother made for me for my senior prom in 1974! The suit was a bit long in the sleeves and we had to pin the cuffs up, but Isaac was able to go to school that day in an authentic 70's disco suit! We later got the inspiration to add the Alien mask to the ensemble to complete the Disco Alien look.

Two days before Halloween the boys were invited to a friend's dance party. We all showed up in costume and Corlis and I helped to chaperone while the kids socialized. The music selection was pretty dismal. I've heard enough of the current pop music to know I don't like it. The DJ hired for the event was about my age, but looked at my like I was wearing a giant eyeball mask or something when I asked if he could play *The Time Warp*. Overall I was a bit shocked at the "dancing" these junior high and high school age kids were doing. Right in front of parents the girls were essentially doing standing lap dances. Our boys mostly sat around the table and talked about video games with their friends instead of dancing,

We let the boys go out on their own while I stayed behind and answered the door in my Eyesore costume. I am proud to say that I caused tears in at least two of the youngsters who came to our house.

## **THE SHOOTING FAIR**

The last bid Scouting outing of the year was our annual shooting fair held at the Scout Camp about an hour away from Kingsport. This is one of our most popular events of the year as the boys are given a chance to compete with rifle, shotgun, pistol and bow shooting. This trip is always a big production because we usually have 50-75 participants. Since we don't have to backpack the equipment in we can bring all of our gadgets and show off.

Prior to the shooting, the scoutmaster requires that the boys complete a four-week shooting safety course covering the important aspects of each type of shooting. We are lucky in that one of our adult leaders, Col. Connely is an avid gun



collector and has at least one of every type of firearm we might want to demonstrate to the boys. By the time the scouts actually get a gun in their hands they have been hopefully indoctrinated in the concepts of shooting. If they aren't, then at least we don't let them have ammunition for their guns until they are ready to shoot on the range.

Once again we lucked out on the weather. There was a slight chance of rain on Sunday morning, but aside from that the temperatures were unseasonably warm and thankfully dry. I had been looking forward to the reactions of my fellow adult leaders to the deployment of our new big tent. The reaction was all I could have hoped for. We had a steady procession of visitors through our tent all weekend to see just how much space we had and how many features were built into our tent. I loved it when one of the scouts dubbed our portable mansion the Taj Ma-tent.

The absolute best reaction came from Marty Miller, a really gung-ho dad who always has the latest and greatest stuff to show off. As Marty was taking down his tent one of the scouts passed by and remarked "Gosh, Mr. Miller, you've got a really big tent!" Marty hung his head and sulked "It used to be a big tent!"

The main event of the campout, of course, is the shooting. I take the archery range because I had the youngest kids in the group for a while and the only things they were permitted to fire were the bows and BB guns. I spent Saturday afternoon helping to run archery while Nick and Isaac tried their hands at the various firearms. Nick excelled on the pistol range and shot a perfect 50 on his first try. Not to be outdone, Isaac managed to shoot a 48 later the same day.

On Sunday we were not able to open the archery range because of high wind. The wind was so strong we could not get the targets to stand up for anyone to shoot. I got to take advantage of this and do some shooting myself. I had never used a shotgun before, but I found I liked it the best of all the available weapons. I missed the first couple of clay pigeons, but after I got the hang of aiming, I popped five in a row. I like hitting the moving target much better than a stationary piece of paper.

On Sunday afternoon the men all get to take out their special toys and shoot them. This ranges



from semi-automatics to muzzle-loaders. The favorite gun of all is Col. Connely's .23 cal *Firebolt*. This gun is technically a handgun since it is a bit too short to be a rifle. It would not be something you could carry concealed. For shooting this monster they set up a water-filled half-gallon milk jug. The impact of that big slug on the plastic and water is truly impressive.



Well, that's about all I've got time for now. Our Thanksgiving holiday should be interesting. My mother informed us that she and dad would be too busy delivering food baskets and preparing a feast for the homeless to make a Thanksgiving meal for us at home. That didn't bother me too much, I just volunteered up all to help with the food delivery too. On the Sunday after Thanksgiving I'll head to Brazil and Puerto Rico for what should be my last trip of the year. Stay tuned in January for the scoop!

# MAILING COMMENTS

## SFPA 246

### **VARIATIONS ON A THEME #43: RICH LYNCH**

- The DVD of *Revenge of the Sith* came out two weeks ago, so naturally we had to get a copy and watch it again. It was good timing to come across your observations now. I agree that Lucas never really decided how The Force worked. If a Jedi (admittedly Yoda) can use it to pick up a space ship, why couldn't they use it to fly? That problem goes right through to the end of the story when Darth Vader finally kills the Emperor by throwing him off a balcony. Sure Palpatine apparently falls into the exploding power core of the Death Star, but why did he fall in the first place? Part of the problem with the Jedi seems to be that most of their power was lost to the rise of the Dark Side. In several places Yoda and Mace Windu discuss that their control of The Force is weakening and the limited prescience they have used to guide The Jedi in the past has almost vanished. I do like how Obi-Wan uses a hated blaster to kill General Greivous and then almost immediately thereafter the clones turn on the Jedi to wipe them out. A light-saber is a rather one-dimensional weapon when the attack comes from all sides.

You are right that Anakin does not take to impending parenthood with much enthusiasm. Perhaps that is part of the reason why in the later films that he is ready to turn Luke over to Palpatine. Ooh, there's another flaw I'd not considered before. Anakin knows full well that the Sith Master will only allow one apprentice, and he demonstrates over and over that he is willing to discard apprentices he tires of. Why is he ready to turn Luke over to Palpatine when doing so will almost certainly cause The Emperor to turn on Vader? OTOH, in several places Vader appears to make excuses why not to turn Luke over, and almost protects him in some ways.

Apparently Padme is trying to withdraw from society and keep her pregnancy a secret. That would explain the absence of the entourage in

RotS. She apparently had C3PO to do her hair and arrange her wardrobe. Also, the timeline of the films is a total mess. In some ways RotS seems to span only over a few days, yet Padme apparently has enough time to bring her pregnancy far enough along to give birth in the end. Also, the speed of space travel seems to be rather strange. In Ep. 4 we are shown that even a very fast ship, The Millennium Falcon, takes some time to cross through hyperspace, yet in Ep. 3 Palpatine senses that Anakin is getting French-fried on Mustafar and gets there, apparently within minutes, in time to save him.

I could go on, but the basic idea I get is to enjoy the films as mindless fun and not ask too many questions. The shame is that for all the great visual imagery and the technical revolution in filmmaking brought about by the Star Wars series, the stories themselves are really not that good. If only George Lucas would have trusted someone more talented in writing with his basic outline, the end result could have been so much better.

### **THE NEW PORT NEWS #222: NED BROOKS - If**

you haven't gotten it yet, Free Cell game 6182 is solvable. You have to arrange it so you can play the ace through seven of clubs before any of the other aces go into the suit piles. Once you do that you can get the red tens over to black jacks and get the other aces up. Normally it doesn't work when you get one suit way ahead of the others, but it works for that game.

One reason they make you take off your shoes for airport security is because lots of shoes have a steel plate in them to add to their stiffness. Enough people have shoes with a metal reinforcement in them that it is just simpler to make everyone take them off. That plus the possibility of a shoe bomb are the official reasons for shoe removal. I bet another reason is that taking shoes off is one probably the most



disabling thing you can do to someone without physically restraining them. If security calls for someone to stop, and the run off instead, it gives the gendarmes a big advantage in a rundown if the fugitive is unshod.

I think that our military's adoption of torture as an interrogation technique may be the defining moment of when we stopped being the good guys in the world. There are be times where lives are at stake and you are certain a detainee has vital information where torture becomes arguably permissible. For it to become commonplace enough for George Bush to announce to the world at the Pan-American Summit meeting in Buenos Aires recently that "We do not torture." Is about like Bill Clinton saying "I never had sex with that woman."

I suspect that the resin used in toner probably varies over time. Eastman sells several hydrocarbon resins that are used in toners. About the only thing I see in common is that they have about the same softening point and are made from pure aromatic monomers. There is a considerable spread in the cost and composition in those products. The one mentioned most as a toner, as well as being cited in the original Xerox and HP patents is *Piccotex* 100 hydrocarbon resin, a product that has been around for at least 25 years. I suspect that when toner was developed this was the only product of its kind on the market. Now there are second and third-generation products that can also be used but are cheaper plus there are several manufacturers out there making them. Since the functional differences between these would be subtle at worst, I suspect that the tones makers switch from resin-to-resin based on price and availability. I'll guess that your spotty success at cutting thermal stencils from laser printer toner is due to some of these very subtle effects coming from switching resins that just don't show up in other printing applications.

#### **TWIGDRASIL AND TREEHOUSE GAZETTE #95:**

**RICHARD DENGROVE** - I'm glad that your friend Sheila found a place for you in the wedding. It may seem like you didn't do much, but just doing your part reliably was probably a great comfort to the couple. I think part of the reason people put themselves through such an ordeal at weddings is to keep marriages together. If it was easy or cheap then we might be more tempted to quit one marriage and start again.

On your observations about *Revenge of the Sith* I agree with you that Hayden Christensen and Natalie Portman are terrible actors. George Lucas was just lucky in casting unknown actors like Mark Hamill and Carrie Fischer in their roles in the second trilogy. While not the greatest actors, they were at least able to seem like they doing something that aimed higher than a high school senior play. I really feel that Lucas simply got tired of the series after Episodes 4-6 were made and just couldn't summon the creativity to bring Episodes 1-3 up to the same level. At the same time he couldn't give up enough control to step away from the material and let other writers and directors take over.

I look at the Harry Potter movies as an example of how a series can grow by letting the creative team change. First, J.K. Rowling gave up trying to control the filming of her books from the very beginning. Second, they have kept on Steve Kloves to do the screenplays for all four movies to date. Third, Chris Columbus directed the first two like a fast-food franchise manager. The series has definitely improved by letting others take over the creative reigns and not being a slave to the books.

I feel that a major contributor to what people call Chronic Fatigue Syndrome is stress. In what I do, most of the activities I've chosen are actually stress relievers. Sure the workouts are physical, but after a frustrating day at work, there's nothing like spending an hour kicking inanimate objects to relieve stress. As demanding as backpacking is, once you are on the trail, you are forced to slow down your pace and relax. It also doesn't hurt that most days I love my job. I get to putter around in a lab and cook up stuff and then use all kinds of fancy technical gadgets to test the stuff. Also, my job is never the same from one day to another. While I can't say that people suffering from chronic fatigue are malingering, I also think a large component of their problem is psychological. That's also not to say that I'm not going crazy too, but at least I'm having fun on the trip!

I don't think that "Johnny's" night terrors were associated with the spider bite or necessarily the unfamiliar surroundings. The way his father responded to them it seemed like this was behavior that not unexpected. They have never



gone on another outing, it appears that they have dropped out of the troop.

**SPIRITUS MUNDI #208: GUY H. LILLIAN III** – I loved the “Buzz Aldrin Smackdown” cartoon on the cover. Having worked with Mr. Aldrin through several autographing sessions at LA Con some years ago, I’d say that I’m not surprised he clocked that guy. In signing autographs, Buzz was very professional, easy to talk to, and exuded an air of confidence I’ve rarely seen elsewhere. He also gave the impression of a man who doesn’t take much guff from anyone.

Your mention of the London Underground bombings reminds me that I forgot to cover that aspect of our UK trip in the last mailing. We landed in England one week after the second wave of fizzled bombs, so unsurprisingly the city was in a high state of tension while we were there. Luckily as far as tourists are concerned the Underground is a highly redundant system, so we were able to get around the city even though parts of the subway were out of service. At each station there were heavily armed policemen looking over everyone entering. Corlis had the foresight to buy mesh-style backpacks for the trip so an inspector could see what we were carrying without having to actually open the pack. That said, the guards never gave us a second look, but we did see several dark-skinned men pulled aside and submitted to searches. Three were also several instances where we were riding on a line and an announcement came over the PA system to tell us that this particular line was going out of service due to a security lockdown. We were also in London when the police arrested the dud bomb suspects *and* the IRA announced that it was renouncing violence and turning in its weapons. No duh! In all, we never had a qualm about riding the Underground, but we were constantly reminded of how vulnerable we were there.

I’ve decided not to nag the boys on making progress toward Eagle Scout. They both have a good chance at making it, and I’ll help them finish requirements whenever they ask, but if they make Eagle it will be on their own initiative and not because I was pushing them to it.

**PETER, PAN & MERRY #62: DAVID SCHLOSSER** – I understand that the whole New Testament is an add-on to The Bible. If one accepts that Jesus was The Messiah (and I do realize I’m *not* preaching to the choir here!) then

the NT is rather a necessary and legitimate addition. One aspect that adds to the legitimacy of the NT is that it is a collection of writings from various people as opposed to one man’s personal revelation. That is the problem I have with The LDS Church, let alone charming folks like David Koresh and Jim Jones. All of these I feel is dangerously close to Scientology, which L. Ron Hubbard as much as admitted was a con from the git-go. Of course, one can also make the case that since Islam is based on the revelation to Mohammad that calls its legitimacy into question also. I suppose that any religion that asks its adherents to follow one man’s teachings must be approached with a high level of skepticism. That goes for Christianity too!

I see you have gone beyond mere cash awards from good schoolwork too. This year Isaac really, really wants an Air Soft pellet gun. I made him the deal that if he can carry an A average in math through the holiday break then I’ll buy him one immediately. This year he has an excellent math teacher, and Isaac has really bonded with him. So far he has the A for the first 16 weeks of the year, so it’s possible that he’ll make it.

Then there’s Nick. Our Scotland trip ended up making the boys miss the first three days of school due to the flight delay in getting home. None of Nick’s classes had done *anything*, except for Geometry, where the teacher was covering the first chapter in the first week. When he got to class she was going to give him over the weekend to prepare for the test the others were taking on Friday. Then she discovered that his absence was unexcused, so he had to take the test with the rest of the class. Early the next week the class asked about the test and the teacher explained that she forgot to bring the papers in that day. When asked how the grades ran, she said she didn’t remember what the distribution was, but someone had made a 100 – Nick Robe.

**FREQUENT FLYER: TOM FELLER** – My brother is the president of the Eastern Kentucky Birdwatching Club. He goes out of his way to protect birds and bird habitats. Even he hates house sparrows. It is especially sad when the bluebirds are the ones that suffer. They are such shy and sweet birds that they really are almost helpless in this mean world. We have loads of birds at our feeder coming from the woods around our house. I was delighted a couple of years ago when a pair of bluebirds started showing up at

our feeder. Within a week, of course, the cats got them.

I'm glad to see that you are using books to back up your Internet-based research on the author biographies. I've seen too many people using what pops up in a Google search as the Whole Truth without verifying what they are using. It is also true how information tends to get copied from one place to another, making it that much harder to get reliable information.

I've been frustrated several times in finding out more about an author I've liked. Perhaps the most interesting one was Edward Whittemore. Rickey Sheppard got me hooked on his books in the early 80's, but despite very positive critical reviews he never was very successful. His last book, *Jericho Mosaic*, was published in 1987 in near obscurity. I knew several people, including Mike Resnick, who were very interested in Whittemore, but we could never find out much about him.

The books were a fictionalized history of the Middle East from the 180's through the aftermath of the Yom Kippur war. It wasn't until two years ago when Mike Walsh reprinted Whittemore's *Jerusalem Quartet* that much biographical information became available about Whittemore himself. He was an honest-to-gosh CIA spy in the post-WWII Levant, and understood what he was writing about profoundly. The reason nothing more was published after *Jericho Mosaic* was because Edward Whittemore died of cancer just as his last novel was being published. These books are still relevant today, and as I just re-read them recently I can see the seeds of our current Iraqi disaster clearly planted in these pages.

I had not heard of the root cause of last year's Comair computer crash. I'll bet they are not the only ones out there still running on FORTRAN systems. I found out recently that all banking systems worldwide still run on COBOL. The reason is that financial institutions were all early adopters of computerized data processing and when they installed their systems COBOL was the cutting edge. Now there are only a few companies that still provide COBOL programming expertise, and those are doing BIG business!

#### **VARIATIONS ON A THEME #44: RICH LYNCH**

- The biography of Edward Elgar was interesting.

I can't imagine what a rush it must be to compose a tune like *Pomp and Circumstance* and know instantly that it will be a hit. I also can't imagine a mind like W. A. Mozart's who apparently had melodies like that constantly arranging themselves in his head. His challenge was to get them written down fast enough.

#### **GUILTY PLEASURES #39: EVE ACKERMAN -**

The audacity of the pirates who posted your books is amazing. You don't say if these turkeys were actually arrested and prosecuted for their crime, or if the publishers only succeeded in getting the sites shut down. From the sheer illiteracy of their posting, I wonder if the perpetrators were just dumb, or if there were not in the US. Their "defense" reads like it was written by the "Elbonians" who periodically appear in Dilbert. This would be funny if it weren't the end of a crime spree!

Your spelunking expedition sounds interesting. Living in Kentucky and Tennessee I've been around caves for most of my life, and I really respect their potential danger as well as their mystery. I was walking in the field behind my house once and the ground literally gave way beneath me, and I fell into a hole up to my armpits. I couldn't pull myself out, and I didn't dare drop the rest of the way into the hole since I didn't know how deep it was and if I could get back out if I did. Luckily I was able to call to a neighbor who came over and pulled me from the hole.

**OBLIO #159: GARY BROWN** - I just saw a trailer for *Superman Returns* in front of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. I can't believe that they are going back and re-doing the Superman origin story! The trailer even used the Marlon Brando voice-overs from the Christopher Reeve *Superman*. Gimme a break! I've already seen the Superman origin story too many times. I want to see something new about the character, and I don't mean putting a new twist on the Lois and Clark relationship either! I'm going to sit that one out.

I'm glad your high school reunion went so well. I enjoyed my 25<sup>th</sup> a few years back, but I don't plan to make an effort to go to another for several years. I don't have particularly great high school memories, although they mostly aren't awful either. At the reunion I found that apparently I was more memorable and respected than I remember myself being. Of course, I wasn't on



any sports teams. I was more the band and drama club type. It is good that you were able to get such a kick out of your reunion.

While the number of merit badges required to achieve Eagle has not changed, I do believe the list of required ones has grown and has become more difficult. You now have to earn at least one of the really hardcore outdoor badges that I would have never been able to earn in my day. The funny thing is that I'm earning them now, as I'm turning 50, only I don't get the badge to go with it!

I used a 6-ton jack and a 4x4 to push up the corners of the deck. After using the beam as a jack, I left it in place to add extra support for the deck.

I see you have picked out the soundtrack for your funeral. That's a good idea. I'll have to put some thought into that for myself.

Seeing your pictures from ComicCon reminds me of a great bit in *Chicken Little*. If you've seen it, how long did it take you to recognize who did the voice of Chicken Little in the "movie version" of the story right at the end? I think it took Corlis about two words before she blurted out "Adam West!" to the whole theater.

#### **THE NEW FORGER #79: JEFFREY COPELAND -**

On seeing the list of books you've picked up off Liz's pile, I would recommend to you both, if you haven't found them already, The Stephanie Plum series by Janet Evanovich. These are chick-lit reminiscent of Sue Grafton's Kinsey Milhone books. In this case, however, the heroine is a slacker who has lost her job as a department store lingerie buyer in Trenton, NJ. To avoid being evicted from her apartment and having to move back in with her parents and grandmother, Stephanie takes a job working as a bounty hunter for her bail bondsman cousin Vinnie. Stephanie's qualifications for the job probably hover about - 25%, but her first assignment is to bring in a fugitive cop who also happens to be a sometime lover. If she can complete the job, she'll earn \$10,000, so it is either that or share a room with hey batty Grandma Mazur. There are 11 of these and they all are very funny. They are also very formulaic, so I would not suggest reading them back-to-back or they become predictable. When Evanovich is on target, however, these have made me laugh about as hard as anything I've ever read.

On Chinese World Domination, I just read an article this week on the horrific state of health care in China for the masses. One woman was found this week at a crematorium alive, but nearly paralyzed and only her tears betrayed that she was still alive. Apparently the woman had neurological problems and the family couldn't afford any health care, so they dumped her at the door to the crematorium ala *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*! It seems in this Worker's Paradise, there is no such thing as state-provided medicine and the only way to get care is to pay for it out of your pocket. How is a civilized country supposed to compete with a system like this? At least Russia made attempts at sharing the wealth among the workers even if the system was inefficient, inadequate and corrupt. The Chinese apparently don't even go through the motions! When is the world going to wake up and call China what it is - the largest slave state in the history of the world?

It is interesting to note the differences between the post-Katrina gas price shock and the embargo years in the 70's. Despite the damage to the refineries after Katrina, sure prices exploded, but if you were willing to pay the price *there was still plenty of gas!* While noises were made about no new US refining capacity, and how much of the system was out of commission, there was still enough gas in the system to keep the pumps running. I believe in the 70's the oil companies made sure there was a shortage to pressure the government to make friends with the Saudis so that Big Oil could rake in the profits of oilfield development. This time around I think that the oil industry wants relief from environmental regulations so that the cost of refining drops. Most of the money in oil production comes at the wellhead. Refining the crude into a usable product is not a profit center., and the wholesale markup only offsets the cost of refining. The oil companies want badly to reduce their cost of production so they can keep selling prices at the same level while raking in more profit.

#### **HOME WITH THE ARMADILLO #67: LIZ COPELAND -**

Sorry that the job with the APNQ didn't work out. It sounds like you had a problem on a smaller scale like my friend Mark Linneman had with the University of Kentucky law library. He was the head librarian there and was up for tenure. The old ladies in the library didn't want him, but the law faculty loved him. The LOLs didn't much care who was head librarian as long

as the position was filled by a woman. They eventually won the fight and Mark lost his job. It took him four years to finally land a job with the State of California.

I hope your knee recovers.

**TRIVIAL PURSUITS #120: JANICE GELB** - I don't suppose it would be possible to talk Steven into using a sleep apnea machine. Yeah, right after he starts eating green leafy vegetables. I hated my machine at first, but now I find it soothing. I hadn't realized just how much I was fighting drawing in breath until I got the machine to do part of the work for me.

Keep us informed on the progress of the move and the nuptials. I'm really interested in hearing about selling your house. I've never had the luxury of selling in a seller's market. That sounds like fun. It also sounds like fun to get rid of all the accumulated stuff. A few years ago we had to clean our garage to make room for ball players, and I filled our van five times with junk to take to the dump. Some of the boxes had not been touched since the day we moved in ten years earlier.

**AVATAR PRESS #29: RANDY CLEARY** - I absolutely agree with you on the rules for a knife fight. In my work and with the places I travel though it would be stupid not to think about what if... Also, after 9/11 I strongly feel everyone should think about knife counterattacks. Assuming that terrorists can't manage to get firearms with lots of ammo on a plane, the pattern has been to use knives. I firmly believe that a determined planeload of unarmed passengers can demolish a handful of attackers armed only with knives. The first rule of knife defense, however, is to assume that you will get cut. The strategy is to take the damage somewhere non-vital and then do something Very Unpleasant to the attacker.

**THE STAR IN THE WIND IS A WORD: MIKE WEBBER** - I got that sequence of the crane and the car in the water as a slide show. What you don't have there is the sequel where they bring an even bigger crane and proceed to do *exactly* the same thing again trying to rescue the first crane from the water!

That's an interesting story about ENIAC on a chip. We've often been told that a roomful of 50's

vintage computing equipment will now fit on a fingernail-sized chip. It is interesting to have the thing available as an object lesson. My questions are: does it work, what does it do, and does it work better than Windows?

**"YNGVI IS A LOUSE" AND OTHER GRAFFITOS: T. K. F. WEISSKOPF REINHARDT, ET.AL.** - If you are reading the Donna Leon books, you should also get *City of Falling Angels* by John Barendt. In this book he treats Venice as he did Savannah in *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*. The city and the story don't come together quite as well in *Angels* as it did in *Midnight*, but the book is still an excellent study of Venice, its history, people and politics. The book is a study of multiple characters, a mystery, and fact-too-strange-to-be-fiction all rolled into one. I've always wanted to visit Venice, and now I really do, but I don't want to visit just as a mere tourist.

I think that Dumbledore really died in HP-6. It was part of a carefully constructed cover for Snape to become a mole in Voldemort's organization. Remember that the prophecy from HP-5 says that Harry and LV can't coexist - it doesn't say that one kills the other.

I am a bit disappointed that after all of the buildup, apparently Voldemort's weakness is that he has divided his soul up and placed it into a series of inanimate objects. If you destroy the trinkets then Mortie does a Wicked Witch of the West imitation. Where have we seen that motif before, eh? It is a cop-out and a blatant steal from *Lord of the Rings*. I expected better.

Re: Hank: Democrats are complaining that as the deficit goes *down* taxes are bringing in more revenue? Um, excuse me, but what planet are you getting your budget figures from?

Oh, so just because FDR threw the Japanese-Americans into concentration camps makes it OK for Bush & Co. to throw out the rule book too? Oh, come on now, just because the Nazis called themselves socialists means that Democrats are Nazis too? That was just part of the Big Lie of Nazism, using a progressive concept of Socialism to hide something far more sinister. When does it suddenly matter what a repressive regime calls itself? After all, it's the People's Republic of China. Does that mean that Republicans are actually closet Communists? I'm afraid that



you've committed a rather glaring non-sequitur there.

Toni: REYRCMT on stem cell research. It is a good point that there is nothing to keep someone from doing private stem cell research except for the money to do it. I a bit surprised that the big pharmaceutical companies aren't just thumbing their noses at Big Bro and doing just that. Maybe they are and they just aren't holding press conferences about it. Of course, if there ever was any commercially usable therapy to come from stem cell development it would have to get by the FDA. These days the FDA has become so politicized that they can't allow the morning after pill to go over-the-counter when all the science indicates it is safe.

**SMALLVILLE TORCH: GEORGE WELLS** - I have been avidly reading the Jim Butcher books from the git-go. There seems to be a whole new sub-genre of magic in the mundane world that has struck a chord with readers. I suppose that Harry Potter is part of it with wizards attending a magical boarding school. Then there is the whole school of writers like Charlaine Harris, Kim Thompson, Jim Butcher, and more who are writing about the Supernatural lurking in the cracks of our mundane world. Did you read Butcher's new series that started with *The Furies of Calderon*? If so, what did you think?

**REVENANT: SHEILA STRICKLAND** - I'll be training for Philmont by hiking in the high sections of the Appalachians this spring. There are many stretches where the altitude is over 5000 ft. It is certainly not as high as we'll see at the camp, but it should help to prepare. Another thing about Philmont is that you work up to the high altitudes when you are there. The base camp is at about 3000 ft, and it takes at least two days of hiking to cross the 6000 ft mark from there.

One thing that should compensate for the rustic Outside Con DSC will be the food. Once you get there you will not go hungry. This year there was food going to waste at every meal. As it is the campsite is not very rustic. There are showers in three separate campsite clusters and plenty of bed space in the cabins. We were the only ones this year to actually set up a tent so you don't need to fear being stranded in the Great Outdoors.

## **A Few Comments on SFPA 247 I Couldn't Resist**

**SPIRITUS MUNDI #209: GHL III** - Thanks for the rundown on New Orleans Fandom in the wake of Katrina. I'm so sorry that the story of Cindy Snowden didn't have a happy ending. It always gave me a good feeling about how you obviously cared for her over the years and supported her when others could not. It takes a lot of courage for someone like Cindy to make it in the world since they can't do it alone. A part of the continuing tragedy of Katrina is that so many people like her lived in New Orleans and needed help too. Unfortunately when they needed it most, that help wasn't there and now we pay. It's just tragic that someone like her had to make the ultimate payment.

Well, I'm thinking that Pat Robertson is as crazy as Chavez, so perhaps he is just reacting to a kindred spirit. I think the real reason is that Robertson sees Chavez as growing into the next Castro. The scary thing is that he may be right, only imagine a Castro with *money*. Unlike the rest of the corrupt dictators who've ruled South America over the last 60 year or so, Chavez is not interested in lining his own pockets, he is interested only in power. Look at how he taunted Bush at the Pan-American summit recently. He was so good at it, the only thing Dubya could do was pretend there was a Hugo-shaped hole in space there and ignore the noise. If Bush had responded in any way, Chavez would have won, but he won too by taunting Bush openly and not getting slapped down for it. Of all the leaders at the summit, only lame-duck Vincente Fox of Mexico retaliated at all by withdrawing the Mexican ambassador from Caracas. You've gotta wonder what being in such a no-win situation did for Bush's blood pressure.

**CAL EDONIA, AND HIS DOG...: DAVE SCHLOSSER** - It was certainly lots of fun to meet up with y'all in Glasgow, especially since we both apparently didn't pay enough attention beforehand to expect to see each other there! If we combine The Robe Experience's tour of Southern England with your tour of Northern Scotland, we can compile a pretty comprehensive tour guide of the UK! I see that you too enjoyed some of the eccentric signage over there. I have now mounted Underground-style "Way Out" and "Mind the Gap" signs in our family van. I'm glad

our families meshed so well, and we WILL be at LA Con next year!

**"YNGVI IS A LOUSE" AND OTHER GRAFFITOS:**

**T. K. F. W. R., ET.AL.** - OK, It's the end of the world. I find myself agreeing with most everything written by both Pat Gibbs and Hank in an issue of *Yngvi*. The Supreme Court seems to be going out of its way these days in making decisions that please nobody. Of course, The Court is not there to please anyone, but still I must agree with Pat on the eminent domain and medical marijuana cases they have made stunningly bad decisions. The really disturbing thing is that both decisions hand even more power to the government in a time when the same government keeps showing us it shouldn't be trusted with power.

Hank correctly points out that there's plenty of blame to go around for the Katrina disaster. Nobody should be bragging on that one. I can't help coming back, however, to Michael Brown, the utterly hopeless head of FEMA. On one day he testified to Congress that he had not been notified of the way the situation was degrading and the very next day his own underlings show up with documentation that he was notified plenty and did nothing.

**HOME WITH THE ARMADILLO: LIZ**

**COPELAND** - I had to do a double-take of the picture of Naomi and Grace on your cover page. The way Grace's head is positioned and the pattern of her hair made it look like Naomi was Lettin' it All Hang Out right there in the room party! It sounds like Worldcon West was fun.

**OBLIO #160: GARY BROWN** - After reading your zine I bought a copy of *Hoot* and read it cover-to-cover in one sitting. I'm trying to decide what part in it I would cast Jimmy Buffett. Most of the adult males in the book are either bad guys or ineffectual, and I can't see Jimmy playing any of those parts. After reading *Hoot* I realized that I had completely missed out on reading Carl Hiaasen. I have seen him mentioned over the years, but somehow I had associated him with stuffy Lit'rary writing and had never picked up one of his books. Thanks to your mention, I've now rectified that condition. Not only am I looking forward to reading more of his stuff (I've since read *Lucky You*) I'm happy to find a new author who is both prolific and has been around long enough for most of his works to be available

in paperback! Just perfect for the International traveler!

Actually, I *don't* work for Kodak anymore. Eastman Chemical Company was spun off from Kodak as an independent company in 1994. That was a great move for me since Eastman has avoided being sucked down in the death spiral Kodak is now in.

**REVENANT #33: SHEILA STRICKLAND**

- I heard a story on the radio a few weeks ago that Baker, LA had been selected as the site for one of the huge post-Katrina trailer camps that FEMA will be erecting for displaced victims. Apparently there are several of these strung across Florida that were supposed to be occupied for six months and are still there after four years. It has been a boom for the mobile home construction industry. We have several Clayton Mobile Home factories in East Tennessee that have been shut down for years because of a depression in the market. Within a week of Katrina hitting, those plants were haring people and getting ready to go back into production!

**VARIATIONS ON A THEME #45: RICH LYNCH**

- It was good to see you and Nicki in Glasgow. It sounds like your hotel in London was similar to the one we used. We never came across the lack of towels in the bathroom though. The smallness of the room in London didn't matter much though. We only were there to sleep and we were usually so tired that it didn't matter that we were sleeping in a closet.

You and Nicki went to many of the same places in London that we visited. Tom and Anita both visited London, Bath and Shrewsbury like we did. We all visited Edinburgh. As many times as our paths crossed in Glasgow it seems strange that we never saw other fans outside of Glasgow. Of course, London is a big city and it would be silly to think that you would randomly run into a friend there, but it would have been a hoot if we did!

Of all the souvenirs of the trip, I think my favorite is the Glasgow subway pass. It looks so official until you realize what it is! The fact that it was so cheap to buy the one-week pass, but that it was only good between two stations is mind-boggling. They had to be losing money on issuing those limited passes! Noticing quirky stuff like that is what often makes travel so much fun!