

How I Became an Emergency Holographic Texan without Losing My Mind and Other Tales of LoneStarCon 2

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LoneStarCon badge with ribbons for committee, Timebinders, program participant, Alamo and Emergency Holographic

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Jim & I arrived Saturday evening to start our on-site working on [LoneStarCon 2](#). To our astonishment, we were able to pick up our luggage much faster than we were able to rent a car. We checked into a Fairfield Inn about a mile from the hotel, near Market Sq. Our daughter Leslie remained behind in Pittsburgh to start her senior year in high school and pick up some homework assignments. She was planning to fly to Texas the following Wednesday.

I have mixed feelings about Texas, but one thing I love about it is fresh tortillas for breakfast. Once we had eaten our breakfast, we were milling about El Mercado when someone yelled at us about being lost Pittsburghers.

Yes, it turned out Karen and Fred were also eating in Mi Tierra, the place that David Thayer had raved to us about last January and which Jim and I had failed to find then. So we joined Karen and Fred and went to the hotel to start Sunday set-up, which was not terribly arduous. We set up the office, cranked up the computers and started answering the telephone calls. We got a fair number of calls about Kaffee Klatch sign-up, but since the lists were still en route, we encouraged folks to sign up at the con.

I set up a bulletin board with a number of good, Worldcon-related newspaper articles, mostly from the [San Antonio Express-News](#). We "Oooohed" and "Aaaahed" over Sherlock's most-excellent room signs.

I did do a press-related activity on Sunday - a radio station in Wichita, Kansas that runs a science fiction show called The Warp Zone asked me to check in with them about the con. So I spoke to them for about 10 minutes on the plans for the week and about what Worldcons were all about. I was supposed to call back the following Sunday to present a report from the con, but realized over two days later that I'd completely forgotten. (It's one thing to write an appointment down in a date book. It's quite something else to remember to CHECK the date book... I dropped the producer an apology note when I realized what I had done.)

That evening, about 18 of us headed for Karam's and had an authentic Mexican dinner in a restaurant run by a Lebanese family. Karam's is an older restaurant with an Inca garden. After we'd ordered our food, we all went out to admire the statues and the flowers. I had a great molé (as in "mo-lay", not as in "a brown rodent").

Either Sunday or Monday night (funny how those set-up days all kind of merge together), Bill Parker arrived with a two foot long bright green iguana. Bill later sustained the first convention-related injury when the iguana clawed his arm.

Monday started the ~~dreared~~ anticipated hotel meetings, where half the committee was suited up (even Fred) to meet with the hotel. You could tell how the meetings went by the demeanor of the attendees post-meeting. Everything was sweetness and light after the hotel meeting. It certainly helped that the hotel sent leftover meeting snacks to the office. However, people kind of schlepped in after the CC meeting about an hour later than expected. "It's Disclave all over again" mumbled Karen. Some workmen in the downstairs function rooms had broken a sprinkler making two function rooms unusable for the con. Luckily, there were still two other rooms available, so while some items needed to be shuffled, nothing needed to be cancelled.

Karen's slogan for the con was "4pm, Monday afternoon, the bar." meaning that the following Monday, as the convention

wound down, she'd be unwinding in the hotel bar. Since I was due to be on a plane at that time, I took her down to the bar on the Monday during set-up and bought her the beer I would have gotten for her the following week. The Marriott bar was a nice place, but, as it turned out, I'd spent more time in there during the two-day January planning meeting than during the whole nine days I was in Texas for Worldcon.

Early in the week, the Convention Center was home to two diverse groups - the Grocery Marketplace (grocers and marketeers) and the Trauma workshop (EMTs, cops & soldiers). The hotel hosted some sort of women's health expo and a Church of God conference. Ironically, someone, possibly from one of those groups, trashed a room on 19 so badly that the hotel had to re-wallpaper part of it! Fortunately, the room was well-repaired by Friday, as anyone at the MCFI party knew.

Sunday, Monday and Tuesday, office manager Laura Domitz worked with Events Division director Sue Francis and some of the gophers to resolve as many outstanding prereg issues as possible. Anyone who looked like a fan was invited up to the office to volunteer. A few even took us up on the offer. Steve Lopata and Sharon Pierce were both there early and often.

Monday dinner was a little more scattered (more people/more groups). A bunch of us went up to an Indian restaurant that has an excellent Monday night buffet.

Pre-con, I fretted some to the LSC2 mailing list that there didn't seem to be any kind of overall Logistics move in/ move out plan. I don't think any one person knew where the various trucks and cars were coming from and going to. This is one thing that it looks like I was wrong about - even without a plan, move-in chaos wasn't too bad, though I do know some art was mislaid for a day, and at least one delivery of mobies went to the Convention Center rather than to the hotel.

Early in the week, I was mostly doing services-related stuff (chasing down mobies and the like) and a little pre-con press work (answering Wally Ross's donated cell phone with its invaluable local phone number). On Tuesday, Jim and I went up to Austin to visit the Celis Brewery, to buy necessities for Babysitting and the Staff Lounge, and to pick up the badges, which had been out-sourced to an Austin-based company. Ahh, the smell of printer's ink on a hot August day in Texas! I expected to see more "desert" between San Antonio and Austin, but the area was pretty built-up. I did not see an armadillo, either living or dead, during the whole trip.

By the time we got back to the hotel, I ran upstairs with the badges and got people to help carry the all-important cases of Celis beer up to our room for the staff lounge. We put together an impromptu dinner group (I thought it included Alexis Layton and Leslie Turek, but, I was wrong - it was Sharon Sbarsky, John Lorenz, Ruth Sachter, David Power, Claire and Dave Anderso, Rick Katze, and at least two others. Sharon pointed out that we waved to Leslie and Alexis who were taking a barge ride at the time) and wound up at a jazz club on the RiverWalk. I liked the shrimp creole, but that opinion was not shared by all. Everyone did agree, however, that the bread was excellent.

I spent some of Monday and Tuesday preparing *Newsletter 0*, a "how to get around the con facility" newsletter with a map and info about volunteering, mobie/wheelchair rentals and babysitting. Tom Becker was supposed to do the final layout, but when he was delayed, I just printed it, made a few hundred copies for the early arrivals and left them in the hotel lobbies. The map that David and Diana Thayer made for it was really useful.

We did some more set-up work Tuesday night, and, since we'd finally checked into the RiverCenter, adjourned to the bar downstairs. As Jim and I got there just a little after midnight, I had to plead with the bartender to sell us a couple of beers. We smuffed a bit, and later helped the Thayers, newly arrived from Ft. Worth, move their computer system upstairs.

Wednesday was supposed to be the day for Babysitting set-up. However, we misread the part of the hotel resume which said that both Babysitting suites were unavailable on Wednesday. Babysitting was crammed into one regular sleeping room. Luckily, it was really quiet. The local babysitters (Northside Sitters Club) were very nice, and the kids and parents seemed to like them. We wound up having to hire extra sitters for Hugo and Masquerade nights.

When you do press relations for any kind of event, one of the best things that can happen is to find a journalist who understands your field and can report on it with some intelligence. We were very lucky that Joe Abell, a photographer and writer for the [San Antonio Express-News](#), was a person who read SF and had always wanted to go to a Worldcon. LoneStarCon 2 got absolutely fabulous newspaper coverage due to Abell's interest, and good coverage from other local papers, including the *Austin Chronicle*. While I'm not sure if she faintly did it or not, one of the *Austin Chronicle* reporters was going to go "undercover" as a gopher and write a report about being a volunteer at a Worldcon. We had some TV coverage, but it was limited (though a brief clip appeared on CNN at some point Sunday).

We also had some extraordinary radio coverage. I had several long talks with Jack Lendman, the host of CyberCity, a local radio talk show (on 550 AM) about computers and the like. He'd done a radio interview with Karen the previous week and presented a suggestion to us: Let the show originate from the pre-function area of the Grand Ballroom. In other words, since CyberCity was on Saturday nights from 7-10, this would have the effect of broadcasting the Hugos almost live over the radio. I thought it was a great idea, so I got permission from various folks on the committee. It turned out, he did the show "remotely" - local fan Wally Ross was interviewed over the phone, and we shuttled interesting people into a room near the ballroom. But it worked out reasonably well.


I'd been working down in the pre-con office until Wednesday, when I found myself getting pulled in too many directions. The press kit wasn't done yet. So I took our laptop and went upstairs to our room for the afternoon. I didn't wind up producing as

large a press kit as I'd done in past years, but, with the help of early work done by my staff, we hit the major points (LoneStarCon 2, Worldcon history, our guests and the auctions). I was also somewhat less organized for my area at the con, but as we had fewer press than we'd had at MagiCon, it wasn't as much of a problem.

A few months back, while researching local tours, I found you could charter a barge and have a catered dinner while seeing the sites. That sounded great to me, so I reserved a barge and organized a dinner. Unfortunately, it was limited to no more than 20 people - and, as we later discovered - 20 fan-sized people made the trip, well, maybe a little cozier than it might have been otherwise. Being a BBQ fanatic, I chose County Line BBQ as the caterer. I sent an invitation around to the LSC2 APA list, and rounded out the group with other folks who sounded interested.

We went on Wednesday evening. "Turn off your cell phones and beepers now," I requested as we crowded on to the barge. I don't know if anyone did, but Karen was the only one to be phoned - twice. Despite the heat, the barge trip was cooler than expected and lots of fun. We had smoked turkey quesadillas, platters of ribs, chicken, sausage and brisket, potato salad, cole slaw, beans, bread, and ice cream. County Line was very responsive to changing the "standard beer" selection from Miller Light to a better selection of Sam Adams and Shiner Bock. One of the fun things about doing a barge cruise was waving to the fen on shore - we must have passed Kelly Persons about four times, and waved to him every time.


Not long after the cruise, I had to return our rental car and pick up Leslie at the airport. Her plane was on time, and we were back at the hotel by about quarter of 11. We looked for parties to go to, but, other than the Seattle party, it was pretty quiet. I opted for an "early" bedtime, while Leslie hung out downstairs, looking for other teenagers.

 Midwest fen Mike Farenelli and Jim Huttner. There is a picture of two guys I met when I first got to college - Mike Farenelli and Jim Huttner. Due to a challenging set of circumstances, I wound up crashing in their apartment after a con and having to take the bus home when my ride failed to materialize. We run into each other every few years at Midwestcons and Worldcons. (This picture really belongs in the discussion of Friday's MCFI party, but I already have so many pictures from that party...)

Thursday morning was the official start of the Worldcon. Eva Whitley was overseeing at-con Babysitting, meaning it was no longer my worry. Jim and Wally Ross were helping her get the Babysitting supplies (including a fridge) set up in the suites. I dragged my wheeled box of supplies and my laptop through the Marriott RiverCenter, across the street, through the Marriott RiverWalk, across yet another street, across the plaza and into (finally) the Convention Center. I generally didn't mind the hike too much, except for bringing my supplies over on Thursday, and bringing them back on Monday. I made the round trip about five times on Thursday, and made an extra three trips back to Registration.

I was running a little late, but my staff (Janice Gelb, Chris Barkley, Wally Ross, Kathei Logue, Charles Mohapel, and Alexander von Thorn) were already there (Eve Ackerman, sadly, was unable to attend LoneStarCon 2 due to an illness in her family - see you next time, Eve?). We also got help from Patricia Ross, Sam Lubbell and Dina Herera. We set up the office, collated the press kit, and got ready for the crush. It never really came. While LoneStarCon 2 had good press coverage, the number of professional reporters attending was down by about 1/3rd of what it had been at MagiCon, and the number of different camera crews was down by almost half. One local TV station, however, stopped by to film at least three different times.

It turned out, press staff hiked a disproportionate amount due to Registration being so far away. Often professional reporters stopped by our office (Room 108) only to be told they had to go back to Registration (at the other end of the Convention Center) first. Frequently, one of us had to escort them. Luckily, Registration decided it would be OK to hand out badges to preregistered press in the Press Office, so once the press badges were ready, this ceased to be a problem. We had a few "Press" and "Photographer" badges made up, but still needed to send the folks we'd never heard from before to the other end of the building.

 LoneStarCon GoH Algis Budrys and his wife. We kept trying to arrange a press conference for one of the pro GoHs, AJ Budrys. Pre-con, a number of reporters had said they wanted to talk to him, but at the con, they got too distracted. Sad because AJ has some good stories to tell. Here's a picture of AJ with his wife Edna.

Thursday wasn't quite the "hell day" I'd expected, but it was quite busy. I did take a few minutes to meet the one writer I absolutely had to meet, even though I didn't have her book with me. Mary Doria Russell, the first-time writer who wrote that brilliant book *The Sparrow* was on a panel Thursday afternoon "Creating wonderful characters and killing them ruthlessly." It turned out Mary was an old friend of Leslie Turek's, and Leslie offered to introduce us. So I went upstairs and tried to pick Mary out on the panel, and finally did just near the end. I stood around with Leslie and Alexis Layton as other folks who really loved her work got to her first. Mary is an absolutely delightful person; one of the most affable writers I've met in a long time. One thing I've noticed about dealing with writers over the years is that those people with talent and intelligence are always easier to deal with than the boors who view conventions purely in terms of their own self-promotion.

While Thursday wasn't a bad day for Press, it was a particularly tough day for Kathei Logue, who was both helping us out with the press while dealing with Kaffee Klatches. I've known Kathei for over 15 years and have never seen her loose her temper before... until late Thursday afternoon, when she needed someone to vent to. Between the ill-thought decision of permitting pre-con sign-ups for the Kaffee Klatches and Literary Teas and an unbelievably interfering hotel liaison assigned to the Marriott RiverWalk, Kathei was upset. So Kaffee Klatches appeared very disorganized the first day and it adamantly was not Kathei's fault. Luckily, Kathei was able to pull things together pretty well for the rest of the weekend, and Patti reported

that the hotel liaison was pretty firmly sat upon and interfered with Kathei no further.

My dinner was a fast sandwich and a beer in the staff lounge before running down to Opening Ceremonies/Meet-the-VIPs. I was extremely impressed by the stage set-up for the Grand Ballroom. While I'm sure I have something of an "anti-tech" reputation, I actually love gadgets (like those huge video screens!) as much as any member of technofandom if not more. My concerns about costs for Worldcons outweigh my love of expensive gadgets. About my only complaint about the Grand Ballroom set-up was wondering if one large video screen might have been adequate. Bill Parker and crew deserve huge kudos for pulling off the transformation of the Grand Ballroom into a very professional set-up without bankrupting the con.

I went next door to see how the Meet-the-VIPs party was being set-up. Friends from Pittsburgh, Ann Cecil and JJ Walton, had taken over the job in late June, but they had everything well under control. I grabbed a table near the door and set up a small press area. Wally and Patricia Ross and Dina soon arrived, so we could station folks both inside and outside the hall to watch for press and get them checked in. Our job at the Meet-the-VIPs was to connect press with pros for sound bites during the party.

During the Meet-the-VIPs, I got to introduce Jim and Mark Olson to Mary Doria Russell. They spent the rest of the evening talking. Jack Lendman, the CyberCity radio guy, stopped in and I introduced him to a bunch of writers. We also had a photographer who said he typically did society photographs (!) A little after 9p.m., Mary suggested we get some dinner, an offer I couldn't refuse. So Mary, Leslie Turek and I went down to the cafe and had a late dinner, talking about writing and kids and moving in and out of Massachusetts.


I ran into Janice Gelb, we went up to the Cancun party, then to the SFWA Suite. I must have stopped in a few other places, but I was so tired and sore that I went to bed relatively early. Problem was, I woke up obscenely early on Friday morning - sometime before 6a.m. I went up to the 4th floor pool and fell into the Jacuzzi for a long time, watching the sky go from purple to bright blue over downtown San Antonio. It turns out I wasn't the only fan up too early - Patti and Marc Wells were there too, with their kids. We talked about the con and relaxed before getting up to go to work.

Friday was quieter, so I got out and saw a little of the Exhibit Hall. I was also on a program item called Making Connections, a general discussion of ways to stay in touch in fandom. I knew Tom Whitmore, but not the other two members of the panel, Benoit Girard and Henry Welch, both of whom were fanzine editors. The focus was quite a bit on zines as a result, but we talked some about clubs, cons and the Internet.

Cathy Beckwith, diva of the Opening Ceremonies, had arranged to have veloxes created from some of the *Express-News* articles and told me they were ready to be picked up. It was very hot, the Express-News building was about a mile away, and I figured I'd hop a cab and be back soon.


I'd forgotten about Murphy's Law.

When I tried to get a cab from in front of the RiverWalk, the cabbie said he didn't want to go there. (I guess he was waiting for a more lucrative airport jaunt.) Annoyed, I crossed through the mall in search of Broadway and the Express-News building. It was about six very long blocks in 98 degree weather. Except that the Express-News has two downtown buildings, and the veloxes were not found in the first building. They sent me to the other building, about three blocks away (at least it was closer to the Convention Center). After hunting around for another 1/2 hour, the veloxes were not to be found. So I strolled back (very slowly), passed the Alamo and the Menger, grabbed a grape ice, and returned to the Press Office, nearly an hour later than I expected. Oh, and I got one of those obnoxious heat exhaustion headaches. I was just about coherent enough to engage in an interesting discussion on religion with Janice Gelb (observant Jew) and Janet Christian (like me, a non-raving agnostic).

Jim and I tried to get Leslie to go out to dinner with us, but, being one of those single-minded gamers, she didn't want to leave the gaming area. So Jim, Chris Barkley and I went over to Planet Hollywood.  MCFI party. Surrounded by loud videos starring Planet Hollywood investors and momentoes from some very obscure movies, we ate somewhat overpriced food featuring some particularly good nachos.

 2,001 Leagues Under

We returned to the hotel and went up to the MCFI suite to see if we could help with final set-up. The 19th floor had two huge party suites, both of them rented by bids for the 2001 Worldcon bids ([Boston](#) and [Philly](#)). Boston was doing a party with a "2001 Leagues Under Texas" party, that included hundreds of balloons floating on the ceiling and 40 pounds of shrimp. The most clever thing they did was to serve sushi made out of candy, food coloring and frosting. To be honest, my headache made me feel less-than-helpful, but I did manage to sample some cookies and some sushi.

 Priscilla Olson and Janice The suites on 19 each had a huge living room, large side room and massive patio that wrapped around the corner of the hotel. Anything potentially messy was served out on the patio, and it was not-so-hot to be uncomfortable after dark. While the party got pretty crowded, there was enough space out on the patio to spread out.

I made a trip to the opposite end of 19 to visit the Philly party. I was glad to drop in to visit "our competitors" - I ran into Pat Mueller Virzi for the first time in many years. Madelaine, her daughter, is really adorable. I really wish Pat would get active

again in fandom!

Saturday was the day to get ready for the Hugos. Nina gave Tom Becker (Newsletter) and me the results early in the afternoon, so we could get our newsletters and releases ready for the night. I got permission to give this to Joe Abell at 6p.m., so he could make sure it got in the paper on time. He promised that since the paper wasn't printed until close to midnight, the results would not be public before the awards were over. Given the breaking news later that night, I'm glad we did turn this over early, because the Hugo announcement would probably have been bumped had not been turned over early.

Robbie Cantor and Brooks Griffith deserve kudos for running an Operations/Con Office that was genuinely useful without empire-building or getting in the way of getting things done. Brooks had major concerns about the small number of radios being spread out over two large facilities, but I didn't see any problems the Ops people failed to handle. At the same time, the staff was lean enough that molehills were never turned into mountains. In short, perhaps Worldcons have finally reached a kind of "Ops Equilibrium."

I ran around much more during these Hugos more than usual, mostly due to the concurrent radio show that was running out of nearby Conference Room 6. Wally Ross took care of most of the initial show, and I sent in Fred and Karen, Allen Steele and Laura Resnick. Then I stopped into the pre-Hugo party to have a drink with Peggy Ranson, Randy Sheppard, and David Thayer.

Meanwhile, a new "writer" I will only refer to by his initials, ONP (for "obnoxious neo-pro") had one of my staff take him into the radio show. This person caused chaos in his wake wherever he went, harassing me for a pro press pass, registration and then badmouthing us pretty ceaselessly for standing firm (free lance writers were not eligible - just local press, TV and radio). I discovered the next day that ONP is a born-again Christian. However, if there is a God, she has a sense of humor since the radio show had technical difficulties when he got in the room so he never got on the air.

When I got back to press area in the ballroom, Chris Barkley told me solemnly "I have some bad news for you."

"What did ONP do now?"

"Princess Diana was badly hurt in a car accident."

It took my breath away - and it put ONP back in his place as trivial.

I sat through the first half hour or so of the Hugos - the radio show folks fixed their problems almost as soon as ONP left the room. Neal Barrett's speech was amusing, but he could have been a little briefer.

I started feeding the radio show the [award winners](#) as they were announced onstage. For a while, I did the show instead of Wally, and we talked more about the history of the Hugos and reviewed Allen Steele's Hugo predictions against the winners. Timing is everything on the air. The show was over at 10p.m., and the award for Best Novel was given out at about 9:58p.m.

I was sorry to miss Bob Eggleton's third Hugo win, but I caught Kim Stanley Robinson's second!

Afer the Hugos, I passed out the Hugo winners press releases, took some pictures during the mass photo shoot and lucked into an elevator that went straight to the Hugo Losers Party. I got a seat and a beer, and talked to Peggy Ranson for a while. When Ellen Datlow came in, she murmured that Princess Di had died, so the whole party got quiet for a minute. Between being tired and at least a little drunk, the news sank in only slowly. I'm not a celebrity watcher, and until her interest in charities over the last few years, she just seemed very shallow. But it was sad to see a woman who was finally coming into her own die so suddenly.

I was at the Hugo Losers for a long time, congratulating Kim Stanley Robinson and talking to a cast of 10s. Having been in fandom for a long time, I knew the best way to get back downstairs was to avoid the elevators and take the stairs. Besides, I wandered in and out of a bunch of other parties along the way (like the Russian party). In one stairwell, someone had put a sign on a fire sprinkler that read:

 Not A Sex

Like many other people, I spoke to Tom Veal about working on the next [Chicon](#). Chicon owes me nothing - in fact, I was a strong promoter of "Highmore, now more than ever" as a write-in vote, which tied with Minneapolis in '73 for third place with six votes. While Chicon in '82 had some problems, it was a tolerable con. Chicon in '91 was the second worst-run Worldcon I've ever attended. I do have this, well, "funny" idea that Worldcon jobs ought to be based more on ability than on political paybacks. Maybe Worldcons would turn out a little better when they are staffed by people who can see the "big picture" rather than throwing up walls and moats around their areas. So while I doubt I will wind up working on Chicon, if drafted I might just do it, if the Chicon committee shows any signs of being a different kind of committee this time.

I found the LA Party, which was crowded and hot. There was an empty, cool, open bedroom off to one side, so I nudged John, Ruth and some other folks to come in where it was a little less frenetic. We had a pleasant talk, joined by other fen looking for

an oasis.

Eventually, I wound up at the Saturday night MCFI party, which featured champagne. Even though it was nearly 1a.m., there was still champagne left. I sat next to Gay Ellen Dennett and poured champagne for the party-goers....one for you and one for me...more for you and more for me. Amazingly enough, it still took another hour and a half to run out of champagne, and I didn't spill a drop...until the very end. Between the beer and the champagne, I had more to drink than I'd had in years, but I didn't feel too bad the next day. Except exhausted! (Many people mentioned that they had a record amount of alcohol to drink at this con...)



Sunday morning, I got up and went and got a Tex-Mex breakfast with lots of extra tortillas at Taco Cabana. I hadn't been there in nearly a week, since a Monday lunch meeting with Wally and Jim. You just can't get decent tortillas outside of Texas. I liked them so much that I went back there for lunch.

Sunday was a quiet press day, so I was tempted to close down the office early. Just as I was about to leave, my staff suddenly showed up en masse, so I could leave the office open as it should have been. ;-> I'd hoped to go up to my room to take a nap. But when I went back to the hotel, Joe Abell was there, wanting to get some early Masquerade interviews. I ran around, found some costumers and brought them to Joe. I also heard more stories of ONP's antics during the convention. I explained the problem was that ONP could not understand simple, declarative sentences, especially the ones beginning with "No..."

Sunday night, Jim and I went out for one last dinner. Again, Leslie decided that staying in the game room was more fun than a dinner on the RiverWalk. We both decided we needed steak, so we went to the appropriately-named LoneStar Cafe. The RiverWalk was amazingly mobbed that night, much more crowded than it had been all week.

Once we got back to the hotel, we went to the Fan Lounge to see if we could do anything to help and wait for the cash bar to open. Running the Fan Lounge was complicated by the very strict corkage rules, so it could not be open about serving snacks. This led to the development of "A Moveable Feast" - bringing people into a well-stocked storage room for a snack and having them bring it into the Fan Lounge as if they'd just been to the only corkage-waived area, the Con Suite.

As I'm on the Cancun committee, I went upstairs to see if they needed any help. Even though it was after 9, the door was closed. I called in that I was willing to help and some young people I'd never seen before opened up the door, saying they were dying to go out to party. Since most of the stuff was set up, I sat at the sales table and sold pre-supporting memberships. Later, Madelaine Virzi, daughter of Pat and Dennis Virzi, helped, which was a good thing since she was more familiar with the presupporter freebies than I was!

For the first time (that I remember anyway - the more I think about it, I might have been at Noreascon 3's), I was invited up to the "Old Farts" party, a party for former Worldcon chairs and their limited number of invited guests. It had a nice collection of food (especially cake!) and some beer. We toasted to the near-completion of LoneStarCon 2. I spent a long time talking with Joe Siclari, Edie Stern and Vinnie di Fate. Karen, Fred, and Randy looked more rested than I'd seen them all week.

A bunch of us not-quite-so-old-farts wound up in the side bedroom, this one the "Presidential Suite" with a four-poster bed and the largest set of closets I've ever seen in a hotel. Amy Thompson showed up, and there's an "incriminating" photo of Ruth, Karen, Amy and me rolling around on the bed, not a man in sight. Patti Wells got beeped out on a minor Facilities problem. To the best of my knowledge, there were no false alarms or any other of the annoying behaviors that plagued conventions just a few years ago.

Monday morning we packed, checked our luggage downstairs and made one last jaunt across two streets and through the Marriott RiverWalk to the Convention Center. The Press Office was locked, so I leaned outside the door, waiting for someone from the hotel to open it. A British fan named Dave stopped me "Are you related to Jim Mann?"

"Yes."

"I found his airplane ticket on the ground in front of the RiverWalk Hotel and turned it in at the desk."

"What? But I'm sure he has it..." And then I realized it was probably Leslie's ticket that he'd found. Within minutes, two or three other people reported the same story to me (hey, in fandom, news travels fast). As soon as Chris Barkley came by to cover the Press Room, I dashed back to the RiverWalk and retrieved the ticket. Then I took it upstairs to the gameroom where Leslie was immersed in a game.

"Hey Les," I said, trying to sound casual. "Where's your plane ticket?"

"It's here." she insisted, opening up her folder.

The kids at the table started to giggle as I pulled the ticket from my pocketbook. While it was no big deal, I carried the ticket for her until we got back to the airport. I also carried around my first edition of *The Sparrow*, just in case I ran into Mary anywhere. Meanwhile, across the street at the RiverCenter, three different people told Jim that his airplane ticket had just been

found in front of the RiverWalk...

Back at Midwestcon, I'd proposed a "Deconstructing the Worldcon" panel to Dick Smith, who seemed to think it was a good idea. He put together a varied panel, which included Spike Parsons, John Hertz, Tom Veal, Perianne Lurie (for Covert Beach), himself and me. We stressed that this was not a LoneStarCon 2 gripe session, and that it should be a general discussion of Worldcons.

We pretty much stated our positions, but I made the mistake of making an off-hand anti-Masquerade remark in front of John Hertz, who pretty much said that anyone who wanted to do away with the Masquerade over money was being petty and meanspirited. For the record, I want to restate unequivocally that I think the Masquerade **does** have an important place at the Worldcon, but I believe it can (and it **must**) be run much more cheaply, and the judges have got to learn to judge more quickly. Much of "Deconstructing" became too embroiled in Masquerade and Tech discussion, but, eventually, it drifted into other areas as well.

I went from a general Worldcon talk to the specific gripe session on LoneStarCon 2. As I was only there during the first hour, the "most fixable" gripes I heard had to do with the Art Show and the badges. Many of the gripes were facility-related, and there really wasn't too much the committee could have done about that.

I said my goodbyes, met Jim and Leslie in the lobby and went to the airport. I packed *The Sparrow* with the checked luggage.

Of course, who was on our plane to Dallas but Mary Russell! In the same row as Jim and Leslie, even. So, she just signed her old business card for me, and asked us to sign her copy of *The Sparrow* (a lovely tradition - it was full of highly complimentary comments from people at Wiscon and Worldcon). I told her "Y'know, in about 40 years, a SFWA benefit auction could make a lot of money out of this book..." (and I meant it only in the nicest possible way, but I think I think I might have stuck my foot in my mouth...)

We got home without any incident, though I did have quite a problem locating my car in the huge Pittsburgh Airport parking lot. Exhausted, we got home about 10, "ready" for the alarm clock to ring at 6am for work...

Thanks to Ben Yalow, AT Campbell, and Sharon Sbarsky for some corrections!

Some People Who Did Great Work at the Con and Might Not Have Been Noticed

Janet Christian - GoH Liason. She did it two weeks from a standing-start, and was amazingly well-organized.

Elaine Brennan - At-con gophers. Ditto.

Sue Francis - Events Division Head. All the events were pretty successful, and, on top of that, Sue was always willing to help other areas, especially preregistration.

Wally Ross - Logistics & Press Staff. Always helpful, very friendly, fast-learner.

John Lorentz & Ruth Sachter - "Emergency Holographic Texans," a humorous hack from Ruth while the two of them were rescuing areas (at-con reg and pre-con volunteers) that desperately needed rescuing.

Bill Parker - Tech. He did an amazing job with a well-coordinated staff while shuttling to his "real job" - doing protechnics and lighting for the Houston Comets while they won the first-ever WNBA championships.

Nina Siros - Hugo Administrator & Treasury. Always helpful, cool and there when you needed her.

KIM Campbell & Marci Malinowycz - Information. A very tricky area due to how spread out the con was and all those pre-con communications problems, but it went pretty well.

Things that Worldcons Should Never do in the Future

1 Don't promise that only people from your area/state will be your only area heads. Your friends and neighbors may not be up for the job, or, oddly enough, even very interested in the job. LSC2 wound up with a surprising number of recruited-at-the-last-second staff as people quit/threatened to quit/stopped working/etc. Virtually the only reason why this con did not become the Nolacon of the '90s is because an awful lot of out-of-towners know and like Karen/Fred/Randy and did not want to see the con fail. And some locals who were almost unknown to the committee came in and did a lot of work at the last possible minute.

- | Don't take pre-con sign-ups for activities like Kaffeeklatches or Literary Teas.
- | Don't appoint people to high Worldcon positions (like division director and many more visible area heads) when they've failed at the same position for smaller conventions or at other Worldcons. There are lots of jobs in a Worldcon. There are ways to get useful contributions from almost anyone who wants to work. But a willingness to do a job does not mean the person is capable of doing the job. While I don't advocate developing a "Worldcon Runner's Accreditation" or anything like that, committees have got to be more thoughtful about making appointments. Great bidders are not necessarily good area heads. (**Note:** Sometimes, people who fail at a Worldcon job later do very well at it, but I think they need to run the area successfully at a large regional or co-run it before doing it solo.)
- | Don't hire Texas yodlers for entertainment. I went running out of the Opening Ceremonies a full ten minutes before I needed to, and I was not alone.
- | Don't make it seem like the only "valid" program participant is a SFWA member. The worst program participant at LSC2 has a SFWA membership. Get people who are interesting speakers and who can engage in discussions with others and not just promote their own agendas.

Back in 1995, I wrote a piece for the SMOFS mailing list and for my Web site called [Problems That Can Plague a Worldcon](#).

Things Worldcons Really Ought to Do

- | Talk con philosophy early and often. At the gripe session, when Teresa Patterson said "The purpose of the art show is to sell art," almost everyone from the committee (and most of the audience) said "NO!" Most Worldcon attendees would say that the purpose of an Art Show is to display art to a variety of people to help publicize the artist. The committee has got to set the tone as a whole, and the area heads/division directors have got to be willing to reflect that philosophy in their areas.
- | Encourage communication. Communications issues (and, no, not radios) contributed to the "ragged around the edges" quality about the con that could have been prevented if people shared information more freely or bothered to listen when people told them things.
- | Beautiful signs do add a nice touch, but functional signs are really needed. We had lots of unused easels and foamcore for signs but not enough personnel to make and maintain them. We even had permission to add two "You Are Here" signs to the Riverwalk between the Marriott RiverCenter and the Convention Center. I heard some complaints from lost fans during the weekend, especially around the Convention Center.
- | Set up a general committee E-mail list and a few division-specific E-mail lists.
- | Centralize "bare minimum" information, so when your Registration head quits a few weeks out, it is remembered to not print badges with an illegible typeface. Even if you don't have a "bare minimum" repository of basic con-running info, have a list of "Emergency E-mail addresses" so someone with the expertise can quickly give you the right answer.
- | Study the local media. If your press person is from out-of-town, get a local person who is familiar with local newspapers, radio and TV to make suggestions about who to target. About 80% of all press releases sent are trashed, so try to "pre-qualify" the news outfits you're sending releases to. Do as much press work using E-mail and listings on local Web sites as you can possibly manage.
- | Have enough computer and printer equipment with the correct supplies. Little printers rent for about \$20 a week. We were short on them all week long. The floor-model copier ran \$400 to rent plus 1.5 cents a copy, but it was a HUGE win. While not quite robust enough for the newsletter, it handled everything else.
- | Assume the Pocket Program and Newsletter are accurate unless you hear otherwise. At separate times, a person in Registration and a person at Information assumed that since they'd seen me working during con set-up in Conference Room 6 of the Marriott RiverCenter, that had to mean that I had set up the Press Office there for the con. So reporters had to schlep back and forth between the CC/Marriott RiverCenter and back again because the con staff hadn't bothered to check the Pocket Program first. Bill Childs did a good job with the data he was given for the Pocket Program, and, except for the rooms that had been flooded, the room assignments were accurate.
- | Before the Meet-the-VIPs party starts, secure a couple of tables for your guests and put some food in it for them. By the time the GoHs got into the party, the lines were huge, so I'm not sure they ever got anything to eat (though their table was near the bar, so they did get stuff to drink).
- | Any cybercasting area needs power in addition to phone lines. Not having a laptop when I first planned the area early in the summer meant I didn't know laptops don't run for long without power. Fortunately, Tech and the hotel came through and we were able to supply some power and power strips for the cybercasters.
- | Think of staffing in terms of producers and directors. Many very creative people can't administer to save their lives, and

many well-organized people don't have a creative bone in their bodies. Create more co-heads of areas so you can get people with both skill sets to complement one another and build stronger areas.

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