

The 76 most interesting things said at this convention ...

... and more! ... will be featured in the next edition of *The Devniad* e-zine.

The Devniad is a personal electronic fanzine committed somewhat monthly by Bob Devney, proud Hugo Fan Writer Loser, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, and this year we'll see. (A paper version of the zine appears in the clubzine *APA:NESFA*.) It's **FREE** to any fan or pro with an e-mail address. *The Devniad* is text-only, elegantly unadorned — 6 to 18 pages or so of essays, reviews, sarcastic invective, and embarrassing personal revelations.

Subjects include books and movies, plus aught else that interests the editor. Often but not always linked to science fiction or fantasy.

Example below: the September 2001 issue featured myriad quotes overheard at my last Worldcon, Millennium Philcon in Philadelphia. Seventy-six are excerpted here (each prefaced by caustic comments in brackets).

And at this very moment, Devney stalks among you, gathering ammo for next month's TorCon3 ish ... Send me any quirky quotes *you* overhear. And subscribe now!

[Excerpts below from: *The Devniad*, Book 75b, Sept 2001. This pub copyright 1995-2003 by Bob Devney, 25 Johnson Street, North Attleboro, MA 02760 U.S.A. E-mail to bobdevney@aol.com, subject "Subscribe Devniad," and maybe tell me about yourself.]

Orbita Dicta

Heard in the Halls of
The Millennium Philcon
(The 59th Annual World Science Fiction
Convention/The 2001 Worldcon)
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.
August 30-September 3, 2001

[In the longish registration line Thursday morn, editor David G. Hartwell proffers a good-natured joke about one of the truly giant figures of modern SF, long-time Asimov's editor Gardner Dozois]

I have a line for you: Did you hear we're roasting Gardner Dozois? Think he can feed the whole crowd?

[I like that one well enough to submit it to the convention newsletter, which will run it and several other quotes gathered under my byline throughout the con, boosting this reporter's already healthy ego ... and setting me up for the inevitable fall, of which more anon]

[In the Marriott elevator, a maybe 11-year-old blonde fan badged Alexandra has her con-going priorities well in order, chanting excitedly]

Anime, anime, anime, anime, anime, ANIME!

[In the green room, writer and friend Steve Sawicki already finds this con quite dreamy]

I had a Worldcon nightmare last night. I was late for my panel, and the elevator was there, and then it *wasn't* there, and there were all these *people* in the way!

[In the panel on space technology, apparently Mr. (Allen) Steele Went to Washington]

During the House hearings I was a part of, there was a renewal of interest in going to the Moon ... The dreamers want to go to Mars as soon as possible; the realists are thinking about the Moon again.

[Guest of Honor Greg Bear's hard-headed about it]

— The realists want to go to the Moon so they can personally set foot on the Moon before they die ... That's not a business plan.

[In the panel on Across the Commonwealth, northern star Robert J. Sawyer likes diversity]

It has been argued that SF, which often deals with different races and cultures and worlds all getting along together, has a particular resonance with the Canadian approach of multiculturalism.

[I forget what fellow panelists Dan Kimmel, Timothy Liebe, Terry McGarry, and Melinda Snodgrass said on The West Wing as a Political Fantasy, but I offered the following — with absolutely no reaction from the assembled throng]

Just to take the supposed topic seriously — let me channel John Clute, maybe the best critic in our field, for a minute. You could well make a case for *West Wing's* embodying some common fantasy motifs. You know: something's amiss in the land ... there's a longing to restore the vanished glory of a happier time ... and you've got the wounded king, with the secret flaw.

[I forget to mention Trent Lott and Tom DeLay, the Sauron brothers]

[At the Trivia for Chocolate event, I somehow manage to eke out second place with a score of 23, followed by Richard Friedman at 21 and my friend Chris Logan Edwards at 20 — all just slightly overshadowed by winner Leo Doroschenko with 67; this bodes ill for later, as we'll see]

[Being on the panel re Books Into Movies decimates my note-taking abilities; but I believe writer and new friend Melinda Snodgrass said this about filming those Harry Potter books]

Chris Columbus was the only director willing to film one book at a time per movie. The others all wanted to smush parts of the books together.

[And she knows how to stay sane in Hollywood]

Roger Zelazny had a very healthy attitude toward seeing Hollywood film his stuff. "They didn't ruin my book. My book is right here."

[In the panel on the Young Adult Perspective, YA Jared Dashoff is the son of this Worldcon's chairman, though not exactly a son of the pioneers]

The reasons kids don't like to read are one, they're stuck in their TV and computer world ... and two, they don't like to go out. In Philly here, the nearest library is at least a mile away.

[Next stop, the slide show of good friend Ernest Lilley, editor of the great webzine SFRevu (that's www.sfrevu.com), who's just back from traversing U. S. Route 66 with a digital camera and an active imagination; unfortunately, they moved Ernest's time in the program, so the total audience for most of the hour in the big, echoey hall is my brother Michael and me; even more unfortunately, Ernest suspected it would be like this so he partied all night and didn't preview his presentation, thus spending half our time rebooting his laptop]

[During one of many lulls in the Ernestathon, I slip into the busy main hall for a moment, and approach star SF/fantasy writer George R. R. Martin from behind — maybe I'll brace him for a cheery quote ... but I slow down as he stops short, quite annoyed at something]

I don't ... fucking ... believe this!

[The woman walking with him stops too]

— What?

[Martin angrily flicks the bottom corner of what I see from afar is today's con newsletter, and I realize something: my lighthearted quote from David Hartwell yesterday, about roasting big guy Gardner Dozois to feed the crowd? It's right where Martin's pointing. Uh-oh.]

— This.

[She reads it, gets instantly enraged herself]

— Who do we have to kill?

[Martin peers at the paper, deciphering the name of the scumbag responsible for this outrage]

— Bob Devney!

[Said scumbag decides not to bother the great man after all right now, and slinks quietly away ... It's the fat thing, I decide, sudden awareness mixing with frenzied self-loathing. Has to be. Although Dozois makes jokes about it himself every chance he gets, his writer friends like Martin must know that instead, secretly, it kills him inside ... and every writer and half the fans at this convention are friends of Gardner Dozois ... So I've just become the most hated man in fandom. Why did I ever decide to start quoting people as my fanac? Couldn't I pick something easy and fun, like Finnish filking or a Perry Rhodan concordance?]

[With a genuinely heavy heart, I drag myself back to the slide show for Ernest's sake; sounds like it might have been quite interesting after all for someone less suicidal, as he blithely continues]

This Web trip is off the Gibson story, "The Gernsback Continuum." The story was written in the 80s, and I wanted to capture the world he saw before it's all gone. *[Shows photo of hot-dog-shaped hot dog stand]* There's this affection for gigantism along Route 66 ...

[There's no affection, though, in the eyes of the first person I see in the hall after the show: it's con-running stalwart Janice Gelb, usually the most attractive and congenial of fannish friends, who now tromps up to me with her hair on fire]

I'm going to kill you!

We've been trying for weeks to keep Gardner's roast a SECRET! We didn't tell anybody, for God's sakes. And you went and published it in the paper in front of five thousand people ... I just can't talk to you right now! *[She stalks away]*

[Omighod, there really is a roast? ... I had no clue ... So I didn't hurt Gardner's feelings, I just blithely ruined half the fun of his whole surprise triumph and spoiled things for Janice, whose acquaintance I really value. If I hurry, maybe the Marriott has an open elevator shaft I can catch ...]

[Somehow I drag myself to the next event, which actually succeeds in lifting my Mesklinized spirits; Win Tom Galloway's Money features whimsical SF trivia categories, created by Tom Galloway and Keith R. A. DeCandido, that are just as funny as those on the contest's source, the TV show Win Ben Stein's Money, and could cheer anyone up]

Gooder, Better, Bester ... Hi and Lois McMaster Bujold ... That's Why Delany Is a Tramp ... WWF Simakdown ... Tiptree Through the Tulips With Me ... The Moon Is Suing for Palimony ... I'm a Gaiman Fan — Not That There's Anything Wrong with That ... A Rage in Harlan ... A Hard Day's Nightfall ... Does Greg Bear Poop in the Woods ... Running with Edward

Scissorhands ... Battlestar Ponderosa ... Hungry Like Gene Wolfe ... R U R or Have You Ever Been A Robot ... The Bar's My Destination.

[In the panel on *Where Has the Future Gone*, legendary editor Gardner Dozois points ahead]

In the June Asimov's, read "Lobsters" by a new Scottish writer, Charles Stross. That's where the future is going in science fiction.

[While writer John Kessel looks back a bit]

... Bruce [Sterling] stopped writing the stuff he was writing back then, and started writing the more complex, interesting stuff he's writing now, about the time he had children ... He doesn't want his children to grow up in his old horribly dystopic cyberpunk world.

[To writer James Patrick Kelly, we're at a crossroads]

We're in this moment that always happens at the turn of a century, when we're trying to decide what we should carry forward and what we should leave behind.

[F&SF editor Van Gelder recalls the Golden Age]

I often have someone telling me, Oh yes, science fiction was really great 25 years ago – and every time I know that I'm hearing about whatever he was reading when he was 13.

[The panel on how the newcoming Campbell Award nominees broke into the field is rife with tales of blood, sweat, and typing, as from writer Kristine C. Smith (who SPOILER WARNING will win the award Sunday night)]

It took me 6 years to finish the first one. That's a lot of evenings and weekends when your friends are out at the movie theater enjoying themselves and you're home staring at the computer screen.

[Writer Jo Walton notes that Roger Zelazny claimed he wrote a thousand words a day, even at Worldcon ...]

It's a lovely idea, but I can't do that. I do nothing for awhile, and then 20,000 words in 1 day.

[At last, the big moment: guileless fan Janice Gelb (friends, we made up later; it seems Gardner never suspected) intros the so-called Liars' Panel]

... The title of this panel has been changed several times over the preceding weeks ... What has not been known until this minute is that the TRUE title of this panel has never changed. It is "The Secret Roast of Gardner Dozois!"

... Another task for the committee was to get a rubber mallet, to use anytime Gardner interrupts –

[Gardner interrupts, with a fiendish and of course quite dirty laugh]

– You think rubber can stop me?!!

[My notes grow confused at this point, but I seem to remember a titanic struggle erupting on the dais; eventually a wrist emerges from the fray bearing Dozois's microphone and hands it to doughty protocyberpunk writer Pat Cadigan; Dozois's unamplified yet still stentorian bellow lifts from the heaving pile]

You think that's going to stop me? Hah hah ha –

[Cadigan bonks Dozois with the microphone, and an indecent order is restored]

[Writer George R. R. Martin recalls when he didn't have winter in his bones]

I first met Gardner Dozois in 1971 at Disclave. He was greeting people at registration with a red jelly bean up his nose.

"Gee," I said, "most people put those in their mouths."

He blew it out into his hand and said, "Be my guest!"

[Wearing a fetching full skirt that turns out to be adorned with little Robot Man comix figures, writer Connie Willis, in her usual sublime comic form, explains that the usual purpose of a roast is to embarrass the recipient, but]

You can't embarrass Gardner ... He takes a [my notes seem to say whale's, which can't be right, can it?] penis with him everywhere. Including to church ... He likes to shout out the word "smegma" everywhere ...

[Now, in a perfect tribute to the band camp girl from American Pie, her reminiscences take on a singsong tone]

Okay. This one time, at Worldcon? ... And this other time, at Worldcon? ...

[Somewhere in here, a musical interlude: a chorus of four floozies comprising some of the finest female writers and editors of our generation croons soft pleas for editorial intercession at Dozois (stuff like "Won't you help / Improve our text,"); after each stanza, chorus boy/writer Walter Jon Williams thrusts forward and sings the response (did I mention this was all to the tune of "Barnacle Bill the Sailor"?) in a raspy, perfectly salacious baritone snarl]

"To hell with your text / We'll have some sex / Said Gardner Dozois / the Editor."
[or, later]

"Pull down your pants / We'll have romance / Said Gardner Dozois / the Editor."

[Writer Joe Haldeman knows where all the jelly beans are buried]

Gardner is this generation's John W. Campbell. We know that Campbell smoked unfiltered Camels in this little ivory holder. That's about the only vice Gardner doesn't have ...

Gardner bought an artificial vagina once for Jack Dann, who had claimed to be the world's champion

masturbator ... But Jack wouldn't demonstrate it, chicken that he was. So he took it home.

[Writer Ellen Klages makes the obligatory proffer of a hardwarming er heartwarming gift]

We bought Gardner an artificial penis warmer. *[Waves this big fuzzy sock-like thing around.]* And if you wash it in hot water, it'll shrink to Gardner's size.

[My notes of Melinda Snodgrass's remarks are somewhat blurred by tears-of-laughter stains, but two remain legible]

Gardner offered to stir my coffee with his knob. And Susan *[Casper, Gardner's poor wife]* said, "I want to see you do that!" ... You see, it was this party, and there was this doorknob Gardner put down his pants ... I tried, but I could never find it.

[Finally, Gardner Dozois gets his chance to make a serious, heartfelt response]

George says that I had a red jelly bean up my nose. No, I was actively hemorrhaging.

[At some later party, writer/fan/friend Fred Lerner satirizes con-going ribbons with a nifty cream-colored number]

THIRD PRIZE Vermont Bicentennial Milking Contest Winner 1977

[At his guest of honor speech, writer Greg Bear recalls his first SF Worldcon: Baycon, in Oakland, California, 1968]

I was 16. And I went into the lobby, and there was Lin Carter on a circular couch, holding forth ... Ray Bradbury ... John Brunner ...

We were creating spies, that went out and infiltrated and changed the course of the world.

[Not necessarily very Bondish spies]

– Very few fans are cool.

[In the panel on Iain M. Banks's Culture: Utopia or Dystopia, NESFAn Mark Olson stakes out his position early]

I consider his work among the most dystopian stuff around. I find the Culture profoundly depressing ... Basically, in the Culture, the people are pets. The Minds, whatever they are doing, have achieved the Vingean Singularity. We cannot possibly imagine what their internal life is like.

[Writer Derry] Murphy is of another mind]

My take on how the Minds think of humans is less as pets and more as children who are never going to grow up. I love my dog, but I wouldn't sacrifice my life for him. Yet although I hate to give endings away, that sacrifice is made by a Mind in his most recent novel, *Look to Windward*.

[U. K. fan Andrew Adams has intoxicating inside info]

Having debated this on many drunken evenings with Iain: Iain was drunk, I was not because I don't drink, so I can remember the conversations ... Until *Excession*, he had concentrated on characters who were not part of the mainstream of the Culture and its so-called perfect Minds ... It's in *Excession* that you first get a hint that the Minds are not perhaps these perfect, omnipresent creatures.

[In the dealers' room, bookseller Art Henderson is still mad about the tiny type on people's name badges]

I always say, we don't keep reinventing the wheel. We keep *losing* the wheel, and dragging around on skids.

[In the panel on How to Review a Book or Movie, as one of the panelists my notes are again scanty, especially since Algis Budrys and Michael Dirda ditched us, leaving Dan Kimmel, Janice Eisen, Lisa DuMond, and me to supply all the brilliance; but I do recall pro reviewer Kimmel's saying]

The difference between reviews and criticism is that criticism is for people who have already seen the movie.

[In the Crossing Genres panel, Robert J. Sawyer has done the math]

When you write cross-genre, you'd think the goal was to get the union set of people who read science fiction and those who read mystery. What I got was the intersection set ... It's at least semi-true that crossing genres means smaller sales.

[Writer Catherine Asaro says money talks]

The only way to avoid having your book categorized in the bookstore is to have your publisher pay thousands of dollars to have your book on the end of the aisles, like Tom Clancy or J. K. Rowling.

[Sawyer tells a new one on me]

The first SF joke I ever heard was "Boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy builds new girl."

[At the con's favorite Italian place, Maggiano's, writer/friend Jim Stevens-Arce serves up a story about his friend who was a production manager at a Puerto Rico ad agency (I think)]

My friend never learned much English. I remember him on the phone to an American client, trying to get across the concept of "the day after tomorrow" when he couldn't remember the words. He kept gesturing at the phone, swooping his hands forward and saying, "No, no, *not* tomorrow. Tomooooorrrrow! Tomooooorrrrow!"

[Had a lot of fun as a panelist on the SF version of The Match Game, although mostly what I remember afterwards is that the British contestants got fixated on the word "lunchbox," apparently referring to the male genitalia ... Anyway,

afterward, when I congratulate MC Kevin Standlee with my usual adroit grace, he thinks he's flattered]

Uh, nobody's ever called me "slick and oily" as a compliment before.

[At Writing for the Screen, Melinda Snodgrass, who as former senior writer on Star Trek: The Next Generation has seen the elephant, tells us what showbiz success is like]

A wise old producer once told me, "The sexiest word in Hollywood is 'No.'" If you have something truly great, say no I won't do that, no you can't see that yet ... They will come after you —

[Next to me, Jim Stevens-Arce has been stepped on by that elephant, and murmurs]

— But then eventually, you say yes.
And they drop you.

[In the panel on The Phlogiston Belt: Changing Science and the Hard SF Writer, editor Stanley Schmidt begins at his beginning]

One of the first thing I did as editor of *Analog* was buy a big story from Bob Buckley, involving life in the clouds of Venus. Right about that time, we started to get lots of data back from U.S. and Russian space probes about what Venus was really like. And so about every week or so I'd get a big brown envelope from Bob Buckley containing another set of replacement pages ...

[Writer Stephen Baxter gives an overview]

The hole in most people's predictive power is not thinking it through to the end. Someone two centuries ago might have imagined a car, but probably not what happens when everyone has a car — and you get traffic jams, and fast food.

Like when Larry [Niven] wrote about when everybody has teleportation, he thought it through and had the idea of a movable riot: the flash crowd ...

[Writer Jack McDevitt reminds us even the greats fall short]

H. G. Wells had a story about a fighting flying machine, but it threw spears.

[Speaking of stuff that needs updating, star SF writer Larry Niven fires up a helluva literary allusion]

Inferno, Purgatorio, Paradiso: the first science fiction trilogy. The science Dante dealt with was the queen science of his day.

[In the dealer's room, writer Jack Chalker responds when I recall his photograph in Patti Perret's 1984's classic The Faces of Science Fiction]

That little kid playing in the sandpile there is running around the convention now, and he's 6 foot 4. My son David ...

If you have a copy of that book, look at me and my dog, and Bob Tucker and his dog. Then tell me again that every dog and his owner look alike.

[At one of the con's most interesting panels, About the Rediscovery Award, grandmaster Robert Silverberg recalls the early impact of this new award's first recipient]

After seven or eight Cordwainer Smith stories had appeared, I suggested that he was a time traveler stranded in the 20th century. And that he didn't bother to explain the background to the stories because it was all fresh and clear to him.

[Even for writer and NESFAn Tony Lewis, who knows his way around Alpha Ralpa Boulevard, Smith can be a demanding read]

In order to understand *this* story, you have to know about this *other* story that he's going to write 5 years from now ...

[In the hall, California fan Tom Becker talks about helping fans shape up]

Yes, the walk this morning went great. The weather was just perfect, and we went down to Independence Hall; some of that area is quite nice. About 40 people showed up.

Which was quite surprising, because, after all [*pauses and looks and me significantly*], no one expects the fannish in condition.

[When I finally find the room for the panel on History and Fantasy, it's hugely overcrowded and I get wedged in a corner on the floor behind people standing, can't actually see the speakers; so I think it's incredibly popular writer Lois McMaster Bujold who shares a worldbuilding tip]

One of the things about magic in your fantasy world is that it should make a difference ... and that the story should explore the consequences of that difference.

[But be careful]

— Fans will write gleeful letters pointing out every little error. You almost think about putting some in on purpose.

[In the pre-Hugo Reception, Evelyn Leeper seems to think some guy named Langford already has the rocket in his pocket, and thus determines to keep her invitation to the event]

Fan writers should keep this, because it's the only souvenir we're gonna get.

[Flashed on the screen during the Hugo Awards, as Connie Willis launches yet another digression from announcing the Best Short Story award while anguished candidates writhe in the audience]

CONNIE WILLIS KNOWS WE'RE AHEAD OF SCHEDULE

[Somewhere in here, not-very-hopefuls Leeper, Glyer, Silver, and Devney lose the Best Fan Writer Hugo to David Langford, the Eternal Champion]

[Afterwards, waiting for the Hugo party elevator, SMOF Joe Siclari talks about the house he and Edie Stern have moved into in New York state]

We're just calling it FanHi Hall.

[At the Hugo Losers' party, Melinda Snodgrass picks out a future winner]

The young writer to watch in this room is standing over there in the dark suit and blueberry shirt. His name is Daniel Abraham. He's in my writing group in New Mexico, is a dear friend of mine, and has just sold a bunch of stories to Gardner for Asimov's.

[Fan writer and friend Evelyn Leeper boasts a cool button] Raseffarian

[In some labyrinthine hallway, well-known California fan Tom Whitmore talks about next year's Worldcon in Con Jose, and why people work hard at it]

You help run a con for the fun of it, not the glory. For instance, how many average non-conrunner fans can name any Worldcon chairs?

[I vaguely agree]

— Know what you mean. Well, for instance, who's the chairperson of your Worldcon next year?

[Whitmore regards this reporter for a moment, assuming irony; but no, my cluelessness really is that capacious]

— Well, actually, I am.

[At the NESFA sales table, Press Czar Tony Lewis opens another front on the agewar]

At the Kansas City bid table, I noticed something about their list of previous KC cons, and asked the young guy there, "Why don't you have MidAmericon on your list?"

He said, "Oh, that was 1976! Almost anyone who might have been there is dead."

I looked at Bob Silverberg, and he said, "Well, not quite."

[At the NESFA Press table, while chatting with Lois McMaster Bujold, SMOF Michael Benveniste notes with pride that the Boston in 2004 committee boasts no less than six Worldcon chairs — whereupon Bujold goes all Minnesota on his ass]

Slow learners, are they?

[Don't make the mistake of asking bibliobabe Becky Henderson of Henderson's Books, even on Monday afternoon, "Is it late enough to haggle?"]

We buy good books and price them fairly. If we wanted to haggle, we'd put question marks after the price tags.

[Great fanzine writer (I mean it: see Emerald City at www.emcit.com) Cheryl Morgan is high on China Mieville's recent bigly-buzzed fantasy, Perdido Street Station]

The campaign to SEND A HUGO TO CHINA begins here!

[At the panel on The Field Since World War II, humorous fantasy writer Esther Friesner unpacks the pecking order]

You get that nasty human nature, where the mainstream reader says, "I wouldn't read science fiction." And the hard science fiction reader says, "At least I don't read *fantasy*." And the fantasy reader says, "At least I don't read *humorous fantasy*" ... And they all go out and beat up on the media types.

[Back at Maggiano's for lunch the day after the con (Tuesday 9/4), fellow leftover Walter Jon Williams talks to my brother Michael and me about his friend George R. R. Martin's Hugo loss for Best Novel this weekend to J. K. Rowling; Williams plans his own special kind of consolation]

George is the one who came up to me on Hugo night last year and informed me that I'd lost the Hugo [for the novelette "Argonautica"] by one vote. And that was the year I'd missed the deadline for sending in my vote ...

George reminds me of this from time to time. So whenever I see George for the next 20 years, I'll be whispering, "Harry Potter!"

[Williams recalls the bad old days]

I was once so poor, I mooched off Howard Waldrop.

[After our table finishes, Williams wanders over to join a party that includes the ubiquitous Gardner Dozois; I go over, get everyone's attention, look meaningfully from Williams to Dozois, and burst into raspy melody]

"I've got a hunch / You're paying for lunch / Says Gardner Dozois / The Editor!"

The Devniad — It's a floor wax *and* a dessert topping!

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