

CHALLENGER #26



Spring-Summer 2007

CHALLENGER

no. 26

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- Editorial: The Deep Field**
GHLIII 3
- Some Disconnected Thoughts**
Jeffrey Copeland 6
- Jamie Bishop** *Barry Hunter* 7
- Asia Ascending** *Greg & Elisabeth Benford* (illos by **Charlie Williams**) 8
- When Funny Got More Laughs** *Mike Resnick* 15
- Salad for Breakfast** *Eve Ackerman* (illos by **Julia Morgan-Scott**) 16
- The Challenger Tribute: Astrid Bear** 23
- A Show of Hands** *GHLIII* (illos by **Rose-Marie Lillian & Wm. Rotsler**) 24
- Popular and Pilloried** *Greg Benford* 32
- How I Escaped My Peruvian Kidnapers** *Gary Robe* (illos by **Kurt Erichsen**) 34
- In Memoriam: Wally Schirra** *GHLIII* 41
- Homes Away from Home** *Mike Resnick* 42
- NOLA and Insurance** *Tom Feller* 48
- The Chorus Lines** *the same* (illos by **Wm Rotsler & Ian Gunn**) 49
- People's Park** *GHLIII* (illos: **Charlie Williams & Elizabeth Atkinson**) 61
- Contributors** 69
- A Tucker Story (x 2)** *Curt Phillips* 70
- How Dull Was My Weekend** *Bob Tucker* (illos by **Lee Hoffman**) 71

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Above: **Mary Ann van Hartesveldt** by Anon. GHLIII Press Pub #1012.

THE CHALLENGER EDITORIAL: THE DEEP FIELD

Guy Lillian III

*... a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
...And what rough beast, its hour come round at last
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?*

Yeats: "The Second Coming"

Lately I've been searching the sky for the largest and most distant thing a human being can see with the naked eye: Messier 31 – the Andromeda galaxy. I know the directions: you start with the Big Dipper, find the Pole Star, draw a line from Polaris through one of the "V" shapes in Cassiopeia and just part of that line ... there it is. Of course, when you find it in the sky, you don't see the majestic radiant disc from observatory photographs; only the glow from its central core. If you could see the whole galactic expanse, we're told, it would stretch across the sky six times the diameter of the moon. Try as I might, I've never seen it. I should have better luck come autumn; M31 is pretty close to the horizon during summer months. In the meantime, there is always Astronomy Picture of the Day, my favorite site on the web, and its many shots of our beautiful, serene galactic neighbor.

Astronomical photos are fascinating: all that size, beauty, distance ... and *baseness*. It's hard to be more basic, after all, than amorphous gas sculpted by gravity, solar wind, and brute physics. Probably the most stunning shots I've seen are Hubble's Deep Field photos, taken when they pointed the great orbiting telescope at an empty spot in space and focused on infinity. One of the pictures encompassed ten thousand galaxies, of all shapes, types, and colors, dating back as close as we have ever come to the beginning of all things. When you think of not only how many lives and civilizations, but how many *geological ages* have passed since that light left those sources, and it's a remarkably *calming* view.

Take a look at www.atlasoftheuniverse.com. The website starts with something far larger than most people can fathom: the Solar System. It moves on to the Galactic Arm, then the Milky Way, the Local Group, the Virgo Super-cluster, and finally, the known universe. With each step in that magnificent progression from individual to universal, our selves and our planet become smaller, to and past the point of infinitesimal – into atomic insignificance. Consider the Deep Field: it's a wonderful method for putting one's problems into perspective.

Or at least it would be so if we were simply elements, moved only by gravity and cosmic rays. But people are more than matter. We do more than exist. We care, and this summer, we mourn.



From: Gerald W Page
<geraldpage@earthlink.net>

Three days after the shooting of Jamie Bishop at Virginia Tech, and I find myself wondering how many more days I'll wake up more depressed than the day before. It is harder to imagine two people who presented more contrasting faces to the world than Jamie and the man who killed him. Yet (if I can take the risk of accepting on face value the news stories we've seen about Cho), I would have to say that those faces seem to have pretty much actually represented the men who wore them.

Jamie did exhibit many of the characteristics those of us who know his parents associate with Michael and Jeri: decency, idealism and intelligence in the foreground. Yet at core, both of these people came from the same basic biological building blocks. Does that speak to the wonder of DNA or to its horror? And both had families.

My heart and sympathy goes out to the poor parents of Cho Seung-Hui. How horrible, how stunned they must feel. And how frightened. More victims in a legion of victims.

I deal in the world of crime – it's my profession. As a defense lawyer, I try to bring the patina of sanity and civilization to insanity and savagery, by championing due process against people's impulse to reckless retribution, and trying to build understanding for those who often commit acts beyond understanding. In this job, as I've said before, we always defend the undefended, occasionally defend the defenseless – i.e., those unjustly accused – and sometimes, God help us, defend the indefensible.

I often feel inadequate in the face of this profession's demands, not only because of my own failings, lassitude and simple stupidity, but because sometimes I have to explain horrors. That verb is important, because attorneys are not trying to *excuse* crime, but to *explain* it, and by explaining it, to restrain our base vengefulness – and preserve what's best about society. We try to make sense of senselessness, to find humanity in inhumanity, to offer a path to peace of mind. *Peace of mind* and *justice* are after all, one and the same.

But even justice has its limitations, and that's just what we slam into when faced with Virginia Tech. Just as with Columbine, in this present tragedy unknowable forces are at work: arbitrary psychopathy, "a grinding of the mind," lunacy, pointless hatred. The legal principles in which I believe cannot answer the questions that follow. Only the strongest – some would say the blindest – faith could answer them. I don't have such faith, but I envy those who do. Maybe it's too easy to accept the obscenities of life as God's will, but I can't blame anyone for embracing such solace.

Solace is forbidden to most of us when faced with Virginia Tech. At Tech our own community, the world of science fiction, was scoured and burned. The fine son of a fine couple, people who have enhanced the lives not only of their friends and their readers, but everyone in the genre, has been taken from them and from the world. Jamie Bishop was a man of talent and generosity with that talent, and his loss is an inestimable disaster.

We don't understand why. There is no why to understand. As we did after Katrina, after Columbine, after the destruction of *Challenger* and *Columbia*, all we can feel is confusion and regret. We can't even feel anger, because the acts of Cho Seung-Hui, being beyond comprehensibility, fall beyond anger, too. Anger requires blame. Who do you blame? Society? Guns? Video games? Cho's family? The maniac himself? None suffice. How do we answer this frustration? What do we do?

I have a small and no doubt ridiculous idea. Again, look to the infinite and indifferent stars.

The aesthetic beauty of Andromeda and the other celestia is wondrous, but I propose that for real wonder – and possible comfort – *use your imagination*. Consider the *people* living in those impossibly distant venues – it’s a mathematical certainty that there are multitudes. Imagine their lives, their hopes, their loves, their gains, their losses, their happiness ... their grief. Imagine the dreamers among them looking up into *their* night skies, and finding the hazy glow that, for them, is the Milky Way. Imagine them imagining ... us.

Imagine the communion that creates – the truly Deep Field. We needn’t look to the heavens to find it, either. It’s the only answer we have to the indifference of the sky and the insanity of the moment, the brother- and sisterhood of living, the unbreakable bond of care.

To honor the memory of their colleague and students, the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures at Virginia Tech has established a memorial scholarship for German majors.

Donations may be made payable to the Virginia Tech Foundation for the Jamie Bishop Scholarship.

Virginia Tech Foundation
University Development
902 Prices Fork Road
Blacksburg VA 24061

Announcement provided by Curt Phillips

The Issue

Before Virginia Tech, issue #26 of *Challenger* sported a funny cover by **Ken Mitcheroney** – but these aren’t funny times. I’ve put Ken’s ‘toon off for an issue and replaced it with “The Laughing Lion” by my old grad school friend, **Susan Russell**. (It ties in perfectly with the Yeats verse above.) The issue also had a theme going, and that survives – travel. Look at all the fine writing on our contents set hither and thither about the globe! **Eve Ackerman** takes us to Israel. **Greg Benford** takes us to Asia. **Gary Robe** takes us to Peru – and is damned glad to get home again! **Mike Resnick** hails the establishments where he has hung his hat during his many journeys far from our shores. I may never get there, but at least I can read about it. (Mike and Greg also provide editorials for this issue – statements of opinion on topics that hit their fancy. I urge any reader so moved to chime in with such comments for future issues.)

Acting on my request, and to keep the issue of my adopted home city before the world, **Tom Feller** explains New Orleans’ “post-K” insurance woes. I reprint two pieces of my own written some time ago, on my first encounter with **Robert A. Heinlein** and on the very different agonies visited on *my* collegiate generation. Finally, **Curt Phillips** chimes in with a final farewell to our main man, **Bob Tucker** ... and a special gift. Here’s Curt:

Back in 1980 when I was assembling my first fanzine “...Another Fan’s Poison”, I wrote a brash little fan letter to Bob Tucker and asked permission to reprint an old fanzine article of his that I’d found and particularly liked. He kindly agreed. The article was first published in Lee Hoffman’s legendary fanzine *Quandry*, appearing in issue 15 for November 1951. Bob seemed pleased with the reprint and when I saw him next at the following Chattacon he amazed and astonished me by

continued on page 33

SOME DISCONNECTED THOUGHTS

ON A TRAGEDY

Jeffrey Copeland

Once upon a time there was a young man of 15 or maybe 17 or maybe 20 years old (or maybe it was two young men) who was unhappy because he had been jilted or beaten up by the football players or forced to attend Bible camp by his mother and who got a revolver or a 9mm automatic or a hunting rifle and shot up his school. He left a diary or a video detailing his complaints which was later analyzed to show his descent into narcissistic madness.

Except that it wasn't once or even twice upon a time. It's happened so often that it has become a multiple choice exercise. It's happened so often that a phoned-in threat or the diary entry of a kid at a school in New Jersey or Iowa doesn't merit more than a short item on page 12 of the newspaper, actual bullets have to fly before CNN will notice.

Last month's tragedy at Virginia Tech, as usual, had the black comedy of a well-worn script, with all the familiar elements. "He was so quiet." "He kept to himself." "He was angry." The odd part this time was that the murderer, Cho, actually had been identified as a threat, and actually had been referred for counseling, but that the university had no way to enforce that. He managed to slip through the usual restrictions on buying guns because even though he was adjudged mentally unsound, he had never actually been committed, and in Virginia that is what is required for adding someone's name to the federal list of those restricted from buying guns.

(As an aside, the mental health lobby is suggesting that tightening that commitment loophole would be a bad idea because it would discourage people from getting help. I would advocate the opposite: Perhaps we should hold the mental health profession responsible for their judgments about how likely someone is to cause harm. Whoever passed on Cho not needing to be committed is partially responsible for what happened next.)

...

Since Alexandra is now a senior at Western Washington University, in the week following this tragedy we were treated to a piece of e-mail from the university administration assuring us that they had plans in place for a natural or man-made disaster, and a way of notifying all the students while one was occurring.

I'm not sure I believe that: Even the best of us make the mistake of planning for the last war. Note the second invasion of Iraq, the Maginot line, the development of Microsoft Windows Vista, and the current airport security regime, all examples of expecting the next challenge to take exactly the same form as the one we just weathered.

Nonetheless, I dread the possibility of hearing the news report from Western -- or from James' high school or from one of the schools in Colorado that the kids attended -- that some student has gone on a shooting rampage. I can only imagine the fear and panic I would feel. I would willingly throw myself in harm's way for either of my children, but to be impotent on the sidelines would be unbearable. To be informed after the fact would be unimaginable.

Continued on page 22

From Barry R. Hunter, baryon@bellsouth.net:

As I watched the TV screen in silence as they reported the events that took place at Virginia Tech, I felt sorrow for all of the families that would ultimately be involved in the sorrow and the pain. Little did I know that it would affect me as well. I didn't think I knew anyone there, but I found out I was wrong and the pain has hit and won't go away. It's not pain for me, but for a friend of mine who has enjoyed his accomplishments as a writer, but more so in the accomplishments and the success of his children.

I've known Michael (Mike) Bishop for over thirty years. I have enjoyed everything he has written including the glimpses of his family life on Christmas cards and emails about works in progress and how the children were growing and what they were doing. I've visited in his home and sat at his dinner table. But right now, I can't come up with a single word to let him know I'm there for him and his family.

By now, the entire nation knows about Jamie and the way he left this world for a better one. Jamie was valedictorian of his class, received a Bachelors and Masters degree in German from the University of Georgia, went to Germany as a Fulbright Scholar, and spent several years in Germany where he worked as a translator, English teacher and other things. There he found the love of his life and brought her back as his wife. He spent five years at UNC Chapel Hill and moved to Virginia Tech two years ago to teach German.

Jamie was also an artist having done several book covers for his fathers' books and other authors as well. His latest has just appeared on *Aberrant Dreams 9*. He also was into digital photography and had a terrific eye for what he wanted to accomplish.

Mike taught at the Air Force Academy and is currently Writer in Residence at Lagrange College. Jeri is a school counselor. Jamie's wife Steffi (Stephanie Hofer) is also a German teacher at Virginia Tech. This made it hard for Jamie to go in any other direction.

From all accounts Jamie loved life and lived it to the fullest and he died doing what he loved best. His website is www.memory39.com.

My prayers and my love go out to Jamie's family: his wife – Steffi, his parents – Mike and Jeri, and his sister – Stephanie her husband Joel and their two children. I have no words to express the pain in my heart or a way to help remove your pain. Just know that my prayers and my love are with you.

From Mike Bishop:

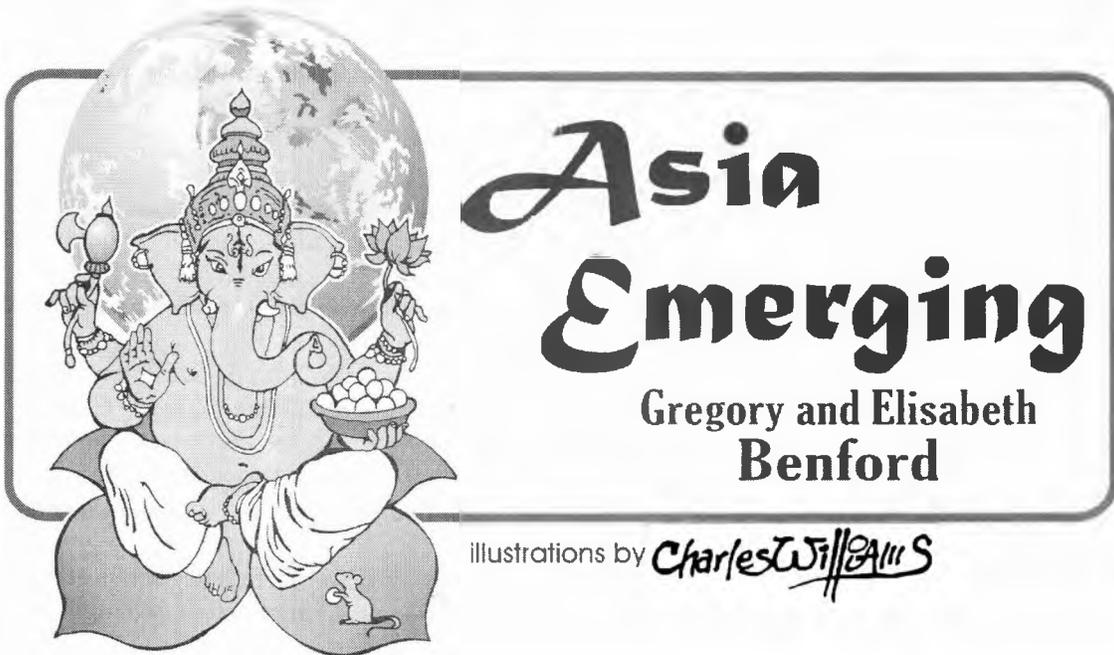
I am touched, in different ways, by all of [these comments]. One day, I may have something to say myself, but that time isn't now. I've already had my preliminary say in the letter published both at www.michaelbishop-writer.com and at www.locusmag.com.

There is a second scholarship fund honoring Jamie, this one at LaGrange College, the liberal arts school in LaGrange, Georgia, at which I am writer-in-residence. Interested persons should send their donations to:

Jamie Bishop Scholarship Fund in Graphic Arts
Advancement Services
LaGrange College
601 Broad Street
LaGrange, GA 30240.

Jeri and I don't regard this fund as competition for the Virginia Tech scholarship, which is for exceptional students in German. This fund focuses on Jamie's lifelong love of the visual arts (all of them, from comic books to painting to photography to digital collage to sculpture and even furniture making), and we view it as an altogether fitting way to honor his memory for years to come and to allow talented students to pursue productive careers in the arts. Also, we aren't touting one of these scholarships over the other, simply hoping that people who wish to acknowledge Jamie's unique gifts choose one of these funds and act upon their choice.

Be sure to check out the Challenger website for Greg and Elisabeth's photos from their journey.



We left February 17, 2007 on a considerable, month-long trip, starting with Hong Kong, where we caught the Lunar New Year Celebration (Chinese New Year). Then on to Colombo, Sri Lanka, to visit Arthur Clarke. Arthur has post polio syndrome and thus very little memory or energy. He turns 90 this December and wants to keep in touch with the outer world, mostly through the Internet. He has few friends left in Colombo.

Arthur took us to the Swimming Club for lunch, a sunny ocean club left over from the British days (commonly called the Raj). Members swam in the pool and enjoyed buffet lunch. It felt somehow right to watch the Indian Ocean curl in, breaking on the rocks, and speak of space: the last, greatest ocean.

Our hotel with a similar ocean view, the Galle Face, is the oldest grand Raj hotel east of the Suez Canal, dating from before the Civil War, and reeks of atmosphere. On the verandah we daily dug into a good Lankan breakfast: string hoppers of woven rice, rich curry of meat and potatoes, idli (small steamed rice cakes), dosas (rice crepes) with various fillings, pappadums – cause for lascivious hunger. The full English breakfast was also available. We mixed and matched.

Sri Lanka sits a few degrees from the equator and was named Serendip long ago by the Arabs, for its fortunate circumstances. Not all is fortunate now, though. The civil war between the Sinhalese government and the fascist Tamil Tigers (much less than 1% of the population; Tamils are 18%) has now run 23 years, killing hundreds of thousands. Since the Galle Face is next to the British High Command compound, and just down the street from the presidential residence and various embassies, not-so-subtle security lurks everywhere. Armed guards carefully inspect entering people and vehicles at all the government compounds. A heavy machine gun on a nearby tower peered over us as we swam in the pool. Elisabeth didn't dare take a photo of them.

Arthur mused, “All this effort, all this death, when we could be building the staging area for a seaborne space elevator.” In *The Fountains of Paradise* he had moved the island five degrees south so it could sit on the equator to facilitate the enterprise.

We flew to Madras to link up with a tour by Zegrahm Expeditions. After a couple of days exploring the city, and getting over some culture shock, we flew south to Madurai to see some fantastic Hindu temples, and do some shopping.

India (and Sri Lanka) is a third-world country. Throughout the trip, we were struck by the traffic noise, the disorder, the roadside trash, the tiny retail shops (as we had seen in China), and generally primitive-appearing lifestyle. Water trucks deliver drinking water to people in Mahatma Gandhi’s Brahmin (high caste) former neighborhood in Bombay. Everywhere people were doing by hand what we in the advanced nations do with machines. People head-carry burdens (in Bologna, everyone uses wheeled shopping carts). Local deliveries are routinely by bicycle, hand carts, or animal-drawn carts (horse, camel, buffalo). We saw stacks of dried cow-patties on roadsides in Delhi within blocks of the seat of government.

Keep in mind, however, that we did not see an accurate cross-section of each community, although tour members asked for the bus tours to drive through ‘good’ sections of towns. In Sri Lanka, the road to Colombo from the airport was a chaotic, commercialized mess, and nothing like the quiet of Arthur Clarke’s residential neighborhood.

Elisabeth spent a lot of time shooting ‘guerilla’ photos from the bus; otherwise, we would have pictures mainly of old forts and temples.

Indian women float like butterflies, in colorful saris and salwar-kameez outfits (long tunic and scarf over long pants), walking with grace and perfect posture through the dirt and chaos and traffic. Elisabeth couldn’t take enough photos of the contrast this makes in the landscape.

Even women engaged in hard physical labor wear saris; there are no work clothes, not even hats! Women harvested mustard seed with hand sickles, or carried loads of bricks (on their heads) or patted cow dung into large patties while wearing bright colored saris. Women in the cashew nut factory all wore the company uniform sari. State monument and street sweepers also wear sari-uniforms (pink, in Jaipur). Chinese peasants have it easier; they wear big straw hats and sensible pants suits in the fields.

The women on the tour forayed into the clothing shops and emerged with long tunics, scarves, and floppy pants. Californians have a great advantage over Easterners; we can wear the bright colors! We all went home with groaning bags of Indian clothes and crafts, mostly very inexpensive (if you don’t count the trip cost!).



Then south by bus to the coast, where our French ship, *Le Levant*, ushered us into elegant staterooms and well coordinated programs. Great food, careful handling, generally superb.

Elisabeth was pleased to speak French to the crewmembers and not have to eat Indian food all the time. Greg had spent two previous month-long trips to India, roughing it around the north, largely on his own. Time to take it easy!

Around the southern point of India we went, sailing along the west coast states of Kerala and Karnataka. We stopped each day at a port town, went onshore for experiences — farming, rubber plantation, fruit harvesting, cashew nut processing, plus the inevitable temples, churches, local architecture, and even a synagogue from 1568. Heat, humidity, rich smells. And souvenir hawkers!

Cochin was especially interesting; the state of Kerala has hosted international visitors for millennia, including Jews after the Diaspora, Arabs, Dutch, Portuguese, and finally the British.

We watched antiquated Indian fishing techniques, using big dip nets ('Chinese' nets), and circular throw nets just as Greg once did on the Gulf Coast, and his relatives still do. But here they get little fish and crabs, with shrimp the best haul, and few per cast. The entire coast is fished out; a marine naturalist commented on the many undersized fish in the markets.



One oddity was the mud-fishing by poor women who walked neck-deep through the muddy water, towing empty aluminum water jugs. They massage the bottom sludge with their feet, feeling the mud smelt that hide there. When one stirs under a foot, they can propel the thrashing, palm-sized smelt up with their feet, grab it in hand, and pop it into their jugs. With plastic bags over their hair to keep off sun and water, they earnestly work their way in teams along the bay. The smelt they catch are smaller than their palms.

Greg tried a milk-white 'toddy' that smelled of raw rubber, but was fermented coconut palm sap. A toddy-wallah climbs the palm periodically to harvest the sap, using a ladle. Fierce, sharp, warming the belly: nature's cocktail. This is not the same as coconut water drunk with a straw right from the freshly opened coconut. The latter is available everywhere; in the shell, from carts and small roadside stands.

We took a day-cruise of inland canals through extensive rice paddies and small agricultural settlements in local houseboats.

At a beachfront hotel in Goa, a former Portuguese colony and internationally popular resort, Greg bodysurfed the warm waves of the Arabian Sea, which was much like the Gulf Coast of Alabama. Elisabeth tried the swimming pool instead.

The tour left the ship in Bombay harbor and stayed for a couple of days in the imposing and historic Taj Palace Hotel. Southern India is disorganized and dusty, but there aren't quite so many people, either. The north never lets you forget what it means to travel in a nation of 1.2 billion.

Even in an over-air-conditioned room in a giant hotel you hear mad beeping outside from the cars—the horn is a basic tool, used to announce overtaking someone.

Our room faced the harbor and the Gate of India, an 18th century stone archway. The painted caves of Elephanta Island, just across the bay by ferry, were mysterious. The Portuguese blasted some of the carvings with rifles since they were ancient religious images of Shiva, Krishna, etc.; insults to Christ. But they didn't dare attack temples very much. The Brits wisely left religion alone entirely.

We stayed in Taj chain hotels when not cruising; top of the line. Swimming pools, wireless, fine food, plentiful staff. The pools are tiled in blue and rely on the sun for heating and keep one fresh, though not all have a heavy machine gun brooding over them. Elsewhere this luxury would isolate you, but in India it's a good idea. The wear and tear of travel, especially overland, is large.

The “cobra roads” are rocky, traffic a nightmare (and opposite handed), while everything runs on IST— Indian Standard Time, which becomes Indian Stretchable Time. The moist heat penetrates to the bone. Crowds are huge, poverty lurks everywhere. Education is better in the south, though political power is in the north. When Indians laud their diversity, they really mean their many religions and castes; there were few black or oriental faces.

We flew to Jaipur, the pink city, and saw the 16th C. astronomical observatory, used to get accurate planetary orbit information, about the same time that Kepler was figuring out elliptical orbits in Poland. All to support better data for ...astrology.

Women there wear very colorful deep red saris that work well with their dark, smooth skin. Onward then, in grinding bus trips to Agra and the Taj — indescribably beautiful, so we won't. It still seems odd to Greg, despite two earlier, month-long trips to India (22 and 10 years ago, when it was even worse), that the most beautiful building in the world is a tomb. Ethereal in its grace, hanging in the sky like a vision. Yet it's about death, and the perpetual wish for eternal life. There's even a cremation ghat nearby on the river.

Everywhere springs a colorful profusion of temples, religious icons and symbolism. The opiate of India is indeed religion. It and China alone have religions with reincarnation, the cycle of time supposedly going back infinitely far. Buddhism came from India and caught on better in China. These two vast, ancient societies withstood the centuries by keeping down innovation, so life was much the same from one millennium to the next. Centuries slid by with little to mark them beyond the feuding of maharajahs. The Chinese by 1400 had already sailed to Africa in ships four times bigger than the Columbus expedition, had gunpowder and the compass, and fielded the world's largest naval fleet by far. Yet they gave up exploration and burned the big ships, to lessen the rate of change in their own land. Maybe that's key to why the wheel of life idea works so well



there. Notably, one of the few diehards supporting the Steady State theory in cosmology is Wickramasingh, a Brahmin; maybe he feels a cultural resonance.

The air was thick with mortality. Tombs of emperors loom over traffic roundabouts, abandoned forts of red sandstone stand ready to defend shopping malls, street names reflect dynasties that lasted centuries. You see in passing turbaned Sikhs and sleek Bengalis, dark and beautiful Tamil women from the moist south, Rajputs ablaze with jewelry, raw Kashmiris smelling of untanned leather, uniformed soldiers clumping by, black-cloaked Muslim women, peasants hauling bullock-drawn freight from the scorched Punjab plains.

Beggar children know to murmur key words—"mummy," "hungry," "please," "baby"—in soft despairing tones to snare the hurrying stranger. They and the hawkers throng the tour buses and sites, earning their keep with lifted palms, to live in the shantytowns of packing cases and rusty tin that line bustling avenues. Gandhi said the voice of the people was the voice of God, but it was hard to see a divine element in the grinding poverty.

At an ordinary town's edge is the usual rubble—vacant-eyed children, vivid plastic trash, sagging shacks that shade listless adults, dogs bent or crippled, scrawny chickens pecking through litter, ugly sweet smells from stagnant ditches, brown fruit peelings awaiting a passing pig, cow patties drying on a wall. Some women seemed at ease as they squatted to soap themselves and then their clothes in rain puddles. Misery hung in the air. One sees stories drifting by in a single glimpse: a sick dog eating withered grass, a twisted leg, an ancient brown woman squatting so that she could lift her matted sari away from the road, to relieve herself while she watched traffic with glittering eyes.

Yet there was beauty, too. Pied wagtail birds flitting, their eager grace somehow heartening.

India's socialist beginnings served them poorly as population swelled. Delhi started in their 1947 independence with 250,000; now it has 14 million, thanks to the huge bureaucracy, and a flood of immigrants fleeing Pakistan after partition. Their constitution wrote in 'preferences' (job quotas) for the lower castes, rules which were slated to go away in a generation, but now seem permanent. Political pressure expands them steadily, recently adding "tribes" (ethnicities)—and many political parties based on these favors want to do more. A useful lesson on affirmative action taken to extremes.

The many newspapers in English have a curiously vague tone. They say "communal disturbances" for the incessant Muslim-Hindu strife. Most news is written in passive voice—as Orwell observed a half century ago, to evade responsibility. Criticism of the US is common. One whole page advocated taking the Internet's basic controls away from the US, which makes access free to all, and handing it to the UN or some other body. The subtext seems to be to first internationalize, then tax it.

Delhi is a powerhouse. Our hotel faced the large forest embedded by the Brits in the new southern half of town (so-called "New" Delhi), with its broad avenues, open green lawns, and large buildings of state. The Victorian houses have arched doorways twelve feet high, as if awaiting a

family of acrobats who would need to walk between rooms while still stacked on each others' shoulders. Indeed, India's survival is acrobatic at times. They have come through the hard

decades of socialist poverty and, since the early 1990s, are finally emerging, using market forces to get jobs and decent conditions throughout the land. There is still an ocean of poverty, and nothing will work if family size doesn't drop; over half of the country is under 25 years old.

India views technological problems quite differently. They import 60% of their energy needs and 90% of their oil. The Energy Minister announced while we were there that India will quadruple its coal burning by 2030, shrugging off the entire idea of carbon restriction as a method to restrain climate change—even though, in the tropics, they have the most at risk. Greg tries to explain this to climate scientists here who hold with the prohibition-only stance, but they cannot grasp how differently the developing nations see the problem. Basically, those countries think it's up to the prosperous nations to fix it. Similarly, the Indian space program sees itself as a rival to China, not to the US or Europe. It will be amusing if audacious moves in space come from Asia as a regional competition, just as the US-USSR contest drove the first decades.

In Delhi one easily gets the point of Kenneth Galbraith's remark, that India is 'a functioning anarchy'. Mahasweta Devi's more literary take is that India walks "hand in hand with the new millennium, whistling a tune from the dawn of time." So the nation of Gandhi has nuclear weapons.

The dusty Delhi airport is like a Mexican one of 30 years ago. Crowds massed at the entrances to canyons of barren, bare concrete, without even any shops. In comparison, our few days in Singapore were dramatic—clean, prosperous, orderly. The trip had run 25 days and we were ready to go home, after a stop in Singapore for business. Another Brit colony, rich in history. For \$22 US Greg had a Singapore Sling in the Long Bar of the Raffles Hotel -- mahogany, teak, fans flapping from the ceiling --which boasts a museum about its own history. The botanical gardens were our high point—lush tropical zones, a wonderful orchid garden, exotic birds.

Greg looked into moving to Singapore an intellectual property biotech company he co-owns, because it's far easier to defend property there than in lawyer-plagued USA. The Singapore government even gives grants to get high tech into the country. He had explored this in India, only to learn that, realistically, it would take a year of bureaucratic delay, to be dodged only by generous *baksheesh*. Sobering.

Singapore is known for its tough-minded policies; the sign in the airport says that the penalty for illegal drug smuggling is death. Though they've repealed the strict laws against littering, spitting etc., it's nothing like free-wheeling Hong Kong, where sari-clad Indian prostitutes accosted me outside our hotel, offering services that fell in price within seconds as Greg brushed them off. In a supposedly communist country! But Singapore is culturally diverse, with an educated population. Try having a cogent conversation about local economics with a taxi driver anyplace else!

After 28 days, we headed home. This glance into four very different former British colonies had revealed much, seen from the American angle. Everywhere the press of crowds reminds that the US is a rather under-populated land – and the price of letting that change. Passing through a village, thousands of faces stare back—people just sitting, with nothing much to do.

Of them, Singapore and Hong Kong are far more polished and prosperous, perhaps because they blend Chinese and other cultures well. Sri Lanka is a beautiful land, but India promises the most for the future. Dusty, disorderly, corrupt, yes—but vast and powerful, when it can decide what to do. These nations are the newest addition to what Greg calls the Anglo Saxon Empire—one of culture, not class or race—and could become the true leader of all Asia. Greg hopes they do;

Elisabeth thinks they are hag-ridden with superstition, astrology, religion, and a staggering population, and are not ready for a great leap forward.



WHEN FUNNY GOT MORE LAUGHS THAN DIRTY

Mike Resnick

I was re-reading a wonderful book that came out three or four years ago called *Seriously Funny*, by a man who, like myself, never thought much of the stand-up comedians of his/my youth, like Milton Berle, Henny Youngman, etc., who just stood there and told jokes that other people wrote for them – and who also find almost all the comedians of the past 20 years totally unfunny. (I'll include *Saturday Night Live* and *SCTV* in the unfunny group.) The only two bright spots on the past quarter century, the only two I'd pay to see, have been Rita Rudner and, very occasionally, Jerry Stiller & Anne Meara ... Alan Arkin ... Severn Darden (far and away the most brilliant of them all) ... Shelly Berman ... Barbara Harris ... Andrew Duncan ... Ed Asner ... Eugene Troobnik ... Mina Kolb ... Paul Sand ... Del Close.

That's a hell of a comic line-up. I actually belonged to a Second City workshop when I was in college, back in 1960 (before the original troop, which has never been equaled, moved to New York), and I got to do scenes with Barbara Harris, Andy Duncan and Gene Troobnik. The original Second City Players made three LP records – brilliant, cerebral, and long out of print – and I also have some audio tapes of them as they workshoped some of their improvisations. Never been anything like them for sheer talent.

Somehow the subject got around to this on New Year's Eve, at one of the CFG's rotating parties. Mark and Lynne Aronson, who also attended the University of Chicago before moving here, and are just a couple of years younger than Carol and me, remembered almost all the above. But the

other 25 or 30 people, none of them culturally backward, knew only Nichols & May (most hadn't heard them, but knew they were a team), Woody Allen, Shelly Berman and Jonathan Winters – a tiny handful, and far from the best of them.

Are these guys all due to become nothing but historical footnote, their brilliance piled onto history's junk-heap?

What about some of the others? The hottest ticket in London in 1961 and New York in 1962 was *Beyond the Fringe*, brilliant humor by four young Brits, two of whom became Peter Cook and Dudley Moore. I have a video of the performance ... but except for Mark and Lynne, no one at the party had even heard of it.

And I remember going to Manhattan in the late 1960s, looking for writing assignments by day, and hitting the small clubs at night. We discovered the Ace Trucking Company (anyone remember them?) with Fred Willard, Stiller & Meara, a couple of others. We saw Gerry Matthews and Madelaine Kahn break into the biz with tiny, hilarious reviews at Upstairs at the Downstairs, where a lot of the songs were written by newcomers Cy Coleman, and the team of Tom Jones & Harvey Schmidt. Again, does anyone remember them, or are we doomed to watch HBO and Showtime comics who think endlessly repeating the word "Fuck" is both hilarious and cutting-edge?

Ghod, I hope not. I mean, I know each generation's growing up dumber than the last, but please tell me that Andrew Dice Clay is not the spiritual godfather of the next generation of successful comedians.

*Eve rejoiced recently when Darlene Marshall won two "Eppie" awards for her on-line novels **Captain Sinister's Lady** and **Pirate's Price** – perhaps because she and Darlene are one and the same person!*



Illos by Julia Morgan-Scott

Many of our friends were concerned when we said we'd be spending two weeks in Israel this autumn.

Let me start this by saying the only casualty of our trip was my sunhat.

It got black mud on it at the Dead Sea, pomegranate juice dripped on it on the Golan, a bird did a flyover at Masada and it got rained on on Ben Yehuda Street in Jerusalem. Otherwise, the only other damage on this trip was to my wallet and my waistline.

This was my first trip to Israel, as well as the first trip for my brother Steven and his wife Helen. Howard went in 1987 when I was too pregnant with Micah to keep up the intensive schedule of the United Jewish Appeal mission. This trip came about because we'd traveled in the past with Steven and Helen, and found each other to be sympatico travel companions.

I suggested doing a cruise again this year, but Steven said he wanted to visit Israel.

"I've never been. If I don't go now, I'll never go," he said.

Steven has multiple sclerosis. It's getting worse, as the disease does, and it will kill him someday. It's already limiting his mobility, so we agreed this was the right time to go to Israel.

I called my travel agent and we arranged a tour with our own tour guide and car for the four of us. While this is naturally more costly, it allowed us to tour on our own schedule.

Most tours start in Tel Aviv where the

international airport is. That's fine, but Howard and I weren't interested in spending our first Shabbat (Sabbath) in Israel in secular Tel Aviv, so we arranged to go down to Jerusalem while Steven and Helen spent the first weekend in Tel Aviv recuperating from their trip.

We arrived without incident and were met by our tours' VIP service, which was a dream. They had a wheelchair for Howard, who was still recovering from his broken ankle, and whisked us through Customs and baggage claim. Then we were put on a van and driven to the Sheraton Plaza Hotel in Jerusalem. The Sheraton is across the street from the Great Synagogue and is considered a "shvartz" (black) hotel. This has nothing to do with the race of the guests, but how they dress—religious Jews are referred to as "shvartz" as in "we went to my cousin's wedding and it was so shvartz—the men and women had separate wedding receptions."

I showered, changed into my "shvartz" Shabbat outfit of long skirt, high-necked, long sleeved shirt and hat, and headed with Howard across the street to evening services at the Great Synagogue, which is known for its choir. The choir was a treat, and one advantage of sitting up in the women's balcony was the great acoustics.

Out Shabbat supper that evening was in the hotel dining room. They were overcrowded because there was a bar mitzvah and two *sheva brachot* (post-wedding "honeymoon" suppers) being hosted there, so we agreed to share a table

with another couple.

Ronit and Yoav didn't speak much English, but we managed to muddle through, sometimes with the help of a friendly waiter supplying a word or two of translation.

Ronit is a professional baker and of Moroccan origin, while Yoav is from Kurdistan and a shopkeeper. They have seven children. Ronit told Yoav she wanted a weekend off, so they came down to Jerusalem for a little R&R, which in their case means a Sabbath stay at a religious hotel with Friday night study sessions with their favorite rabbis.

They were absolutely charming and made us feel right at home. And that was the overall theme of our trip to Israel. I have never traveled anywhere where I felt so much like I was at home. Shopkeepers, soldiers and hotel employees all treated us like their long-lost (if slightly slow) cousins, patiently listening to our stumbling attempts at Hebrew even though most of them understood English.

The next morning we opted to get a real taste of home, going to the Masorti (Conservative) Seminary synagogue around the corner from our hotel. As we walked in, a lady in the back looked at us and did a double take.

"Howard? Eve?"

It was our friend Renee, an attorney from Las Vegas whom we'd met when she'd visit our former rabbi. Renee had recently made aliyah (literally, "to ascend", i.e. a Jew who emigrates to Israel) and she made a date to meet us after Shabbat and join us for supper.

The rest of the day passed pleasantly. Another friend joined us for lunch at our hotel, then we took a short walk towards the Old City, but Howard's ankle wasn't up to too much uphill walking.

Renee picked us up later that evening and we went to Ben Yehuda Street in Jerusalem for supper and shopping. All the stores in Israel open after Shabbat for late night shopping since Sunday is the first weekday. The normal schedule is to close early on Friday to prepare for the Sabbath, re-open Saturday night, and some stores close early on Tuesday afternoon to give shopkeepers and employees some time to take care of business since there's not a two day weekend.

We dined at El Gaucho, a kosher Argentine steakhouse, and then walked up past the shops on Ben Yehuda. Renee made it a point to take us to her favorite shop for Judaica, Danny Boy Gifts at 17 Ben Yehuda. As we walked in, Renee said, "Danny, I've brought you some visitors," and Daniel Ben-David, the shopowner, greeted Renee as "My sister!" and went to work making us feel welcome and free to spend major American dollars on the folks back home.

The shopkeepers around Israel had signs in their windows saying in six languages "Thank you for having the courage to come to Israel and spend your money" and they weren't being cute. They were overwhelmingly gratified to see tourists after a summer of war and missile attacks.

We did some preliminary shopping for gifts and Danny said he'd hold onto everything and ship it all together when we were done. We told him we'd be back during the week when we returned to Jerusalem.

We did return to Danny's shop, two or three times, and made a trip next door to his brother David's jewelry store. I only bought some designer costume pieces, but lusted after some of David's designs, including a sterling etrog (citron) box. Maybe on the next trip.

The next morning there was a mix-up over our ride to Tel Aviv, but we finally got it straightened out with our tour company and met up with Steven, Helen and our *madrikh* (tour guide), Effi (Efraim).

Being a tour guide in Israel is a prestigious job and it's difficult to get accepted and licensed by the Ministry of Tourism. Effi was about our age, a retired sergeant major in the IDF, an archeologist, a scribe, a physical therapist, and most unusual for a *madrikh* was dati-religious – or what we'd term in the US, "Modern Orthodox".

We piled into Effi's mini-van with the Tourism Ministry logo on it and headed out to our first stop, the Diaspora Museum. Effi started by giving us the "Judaism 101" lecture but figured out by the end of the afternoon that we knew our *alef-bet-gimel's* (ABC's). By the time we were a few days into our tour we were arguing the merits of rulings of various 1st century rabbis and whether or not the mass suicide at Masada was good for the Jews.

The Diaspora Museum was cool, showing what life was like for Jews around the world. One of the more fascinating exhibits illustrated how you could walk into a Jewish home at any time over the last 2,000 years from Yemen to China to NYC and essentially find the same objects—Sabbath lamp, mezuzah on the doorpost, kiddush cup, chanukiyah (Chanukah menorah).

Afterwards we continued to Cesarea and saw the ruins of the ancient theater, harbor and aqueduct, a marvel of Roman engineering. We finished the day in Haifa at a hotel with a splendid view of the harbor.

The title of this report is “Salad for Breakfast”, which I’ll explain: Each hotel we stayed at offered a breakfast buffet, which is one of the attractions of travel in Israel. Whether it was a five star hotel or a smaller inn, the buffet was a lavish spread featuring cheeses, fish, eggs, yogurt, leben (another cultured milk), goat cheese, fresh breads and pastries, fresh fruit including citrus, figs and dates, bourekas, Israeli spiced eggs in tomato sauce, and lots of salads, especially chopped tomatoes and cucumber salads. There was no meat at breakfast ‘cause all the hotels were kosher, but the buffets were large enough to keep us going well past lunchtime.

So after enjoying our Haifa buffet we joined Effi and hit the road again. This time we stopped at the world famous Bahai shrine and gardens, walked through the Crusader city at Akko (Acre), headed to Tzipori to look at stunning mosaics, and made a detour to Rosh

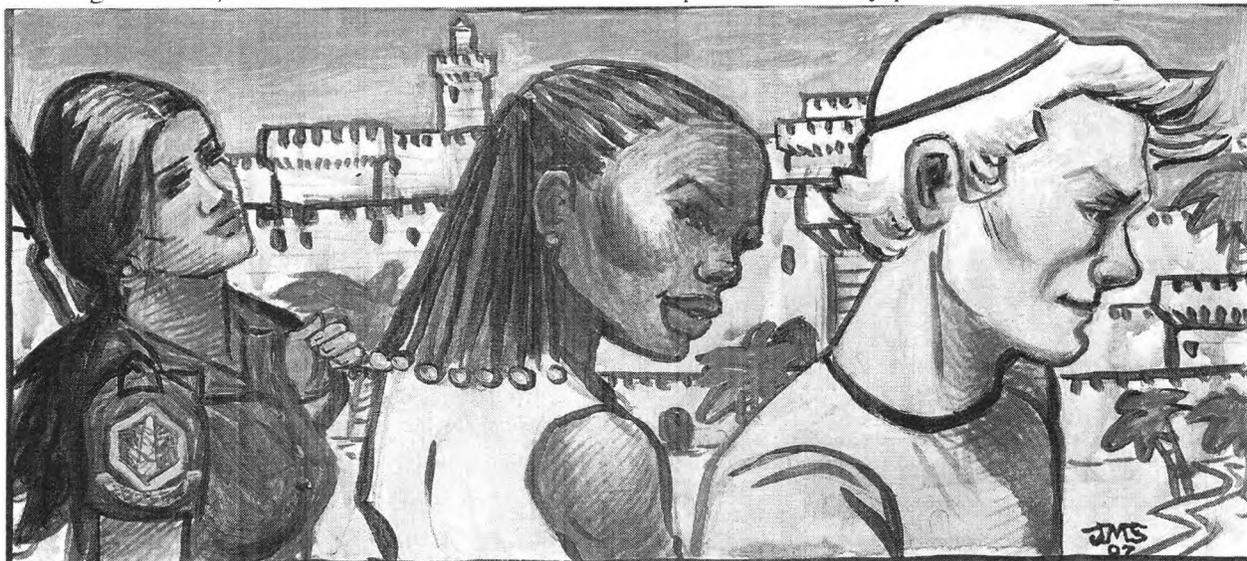
HaNiqlra at the Lebanese border.

Rosh HaNiqlra has cable cars that descend down to magnificent underwater grottoes. It also boasts a lively restaurant where we ate lunch. The restaurant and cable cars were closed during the war this past summer, but the restaurant owner came every day to cook food and carry it to the soldiers on duty at the border. He too was glad to see us and have some tourists returning, ‘cause when I say it’s at the border, I mean that literally. The fence separating Israel from Lebanon was a few yards from our van.

We passed through lots of agricultural land on our drives – banana farms, truck farms, date farms, olive groves, citrus groves – everywhere we looked there was farming going on. We also quickly got used to seeing lovely young girls in uniform with automatic weapons slung over their backs, and boys in jeans and t-shirts with their own weapons standing by the side of the road, hitching rides to their army bases, or home from the base for a day off. You cannot enter a building without opening your bags for a security check, and most times you have to pass through a metal detector as well. After a point, it becomes normal.

We spent the night in Safed, a holy city in the northern part of Israel and home to mystics for generations. It’s also known for its artist colony and we took some time to tour historic synagogues and do a bit of shopping.

Let me just add that the weather on this trip was absolutely perfect, even though we were



officially in the winter rainy season. Most days the weather was cloudless with highs in the 70'sF, and cool nights. We had one day of rain, but it was on Shabbat in Jerusalem when we weren't touring anyway.

At one point I burst out, "Who do we thank for this lovely weather?"

Effi just gave me a look, and I said, "I know, I know *Who* we thank, but I thought maybe the Tourism Ministry had ordered it special for us."

We went up through the Golan to tour the Yarden Winery, and got a first hand lesson in Israeli political realities. Effi drove a switchback road through the mountains where each side had barb wire fence and red triangle mine field warnings. These were mine fields left by the Syrians when they held the Golan prior to '67, and they've refused UN orders to give over maps showing where the mines are. We stopped at a Syrian pillbox so Effi could show us how you could practically lob hand grenades underhand and hit the kibbutzim below, on Israel's side of the pre-'67 border. We also stopped at a lookout over Lake Kinneret (Tiberias) which had a rusted out Syrian machine gun which was used to take shots at the fishermen on the lake.

Lest there be any doubt, this trip totally recharged my Zionist batteries, and part of that was because of the people who live there:

When you look around Israel, the typical Israeli is a security guard with skin like bittersweet chocolate. Her parents were brought to Israel from Ethiopia in the covert airlift, Operation Moses, in 1984 (I remember Howard on the phone banks a few days before the airlift, calling big donors in our community and saying "I can't tell you why, but Israel needs you to increase your donation. Tonight." And they did). She's the first person in her family to learn to read, and is earning a master's degree.

The typical Israeli is white-blond with wide cheekbones. He's from Russia, and is a garbage collector. His family was free to emigrate after the fall of the Soviet Union. He's not religious, but he's proud to be able to publicly say he's a Jew without it hindering his children's acceptance to college or future job opportunities.

The typical Israeli is a doctor whose family has lived in Israel for generations and who

has relatives from North Africa, Yemen and Bagdad, giving lie to the claim that Israel was colonized by Europeans.

When we stopped at the Theodore Herzl museum there was a gaggle of women soldiers on the steps waiting for their bus. We heard one cluster speaking English and asked them where they were from. Manchester, England; Vancouver, Canada; Melbourne, Australia; and Miami, Florida. All are now new Israelis doing their service in the Israeli Defense Forces.

But on the way south from the Golan to Jerusalem we also heard about the cooperation between Jordan and Israel, how workers cross through the border daily back and forth, and how the Jordanian king works with Israel to keep relations stable. So it's not all bad news from the Mideast.

We stopped on our way down to Jerusalem at an oasis (Really. It was in the middle of the Judean desert and there were palm trees all around) nicknamed "The Peace Stop". It's a roadside attraction of restaurants, shops, gas stations and camel rides, run by Israeli Jews and Arabs working together. The rest area was full of Arabs, black garbed religious Jews, tourists, Israeli soldiers and the occasional camel. I got a glass of fresh squeezed pomegranate juice for 10 NIS (New Israeli Shekels – a little over \$2.00), made with what would have been \$9.00 worth of pomegranates in the States. We declined the offers of camel rides, but after we got in the van, Steven said a gentleman had come up to him and told him he could cure his limp and need for a leg brace with a massage. Steven declined, but we joked about it the rest of the trip. He's in the land of miracles! Who knows what could happen! Maybe it was Elijah the Prophet in disguise!

It was on to Jerusalem, and our stay at the plush David Citadel Hotel with its view of the Old City. We were glad to be able to unpack for six nights and not be living out of our suitcases. Supper that evening was part of the tour, and prearranged at a charming restaurant called the Olive and Fish. I didn't have a single bad meal the entire time I was in Israel, though I did buy some stringy lamb shashlik for lunch once that made me eye the feral cats with some concern for the origin of my supper.

Jerusalem is surrounded by forested hills,

the legacy of all the millions of trees planted by Jewish children around the world over the last 100 years through their contributions to *Keren Kayemet*, now the Jewish National Fund. I recall vividly saving my dimes and putting them into a slotted card, and when you had \$2.00 you'd turn it in and receive a tree certificate. We still do tree donations as gifts and memorials, though the price has gone up. The reforestation of Jerusalem has lowered the city's temperature in the summer and increased the amount of rainfall the city receives. Every year on Tu B'Sh'vat, Arbor Day in February, families and schoolchildren picnic in the hills and plant trees, continuing the reforestation projects.

Our first full day of touring in Jerusalem started with a trip to Hadassah Hospital to see the famous Chagall windows and hear the presentation on the symbols and stories in the windows. There's also a repaired window, damaged during fighting in 1967 when the Israelis retook Jerusalem. A telegram was sent to Marc Chagall who replied, "You win the war, I'll worry about the windows". When he repaired them, he left a bullet hole in one as a reminder of the war, and it's still visible today. Now the windows are protected behind bombproof outer glass.

Walking through Hadassah hospital you see Palestinians, Israeli Arabs, Jews of all stripes, all working and suffering together, with medical care available to everyone. Yes, there are problems of racism and discrimination in Israel, but the daily life is much more harmonious than the news reports would lead you to believe.

And Steven wryly said if someone in Hadassah Hospital offered to cure his MS with a massage, he'd take them up on it.

We went to Yad Vashem next, the Holocaust Museum. It's recently rebuilt and the exhibits are state of the art. Steven got a wheelchair so he wouldn't slow us down, but even so we spent so much time there we had to cancel a couple items off the rest of our day. Yad Vashem tells its stories through the taped testimonies of survivors, and diaries and journals kept during the war. I saw horrific evidence of the evil men can do, but I also saw tales of courage including some I hadn't heard before, like how Bulgaria managed to save almost all of its Jews because the Metropolitan of the Bulgarian

Church and the civic leaders refused to cooperate with the Nazis.

I also saw Oskar Schindler's list. The original. And the trees in the Grove of the Righteous planted in memory of Oskar Schindler and his wife.

We went to the Herzl Museum to see the presentation on the life of Theodore Herzl, the founder of modern Zionism, whose most famous quote is "If you will it, it is no dream." Then we headed over to Mt. Herzl, the military cemetery with the graves of Herzl, Israeli leaders like Yitzchak Rabin, and soldiers killed in the wars. Effi strolled through with us, mentioning that half his platoon had been wiped out in the '73 Yom Kippur War, and pointing to various graves – "He was in my school, he lived two doors down, I knew his sister ..."

We also went to the Israel Museum and the Shrine of the Book to see the Dead Sea Scrolls, and saw the Jewish holy sites in the old city – King David's Tomb ("I don't know if it's King David," Effi said. "There's someone buried in there, but he's not wearing a crown."), the Western Wall (Kotel), where we left prayers and messages stuck in the cracks, the restored Herodian Mansions from 2,000 years ago, and what turned out to be the highpoint of the holy sites, the Hasmonean Tunnel.

I didn't get the feeling of sanctity I'd hoped for at the Kotel, but I got it in the tunnel. The Hasmonean Tunnel include a portion of the Wall, underground. For some reason, away from the noise and the confusion of the activity at the Kotel, you "get it" when you're underground at the original site of the streets of Jerusalem. It was truly awe-inspiring, and you can see what a feat of engineering the Temple was when you examine the size of the building stones and how smoothly they fit together to create a structure that was 14 stories high, 2,000 years ago.

We went shopping in the Cardo, the main street of Byzantine Jerusalem and still a busy shopping district. Effi recommended a silver shop to us owned by a Yemenite family and their work was stunning. There were lots of things I lusted for, but Howard had his heart set on a wine fountain, the new hot item in religious Jewish homes. A wine fountain is used for making Kiddush, the blessing for the wine on the Sabbath

and holidays. You have a large cup which sits in the middle of the fountain, and you fill this with wine. After you make the blessing, you pour the wine into the cup holder and it flows out into six or eight little cups ringing the base of the fountain. All the guys seem to love these things. So we got one, in Yemenite design, our major purchase on this trip.

The next day was Friday and we knew we'd have to be out and about early so Effi could get home to B'nei Brak in time for Shabbat. We hit the road and headed south – and down – to the Dead Sea and Masada. Along the way we passed Bedouin encampments in the desert and the caves of Qumram where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found.

Masada was much larger than I thought it would be, and again illustrated marvels of Roman engineering such as the heated baths and aqueduct system. Masada was built as a fortress for Herod the Great, who despite all the nasty things you could say about him certainly had a vision of how to build for the ages. I could have climbed the snakepath to the top of Masada, but because of time constraints we took the cable car.

Masada was and remains a rallying moment in Jewish history. During WWII, when it looked like German troops were poised to invade Palestine from Egypt, the Haganah (Jewish forces) had a “Masada plan” in place to fight to the last man, woman and child rather than fall victim to the Nazis. After independence various branches of the IDF would swear-in their officers atop Masada as a reminder of the high cost patriots are willing to pay for freedom.

When we left Masada we headed to the Dead Sea where we got a lecture of Do's and Don't's – Do wear rubber shoes (the ground is rocky); Don't get any of the water in your eyes (they'll swell shut); Don't let your head get underwater (it's the heaviest part of your body and you could drown); etc.

It was cool bobbing in the water, like sitting in a lawn chair. We rubbed ourselves with black Dead Sea mud that we scooped up from shore (you'd pay a fortune for it in a spa), and relaxed for an hour or two, just enjoying being there. We were told there was little chance of a sunburn because it's so far below sea level that little radiation gets through. Supposedly too,

oxygen levels are higher there for the same reason, making it a destination for people seeking some healthful R&R.

We spent Saturday and Sunday relaxing and sightseeing on our own, and I made it a point to spend some of our money at Yad Lakashish, the “Lifeline for the Elderly”. This is an organization that gives pensioners and elderly immigrants needed services, along with the opportunity to earn money doing crafts which are then sold in the shops. Because of the range of immigrants we were able to choose between various designs done by Ethiopians, Russians, Germans, Yemenites and more. Some of the items are kind of kitsch, but others were quite stunning. Howard bought a gold and white prayer shawl for the high holidays, and I bought some religious objects, knit skullcaps for the boys, noisemakers for the holiday of Purim, and a ceramic wall hanging illustrating the seven species mentioned in the Bible, a symbol of Israel (olives, wheat, barley, pomegranates, dates, grapes, figs). We celebrated our last evening in Jerusalem with the best supper of the trip at a famed Moroccan restaurant, “Darna”, then Effi picked us up again the next morning for the final leg of our trip, Tel Aviv.

On the way we stopped to see Nathan Rappaport's bronze monument “The Scroll of Fire” high in the Martyrs Forest, six million trees planted as a living memorial of the Shoah. There was a group of fourth graders there on a field trip, and they looked and sounded exactly like fourth graders anywhere. They even had parent volunteers along to help out.

The difference was, these parents had weapons slung over their backs to protect their children.

We joked about how those kids weren't going to throw spitballs on the bus, but it was a sad reminder of the cost for Israelis of living in their land.

We visited more museums in Tel Aviv – the Hagana Museum, The Tel Aviv Museum of Art, the Latrun Tank Memorial, and a delightfully tacky tourist stop, Mini Israel.

We were staying at the Sheraton on the beach and had a great view of the promenade and shoreline. The next day was our final day of touring and we drove over to Yafo (Jaffa), and

Neve Zedek, the old part of Tel Aviv to admire the architecture, see the artists' shops and do last minute buying, and catch our flights home.

It was my first trip to Israel, but it won't be my last. I miss it already, and I understand why my son talks about making aliyah. There are problems, sure. Aside from the obvious ones of your neighbors trying to destroy you and the need for some accommodation with the Palestinians, there are the same problems any industrialized

nation has – pollution, economic issues, disparities between haves and have-nots, but the overall impression you get in Israel is vitality and energy. We passed a coffee shop in Tel Aviv that a couple years back was blown up by a suicide terrorist. Today there are people sitting outside the re-built café drinking coffee and chatting on cell phones, and that's the lesson of Israel. It bounces back, survives, and grows into the future.



Continued from page 6

Even if they were not directly harmed, I cannot begin to fathom the hole such an event would leave in my childrens' lives, cannot picture the bruises that would affect them forever.

...

Which brings me to my actual purpose, to speak about some of the victims.

On September 11th, 2001, the shock was so large that the horror was merely intellectual until dinnertime, when Allie asked, "what about the kids at daycare whose parents won't be coming to pick them up?" And yet, even with six degrees of separation, even counting the breadth of fandom's interests, no one from my family or my overlapping communities was directly touched by Osama bin Laden that day.

Not so this time.

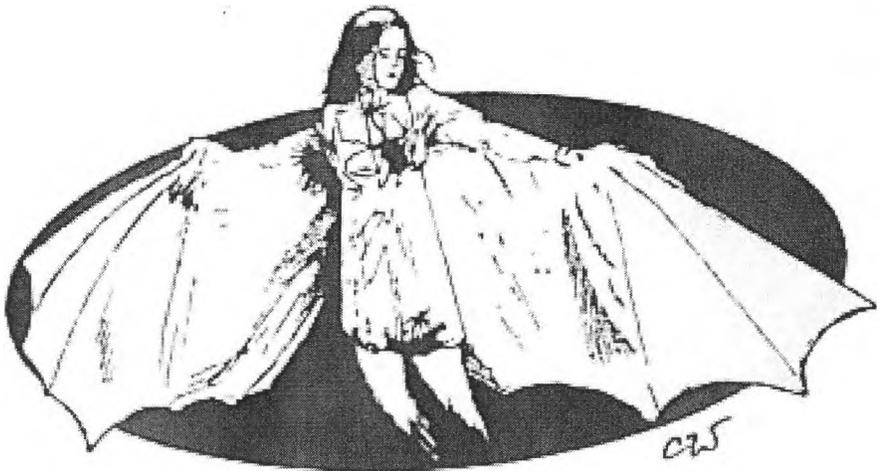
At an unrelated event a few weeks ago I spoke about how often the people we hold up as heroes are not practical for everyday life: it is unlikely that you'll sit atop "a condom full of high explosives and seven miles of wire built by the lowest bidder" like Gus Grissom, or write a letter from the Birmingham County Jail on a matter of principle like Martin Luther King.

However, in this event, some of us were forced to become heroes without planning or forethought, and we need to honor them. Jamie and his colleague Jocelyne Couture-Nowak, both married to other Virginia Tech faculty members, became unlikely martyrs, cut down without warning while teaching, as were Indian hydrology professor G V Loganathan and Romanian Holocaust survivor and mechanics professor Liviu Librescu. They were all in the wrong place at the wrong time, but they were with their charges, their students, our children, when they were needed, when we couldn't be.

Some who survived are providing us with the oral history. One of Jamie's students, Erin Sheehan, was interviewed by *EPR's Morning Edition*. She described how she was lucky to not be shot, how students barricaded the door, how they sought help after the first onslaught from the gunman. But declaring her intention to finish school and graduate she took up the refrain of survivors of terrorism and the Blitz: "He shouldn't have the power to change our lives."

Unfortunately, the lives of those involved *are* changed. Perhaps we can help them to be as normal as possible, and remember those who didn't survive.

*Jeff Copeland lives in Washington.
Alexandra, or Allie, is his daughter.*



THE
CHALLENGER
TRIBUTE
ASTRID
ANDERSON
BEAR

In 1967, when I was 18 years old and the littlest of the Little Men, I attended a party at Poul Anderson's house in Orinda, California. I knew Poul and Karen, of course – generous souls that they were, they had driven me to my first club meeting. But I had never met the third member of the family ...

I remember the very moment. I was talking with the late Jerry Jacks, asking him about the ancient fannish schtick, "Ghu". All of a sudden we – and the room – were utterly overwhelmed, in an explosion of red hair and personality. She was wearing a dark cloak, and carrying a real, straight-from-the-*Star-Trek*-set tribble. Astrid had come into the room.

Astrid has never left. She's been a radiance in the science fiction firmament all of her life. Among her excellences, costuming. At Louiscon in 1969 she and her mother premiered the most famous masquerade presentation of all time, "The Bat and the Bitten" – Charlie Williams' illo above depicts that incredible costume. Jay Kay Klein's photo to right shows her with Ron Bounds in '71, as "Poseidon & Friend". She chaired Costume-Con 2 in 1984.

But Astrid's SF interests haven't been restricted to masquerades. With her husband, Greg Bear, she serves on the advisory board for Seattle's Science Fiction Museum & Hall of Fame. They have two kids, Erik and Alexandra. Astrid, mother to a 20-year-old man? A 17-year-old lady? Pardon the astonishment of someone who knew her when she was 14, still wearing a huge black cloak, still playing with a genuine tribble.

How fortunate those of us who have been privileged to know this lady named for the stars.





*In 1974, while working as an editorial assistant at DC Comics in New York, I wrote the following –slightly edited – for **Spiritus Mundi** 22, my zine for the Southern Fandom Press Alliance.*

A SHOW OF HANDS

Robert A. Heinlein in New York, May 29, 1974

Guy Lillian

Photo by Rose-Marie Lillian / Illos by Wm. Rotsler

He came to the front of the stage. Behind him was a podium, brightly lit, shining like a jewel. He walked to the very edge of that light from above, and his strong face was in shadow. He wore a tuxedo, and faced us four-square. We were applauding. “I see my family got here,” he said, his tones Midwestern. His jaw was moving exaggeratedly. “If it looks like I’m chewing gum,” he said, “it’s because I am. It’s been a rough week. Ginny and I are outdoors folk, and the big city is tiring. It’s Aspergum.”

He turned to walk back towards the podium. We were silent there in the audience. He held an envelope which he opened and from which he dropped papers. He bent and retrieved them, unembarrassed. When he finally disposed of them shrugging them away, he mentioned that though this appearance was sponsored by the Poetry Center of New York’s 92nd Street YMHA/YWHA, he would be reading no verse of his own. He courted his wife that way, he said, but considered his verses private and worthless to others. He did quote a couple of lines by Sewell Ford (sic) to illustrate a point. He spoke slowly.

And for a reason. He was a “somewhat reformed stammerer.” “Don’t be afraid to laugh,” he said, “when I stop or whistle. It makes me feel more at home.” Again he came to the front of the stage. “What should I talk about?” asked Robert A. Heinlein.



Tom Collins had told me about this appearance while I was crashing at his lower east side apartment. I had immediately ordered a ticket – for \$3.00. On May 8th, for absolutely nothing above and beyond the 35 cent token fee for the subway, I had accompanied Denny O’Neil to Baird Searles’ 8th Avenue’s Science Fiction Shoppe to see Harlan Ellison at an autograph party. When Denny came in, a kid said “And I didn’t bring my comics!” Harlan was seated at a table heaped with his in-print books. Denny introduced me. Harlan, pipe blazing, looked up and told me that he remembered the face and the name but could not have put them together. Later, while fans both serious and neo clustered and talked, he told O’Neil – a martial arts enthusiast – about throwing a drunk with a kung fu toss and described acidly the speech Heinlein gave in Ellay this year, accepting a Nebula for Arthur C. Clarke. According to Ellison the performance was pathetic – RAH had gone over every minute of Clarke’s life, had called for a show of hands, and

so on, interminably. I showed him the blue ticket the 92nd Street Y had sent me, and he croaked, “Oh God! Tear it up!”



We had a choice of topics, Heinlein said ... writing in general, science fiction, specific books ... what did we want to talk about? Let’s see a show of hands. Writing? Very well, then ...

“Ideas are everywhere.” He turned to the subject of watches – “Marvelous little machines.” He’s proud that an ancestor, Peter Heinlein, had invented the escapement for watches, which until recently had been unsurpassed for enabling seamen to find longitude. “Has anyone here ever taken a creative writing course? Raise your hands.”

From the fifth row, aisle seat on the left-hand aisle, I raised my hand. Others in the auditorium, about ¾ full, joined me, shyly.

“I have but one word to say about creative writing courses.” Pause. “DON’T! Creativity cannot be taught!” *Well neither can leadership or character Mr. Heinlein so why did you go to Annapolis?* I thought but of course did not speak aloud. I was not here to argue but for something different. “Spend your time writing!” Can’t argue with that. He ran down his five rules for successful writing – (1) write, (2) finish what you write, (3) place it on the market, (4) never rewrite anything, (5) keep it on the market until it is sold. He added little things like using a pitch-black ribbon and proper form: “All editors have eyestrain.”

He then moved on to his own experiences, and everything came alive.



When I walked into the 92nd Street Y at 6:45 that May 29th, 1974, I found a group of fans already thronging in the lobby. You could not mistake them; they *looked* like fans. And what do fans look like? They were enthusiastic in manner, especially among their own. Outside of their kind they are quiet and distant. Phraseology and delivery is exaggerated. Glasses. Tomn Collins was there, of course, and my fellow Southerner Hank Davis came in, beautifully attired, smiling. Once we were let into the auditorium, I sat behind him. (After Heinlein’s speech he told me, “I have seen God.”) Alexei Panshin stood against the lobby wall.

Sitting in the fifth row on the left side of the left-hand aisle, I found an old gentleman with whom I had shared a limo going from the St. Louis airport to the ’69 worldcon. I asked him if he had ever talked to Heinlein, figuring that such an elder fan would have. He told me no, but that he had seen him once.

Fans are strange people. Before the lights dimmed and while I tapped my teeth with a Flair pen and admired the curve of the behind of the girl holding the programs, I thought about being one. It was with a sense of being foredoomed.



Heinlein pronounced his name “Hine-line.” He never anglicized the diphthong. He told us that he used eight pseudonyms at one point in his career, sometimes filling whole issues of pulp magazines. He mentioned “an old shipmate,” Katharine Anne Porter, an used something she had told him to illustrate a point about writing – that the story will seek its own length and characters insist upon their own lives. Porter’s *Ship of Fools*, “a book the size of the Old Testament,” began as a contracted-for novella (a word Ms. Porter despises). But it just grew. Heinlein said all his writing is like that.

“I wonder what one does with used Aspergum.”

He spoke about being a writer, and how one behaves when work has gestated long enough in one’s mind and is ready to emerge. A writer becomes impossible to live with and

should be penned up. “My wife says that when she finds my shoes in the icebox, it’s a sure sign a story is on the way.”

He started talking about specific books. It took him thirteen working days to write *A Door Into Summer*, he said, and he told us that the cat in that story really existed. Pixie was the name of the real *gato*. He told a funny story about how Pixie hated the snow on Lookout Mountain, where the Heinleins lived before health reasons forced them to the Pacific shore.

Thirteen days was the fastest time he’d ever done a full-length novel. The longest? 108 working days – one off in there to see the dentist – for a much longer story, the title of which he could not recall for a moment. Finally people volunteered, “*Time Enough for Love!*” and he smiled, “Of course.”

“At my age,” he said, “that’s a long stretch.”

They had passed out 3x5 cards early on in the speech. For questions, they told us. As my shoulder was time and again tapped to call me to pass cards forward, my own burned my hand. A question, a question ... what do you ask Robert A. Heinlein, now that at last you have the chance?

He discussed *I Will Fear No Evil*, a book half-edited when he was struck with what everyone thought would be his final illness. Editing is a process Heinlein has only once granted to another, that awful day when reality slipped away from him, he saw roaches on the walls of his sterile hospital room, and he signed power of attorney to his wife and his agent. They did not touch the book, he said; they let it be published half-cut. The story as he wanted it is still there, said Heinlein ... just lost in too many words.

Nevertheless he considers *I Will Fear No Evil* a successful book ... more so than *Stranger in a Strange Land*, for its sales picked up quicker and it has already made more money. He expects *Time Enough for Love* to surpass it. Commercial value is the highest value for Robert A. Heinlein, or so he asked us to believe. The success of this massive trio of novels he lays to their general aim – towards a wider audience than science fiction readers.

He continued with advice. “Unlearn things that you thought were true once. That way you can grow old out of the deep freeze: stay alive.” Cards kept moving forward over my shoulder. I started questions, blotted them away with my Flair. Finally I decided, I must be a fan and yet more than a fan, and wrote down three:

Any comment on the space program?

What is your favorite American city?

Who is your favorite man?

The rationale behind these questions should be immediately obvious. The first time I hear Heinlein’s pleasantly sans-serif Midwestern voice was on my 20th birthday, when he and Arthur C. Clarke discussed the landing of Apollo 11, earlier that day. Asking about the space program was a natural question, designed to cover up the other two.

Because if what I’d heard was true, New Orleans was Heinlein’s favorite American city. My “home” town was then running for the 1976 worldcon, and I hoped to win a sly boost for the Big Easy in the voting that summer. (Of course, I was running a calculated risk – Heinlein was brought up in one of our rivals, Kansas City.) As for the last question, I was, I admit, trying to get into the great man’s head. Foolish! Foolish! But my figurative tongue was tied.

While I wrote the straight, tough figure on stage continued talking about writing. He illustrated the technique of “the hook” through a story about Jack Woolfolk, who satisfied an editor and sold a million books by putting sex into the first line of the first page. He admitted that his stories were short on tragic endings and villains ... no one thinks of himself as a villain, he explained, and as for happy endings ... “a man who has given up a six-pack of beer to buy a book *wants* to be left feeling good!” Over and over that image was used: writers in competition with beer. Clowns. Jesters. Beggars offering tales for alms, part of a profession that predates written language ... story-telling.

Finally Mrs. Heinlein, front row center, stood and waved a fistful of cards in her husband's direction. He crossed to stage front and picked them up. Mine was among them, my name legible in the lower right hand corner – Heinlein had warned us that he never answered unsigned questions. Had I been feeling precocious

He answered the first card. "I don't know what happened to the computer at the end of *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*. If I knew I would've said so."

The next card came up. "Critique some of your fellow science fiction writers.' I never discuss living colleagues, nor those who have not been dead for a decent interval. " However, he did consider de Bergerac, as a writer and a man, Wells, and Verne (with humanist reservations) worthy of posthumous applause.

"Any comment on the space program? What is your favorite city? Who is your favorite man?' 'Guy Lillian.'"

Heinlein looked askance at my idiotic questions. The New York fans who knew me giggled and glanced back and my friend Bart, sitting next to me, slapped my arm.

"The space program will continue, but I'm not sure in what language. The public relations teams at NASA deserves credit for taking one of the most glorious moments in man's history and making it seem dull as dishwater ... Thanks to what man has already done, the tens of thousands of men supporting the astronauts, the human race may possibly, probably, almost certainly outlive this planet. It is our destiny to go on and on and on and on and *out*.

"Who is your favorite man?' *I am.*"

Two healthy rounds of applause, two high points. Was I a fool for feeling good at hearing the great man speak my name?

Other questions followed. How did he become interested in science fiction? It began when his eldest brother took him outside to show him a lunar eclipse, when he was 7 and his brother -- now Major General Lawrence L. Heinlein -- was 12. At 10, a comic strip (unnamed) caught his imagination, and later, Gernsback pulps. And always the stars -- he waxed poetic about the lovely skylines to be seen in California, and, remembering the nights I myself have stood chin high in the Mojave Desert, where I was born, and let the Milky Way carry my soul, I could verify his thoughts. You can too.

When did he start writing and why? During the Depression ... no other work. Ph.D.s had apple carts; what could engineers do?

Where'd he pick up his use of slang? He never used *current* slang, said the creator of "grok" and "TANSTAAFL", it doesn't last long enough. So he just made it up, that's all, which got him started on Isaac Asimov, recalling the opening poem in *Nine Tomorrows*. "If Isaac doesn't know it," Heinlein proclaimed, "don't bother with the Encyclopedia Britannica." Applause general.

The next question was one I'd wanted to ask, but had frankly feared to, owing to RAH's saturation with queries about *Stranger in a Strange Land*. He was asked why there was so much difference between *Stranger* and his previous novel, *Starship Troopers*. He huffed a little in a friendly fashion and denied there *was* any difference at all, seeing as he had worked on the two Hugo-winning books simultaneously, alternating one to the other.



Earlier, he had showed us a handful of blue note cards, the like of which he was never without – “I even keep them on the rim of my pool.” He had begun keeping note cards on the concept of *Stranger* in 1947 or ’48, and the idea so excited him that he wrote “thirty or forty” cards about it. However, other, more commercial projects intervened, and it wasn’t until ten years later that he was able to compose the “hook” sentence – “Once upon a time there was a Martian named Valentine Michael Smith.”

More delay set in. In all, he spent four years working on *Stranger*, not continuously, but a piece at a time. No one has ever been able to spot the true breaks. In that time, *Starship Troopers* was conceived – the “new” Heinlein born. For a time he alternated between those two books, both of which, he claimed, were descriptions of aspects of human love. The soldier in *Troopers* loves in that he is willing to die for his comrades-in-arms. As for the concept of love in *Stranger in a Strange Land* ... “Read the book!”

I did, in 1964. I was 14. With horror I reached the section where the stripper, a typical Heinlein female, seduced Jubal Harshaw. It wasn’t immoral to me – but it was terrifying. And somehow I did not approve. To this day I have not read that book through again.



Another card appeared in Heinlein’s hand, bone-white in the glaring spotlight. “Do you consider yourself a romantic, a realist or a cynic?” Heinlein admitted to being a romantic, and a realist too, since “the real world is a romantic and wonderful place. Anyone who thinks otherwise falls into fantasy, and dull fantasy at that.” Enormous applause.

He recommended *Archie & Mihetabel*, the first time I’d ever heard of it, and told a story about a parrot and Shakespeare that I have unfortunately forgotten.

Why were there so many changes in his fiction through the years? He was sticking with the market, of course ... throughout his speech Heinlein insisted upon the total commerciality of his writing. Money was the sole reason for writing; writers were competing with six-packs; writers were jesters, beggars, clowns. I didn’t believe he really felt like that—he would not have pushed ideas at all in his fiction if risk were involved, were his feelings truly so.

The watch on his wrist, that “marvelous little invention,” ticked on towards nine, the hour the speech had to close, and the gathering move into the outer room for autographs. Heinlein took a final question.

“Is there any chance for a novel about Lazarus Long taking place *after Methuselah’s Children*?”

Heinlein said, “I’m not dead yet.”

We moved into the other room.



After getting home from work at a few minutes past 5 that May 29, I busied myself eating something, anything, changing my clothes, choosing the books I would carry with me to have the great man autograph. Tales of the ’62 worldcon revealed a man who was understanding about such things, so I knew I could take some. Besides, I had called the Y and asked.

As you might know, I am interested in getting Hugo winners and classics autoed, and not much else. Four books, therefore, were drawn from my Hugo-winners shelf, and one thick mutha from the nominees for the 1974 award. *Hmm, that’s quite a handful* ... the decision-making process began.

Stranger had to be among those I took; it was his best-known novel, and ‘62’s Hugoer, after all. My personal favorite among his books was *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*, ‘66’s winner, so that too was sure. But if I took *Starship Troopers* and *Double Star*, let alone *Time Enough for*

Love, wouldn't I be that despicable creature, the fan who thought of pro writers as trophies, autograph machines?

So, a compromise ... *Stranger* and *Moon* went with me, the rest stayed home. I went out to catch the bus.

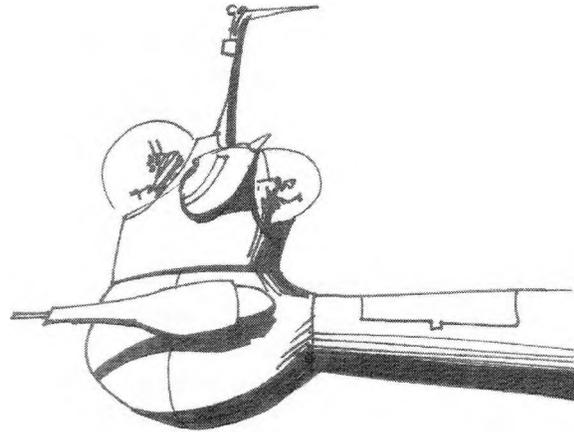


From behind a grand piano in the Art Gallery – photos on the walls of various Pottery Center speakers, including my old Berkeley teacher, Lillian Hellman – a table and chair were brought. Heinlein sat and called for books – they would take precedence. I set *Stranger*, open to the title page, before him. The crowd clustered around, looking at him, up close, and before I placed *Moon* down on that little table, I looked at him, up close.

On stage Robert A. Heinlein had appeared straight and yet frail. A foot away, he seemed *strong*. Not a move was sloppy or ill-considered; even a 12th Century Zouave resurrected from the ranks of the hereafter would know that this was a military man who sat there, signing his name over and over again. His skin was pale but not pasty. Liver spots dotted his wrists. His face, I was told the seat of his recent medical problems, seemed taut and firm.

I spotted my friend Bart, waiting patiently by the door, and near him, my Berkeley comrade and onetime roommate, Tom Collins. Tom introduced me to Alexei Panshin, whom I had last seen at St. Louiscon after the Hugo ceremony. *Rite of Passage* had just lost to *Stand on Zanzibar* and he looked depressed. Then he thought he was depressed.

Bart and I left to scarf a slice of pizza down the block. After Bart departed via the underground, I walked back to the Y.



pottery



Harlan turned to me and muttered, "I hate fans."

The celebrated Mr. E had two very good reasons for saying this. At the 8th Avenue Science Fiction Shoppe, two kids of around 12 or 13 were bedeviling him unmercifully. That's the type of fan Harlan seems to attract, when he isn't getting the Clarion hopefuls.

"So do I," I said. "And I'm one myself. Schizophrenic."

"Aw, you're growing out of it, Guy," said Harlan, and squeezed my arm.

The fans I meant in talking to Harlan were the adulators. Worship must be reserved for gods, and writers are not gods. Hemingway was a man in pain. Faulkner was a man in pain. Certainly the commercial giants of our field of interest are simply men trying to make a living, or if they are aesthetically oriented, write as well as they can. They aren't autograph machines and shouldn't be professional jokebutts. But still, the urge to talk to special men like Harlan or Heinlein moved in me as well. I suppose this fannishness is what I "hated" – what I feared.



When I returned the art room was considerably thinned out. The circle around Heinlein's table was only one or two fans deep. Tallest among them, Alexei Panshin. For a moment, feeling melodramatic, I looked over Panshin's shoulder at the man whose influence on his life must have been immeasurable. I turned away to examine again the photos on the walls and the framed letters of thanks – I was surprised at how many were from writers I'd heard give readings – until I heard on single, strong word: "Goodbye!"

Heinlein was on his feet, an index finger pointed at Panshin's chest.

"Well," Alexei stammered, stepping backwards, "you *said* for people to come up to you with their ideas ..."

Heinlein cut him off. "You read private letters of mine to an audience," he said, "and all I have to say to someone who reads another man's mail is ... Goodbye. Goodbye!"

Panshin *fled*. There is no other word for it. Collins, very upset, followed with others. I knew nothing then about "Sarge" Smith and the Heinlein correspondence Smith's widow had given to Panshin. All I knew is how furious it had made Heinlein ... and how devastating it must have been for Panshin. A copy of *Heinlein in Dimension* sat abandoned atop the piano.

RAH sat and signed some more books, then rose, wearily I thought, posed for photos with a fan and congratulated the fan's father on his musicianship; apparently he was familiar with the man's work. Nervously I kept trying to approach him and communicate in some way. Finally, as Mr. and Mrs. Heinlein were walking out the door, I asked him if he had heard from our mutual friend, Daniel F. Galouye.

"It *has* been a long time," he said. "How did he look when you saw him? I haven't been to New Orleans in so long ... Ginny, have we heard from Dan and Carmel recently?"

Another fan jumped in to pay his obeisance. For a few moments, outside, I watched while the director of the poetry center waved down a cab for the Heinleins. It was 10PM and they had an early morning interview show.

Jackson Burgess, my writing teacher at Berkeley, once told my class about literally running into Ernest Hemingway on a New York City street. Watching the genius get into a cab, he was struck by the stiffness with which Hemingway moved. Heinlein lowered himself into the

taxi the same slow, agonizing way, and apparently he bumped his head on the door jamb, since Miss Virginia was rubbing the back of his head as the cab launched itself into the tumultuous mechanical torrent of 3rd Avenue.



AFTERWORD, 2007.

As my boss' secretary said that day, when I mentioned that I was going to see Heinlein, "I didn't know they played *hai-lai* in New York!"

I never got *Starship Troopers* autographed.

Despite the numbing pomposity and illiteracy of my 1974 writing, I've mostly kept my mitts off it. Here and there I've shifted a verb to the past tense, and I've excised most mentions of New Orleans' doomed bid for the 1976 worldcon, but otherwise this is my account of 5-29-74 as it was originally printed. Even burdened by my embarrassing brooding on the nature of fannishness, professional-worship and other such drivel, what I wrote about that event, an important one in recent genre history, right after the event is at least an accurate account.

(At least as far as I'm concerned. Tom Collins composed his own memoir of the night – I saw the stencils if not the finished product. He thought I'd gotten some details wrong. Tom?)

When I next saw Robert A. Heinlein, at the '76 worldcon, I stupidly mentioned attending the 92nd Street Y, and he seemed mildly embarrassed. I said no more, because I liked and revered Heinlein, and didn't want to make him uncomfortable ... and, to be truthful, because I'd seen him angry, and was scared to death of him.

Which was too bad. While we know from Earl Kemp's nightmarish experiences how demanding Heinlein could be of con committees, RAH treated his readers well. At both MidAmeriCon and SunCon, he was gracious and charming – and wore righteous Hawaiian shirts. I remember once at Big MAC when he stepped outside for a smoke, and was instantly swarmed. I remember his patient smile at the girl talking and talking to him ... and the unlit cigarette he kept cupped and hidden in his palm.

And he was generous with other professionals. From one of Philip K. Dick's story collections, I've learned that when RAH learned that Dick was suffering, he sent him a loan. A close friend of John Varley told me how moved he was by a letter of praise from Heinlein. Both he described as *colleagues*, despite the vast differences in their styles and opinions (think of two SF writers more different than Phil Dick and Robert A. Heinlein). Obviously, the community mattered more.

One can only wonder how different our field might be had he thought of Alexei Panshin as a colleague. I don't know Panshin; I've seen him only once since that disastrous night, at a regional convention, and we didn't talk. But it's impossible to believe that Heinlein's rebuke of 4-29-74 had no effect. For one thing, though Panshin's writing since has been extremely entertaining – his website, *Welcome to the Abyss*, is a hoot – a definite hurt and bitterness dominates. When RAH is mentioned, Panshin critiques not only the work, but the man, *ad hominem*. I can't help but think that the 92nd Street Y had a part in that. And if this talented author, who won a Nebula for his first novel and delighted Sfdom with his tales of Anthony Villiers, has published any fiction since that day, please refer me to it.

By the way, that's Rick Norwood with Heinlein in the photograph. Rosy – then Rose-Marie Green, 14 – took the picture in her family home, near Cape Canaveral, Florida, on July 15, 1969, the eve of the day Robert A. Heinlein finally saw men leave for their *Destination: Moon*.



There's no way that zine
will fly--it's just not
aerodynamically sound!





POPULAR AND PILLORIED

Gregory Benford

In the early 1990s the National Academy of Sciences held its annual election to membership. Richard Feynman had already become so exasperated that he resigned his membership, saying that he saw no point in belonging to an organization which spent most of its time deciding who to let in.

But this time the best known astronomer in the world was nominated. Each section of the Academy votes separately on all candidates, and the astronomy division voted the fellow in. But there were negative votes from other divisions, notably the particle physicists. They disliked his public persona, some said. He displayed an arrogant egomania and was really not up to caliber, despite his fame. Plainly, envy played some role. Rumors flew.

Rarely is a candidate turned down, but it happened this time. So it is that Carl Sagan was not a fellow of our National Academy.

World famous, principally for *Cosmos*, he had done solid work on planetary atmospheres since the early 1960s. After the National Academy rebuff he increasingly spent his time taking science to the greater world.

Many scientists don't think much of such endeavors. But the opposite of popularized science, in the long run, is unpopular science.

That we see daily, in the scare-'em-with-science strategies of Hollywood movies, doomcryer personal liability lawyers, environmentalist Chicken Littles, and the many political tribes who seek new threats in every fresh technology. (I make these comments as a member of about half a dozen environmental groups, too.) All these have legitimate issues, but play the scary aspects to the hilt—because it works. Metaphorically, I suppose one could say that once we were a nation of Robert Heinlein fans, and now we're a country of Stephen King readers.

We Americans, once the embodiment of Yankee ingenuity, have a national schizophrenia about science. We love its wonders, hate its threats, dread its manifest power.

Much of this comes from a public that simply doesn't know much science, or even how scientists think. Films and TV can routinely get away with mammoth plot boners. Radiation will make you grow an extra head, or create giant insects. Viruses spread instantaneously, even through hard vacuum. Spaceships bank and rumble like fighter planes. Mutations quite often cause super powers, of course.

If only the low levels of media were affected, fine. But we have legislatures which pass laws making π exactly equal three, exactly, and a notorious Kansas school board that wants Intelligent Design taught alongside evolution. Codes written by politico-lawyers set contamination standards higher than the purity of rainwater, so nature itself is "polluting" Lake Michigan. Dollars get wasted on absurd safety requirements, while elsewhere people die for want. Politicians consult horoscopes.

What can scientists do about this? Patiently try to get through to the broad public with the truth.

Sagan fought this battle well. He provided a step-by-step hypothetical reasoning primer called “the baloney detection kit” that readers could use to evaluate questionable claims. Pseudoscientific concepts such as astrology, crystal healing, and alien abduction were, in Sagan’s view, ultimately mind-numbing appeals to authority. *Believe this without evidence; hey, it will make you feel better.*

In his last book, Sagan resurrected the Enlightenment metaphor of reason as a candle shining into the darkness of the universe, empowering individual human beings to think freely and take control of their own destinies.

But the National Academy insult stung. Carl is gone, but we scientists are left with the problem. Who has replaced him? No major interpreter of astronomy has taken his place. Indeed, there is no widely recognized scientist in our popular discourse. At least we have many good writers about science—E.O. Wilson, Richard Dawkins, John McPhee, Neil Tyson, Stephen Weinberg, Brian Greene, Lisa Randall, others. Note they are mostly biologists and field theory folk, two recently gee-whiz subjects. They’re mostly men, too.

But few of these undertake major TV productions, testify before Congress or draw a crowd the way an even minor rock star or politico does. Why?

Partly it’s about skills. Few learn the tricks of good media savvy. Few invest the time to cultivate those in the media culture. Not many rub shoulders with that quaint culture that equates “intellectual” with “humanist” alone.

Then there lurk the upper levels of science itself, a fairly snooty club mostly based in the east coast. As a graduate student I asked Jacob Bronowski how his TV series, *The Ascent of Man* had been received at our university, UCSD. “I have the feeling they’d rather I hadn’t,” he said rather crisply. When I asked a prominent particle physicist what would happen if Sagan were alive and came up for an Academy vote again, he said, “The same.”

Unless the culture of research science realizes that it may be a major stumbling block to its own popularity, we’ll remain part of the problem, too.

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Continued from page 5

pulling from his suitcase the copy I’d mailed him and asked *me* to autograph it for him! I don’t need anymore egoboo for the rest of my life; Bob topped off my egoboo tank quite nicely with that gesture. That same evening Bob gave me blanket permission to reprint any fannish writing he’d ever written or ever would write and it’s by that authority I now convey full permission for *Challenger* to reprint what I personally consider to be the single best piece of fanwriting ever written; Bob Tucker’s “How Dull Was My Weekend”.

Earl Kemp tells me that **Dean Grennell** most likely took the photo of **Lee Hoffman** and Tucker on our back page. I don’t think I’ve ever seen a better portrait of a fannish friendship.

As always, *Challenger* is blessed by marvelous artwork. These pages have seen **Kurt Erichsen** and **Charlie Williams** often (Charlie’s picture of **Astrid Anderson** is reprinted from *Mimosa*, courtesy the artist and **Rich Lynch**), but this is only the second time **Julia Morgan-Scott** has graced us. Both she and **Sheryl Birkhead** are on deck for cover appearances here. Also, we feature the lasting, seemingly inexhaustible genius of **William Rotsler**, **Ian Gunn**, and **Joe Mayhew**. Thank you, people, and I’ll be bugging you again.

Three closing notes. First: **Ned Brooks** provided essential help in locating the original publication of my Alfred Bester interview, republished last issue. A special *salaam* of gratitude to him.

Second: a reminder that my DUFF trip report, *The Antipodal Route*, is on sale through me for ten dolla’, every cent of which will go to the fabulous Down Under Fan Fund. If you send a check, make it out to **Joe Siclari**, current administrator; I’ll send him the money and you the zine.

Finally, very special thanks to you, our readers, for nominating *Challenger* for the Nippon 2007 Hugo. We can’t attend, alas, but have asked **Naomi Fisher** to represent us at the ceremony. It’s just a thought, but ... wouldn’t it be great to if she got the chance to show off her new dress?



A SFPAn and frequent Chall pal, Gary's first piece for our zine dealt with watching paint dry. Bet he'd have preferred that to this.

How I Escaped my Peruvian Kidnappers

Gary Robe

Art by Kurt Erichsen

OK, is that a melodramatic enough headline to sell this zine? I thought so. Yes, I got kidnapped during a visit to Lima. I wasn't hurt or even threatened with violence, and I'm obviously here to tell the tale. It makes for interesting party conversation.

The obvious question you might ask is why a lone Gringo was doing arriving at midnight in Lima in the first place? I am an R&D chemist for Eastman Chemical Company, based in the

company's corporate headquarters in Kingsport, Tennessee. As the only fluent Spanish speaker in my group it is a natural extension of my job to be work on technology support and business development in Latin America. So in addition to my responsibilities for new product and application development, I get to travel across South America to promote the use of Eastman's line of raw materials for the adhesives industry. Before you get all jealous about me getting to sun

myself on the beaches in Rio or explore the trackless Amazonian wilderness let me tell you Robe's First Law of International Business Travel; they don't put glue factories next to tourist attractions.

This trip through South America was planned well in advance since it required coordinating the travel of four Eastman people plus setting up customer calls in two different countries involving three sets of local distributors. As with most such trips there weren't a lot of choices in making connections. I had to leave home on the morning of Sunday, April 2 in order to make sure I would be in Atlanta for the single daily flight from there to Lima. If I missed that connection, I might as well cancel the whole trip. I would then arrive in Lima in the late evening of the 2nd to be met by a limo service driver at the airport for transport to a hotel for a few hours rest. I would then make calls in Peru on the 3rd and 4th, then take a night flight from Lima to Santiago, spend two days in Chile and then return home on the night of the 6th. My flight leaving Tennessee was right on time, but the Atlanta-Lima flight was delayed for over an hour due to the plane not arriving on schedule. With the delay I arrived in Lima at 11:15 p.m. I was seated right next to the door of the plane so I was one of the first passengers off the plane. Normally this would be a trivial detail, but it plays in to later events.

The line at the immigration checkpoint was very long and very slow, so it was well past midnight when I hit the customs inspection station. I got another delay when I got flagged for inspection at the customs checkpoint. After passing the immigration and customs gauntlet I went through a first set of sliding opaque glass doors to a vestibule in which drivers were waiting for incoming passengers. This was where I expected to be met, so I carefully scrutinized all of the placards on display. My name wasn't among them. There were also two kiosks in the vestibule area belonging to the limo services, also displaying passenger's names. Once again my name wasn't there. By this time I was wondering what to do when I saw a second set of glass doors open and a multitude of people waiting outside, again with signs. I figured since I hadn't been met by the VIP services my driver must be waiting out there, so I passed through. Outside the security wall there were dozens of drivers waving name

signs plus several hundred traveler's relatives expectantly massing in a typically Latin chaos. One-by-one I examined the names on display and didn't find mine. To make sure I passed over the crowd three times to make sure I wasn't missing anything. No luck.

OK, I thought, now what? Well, in Mexico, Sao Paulo, Buenos Aires, and Santiago there are taxi stands in the airport where one can purchase passage and pre-pay for the ride without having to pass cash to the driver. Lima should be the same, shouldn't it? That was the simple assumption that sealed my misfortune. Lima is different. I discovered later that aside from the high-class limo services (like the one that should have been waiting for me) there are no taxi companies in Peru. Every one of the city's taxis is an independent operation and every driver works for himself. At 1 a.m. on a Monday morning there's no such thing as a safe taxi. Your only hope is luck of the draw and hoping to get an honest driver.

I searched through the Lima airport in vain for a taxi stand. Of course, as soon as I left the exit for arriving passengers I attracted a gaggle of "admirers" asking to help me with my luggage and if I needed a taxi. I instinctively blew these guys off saying that I was meeting a friend and didn't need a ride. I walked through the airport, and even looked outside on the curb for a sign of a taxi kiosk, but soon discovered that there was no such thing. I then decided to head back to the reception area to check again just in case I had either missed my name or the driver was running late.

At the point I tried to cross back into the arriving passenger exit a man in a suit with airport security credentials hanging from his neck stopped me and told me I couldn't pass back in once I had left the area. Being a naive obedient and gullible Gringo, I believed him. I told him that I was supposed to have a driver meeting me, but I couldn't find him. The guy then took me around to all the meeting points outside the debarkation lobby once again, but no luck. Then he asked if I needed a taxi. I really didn't want to have a stranger call a taxi for me in Lima. I considered trying to call the hotel to find one of my colleagues. My US-based cell phone does not work in Peru and all the public phones in the airport required a local phone card. I considered

buying a phone card, but had no local currency. It was after midnight, all of the currency exchanges were closed so I was out of luck on that front. Not seeing any other option, I relented and asked for a taxi. He then made a call and escorted me out to the queue.

In about five minutes the taxi my savior called arrived. It was a station wagon, maybe 10 years old with the word taxi painted on the side. The driver asked where I was going and I told him the name of the hotel and the section of the city where it was located. He said he knew where it was. I asked if they could take a credit card or if I needed to convert some dollars into Peruvian Soles. The driver he could take the credit card. When I started to get into the back passenger seat the driver said, "No! Sit up front with me!" I didn't think a lot of it because I often get chatty taxi drivers who like to interrogate a Spanish-speaking gringo visitor, so I got in. The taxi started to pull out and then stopped again and a second man jumped in the back seat. "Oh, well, I'm screwed now," I thought as we pulled out of the airport.

Once the second guy got in I knew that I was taken, and started to think about how to get out of the situation. I happen to be a Second Dan Taekwondo black belt with extensive extra training in street-style Hapkido fighting techniques. My martial arts credentials are not just for show. My Dan degree is certified by the World Taekwondo Federation governing authority at the Kukkiwon headquarters in Korea (Certificate no. 05926522). I have twice qualified for the US Taekwondo Union tournament in Olympic-style full contact sparring. I have sparred with national champion-level opponents 20 years younger than me. I don't claim to be a greatly talented practitioner of martial arts, but I can hold my own in a street fight. One of the great things about martial arts training is its complete invisibility. There's no way to tell that the 50-something somewhat pudgy White and Nerdy type guy sitting next to you knows how to yank your arm off and hand it back to you in under two seconds. That at least gives me the element of surprise in a bad situation. If they had just known how I was thinking about doing them Grievous Bodily Harm these guys might have driven me to the hotel and only overcharged me for the ride. On the other hand, if I somehow tipped my hand they might

feel obliged to escalate the encounter with hidden weapons. At this stage of the game my job was to stay cool.

The driver was no problem. I could just reach over with my right hand and yank his right hand off the steering wheel. As I straightened out his arm I would pop his elbow with my left hand. That would at least dislocate the elbow and possibly break it. At that point the guy wouldn't be doing much more driving that night. The problem at that point was twofold. The first problem was tactical. What could I do about the guy in the back? Since I didn't know if he was armed it would be the epitome of stupidity for me to take out the driver without incapacitating Amigo-In-The-Back. My best move would be to backfist him in the face with my left hand on the follow-through from breaking the driver's arm. The problem was that I didn't know if I could reach him in one movement and if I managed to land the blow if it would be decisive. The second problem was strategic. Even if I managed to subdue both driver and Amigo ITB, I would be lost. In Lima at 1:30 a.m. With a taxi and two broken and bleeding "taxi drivers" to explain when I flagged down a policeman. Visions of the Lima jail at sunrise went through my head. No, unless they showed a sign they were getting violent it wasn't in my best interest to attack. As we pulled onto the main highway of Lima the driver chatted about some of the landmarks of the city and asked about where I was from and how long I would be in town. After a few minutes came the question I was anticipating. "How will you be paying us?"

I replied, "I have US dollars and a credit card."

"Oh, no." said the driver, "We can only accept Peruvian Soles. You need to get some."

"OK," I said, "Just take me to the hotel, I can get them to convert my dollars and I can pay you whatever you want."

At that point the driver turned the radio on loud and left the main highway. Without explaining what he was doing we started across progressively darker and more deserted roads. As the neighborhoods got rougher-looking I got progressively more nervous. I didn't want to give too much of my mental state away to my abductors by asking dumb questions like "Where are we?" and "Where are we going?" The answers

to those were obviously "In our power" and "Somewhere worse." We finally came to an ATM on a lonely, unlighted street.

"Get out and use your credit card here to get Soles," commanded the driver.

I wasn't about to leave the car on a dark street to approach a cash machine. Even if my abductors meant me no immediate harm, I couldn't be sure of anyone lurking in the shadows near the ATM waiting for someone to withdraw cash. Even more, I couldn't really use my credit card to get cash there. My corporate card has no PIN assigned, so it is useless. I decided this situation was too much out of my control, so I balked.

"No, I'm sorry but I can't do that. Look here. This is a corporate credit card. It is not authorized for cash withdrawals — only credit! If I try to use it here the machine will just eat it. There is no PIN for this card."

"Don't you have another card?" the driver suggested.

"No this is the only one I have," (I lied — I had personal cards I could have used, but why did they need to know that?). "Just take me to the hotel and I'll get you money."

The taxi then took off again and the driver and Amigo ITB discussed the situation. Finally they called on their cell phone for their boss to talk to me. I explained that I couldn't use my card in an ATM and I would just have to go to the hotel. "No, let me talk to the driver," said the voice on the other end.

After some discussion the taxi took a new course and started roaming the city. Some time later we pulled into a gas station. "Give me your card and passport," asked Amigo. "They can run a voucher on your card here and give us the cash we need." Riiiiight.

Not seeing another option, I handed over my credit card and passport and let them run a charge slip. They brought me a couple slips of paper to sign — nowhere showing any amount that was being charged or the name of the business. I signed like an obedient Gringo should and we pulled out of the station. They didn't even give me a copy of the receipt. Of course by now we all knew that this was a shakedown, so why pretend that anything else was happening? We repeated this ritual until the card wouldn't run any more.



At no point were my kidnappers threatening. They were friendly and chatty and pointed out places I might want to visit. They asked if I liked pretty girls and if I wanted to meet some. They knew a place where they could fix me right up. They also pointed out casinos and nice bars where we could all go for a drink if we wanted. I explained sadly that it was now 2:30 a.m. and all I wanted to do was go to my hotel and sleep a few hours before going to work in the morning.

After my credit card gave out the driver said we were going to the hotel in 15 more minutes. I tensed again because this was the really dangerous part for me. What were they going to do with a passenger they had just ripped off? Dark alleys and sharp objects started playing through my head. Instead, the driver actually took off on a new direction and the quality of the neighborhoods started to improve. After about 10 minutes on our new route the taxi's motor sputtered and died. The driver ground the starter for a while and then he and Amigo ITB got out, raised the hood and scratched their heads. At the

time this didn't seem very suspicious, only a perfect continuation to an already memorable welcome to Peru. The taxi had, however, stalled right in front of the main gate of the Lima University — an awfully conveniently describable and public location. Two minutes later, miraculously (if one was inclined to believe in miracles at this point in the game), another taxi pulled up and asked if we needed help. My kidnappers transferred my luggage to the second car and shook me down for a \$10 tip "for their trouble!"

In retrospect I see that the breakdown was a really a set-up. Since they now had everything they set out to get from me they now needed to get away from me, they were just being polite about it. They could have taken me to some out of the way place, tried to rough me up, and taken my wallet passport, clothes and anything else that caught their eyes but that would probably have been too provocative to escape notice by the authorities. They must have had a cutoff switch somewhere in the car so they could stop at the pre-arranged point to hand me off. The second driver did actually take me right to the hotel. He was even trying to be a legitimate taxi and even gave me his card if I needed transport again. Once at the hotel I paid him generously just to watch his guilty reaction. I hope he choked on it.

I bolted from the taxi and the bellman retrieved my luggage. Since I had arrived so late, at least I got a room upgrade for my troubles! The first thing I did was to call Citibank to cancel my credit card.

This was a much more difficult ordeal that it should have been. I called the number on the back of the card and got a recorded message that this number was out of service at Citibank and gave me another number to call. I called that one and gave the operator my card number and explained I was calling from Lima, Peru, I had been kidnapped and that I needed to cancel the card. She then asked what kind of account this was and I told her I it was a corporate card. "Oh," she replied, "this number is only for personal cards."

"OK, give me the number for Corporate cards."

"It's 1-800-....."

"No," I interrupted, "you weren't listening! I'm in Peru — I can't call an 800

number!"

"Oh, let me see." ... wait 5 minutes...
"The number you need is 1-904, etc."

So I call the third Citibank number of the morning. Ring, ring, "Hello, Citibank." I go through the ritual again. "I'm sorry sir, this number is for Business Accounts, I can't help you with Corporate Accounts." "OK, what's the number for Corporate accounts?"

"It's 1-800-....." Lather, rinse, repeat. So I call the fourth number and am put on electronic on hold for 20 minutes at 3 a.m. I then re-call the last number and go through the ritual again.

"Sir! I just talked to you a few minutes ago!" was the frosty reply, "This number is not for Corporate Accounts!"

"Yes, but the number you gave me just kept me on hold for 20 minutes!"

"Well, sir, you must be patient. They can get busy over there sometimes."

"At 3 bleepin' o'clock in the morning? You gotta be kidding! I want to talk to your supervisor!"

"That won't be necessary sir, just call this number, 1-904- etc."

This was a different number than she gave before, so I finally got the Gosh This Guy Actually Has A Legitimate Emergency number.

As I explained my situation to the person handling Citibank Corporate accounts — not Personal or Business accounts mind you — she said, "Oh, yes, you do have several charges here!" No duh.

"Out of curiosity, madam, was there any kind of security hold on that account before I called?"

"Oh, no sir. The system only flags suspicious transactions."

"So three \$150 charges at Lima, Peru gas stations within 90 minutes are not suspicious?"

"No, sir, I really can't comment on what the system would flag as suspicious."

I will say that Citibank was quite efficient in that they had a new card waiting for me when I reached Santiago.

At that point I was still shaking, but I decided to brush my teeth and try to get a few hours of sleep before going to work. I got my shaving kit out of my laptop case to get my toothbrush. When I opened it I noticed something strange. My cordless razor wasn't there. With a

sinking feeling I opened my laptop case and found that all there was left was a couple bottles of water that Amigo ITB had left for ballast while he had cleaned out my bag of everything that looked valuable. That was why the driver had kept the radio blaring. He was covering the sound of Amigo stripping my computer bag.

They took my laptop, digital camera, razor (kind of funny because its case was broken and I had almost replaced it before leaving), power adapter, modem cable, Ethernet cable, memory stick and laser pointer. I was really bummed about the 2GB memory stick because it was hidden in a side pocket and carried my hard drive backup.

At this point I was rather philosophical about the whole incident. I got through it intact, with only material losses. I really regretted losing all the years of data stored on the laptop, but the computer has a power-on password, Windows has another password and the memory stick had yet another password, so there was no way any of those devices would be of much use. Yes they got my camera and a 1 GB SD card, but I had just downloaded all the pictures I had on it, and they didn't have the battery charger or download cable so the camera was pretty useless in itself.

I didn't end up in a vacant lot in a Lima slum beaten, wounded, or dead. I didn't get disappeared into the mountains and held for ransom. These were possibilities going through my head as I took my early morning tour of Lima. Oh, sure I could have given them a surprise Taekwondo demo if they had turned violent, but if it had come to that I didn't foresee much good coming from resorting to martial arts. I'm also wiser now.

I now travel with an International cell phone. The company provides them for the asking, but until I had this problem nobody had ever told me they were available! I have to turn it in every time I return and any numbers I've stored will be purged, but at least I can contact colleagues and hotels if needed.

I had succumbed to something I have feared for years — overconfidence. I thought I knew the drill for the place I was going. Actually, I had never arrived by myself in Lima before. I had always been traveling with a companion who took care of the ground transportation. On top of that the Lima airport has been renovated since my

previous visits, so I was actually arriving into terra incognita. It would have been better if I panicked, gotten semi-hysterical and gotten the attention of the actual airport security. They would probably have been able to call the hotel for me, or directed me to the right place to meet the limo driver. When contacted the next day the limo service claimed they had a driver waiting for me and they were searching for me until after 2 a.m. when the hotel indicated I had arrived. I suspect that I exited the plane and cleared customs more quickly than they judged possible and didn't have the sign out soon enough. If I'd had five minutes more delay in the immigration line I might not have had this adventure.

The next morning over breakfast I told the story to the horror of my colleagues. I then called Eastman Security in Tennessee to report the theft of the computer. I assured them I was whole and hale and that the laptop was properly password protected so it would be virtually impossible for anyone to access the hard drive. The power-on password was coded into the drive itself so nobody could plug it into another PC with an unsecured BIOS and access the data. The man I talked to asked me for a contact number so that if security wanted to get more information they could call me back. I gave them the number of the hotel but explained that I was going to work in 15 minutes and wouldn't be back until evening.

In the evening we returned to the hotel there was a message slip under my door telling me to call the Eastman help desk. I called and began to explain the situation when the guy on the other end interrupted me with "Oh, you're the guy who got kidnapped in Peru!"

I was taken aback since it had been about 10 hours since my first call and this fellow had to be on the second shift. That meant that my tale of woe must have carried over at shift change! "Yeah," I answered cautiously, "Am I that famous up there?"

"Oh, yes," the technician replied, "You've been the hottest topic of conversation we've had for days!"

I asked what they needed from me and all they wanted to know was where in Chile to send my replacement laptop via DHL. I explained that I wasn't going to be in one place long enough for them to track me down and that they could catch up to me with new computer on Monday morning

when I got back to my office.

After two days of visiting customers in Peru we took a night flight down to Santiago. The limo service that missed me on my arrival gave me a free ride in to the airport as recompense. That was a nice gesture, but I would have preferred for them to have been waiting for me upon arrival. The driver had instructions to only take me in the car, but I asked our Regional Director to ride with me since I really didn't want to ride alone. We had a nice conversation about the business and travel security in Latin America on the way. He was thankful that I wasn't bitter about my experience and had pretty much taken the incident in stride. I admitted that I was pretty nervous about it, but I wasn't going to let it deter my enthusiasm for working in the region.

I have since returned to South America twice since this episode and have not had a single problem.

Traveling abroad is a wonderful experience that I heartily recommend to anyone with the means and curiosity to do it. I am a seasoned traveler. I've visited five continents and most countries in Europe, Asia and South America. If you get the opportunity I say, by all means go, but keep these guidelines in mind:

Know where you are going. The Newark airport can be just as dangerous as, say, Lima, if you aren't careful! The local visitor's bureau or your travel agent isn't necessarily going to warn you of trouble spots. Websites like Lonely Planet and US State Department can be invaluable resources in finding out the scoop before you land.

Don't travel alone. If I had a traveling companion, even a total greenhorn turista from the

Tennessee hills, I would have not gotten the "Millionaire tour" treatment in Lima.

Sleep on the plane. Predators pick on weakened prey. If you arrive exhausted, you won't be thinking clearly. If you can't sleep on a plane, at least learn some relaxation techniques so you don't arrive under stress.

Have names and numbers in your hands. Have a hard copy of hotel reservations in hand. You are most vulnerable as you arrive. It is essential to be able to contact someone you know and trust at your destination.

Have an International phone card with you. Unless you are paying for international service your cell phone is an excellent paper-weight once you leave the US. Have some way to tap in the local phone net that you can rely on before you arrive.

When in doubt, look for a uniform. A uniformed official is less likely to do you harm than someone in

plainclothes. Notice I say less likely, not *unlikely*. Official corruption in many foreign countries is so rampant it is not prudent to put much trust in local authorities. In an emergency, though you are better off approaching a uniform than a suit. The exception to this rule is if the only person in uniform around is carrying a machine gun. These guys are *NOT* tour guides, and are likely to be unreceptive to helping a distressed tourist.

Don't get cocky. I've flown a lot of miles and have had to get extra pages added to my passport. I thought I had seen it all and got fooled by my own overconfidence. It's a great, interesting world out there and most of it is worth seeing. I certainly won't fall for the same trap again, and I hope I have more respect for the other traps out there I haven't stepped in yet!



IN MEMORIAM



WALTER M. SCHIRRA, JR.

I remember when *Sigma 7* flew – the Mercury capsule purposefully named for an engineering symbol. I was in 8th grade. I was 16 and in high school when Gemini 6 first suffered the loss of its Agena target rocket – with which it was to practice orbital rendezvous – and then a premature shutdown on the launchpad. It was only the coolness of the lead pilot that saved the mission, allowing NASA to turn the problem around in two days and launch for orbit. There it found Gemini 7, already in space, and approached so closely that the pilots could see each other's faces. From the moment the recovery ship brought the capsule aboard, and opened it to its commander's smile and handshake, America was ahead to stay in the space race.

After the dreadful Apollo 1 fire, the country doubted its own competence and commitment to spaceflight. *Life* magazine countered that miasma by printing on its cover the face of the commander of the next mission, Apollo 7. His visage, alone, was enough to restore confidence; when he took that first Apollo into orbit, we knew there was no turning back.

We also knew there was a human being up there, an exuberant joker who could flash a sign during a TV broadcast asking the nation's chief astronaut "ARE YOU A TURTLE?"

He was one of the Seven – the best pilots on Earth – the guys with The Right Stuff. When we landed on the Moon, he wept. "We're home," he said. Home being the furthest reaches of the human spirit.

HOMES AWAY FROM HOME

Mike Resnick

Now that I just turned 65, I figure I've done, if not most, at least well over half of my traveling. And during those 65 years, I have been fortunate enough to stay at some of the more memorable hotelries on Planet Earth. Since I play to cut back on the traveling a bit during the next 30 years, I thought this might be a good time to share my memories of those accommodations with you.

We've stayed in places that were far more famous, but the most luxurious hotel accommodation we ever had was when I was Toastmaster at the 1988 Worldcon in New Orleans. The pro and fan Guests of Honor -- Don Wollheim and Roger Sims -- had first choice, and both chose suites in the Marriott, which was across the street of the Sheraton and hence 40 yards closer to the French Quarter...so we "settled" for the Presidential Suite in the Sheraton.

It had a living room with a 60-foot window wall overlooking the Mississippi, a dining room with a mahogany table and matching chairs for 24, the master bedroom had a gorgeous 4-poster king-sized bed on a raised platform and two walk-in closets, there were 3 other bedrooms (once we found out how many bedrooms we had, we filled them with Laura, a friend of Laura's, and my father). There were 6 bathrooms, each with its own phone and television. There was an express elevator that went from the lobby to our front door on the 49th floor and nowhere else.

I've stayed in my share of 5-star hotelries in the US, Europe and Africa (and the Sheraton isn't one; even before Katrina it only had 4 stars), but I've never experienced an accommodation like that one.

The contract between producers and the Writers Guild stated that we must be flown first class, driven by limo, all meals paid for, and housed in 5-star hotels. The most luxurious of them was the Beverly Hills Four Seasons. We had a penthouse suite, which is to say, a bedroom and a sitting room. (Well, once we had one penthouse; a couple of other times we had the same floor plan but not on the top floor.) It was spacious without being overwhelmingly so. What made it worth the money (not ours, thank ghod!) were the furnishings: a bed, chairs, chaise lounge, tables, desks, that must have cost upwards of \$40,000 for the two rooms...and the wallpaper probably went \$75 a square yard. Elegant bathroom, too. That was the Capella International hotel.

The Miramax hotel was a little less in-your-face elegant but far more interesting. We had the same suite each time, at the Beverly Hills Nikko Inn. It was exceptionally high-tech. Every desk and table, even the nightstands, had rows of buttons that controlled everything in the suite. Push this button and the drapes would open or close; push that one and they'd open or close in the next room; push this other one and the water would start running in the bathtub; push another and room service would speak to you

on the intercom so you didn't have to fumble for the phone. There were actually two bathtubs: a normal one, and one that was maybe three feet on a side and six feet high. Of course they had high-speed computer connections (before 99% of the hotels did), and state-of-the-art widescreen flatscreen TVs, stereos, DVD players, you name it, in each room. The furnishings and overall ambience were not up to the Four Seasons, and every time we had a business dinner they drove us to the Four Seasons' restaurant rather than eating at the Nikko, but as I say, it was a lot more interesting suite.

(We never saw anyone in the Four Seasons reading anything except *Daily Variety* and the *Daily Hollywood Reporter*; they were also the reading matter of choice at the Nikko, but at least a couple of people in the lobby were furtively peeking at the *Wall Street Journal*.)

When we went to Botswana in 1990 as part of a 6-week safari that included Zimbabwe and Malawi, we knew we wanted to stay at the luxurious Chobe Game Lodge when we visited the Chobe National Park, and we reserved a room. When we landed in London, prior to getting on a plane that would take us the rest of the way, the agent who had arranged the trip to our specifications was waiting there to greet us, and mentioned, in passing, that the honeymoon suite, the one where Richard Burton and Liz Taylor had spent a week after their second marriage, had just had a cancellation, and would we be interested? Ordinarily I'd have said no, but I'd just made a few foreign sales I hadn't anticipated, and we were only going to be at Chobe for 3 days, so I agreed.

By the time we got there two weeks later, we'd been staying in tented camps in the Okavango Delta (for "Delta" read "Swamp"), and some dry, dusty areas on the edge of the

Kalahari, and we were ready for a little luxury. The suite was composed of a bedroom and a parlor, each about twenty by twenty feet. Beautiful tiled floors, lovely stucco walls, glass doors from each room leading out to a balcony. More important, the suite was air-conditioned -- the only air-conditioning in the whole country other than in the capital of Gabarone. And it had a ceramic tile bath -- the first enclosed, indoor bathroom we'd seen in ten days. Very comfortably furnished.

We walked out onto the balcony and saw that we were only about thirty yards from the Chobe River. We were also at the very end of the building. The balcony lead around to the side, and we couldn't imagine what there was to see there, but we walked around

the corner and lo and behold, there was our own private swimming pool, built and positioned in such a way that no one not on our private balcony could see in. We used it maybe eight or ten times while we

were there, and never wore a swimsuit.

Each morning we were served a huge breakfast on our deck, which we ate while watching maybe two hundred elephants drinking and frolicking in the river a short stone's throw away. (And when I wrote up my favorite meals in an article a few years ago, I stated that the best single dinner I've had in my life was at the Chobe Game Lodge.)

I know why Liz and Dick stayed there. What I don't know is why, with their money, they ever left.

We stayed in another luxury lodge on the same trip. About a week after leaving Chobe we found ourselves at Hwange, the biggest and best game park in Zimbabwe. I'd reserved a room at the Hwange Game Lodge, but instead we were given a huge suite, each room sporting numerous pieces of native



Shona and Mtabelle artwork and weapons (spears, not AK-47s.) Had a private balcony overlooking a water hole, too. Not as luxurious as Chobe, but awfully good for Africa.

But I hadn't asked for it, and I didn't want to pay the thousand a day or so that it must cost, so I went down to talk to the manager about getting the room we'd reserved, and he said not to worry, it was a gift of the management.

Just out of curiosity I asked if the lodge was full and he had no choice but to give us a free upgrade, and he said no, the lodge was about half empty. Then why did he give us this gorgeous and obviously expensive suite at no cost, I asked. He grinned, pulled out a copy of *Paradise*, which was my science-fictional allegorical history of Kenya, and mentioned that when he saw my name on the guest list a few weeks earlier he'd decided that he wanted to make a good impression on me, that he never wanted me to say anything bad about him or the lodge if I ever wrote a novel about Zimbabwe. (Which I did -- *Purgatory* -- three years later. Actually, I never mentioned the lodge in the novel, not from any ethical concerns about my suite, but simply because, unlike Kenya's Norfolk Hotel, it played no part in the country's history.)

Still, it was a hell of a nice surprise, and a hell of a nice suite, too.

With one exception (Chobe), all the places I've mentioned so far, while luxurious, were paid for by someone else. But on our first trip to London, we stayed at the fabled Ritz, and paid for it ourselves.

(Why? Well, it was 1984, and a small suite -- bedroom and "sitting room" -- cost 150 pounds...and at the time the pound was worth \$1.05. And since every room in or near Picadilly cost 90 to 100 pounds, we figured what the hell, why not splurge for a few days? I'm glad we did, That same suite today costs over a thousand pounds a night, which seems more that a little bit excessive.)

It was a nice, elegant suite, not up to the Four Seasons or a couple of others I'll get around to mentioning, but nice. But what made it memorable were the public rooms on the main floor. Of all the high teas we've ever had, at hotels, at Harrod's, everywhere, none ever approached the Ritz for quality. The lobby was as luxurious as you'd expect a Ritz lobby to be, the one dinner we had there was excellent, and they had a casino as formal and classy as one expects (and never finds) in Monte Carlo.

A hotel in Manhattan that was every bit as good as the Ritz, at least when we were going there, was the Plaza, where we stayed maybe a dozen times, back in the days when I had to travel to New York a couple of times a year to meet editors and solicit work. The rooms made you feel like a small child: the doors were ten feet high, the doorknobs were almost at eye level, every chair could easily have held a typical 450-pound fan, the bathtub almost needed a small ladder to climb over the side. It wasn't that expensive for a 5-star Midtown Manhattan hotel back then -- maybe \$150 a day throughout the 1970s; these days I'm told it's \$600 for a room, \$700 if you want a view of anything besides the brick wall of the adjacent building. (I can't remember the number of the room we always requested back then, but it overlooked Central Park.)

The lobby, like the Ritz, went out of its way to impress. Your pupils would contract from all the gilt on the furniture. They don't serve high tea in the States, but every night, on the way home from the theater (I don't think we've ever spent a single night in Manhattan without seeing a play), we'd stop in the lobby, sit down at a table, order coffee and a dessert (or sometimes Carol would order brandy or wine), and we'd be serenaded by a tux-and-tailed string quartet. Very nice way to end an evening.

The Mount Kenya Safari Club is one of the three or four true luxury resorts in all of

Africa. Initially a private club created by William Holden and some partners, the first few members included Lyndon B. Johnson and Winston Churchill.

It's at 8,000 feet altitude, not quite halfway up Kirinyaga (i.e., Mount Kenya). The sweeping lawns contain a huge swimming pool, a few ponds for water birds, and some bowling greens. There's an animal orphanage on the premises, and a private reserve, specializing in the rare bongo, within a mile. There's also a truly fabulous set of gift shops, which deal not only in the ordinary tourist items, but exquisite bronzes and paintings by East Africa's best. And there's a stable for those who like riding through wild mountain territory. Best of all, there's the main lodge, with a restaurant that's world-famous. Members in the private dining room (we had a few meals there with our guide, who's a member) order off a menu, and get a 7-course meal...but it's the general dining room that's garnered all the fame. It's an endless buffet -- there are 6 meat tables, 4 dessert tables, 22 tables in all. If you choose to take your meal out to the patio, you'll be entertained by local dancers and drummers.

We've been there a number of times, and always stay in a private cottage -- there are 8 of them, about 200 yards from the main building. Each cottage contains two large bedrooms, each with a walk-in closet and each with its own oversized bath, and a living room, complete with television (rare on the safari trail), wet bar (even rarer), and fireplace. Sliding doors lead from the living room to a patio with chairs, tables, and umbrellas, where you can sit and watch whatever's happening on the sprawling lawn, or just enjoy the peak of Kirinyaga in the distance.

A few miles around the mountain from the Safari Club, on the other side of the town of Nanyuki, is Ol Pejeta, an elegant private estate formerly owned by Adnan Khoshoggi. It's 110,000 acres, filled with game -- including the increasingly rare black rhino -- and you either stay in Khoshoggi's

main house (it's got four huge, elegant guest rooms plus an unbelievable bridal suite and bath), or, as we did, you stay in a private cottage that is even nicer than the one at the Safari Club. The food is excellent, served on a large dining patio, and there is a swimming pool available to all guests (which never number more than 12.) And of course you never have to leave the property to spend a couple of days driving around observing game.

And believe me, when you get to the Mount Kenya Safari Club or Ol Pejeta after a couple of weeks of tents, outdoor bathrooms, and ostrich egg omelets, you think you've died and gone to heaven. There's not much in the States or Europe that can match either of them for luxury. (Though the Chobe Game Lodge in Botswana can, and I'm told that Londolozi, a private reserve in South Africa, also can.)

A few years ago we took a trip to Jamaica and stayed at the Royal Caribbean, which has since been sold to (yuch!) Sandals.

It had the nicest beach in the Montego Bay area, some 600 yards of white sand, plus a couple of swimming pools for those who didn't like the ocean. We stayed in a 3-room cottage, furnished in Island Expensive, with a shaded patio facing the sea. Breakfast was served on the patio every day, lunch -- on days we were at the resort; we took a lot of day trips -- was served right at the ocean. Dinner -- and it was formal: tuxes and strapless gowns every night, just as Ian Fleming would have wanted -- was served on a series of tiered patios and decks that surrounded a large dance floor. There was live entertainment every night, specializing in songs Harry Belafonte had made famous. (You wouldn't believe how quickly you can become sick of "Island in the Sun" and "Jamaica Farewell".) The clientele was about 1/3 American, 1/3 British, and 1/3 Canadian.

There were tennis courts and pool tables, with bars and bartenders everywhere, as well as wandering calypso bands everywhere. In the morning a staff of maybe

40 would scour the manicured grounds, picking up any leaf that had had the audacity to fall off a branch during the night. The place owned some glass-bottom boats, and rented sailboats of various sizes. You could also rent a van and driver and plan your own day trip to Dunn's River Falls, or Ocho Rios, or the rum distillery in the middle of the island, or the extensive nude beach at Negril, or even distant Kingston. At night, after the dinner and the dancing, you'd sit on your patio and watch the brilliantly-lit cruise ships passing by.

If there's a nicer way to spend a couple of weeks in January, we've never found it.

Down in the Grenadines, at the Southern end of the Caribbean, there's a little island, maybe 3/4 of a mile in diameter, called Petit St. Vincent.

It's not easy to get to. We flew from Cincinnati to Miami, changed planes, flew to San Juan, Puerto Rico, changed planes, flew to Barbados, changed to a little 5-seater, flew to Union Island, and from there took a motorboat to Petit St. Vincent.

Carol had read about it, but we didn't know anyone who had been there. Evidently some Cincinnati-based cargo pilot flew over it -- it was uninhabited -- weekly during World War II, and promised himself that when the war was over he'd buy it. And he did.

It's a very hilly island, surrounded by a coral reef. There's a main office/restaurant building in the center, and it's got the only electric power on the island. Scattered around the edges of the island are 11 luxurious villas, each two huge rooms, with an equally large bath, and with both covered and unshaded

patios. Outside each villa is a flagpole, with two flags: raise the red flag and no one will approach the villa under any circumstance; raise the green one and someone will be there on a moped (a concrete walk for mopeds surrounds the island) within 2 minutes.

You have beautiful views of the sea, but you can't see any other villa from your own, which means they can't see you, either. You can wander around naked for a week, or sleep naked on your deck, and as long as you've got the red flag up no one will ever know. (Not that anyone cares in the first place.)

Great dining. They serve fresh shellfish -- you can walk around and see them unloading the traps each morning -- and there's filet and prime rib for those who don't

want fish. I don't drink, but Carol assures me they have a top-of-the-line wine list.

Not much to do but relax and unwind. There's an obstacle course that no one uses, and there's great snorkeling, and that's it. You come home tanned, rested, and well-



fed.

Some hotels were witnesses to history. A precious few, like the fabled Norfolk Hotel in Nairobi, were *part* of history. We've been to Kenya four times, and whenever we've been in Nairobi -- the start and finish of each safari, and twice for a day or two in the middle -- we've always stayed at the Norfolk, which, though far from large, has housed royalty from perhaps 50 countries, plus a goodly number of Presidents and Prime Ministers.

The main hotel has about a hundred rooms, but there are also a dozen two-and-three-room cottages on the grounds. At various times we've stayed in cottages that

had been home to Robert Ruark, Elspeth Huxley, and Bror Blixen. (Never did stay in Teddy Roosevelt's cottage, damn it). Each cottage, in addition to its one or two bedrooms, tiled bath, and living room, has a shaded patio overlooking the two large, colorful aviaries. The hotel's restaurant, the Ibis Grill, is one of the three best in town, and the waiters are more than happy to serve you on the patio of your cottage.

Everywhere you look there are plaques commemorating some event that took place there, or some person who stayed there. In 1981 the main hotel was rocked by a fanatic's bomb on New Year's Eve; it was rebuilt in exactly the same style and colors, and by mid-1982 you couldn't tell there'd ever been an explosion. Unlike, say, the Mount Kenya Safari Club or the Chobe Game Lodge, the Norfolk wouldn't be a 5-star hotel anywhere else in the world; it might not even get 4 stars in the US, England, France, or Hong Kong. But it is so steeped in history and tradition that there is simply no place else to stay when starting or concluding your East African safari.

And a final batch of better accommodations:

- *Chicago's Palmer House*. We stayed there, in a small suite, after moving to Cincinnati. It's Chicago's answer to the Waldorf, and in my opinion is even nicer/ (When I was a kid I used to go there all the time. There was a magician's supply shop on the second floor -- I have no idea if it's still there; I'm talking half a century ago -- and as long as you bought a trick, no matter how inexpensive, the guy who ran the place would dazzle you with tricks no kid could afford. It was a great way to see a half-hour professional magic show for maybe \$1.25, and I never missed the opportunity when I was in the Loop.)

- *San Francisco's Mark Hopkins*. Nice, but not quite world class. Same with its famed restaurant, Top of the Mark; nice, but there are a lot better.

- *Miami's Fountainbleu*. They held the 1977 Worldcon here. It was in receivership at the time, and not at its best. Fabulous lobby, capable of seating 1,500 people in comfort, and a world-class swimming pool. Rooms and restaurant were nothing special.

- *Orlando's Peabody*. Not five stars, but as nice a four-star hostelry as you could want. Fine restaurant, great 24-hour coffee shop, wonderful lobby with its own 30-foot-high waterfall, large comfortable rooms. Home to the 1992 Worldcon.

- *Nancy France's Grand Hotel*. Every city in Europe's got a Grant Hotel (we hated Brighton's in England), but this one really *was* grand. Spacious rooms, huge bathrooms, excellent restaurant.

OK, so much for the good stuff. And just to show you I don't always luck out:

In the early 1990s, the Nebula Banquet was held in New York. I flew up alone. Just as well; Carol would have taken one look at the room and insisted that we move to the Plaza or the Waldorf.

Some genius booked us into the Roosevelt Hotel in Midtown Manhattan. At a time when the convention rate for most Midtown hotels was maybe \$250 a night, the rack rate for the Roosevelt was \$88.

It was overpriced.

The room was small. It smelled of mold. There were exposed wires along the baseboard on three of the four walls. The sink leaked. I killed a roach while I was unpacking. Never saw another roach; I think the rat I saw the next morning ate them all. Two of the three lamps had burned-out lightbulbs.

It's possible that the Roosevelt is still standing. If so, I don't know why.



I asked Tom to explain the insurance situation in New Orleans, and sure enough, here's

NOLA AND INSURANCE

Tom Feller

One of the conditions for rebuilding New Orleans, southeast Louisiana, and the Mississippi Gulf Coast is money from insurance companies to pay claims. The main issue regarding insurance payments is that standard homeowners and business insurance policies exclude flood damage. Many homeowners and business only take out flood insurance if their financiers, usually banks, require it.

Sometimes businesses think they have flood insurance, but their insurers disagree. For instance, Allianz Global Risks refused to pay a \$100 million claim by Tulane University in New Orleans on the grounds that the policy excludes floor damage, and the university sued them for \$250 million. Northrop Grumman Corporation sued its insurance company, Factory Mutual. It had shipbuilding operations for the U.S. Navy in Pascagoula, Mississippi, and Avondale, Louisiana. Northrop was Mississippi's largest private employer with 10,000 employees in the state before Katrina. In Pascagoula, the hurricane damaged 1.75 million square feet of buildings and destroyed 301 vehicles, 81 pieces of heavy equipment, and 26 cranes. The issue is that much of the damage was a result of flooding, and Factory Mutual disputed whether the policy covered it. Northrop argued that it was an "all-risk" policy that did not exclude flooding.

Paul and Julie Leonard, homeowners in Pascagoula, Mississippi, who did not have flood insurance, lost their lawsuit against Nationwide Insurance to overturn the flood exclusion in their homeowner's insurance policy. Their house, 515 feet from the beach, suffered \$130,000 in damages, but the insurance company had only paid them \$1,661 for wind damage and argued that the remainder of the damage was caused by flood. The judge ordered the insurance company to pay \$1,238 more, but upheld the principle that flood damage was excluded.

State Farm was the single largest homeowner insurer in Mississippi, so they had many Katrina-related claims. They denied many of them on the grounds that the damage came from flooding rather than from wind and rain and were accused of not acting in good faith. Eventually however, they lost a case in a Federal district court in southern Mississippi. The court decided that they could not arbitrarily deny a claim based on the flooding exclusion, but actually had to prove that flooding was the cause of the damage.

Then State Farm settled a lawsuit with the Mississippi Attorney General, the Mississippi Insurance Commission, and a lawyer representing individual homeowners. They will eventually pay at least \$50 million and possibly as much as \$500 million to homeowners in the settlement. Around 1,000 homeowners, whose houses were so thoroughly destroyed that it is impossible to determine whether flood, rain, or wind caused the destruction, will be compensated for 50% of the value of their homes. The insurance company re-opened the claims of about 35,000 homeowners and re-examined whether wind caused any of the damages.

I don't know whether these developments influenced their decision, but a short time later State Farm announced that they would stop writing any new homeowner insurance policies in Mississippi. This became a trend. Allstate, the country's second largest property insurer, cancelled 95,000 homeowner policies in Florida and 28,000 in New York, specifically New York City, Long Island, and Westchester County. Although no hurricane has hit New York since 1938, the insurance company decided that the risk is too great. It also does not write any more new policies in the 14 counties along the Texas Gulf Coast.

In general, businesses operating in hurricane-prone regions have found that their insurance premiums have risen and their coverage has decreased, assuming they can buy insurance at all. The August 28, 2006, issue of *Business Insurance* cited Nashville-based HCA (formerly Hospital Corporation of America) as one example. It operates hospitals on the gulf coast and found their property insurance premiums increased by 167% for less coverage. Total insured losses world-wide for all insurance companies from catastrophes were \$61.2 billion in 2005 and \$27.5 billion in 2004.

Further to the articles you published on Robert E. Howard, I attach a scan of a commemorative postmark issued by the USPS in his honour.



Robert E. Howard
STATION June -9- 2006
Cross Plains, TX 76443
1906-2006 REH Centennial

Unfortunately the writing on the sheet of paper in the typewriter is too blurred in my copy of the postmark to make out but is probably a list of characters and titles from Howard's writing.

Courtesy Dale Speirs
Box 6830
Calgary, Alberta
Canada T2P 2E7

THE CHORUS LINES

*For this first letter, a note of explanation: Diane Hughes, a psychotherapist, was a frequent attendee of many Southern conventions in the '80s and '90s, and a great friend. When I recently chanced upon her e-dress I asked her to read **Challenger** #23—and my closing tribute to my pal and neighbor, Cynthia Snowden.*

Diane Hughes
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I just finished reading the piece about Cynthia and I have tears in my eyes. You did a

wonderful job of capturing the essence of a very special person and the senseless tragedy of her death that occurred at least partially because of the lack of responsibility of those who should have been more careful in providing for her care in a crisis, and I certainly don't mean you.

It was beautifully written and very moving, and I wish you my condolences for your loss. It sounds as if what you had with her was an utterly irreplaceable relationship. My sympathies.

I'm delighted to hear you are married. I commend you for being a public defender which as I know is poorly paid and difficult work.

It's good to be in touch again.

In 1984, when I was at one of my lowest points, ever, a lovely lady approached me at a convention and drew me into talking about my pain, the first step towards finding balance and hope and peace of mind. She was not only a fan, but a psychologist, not only a psychologist, but a friend. You were that lady. It's been too many years.

Susan R. Higgins
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Thanks again for yet another outstanding issue of *Challenger*. I love every breath of it.

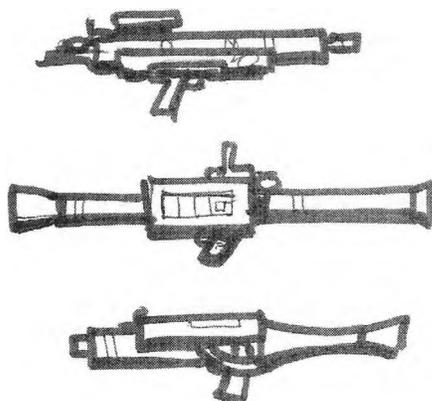
Shelby Vick
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Many compliments, Guy – *Chall 25* is – to me! – a big success. Great in appearance, stupendous in content. I particularly liked Curt Phillips' adulation of Bob Tucker and agree with it all. (For a different aspect, check out www.planetarystories.com where our sixth issue is dedicated to Bob.)

I also immensely enjoyed Mary Ann van Hartesveldt's analysis of Scientology. I remember when the first edition of Dianetics came out, remember reading it, remember *wanting* to believe things were so simple ... and then, I remember when Realization Hit. It isn't science-fiction; Scientology is fantasy!

Also enjoyed the interview with Bester. Science fiction authors had a lot to do with the comics field, just as the field had its effect on science fiction.

In short, great issue!



Henry L. Welch
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Thanks for the latest *Challenger*. As always, a fine issue.

The Watts Towers seem like a manifestation of some kind of insanity. I am generally too practical to even think of attempting a similar endeavor on almost any scale.

I'm not certain if Greg Benford is aware, but the TV show *Myth Busters* did some experimenting on the airline crash position. They were able to determine that the extent of your injuries would be greatly reduced in that position relative to sitting upright. The picture wasn't pretty either way and the certainly didn't address the likelihood of fire or roll-over during a crash.

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Thanks for *Challenger* #25, which came in today's mail, along with the latest issue of *Extrapolation*. I read *Chall* in one sitting, but I have yet to open *Extrap*, and I suspect I'll never read that issue. It's devoted to Ursula K. Le Guin, and I think my time would be better spent reading her than reading about her. The nice thing about *Challenger* is that I can both read you and read about you at the same time.

Jeeze, pass that Extrapolation on to me! Any good critical writing about LeGuin is worth reading.

By far the most interesting piece in this issue was "Hebrews 13:3". I'm fond of quoting Kipling's line from *Captains Courageous*: "The most interesting thing in the world is to find out how the next man gets his vittles." When someone not only tells you how he makes his living, but conveys the passion that led him into that work and sustains him through the disappointment and despair that are built into it, you can see how absolutely right Kipling was. From "Hebrews 13:3" I learned something about Louisiana's criminal justice system, something about the miscreants who find their way into its clutches, and a good deal about who Guy Lillian is and what makes him tick. These are all things well worth knowing - especially the last.

Your piece on your interview with Alfie Bester was fascinating. I well remember Heinlein's appearance at the 92nd Street YM/YWHA (not the YWCA) in Manhattan. He didn't give a speech, but rather selected written questions from the audience and gave his answers to them. Afterwards, when he sat signing autographs, I was standing nearby when Alexei Panshin walked up and tried to introduce himself. Heinlein refused to shake hands with him, on the grounds that Panshin

had read letters that Heinlein had written privately. That was the only occasion on which I saw Heinlein in person; the experience didn't cause me to wish to repeat the experience.

As you can see from "A Show of Hands" this issue, I was there too! You should've found me and mentioned that we'd be exchanging fanzines in thirty years.

I was glad to see your pictures of the Watts Towers, which do indeed remind me of the whimsically embellished architecture of Antonio Gaudí. He, too, used scraps and shards as decorative elements in his constructions; and he, too, worked *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*. Of all the arts, architecture is the one that most compels my interest, I think because it reveals more than any other endeavor the assumptions of the architect and the society in which he works. The painter and the composer may create the most elaborate of structures: but they need not worry about them falling down! That danger imbues architecture, even at its most whimsical, with a seriousness that is sometimes lacking in the other arts.

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It would be interesting to compare *The City and the Stars* with its first draft, *Against the Fall of Night*. This is a strange case indeed, of a book that was seriously revised – and yet the first draft is still considered an independent, worthwhile work. The broad theme remains the same (in some ways, *Against the Fall of Night* is as much a thematic follow-o John W. Campbell's stories "Twilight" and "Night") but there is a wealth of comparison to be made of the differences.

Clarke is one of the few writers who considers the universe as it stands beautiful and mysterious, who can evoke the wonder of reality. Sometimes this is in an entire book, and sometimes the wonder can stem from a single, wondrously suggestive line: "I do not think we will have to wait for long."

As I've said before, one of the most moving scenes in *The Whole Wide World* is the one where Novalyne Price hears a sound coming from the back of the Howard house, and following

it, finds Robert bashing out a Conan story, bellowing the words out as he types them. How often do movies show the creative impulse so vividly? (I wrote an outline for a story where REH writes a letter asking for help with derivations of words, from which much contact, change, and cross-fertilization occurs.)

The recent fire in Cross Plains, which stopped just short of the Howard House, is proof that Crom is not as totally uncaring as some would like you to think.

The guy at the *Space Cadets* signing who had the wrong idea: I've read about similar cases. A few years ago, when the wondrous glow of JMS was still lighting the sky of fandom, after *Babylon Five* had gone off the air, JMS and the stars of his new show, *Crusade*, were guests at a con. People noticed that the actors went around in a group and never talked to anyone outside their official appearances. Did they think they were at a Creation*Con?

Now that the 70k limit is a thing of the past, why hasn't someone striven for a "Restored" edition of *The Demolished Man*, with the prologue restored? It works for others. But then, even with the Prologue restored, *TDM* would still be too short for today's book business.

The deleted sequence is printed and discussed in Redemolished, a book of Bester's essays.

Referring to the Hugo Awards as a "failed system" leaves the question of what else to do. The FAAN Awards are hardly that much different, just smaller. So what does Frohvet see as the failure, and what does he think should be done?

Langford, as said, has a voting bloc. It isn't like that nomination of that book; these people genuinely think him the best fan writer they read. Or only. Wherein lies the problem. Can we make people go out and read a broader spectrum of writers?

Campbell often argued as a contrarian. Christopher Hitchens might take a lesson from his works.

"Worldcons lately have been ghettoizing fan-related programming." Tell me about it! Items put up against the Opening Ceremonies. Or on the last day of the con, an hour before closing ceremonies. San Antonio (and doesn't that go back a ways) had the best fan

program, but even there one could see the harbingers of decline.

Louisville's own Sue Grafton is running into a P is for Problem with her L is for Letter series of mysteries. It may be necessary for her to buy and take to heart Dr. Seuss's *On Beyond Zebra!*

*"SNEE is for Sneedle
A terrible kind of ferocious mos-keedle
Whose hum-dinger stinger is sharp as a needle..."*

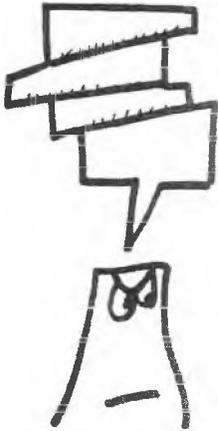
Guy and Bob: Thank you for your kind wishes.

*Wishes that worked! Congratulations on your Hugo nomination for **Heinlein's Children!***

I will say that Chris Garcia is a very enthusiastic recipient & LoChack of *Alexiad*. It's obvious that he lives in a dimension where there are 200k+ seconds in the day, and at least eight days a week (Beatles reference, y'know).

George Romney had only been elected governor of Michigan in 1962 and in those days that was not sufficient time in office to consider a candidate qualified for the Presidency. Also, he was born in Mexico, which some people might have thought a problem then.

I believe Burton's last words were actually "My God, I am a dead man!" See *To Your Scattered Bodies Go*.



There is a thread on James Randi's website forum about Ted Gunderson. Ted was assigned to supervise the digging up of the site of the McMartin Preschool. He and the diggers produced a report which showed that the cunning molesters had managed to fill in the tunnels so that they

were indistinguishable from the undisturbed soil. Thus invalidating several hundred years of archaeological experience and practice.

And now Tucker.

He wasn't supposed to die. He wasn't supposed to die! That was the whole point of those reports so long ago. He couldn't die.

Life goes on, but it will never be the same.

Mark Plummer
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Thanks for sending me that link to the new *Challenger*. I confess that of late – since you went electronic, essentially – I've not given your publication the attention it undoubtedly deserves. This is mainly because until relatively recently we've been existing on a dial-up internet connection which isn't exactly conducive to reading this kind of online fanzine.

Actually, I was mildly surprised to discover that you were able to tell us of *Challenger's* existence before James Bacon did so, and then secretly rather pleased that I was able to tell James about it myself. This last year or so I've noticed that we've moved on from us telling James things to him telling us, popping round of an evening to brief us on the latest developments in Worldcon politics or future plans for the British Eastercon or whatever. I fear sometimes that we may be subsiding into eminence, consigned to the sidelines and reduced to shaking our heads at "these young fans today" while James storms on towards world fandom domination.

And to think that I remember him from that first UK convention he describes in his article. You will be unsurprised to hear that the cling-film is rather an enduring imagine...

But yes, it's a very ... Jamesian piece. It starts off going in one direction, then suddenly changes tack, shooting off at an angle, forking, looping, doubling back on itself. I get the impression that he's developing a style which will ultimately enable him to embrace all themes and subjects in a kind of unified theory of everything, the James Bacon article to end all James Bacon articles in which he will explain what fandom is and what it's for, and exactly who did saw Courtney's Boat, as well as setting out an agenda to end world poverty and provide free energy across the globe, and all wrapped up in an absolutely killer recipe for chicken chasseur. Oh, and cling-film, of course.

I was thinking about the bookshop thing at lunchtime today while I was poking about in the local-to-my-office branch of leading UK book chain Waterstone's. It's actually next to the

London School of Economics and so the stock has more than a slight preponderance of books about, well, economics, but it also has an eclectic selection of remainders and I guess there's some entertainment value to be gained from looking at the fiction titles they expect to be able to sell to student economists. But for some reason it occurred to me that I'm probably one of the few people I know who's never bought a book from Amazon, and that's partly been because of the lack of a decent internet connection but more it's because I actually like the bookshop experience so much. And the Fantasy Centre shop that James describes is indeed one of the best.

It was not ever thus, mind. That gives a slightly false impression because it's always been a really good second-hand science fiction and fantasy bookshop – or at the very least so long as I've known about it – but it hasn't always been quite as welcoming as James describes. When I first encountered it, before present-day co-owner Erik came on board, I think they were altogether more cautious about their clientele. The traditional greeting, usually uttered within a couple of minutes of a customer entering the shop was, "You do know it's all science fiction, don't you?" There was some justification for this as to this day people wander in, scan the shelves for ten or fifteen minutes, and then ask whether there's a section for books on tree surgery or Uzbek detective stories in Urdu translation, but if you did know that it was a science fiction specialist store then this approach didn't exactly make you feel at home.

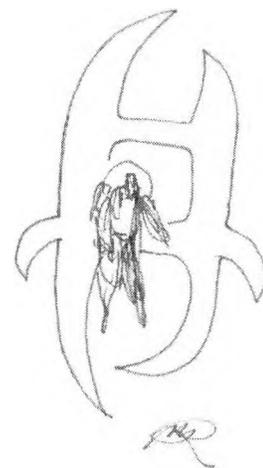
And then there was the collectors' section at the back of the shop – where the pulp magazines are on James's plan – and if you strayed into that there would be yet more questions. "Umm, you do know this is the collectors' section, don't you?" would come first and if you replied that, yes, you did, and you didn't immediately flee back to the cheap Fred Pohl paperbacks, you'd get as a follow-up, "Umm, some of these are quite expensive." I don't know, maybe it wasn't so bad if you looked as if you might be prepared to shell out two or three quid on a 1950s US *Galaxy*, and maybe I didn't and that was the problem, but somehow I rather got the impression that any purchase I actually managed to make was something of a victory.

It's not like that any more, and as James say, it's a friendly store where the proprietors will offer you a coffee and talk books and science fiction and, yes, sometimes fandom too. Erik has passed on several good items of fan material that come their way, items that they can't really sell but which they know have value to the right people and which they want to pass on to those people. It's still pretty quiet much of the time, it being the kind of shop that's almost certainly suffered with the rise of the internet, but other days I'll be in there and UK anthologist Steve Jones will drop in, and then Andy Porter, and then a long-term customer from France... and then that bloke that nobody knows who pokes about a bit for half an hour and then leaves with a dozen paperbacks or maybe asks if they have any books on sheet-metal working.

They used to have good parties too. Typically it'd be a Friday evening after the shop had technically shut. There would be beer and genial company and maybe the odd passing celebrity too. It was remarkably convivial atmosphere, not least because the conversation would inevitably turn to sf and if it did and you ever got into a disagreement you

would almost certainly be able to find the text that you needed to settle the dispute. And then dark fantasy writer Gerald Suster would show up, and we would have the same conversation we had every time where he asked me who my favourite author was and I said I didn't know, 'cos I didn't

really have a favourite, and then I'd make something up – a different person each time – and Gerald would try to light a cigarette rather ineptly and I would wonder again about the wisdom of allowing uncoordinated people to have matches around so much pulp paper, and then Claire and I and Pat McMurray and a few others would go and have dinner at the Korean restaurant up the road. Funs days.



You know, I don't think I've been to the Fantasy Centre for a while. Maybe I'll go tomorrow.

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Many thanks for *Challenger* #25. I always like reading Mike Resnick's diaries, and the account of his adventures in Los Angeles was, as always enjoyable. I've never seen the downtown Disney in Orlando, but I thought the one in Anaheim was pretty – one glance at those flowers told me I wasn't on the East Coast anymore – but synthetic. (When I go shopping, I really *don't* want to have a pop soundtrack undergirding my purchases, this grumpy baby boomer said.) As for Marie Callender's (not "Callendar's"), we used to have them out here, but the one I went to turned into a Brazilian *churruscaria* (that's Portuguese for "Bring me some meat!") place years ago. The pies were indeed quite good.

I'm glad you reprinted your Alfred Bester interview. I remember very little of the one conversation I had with Bester, except that the man was a professional. And one of the duties of being a professional writer is being *nice* to your fans. Of course fuggheads should be dismissed, but being a pro means being polite to everyone. Bester certainly knew that; so do Fredrik Pohl, Gene Wolfe, Brian Aldiss, and Terry Pratchett. It's the insecure minor writers who impose unreasonable demands on con committees and are rude and obnoxious in general. These temper tantrums are one reason they're *minor* writers.

In our genre, maybe, but that judgment could be due to their violating the social expectations of the science fiction community. Only a very few SF writers can act like snobs and get away with it.

However, I've seen major mainstream writers – Saul Bellow, for instance – behave petulantly and impatiently towards readers. That I ascribe to the distance imposed by genius; Bellow, after all, won the Nobel Prize. No, I must disagree here: the only duty of a writer is to write – the only duty of an artist is to tell the truth.

I also enjoyed your stories from your work as a public defender. Why did you get into this line of work? What do you enjoy the most about your job? I bet your workload is horrendous and that many of the people you represent are indeed

scum. But I also bet you get a great deal of pleasure out of helping poor people who have indeed been shafted by the system or by overzealous prosecutors.

*I picked up my interest in criminal law from **To Kill a Mockingbird** – providentially, on the tube as I write – and **The Defenders**, the great TV drama of the early sixties. My main satisfaction from the work comes from helping normal people who have blundered into trouble – fallen into addiction or written bad checks or engaged in petty larceny because they're broke. It's also enlightening and perversely diverting to deal with sociopaths. How better to appreciate normality than by comprehending aberration – and how better to appreciate the oneness of humanity than by seeing how little aberration deviates from the norm? "There's only one make of man, not two ..."*

Curt Phillips delivered a worthy tribute to Bob Tucker. I remember Tucker from the period in the late 1970s when I was a Midwest fan and took part in a few "Smooths!" at a Chambanacon or a Windycon. I've read some of Tucker's fan writing, and have a copy of the *Incomplete Bob Tucker*. Phillips is right that Tucker's fannish legacy is reminding us that there's far more to being a fan than writing letters to prozines complaining about authors with PhD's who don't know the correct melting point for busbars. But the wrong lesson to learn from Tucker's writing is that it's not fannish to be serious or passionate about SF or science. We should all try to be good writers and witty ones, but we should also realize that there's far more to writing than contemplative navel-gazing.

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I just read the product of your DUFF trip, *The Antipodal Route*. I enjoyed it. I thought I knew something about Australia, but I obviously don't.

RUNNING TO AUSTRALIA. Guy, just think: now you're world famous. OK, so they don't know too much about you in Bhutan or Tanna Tuva, but many do know you in Australia. If you take the right positive attitude, you can see yourself as being well-known as Bush, Jr. Of

course, if Bush, Jr. were in the limo, I doubt anyone would say: "Who's that in there with Guy."

NO PICNIC AT HANGING ROCK. It's not exactly true that a stranger wouldn't help you in the U.S. if you needed it. I live in an apartment house, a living arrangement not conducive to friendship. What makes it worse is that it is inhabited by every nationality known to man. The place is a veritable United Nations.

I am on talking terms with only two of my neighbors, and passably friendly with only one other. However, when some trouble happens, everyone closes ranks and tries to help. When a fire happens, when the roof caves in, people are trying to help one another. I would imagine, given the dangers of something like a Hanging Rock, Americans would be helpful there too. It's friendliness in between emergencies that would be the problem in the States.

THE FAR SIDE OF THE EARTH. Ah, Hurricanes for the Australians. Those Nawlirian drinks are pretty powerful. When I was in New Orleans in the early '80s, I went to Pat O'Brien's Bar [*where the Hurricane was created*]. I could have gotten \$2 back for the glass if I had been sufficiently sober to hand it back to the waiter. However, I wasn't. I bet others weren't either. That is why so many households have them as mementos. Hurricanes are so strong they remind me of the drink Old Factory Whistle. One shot and you're through for the day.

THE EASTER BILBY. My wife has seen marsupials on TV and, as an old horse woman, she doesn't trust them. While they are exotic and you like to look at them, she thinks they are prone to being temperamental. Maybe that's why you weren't able to report about anyone who has trained marsupials to do tricks.

Didn't you read about "Ron Jeremy"?

FOOTY. Footy a family game? That the women decided to shop rather than see it says it all. It sounds like Soccer (Footy?) in England, which, as we all know, gets violent. I know the rules prohibit violence to such an extent that you would presume it had been eliminated. However, I am always dubious about the extent to which rules are practiced. By comparison, I bet, our football players are wimps; they wear scads of protective gear.

BELLO CAMILLO. So your Australian friends are friends with Maoris, who come

ultimately from New Zealand. The Australians were only a relatively short time ago supposed to be racially and ethnically centered people. It was impossible for an oriental to immigrate to Australia. Now, Australia is very racially and ethnically tolerant. Of course, I doubt Australia is as tolerant as the U.S. Once the White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs) ruled the U.S. Now, a friend has cued me there was a sea change when no one was looking.

She says that there is a new racial, ethnic elite that rules America; and she's part of it. She pointed out she is Welsh, Scottish, Jewish, English, Irish, Italian and German. The new elite, she says, is not the WASP, but the All-American MUTT.

It will probably take a little longer for Australia to be ruled by the All-Australian MUTT.

BLUE MOUNTAINS. Having seen pictures of Normal Lindsay's nudes, I have to agree they have flesh on them, unlike the nudes we are used to. Also, they are more athletic and graceful. I don't know about their intelligence or their depth, however.

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Lost Causes... I think I must be the current record holder for Fan Hugo losses. It used to be Stu Shiffman, with nine non-consecutive nominations and losses, but then either the ninth or tenth time he came in with the largest number of ballots for once. Curiously, it was rather a while after Stu had started to drift away from SF fandom, when his art didn't seem to be much in evidence.

At the moment I lag far behind Stu's record – six nominations and losses – but so far as



I know that's as bad as it gets. Of course, plenty of fan editors, writers, and artists have had more nominations, but I think one or more wins as well. Does any of your readers have enough time on their hands to ransack their own program books to compile actual stats?

As for the perks of a "mere" nomination. Well... the pin is nifty. I have nowhere to wear them mind you. Nobody outside of fannish circles knows what they are, and anyone in fannish circles locally would probably think me terribly stuck up if I appeared with a rank of pins stuck to my shirt collar like military awards on Herman Goering's uniform.

I keep mine on a wicker cowboy hat with a button collection.

This leads me to the second perk mentioned. The terrific parties. I've never been to one, sorry. I can't afford travel, hotel bills, and worldcon memberships, so I've missed all those terrific parties where I might be able to rub shoulders with the Fabulous and talk about their next two book contracts.

Nor have I ever sat in an award ceremony. To be honest, I have to ask myself if I'd want to. From what I've heard of the awards they sound absolutely hideous -- like the Oscars, an exercise in self-love and time-wastingly obvious statements. For those who love such attention, it may be worth it when in due course you mount the podium to thank all the little people who made this possible, and when you have your photograph taken with other winners, but why are the other couple of thousand people there? Do fans like being toadies?

I think I'd rather have my Hugo mailed to me, and that all the flattery be in print.

The fact is, nominees are pretty much forgotten by the end of the worldcon. You never see their names in print again. Unlike the winners, you can't look them up in each and every worldcon's program book, you have to have last year's. And every year's. Otherwise, fame is fleeting.

As for reforming the system. I can't be done as long as the Hugos are voted by the membership of the worldcon. The damn fools are science fiction fans, if you can believe it! Ninetenths have probably never seen a fanzine unless we count *Locus* or *Ansible*. From the results of recent years I have to assume that for most of the

voters, fan art is what you see in convention art shows by artists who hope to become pro and are practicing doing *Analog* covers. I suppose a fan writer to your average worldcon member is whoever's name you see most often, which is not surprisingly the editor of the newsletter you're reading -- the only fanzine you likely do read.

I don't advocate a peer system to replace the Hugos. That's been tried, with no great success it seems to me. The FAAn awards from years ago were a brave try, but simply never managed the cachet of the Hugos, for obvious reasons. The more recent attempt to revive the FAAns has run up against the ugly truth that fanzine fandom has grown too old, too tired, and its small numbers diminished by division into very tiny cliques. As I see it, the FAAns aren't meant to be taken seriously and shouldn't be, which is fine. People have fun with them. But the Hugos they aren't and can't be.

The Hugos are with us and we can't be rid of them -- like Oscars, like *American Idol*, and like presidential elections. They don't work but the have acquired a life of their own. We learn to serve them in hope they will serve us if we are lucky.

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First of all, congratulations on another Hugo nomination! This might be your year, you never know. I honestly expected to see a few Japanese names on that ballot, given that there should be more Japanese fans than American fans at the Worldcon this year. No matter; here's to seeing some new names on the final results. There's you, Chris Garcia, John Hertz, Joseph Major and his great book on Heinlein...fanzine fandom is making its mark on the Hugos once again.

Excellent Taral cover, especially for the colour. Colour always makes the front of the zine, and adds to expectations inside.

The Democrats have taken the Senate, but the White House is, IMHO, theirs for the taking. As you say, there are good candidates, but the Republicans, with their abuses of not only American documents of basic rights, but human rights through the Geneva convention, have left a

very bad taste in the mouths of the American electorate and the world in general. Can Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama make America a friend to the world again? Or has Dubya ruined America's reputation as a paragon of rights and diplomacy? We won't find out for a while, but I don't think John McCain or Rudy Giuliani are what the US needs right now ... people would expect more of the same, and they do not need that at all.

So many SF people we respect who are in their higher years ... Ray Bradbury, 4SJ, and Sir Arthur C. Clarke. Only Isaac Asimov's books take up more space on our bookshelves. If only he was healthy enough to travel ... we could give him the respect due him the way so many gave it to Bradbury and Ackerman at LAcon IV.

I trust you noted the Pulitzer Prize awarded Bradbury this past April. Not a Hugo, but nice.

Speaking of the L.A. Worldcon ... I had hopes of finding out where the CFG suite was, but we never did find it. We ran into the Simses a few times, but we never did find it ... no matter, there was parties by the dozen, and enough food to ruin your diet and send your blood sugar count through the ceiling. Greg Benford's article reminds me that lately, there's been articles in the papers and on television about cellphones not really interfering with the electronics in planes and in hospitals. It's just a case of spurious stories becoming fact through constant retelling, or someone being overly cautious about what might happen, maybe.

I never met Alfred Bester, but his memory lived on with his name being used for a *Babylon 5* character. I've already told this story elsewhere ... when fans raved about Walter Koenig's performance as PsiCop Alfred Bester on various episodes of *Babylon 5* (as I did), one close female friend of mine wondered aloud where JMS got the name. I grabbed the Alfred Bester paperbacks I have off my bookshelf, and her eyes nearly fell out of her head. I explained all to her, and being mostly a media SF fan, she learned a lot that day. I have to admit, though, that not being a comics fan, I didn't know that Bester has written for comic books. There's someone else I wish could be around to see what his work has done for the field.

In this modern age, there are as always benefits and losses. One loss we suffer through is the loss of many good bookstores through the sterile big-box bookstores which offer some

selection, but no adventure, which is what I found in independent bookstores and in the good used book places. The tall rows of shelves, the musty paper scent ... they always offered some mystery. What shall we find? I have an account with a used book store to the south of us, but in Toronto, we are lucky that we still have a science fiction book store, Bakka-Phoenix.

The canals of Mars ... such a romantic idea, signs of a civilization not far from us, an idea that revived the romance of exploration and travel to far lands. The attraction Mars had for us quickly left when the canals were revealed to be mere markings, faint ones that may never have been there. Sometimes, reality intrudes where it's not wanted.

Al Gore was in Toronto recently doing his Powerpoint presentation, *A Inconvenient Truth*, and it was the hottest ticket in town, sold out in minutes. So many Canadians are sick of our government ducking out of its commitments on the Kyoto Agreement, and for gladhanding about so-called serious pollution reductions. Look for David Suzuki on the net ... he has become Canada's loudest and most intelligent voice on reducing pollution and global warming.

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Your courtroom vignettes were the best item in *Challenger* #25. Your courtroom stories usually are the best item in any given issue. Even though your venue is a long way from Southern California in a number of ways, things seem to be pretty much the same all over. The same problems at a different address.

Again I marvel at your visits to Watts Towers. I was the analytical officer for that area of Los Angeles back in 1970-71, and I've never been there. South-Central Los Angeles was pretty bad back then, and Watts was the worst part of South-Central. Things have undoubtedly changed since then. The endless stream of Hispanics have been moving into South-Central and forcing the Blacks out. The Blacks have the choice of either leaving under their own power or feet first. Politicians have noticed and decried all this hostility between Hispanics and Blacks. Which doesn't change a

darned thing. These two groups just plain don't like each other.

Mike Resnick's "L.A.con IV Diary" gives a glimpse of life in the pro lane. Not surprisingly, I was never anywhere near Mike Resnick during the entire course of the convention. After reading Mike's account of the convention, I am now aware of another reason why I would never make it as a pro writer. I couldn't eat that much no matter what. I only eat two meals a day, and usually they aren't terribly large meals. The only reason I ever ate lunch was because they gave a lunch break at work. My ex-wife once commented that I eat like I'm fueling a machine. As long as I get about the right number of calories at about the right times, I don't much care what I eat. That's more-or-less true, since there are some foods I definitely don't like. Aside from that, I am fueling a machine.

As Greg Benford points out, there are definite risks out there in the real world, and we can't possibly avoid all of them. Personally, I fly much less than I once did. It isn't the possibility of terrorists I fear but rather the certainty of homeland security. I figure I'm a very small target on a very big planet. Terrorists might get me, but

the odds are against it. Other people could get me as well. I could be walking down a street and a stray bullet from a robbery or a drive-by shooting could kill me dead. A driver could lose control of his vehicle and run me down on the sidewalk. I could probably worry about such things night and day if I wanted to worry about something.



Such thoughts occur to me, but I don't really worry about them. I figure there is no point to

worrying about things I can't possibly prevent. What me worry?

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Thank you for #25.

Cold Case Files (A&E) presented the Michael Crowe case for the third time on January 7, 2007. If you haven't seen it and they do it again, try not to miss it.

Richard Dengrove's review of Joe Major's *Heinlein's Children: The Juveniles* also was excellent. If there is any justice the book will win the HUGO. So, hopefully you and anyone else voting for the HUGOs will vote for it as #1 for Best Related Book.

"What Scientologist's Believe About mental Health – and Why You Should Care" by Mary Ann van Hartesveldt was outstanding.

Your continuing photos from your trip are very much appreciated. This time the Watts Towers. I lived in Pasadena (Los Angeles County) for 47 years before moving to Camarillo (Ventura County). But, I've never been to the Watts Towers. Heck, it took my then wife to get me to the Huntington Library in San Marino and it was only a few miles from where we lived. Any more pictures from the WorldCon itself?

Your continuing reports on your life as a Public Defender are also very much appreciated. I'm going to copy the latest (Hebrews 13.3 – Three Stories from Court) and send them to two or three friends with full credit to you and an explanation about *Challenger*. Well, I will not have to explain very much as they know about Science Fiction Fanzines (even if they are not SF Fans as such) and about my writing letters to them.

Concerning the case of "The Empty Man"—I found *Challenger* #14 and reread your commentary. I am unable to make a judgment about the interrogation as I don't have enough information concerning the case. How about furnishing more information? What was the final outcome, if there has been one? Was the dramatization on A&E on one of their Cold Case Files, or was it a separate program?

I understand the Empty Man has been granted a new trial.

Another fine issue and one of these years you will have a HUGO.

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Congratulations on another Best Fanzine Hugo nod, Guy. After reading this issue and perusing past issues on-line, I can understand why. You are producing a top-notch zine with fine art (lovely cover by Taral, by the by) and photos to accompany the articles, which are many and varied. Lots of interesting material herein. Overall, a splendid issue.

This is such a huge zine that it took me quite a bit of time to read it. Most fanzines lately seem to hover in the 30-page range, and then you clock in with this 76-page monster, which is a throwback to those days of yore when massive fanzines were produced on a regular/semi-regular basis. When *Challenger* #25 put a new dent in my mailbox, memories came banging back about those huge issues of the Haskell-era *Runes*, plus *Energumen*, *Mota*, *Granfalloon*, *Mimosa*, *Mainstream*, and others that regularly exceeded 50 or 60 pages an issue. I wonder if the smaller average size of modern-day zines is not only a reflection of the smaller number of people producing zines, but is in addition to the technology factor that makes fanzine production easier and faster. It probably is; still, it makes me wonder. This sounds kind of like a fanzine article to me...

My wife and older daughter are Criminal Justice majors over at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, and so your article "Hebrews 13:3" piqued their interest when I told them you were a public defender in real life. Penny – the 22 year old – is a victim studies major, and your third story about the Aggravated Incest case grabbed her interest. If not this semester – since it's almost over – but maybe next year, maybe you could provide an interview or additional material for papers they will have to produce for classes. Of course, it all depends on which courses they will be in, but this might be a Good Idea for primary source material. No rush on this one, but I figured I'd mention it since your article jarred this idea loose in my brain. It certainly sounds good to me.

Great interview with Alfred Bester. As you know, I re-read *The Stars My Destination* during the Holiday break this past year, and thoroughly enjoyed it again. It is simply just one well-told, thoroughly entertaining novel. I forget off-hand where I read this - not sure if it was in the

latest SNAPS distribution, and Joyce Katz wrote about it, or was it Robert Sabella in his fanzine? gotta double-check – but 2006 was the 50th Anniversary of the publication of *The Stars My Destination*. It would have been very appropriate for a special edition with retrospective commentary by various authors to be published. This book consistently pops up on fans' lists of favorite all-time sf novels. It is one crackling good read.

Now I'm getting the urge to re-read *The Demolished Man*. Maybe over the summer. That may have to wait, though, since I just checked out four Alastair Reynolds books out of the TAMU circulating library to read, and I've started with *Diamond Dogs*, *Turquoise Days*, which is a lot of fun. The other books I checked out were from his Revelation Space series, so I'm looking forward to reading them. This is my first exposure to Reynolds. So far, I am not disappointed.

Back to the zine. James Bacon's "The Greatest Bookshop of Them All" made me nostalgic for the used bookstore runs Lee Pelton, Steve Glennon and I used to do once a month back in Minneapolis-St. Paul in the mid-70s. I love used bookstores. Of course, my interests are more eclectic nowadays, but I always check out the science fiction and fantasy shelves first. There aren't many used bookstores in College Station-Bryan, I am afraid; Carousel Books closed down recently (it was in a shitty little strip mall over by Post Oak Mall), and that was the only other used bookstore in College Station besides Half-Price Books, which is a wonderful place to spend an evening and 50-bucks at a drop. Good stuff there, though. Up in Bryan, there are only two used bookstores: BCS Books & Comics and Cavitt Corner Used Books & Collectibles. Most of the "bookstores" in these "Twin Cities" (ick! they are not! especially not to this Minn-stf boy) cater to this college town, with four chains carrying texts, supplies, and TAMU bric-a-brac and clothing. *sigh* Such is life in a college town.

Speaking of books, John Hertz reviewed one of my favorite Arthur C. Clarke books, *The City and the Stars*. That novel is full of those *ghosh-whow* moments that simply make me stop, put down the book for a minute, and soak in or digest what I had just read. Clarke can paint such a vivid picture and infuse it with an energy that is still poetic, which is probably why he is one

of my favorite SF writers of all time. Such an incredibly talented writer, and such an incredible output over time. Love his work.

Funny thing, glancing at Rich Dengrove's review of *Heinlein's Children*, I never was a big fan of Heinlein. His shorter fiction was fine, and some of his books are definitely fun to read - the juveniles, of course - but I never cared for his huge, sprawling tomes from the late 1960s through the 1970s. Oh, well. Everybody has their own reading tastes.

I think I'll call it a wrap by thanking Curt Phillips and Charlie Williams for the tribute to our dear friend, Bob Tucker. Even though Bob passed away seven months ago now - has it really been that long? - the thought of his loss still gives me pause. Our fannish heritage is so much richer thanks to Bob's efforts, and for that we thank him, and we'll miss him. The upcoming NASFiC has been dedicated and renamed in his honor. That is a fitting tribute, too, but I think Bob would have been very amused by the gesture. He was one cool fella. I hoist my coffee mug in a non-alcoholic *Smoooooth* to his memory.

Grand zine, Guy. Thank you much, and I look forward to the next one.

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I loved *Challenger 25*. Of course, I loved most my article "The Rise and Fall of the Canals of Mars." It was a great masterpiece if I don't say so myself - modestly.

On the other hand, my article "Heinlein's Children: a Review" was a great travesty. It would have been no big deal if, once, I had confused Heinlein's novel *Tunnel in the Sky* with *Time for the Stars*; if, once, I had written it *Tunnel for the Stars*. That could have been forgiven. The problem is that I did it five times and then got it right once. When someone criticized me for making the mistake, I argued that my ideas remain valid. However, that was before I realized how often I had gotten the title wrong.

Also, I got wrong that *Farmer in the Sky* was set in the asteroid belt. No, it was obviously set on the Moon of Jupiter Ganymede. This should teach me to re-check my facts and spelling.

Not even the cyberpunk novelists of the '80s made as glaring a mistake. They did make a

big one. Joe Major, in the "Cyber-Punks," is right that they extrapolated from technology current in its time without even extrapolating new technology.

Yet they would have done one good thing for science fiction if only other writers had carried the ball. I suspect regular science fiction has concerned itself too much with elites, military men and other movers and shakers of the future; and has ignored the rest of the population. Cyberpunk gave the future an Underbelly; something needed for a more complete society. Maybe someone could give science fiction a Middle Class as well.

The Cyberpunks may have been wrong; but, in his diary of LA Con, I don't think Mike Resnick made any mistake when he went to the Gene Autry museum. The Western is a part of us that has been lost. I remember, during the '50s, when the Western was popular. In fact, I remember a time when the majority of TV shows were Westerns. The past had a myth then as well as facts.

However, no longer. Periodically, there are attempts at Westerns, but they don't come off right. Part of the problem is that the real Western is un-p.c. Even when, as I remember, one hero was an Apache with pre-Hippy long hair.

The big problem, though, is that we don't want to deal with our feelings about the past. We did in the '40s through the '60s. Costume dramas were big then. The Civil War as a hobby was bigger then. Now poof.

As Mike Resnick is right about the Western, Mary Ann van Hartesveldt is spot on about Scientology. I suspect the reason it opposes psychiatry is that psychiatrists gave ammo for L. Ron Hubbard's second wife, Sara Northrup, to divorce him. I will have to re-read Martin Gardner's *Fads and Fallacies*; but if I remember correctly, they considered him "hopelessly insane."

Alex Slate is right that there are several variants on the Yiddish word for dust collector. I am sure his "tschotschke" is one of them. I have often seen it written as "tsotske." However, my father always pronounced it "chotchka."

OTHER CORRESPONDENTS INCLUDED
Sheryl Birkhead and Lawrence Zeilinger



PEOPLE'S PARK

*The following article was originally published in **Challenger** #2 in the winter of 1995.*



Charlie Williams

"I was awoken at ten past four this morning. At that time People's Park... still belonged to the people who had constructed it. and Berkeley was an open city.

"The Park was taken by five. fenced in by noon. At ten PM tonight Berkeley went under something notably resembling martial law.

"Our fathers were honed and tempered for life by a Depression and a World War. It seems as if we are to undergo the same test of fire, tempered by our fathers."

That's an excerpt from my diary, May 15, 1969. I was 20, a boy, in the midst of the year that would start my becoming a man, experiencing the event that would, as much as anything, shape me as a spirit. Guy H. Lillian III, pompous initial and all, already existed, of course, and much of the kid that was already there is still with me. But something new was discovered on May 15, 1969 and in the weeks that followed. It has always been with me.

During one of our early meetings, I told my shrink about People's Park. She said it sounded as if I valued the event because, for once, I could Belong, yet be myself as well.

Maybe so. Belonging is one of the universal human needs. But if my feelings about People's Park stemmed only from that desire to adopt the protective coloration of the community around me, why was I even more anti-drug at Cat than I am now? Perhaps the excitement of rebellion had me enthralled. It was dangerous out there. The police shotgunned 35 people and killed one, for no other reason than that he got in the way. When you're 19, that sort of madness can be ... delightful.

I should give myself more credit. What I remember – what comes through the turgid prose of my journal – is the *calm* at the core of my excitement, terror, thrill. There was defiance and danger, sure. But there was also the sense of being *right*. Of being on the side of decency and justice, terms that were more than vague, comic abstracts in that place and at that time. Of having communion with, in that greatest American phrase, *self-evident truth*, a justice so pure and so simple that I could not imagine it being fairly denied.

We were *right*, out there. We were *right*. People's Park, Berkeley California, May 15, 1969, and the weeks that followed. The best days of my

youth.

By 1969, springtime in Berkeley had come to signal a nice fat round of campus rioting. But in the spring quarter of that year all it seemed to mean was pretty weather and relaxed anticipation of summer. Cal's winter session had seen the campus flooded with tear gas and racial division as the Third World Liberation Front had moved its call for a college devoted to minority studies. The appearance of People's Park seemed to promise a much more constructive and affirmative season.

Charlie Williams' illo for this article is based on a photomontage I picked up sometime in the days of the Park. It shows something of the way it was. A block off Telegraph Avenue, hotbed of Berkeley's street life, and coincidentally a block in the other direction from the highrise dorm where I lived, the U Diversity of California bought and razed an acre of land, saying that they intended to use it – eventually – as an athletic field. For months the land lay fallow, empty, cluttered with trash.

Then someone – we don't know who began to plant flowers there – bushes – put benches down, and swing sets. It became a group project. Spontaneously, in the midst of dormitories, across the street from the university's housing office on one corner, and a beautiful rustic divinity school on the other, a community park began to emerge. Kids played there. A path was etched through with donated brick. Strips of sod were rolled onto the lifeless hardened clay. Someone brought in hollow plastic hemispheres. just the right size for a kid to sit in and rock. A local radio station, KNOW, donated enormous wooden letters (God knows where *they* got them) which stood in the corner of the fabulous lot. Someone –

we don't know who -- painted a sign on rough wood and nailed it to a tree. It read **PEOPLE'S PARK**.

You have to understand the political dynamic of the day. All of California is divided into two parts. (Hmm ... snappy.) Southern California is dry, desert, frenetic, freeway urban, winger. Northern California is lush, wooded, tranquil, pastoral, liberal. Southern California is dominated by Los Angeles. Northern California is

centered – in all ways but geographically – in San Francisco. In 1969, the major political activity in Southern Californians was outrage at the "youth movement" echoing out of San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury, and Bay Area college campuses. It was the height of the '60's, the era of the hippies, The Berkeley *Barb* (I always preferred the *Tribe*), with the Vietnam War in its full sick pitch and the reaction to it angry, angrier, and building. Nixon was President, beginning his slide into the paranoia that would, a year later, kill Schroeder, Scheurer, Miller and Krause at Kent State and, five years later, drive him out of office. In California, Ronald Reagan was Governor, in part because of hostility to the "Filthy Speech Movement" at Berkeley. That was actually the *Free Speech Movement*, which began in 1964 and which convinced me, at 14, that Berkeley just might be a helluva place to go to college.

As you see, I did so, although Berkeley's unique attractions took their time making an impact. Translation: I resisted drugs and shrouded within me an apprehension over Berkeley's huge population of street people – runaways, mostly, the detritus of an uncaring and intolerant suburban age. Campus radicals bugged me; they seemed more interested in posturing and bullying than in ending the war or racial justice or any of their exemplary stated aims.

I walked through People's Park every day. I was 19, mostly... inexperienced, shall we say, uptight, repressed, all the residuum of a suburban boyhood. After the TWF battles, however, and my first experience with police stupidity and promiscuous brutality, it was good even to middle American eyes to see a positive and affirmative and beautiful thing come out of Berkeley. I didn't linger there, though. People's Park was beautiful, but it was scary. It was much safer back in the locked-and-bolted confines of my dorm.

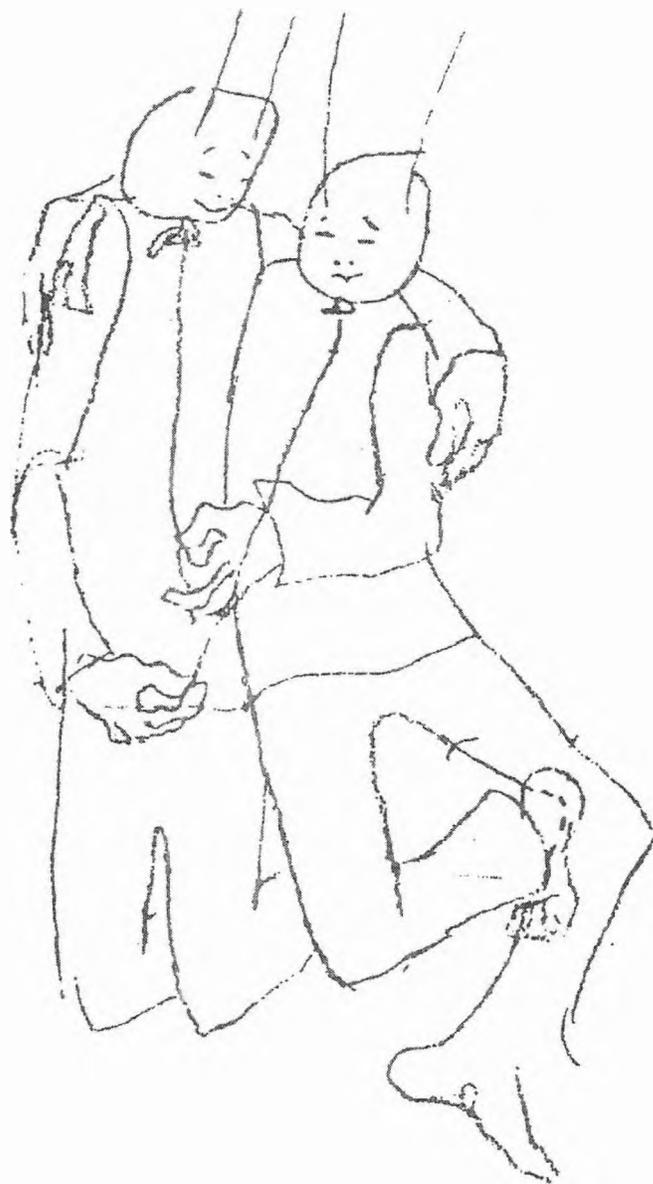
But one time I couldn't avoid the real meaning of People's Park. I was walking past, en route to class, and a bearded guy hailed me. He was on his knees, pulling shrubs out of nursery cans. He needed a little help planting a tree ...

Well, uh, gee, uhh I might be late for class, get grass stains on my slacks ...

Anyway, I helped him bend back the can, put the little shrub, its roots gripped by lush black soil, into the hole he'd dug for it, and tamp the dirt back into place.

I remember nothing else about that day... except that, in the decades since, I've become pretty proud of helping that fella plant that one small tree.

It gave me a stake in People's Park.



My roommate's name was Brian Siegel, an actor and overt hippie. T'was he who awoke me at 4 a.m. on May 15, 1969. "They're coming in," he said.

For the past few days, the University administration, under the thumb of Ronald Reagan's gubernatorial tyranny, had been making threatening noises against the hippies and

revolutionaries camping out on university property. But Cat officials and street people had been communicating very publically, and UC Chancellor Roger Heyns himself had pledged police would not come into People's Park "in the middle of the night".

Give "Roger the Dodger" some credit, we said later. When they came, it was well *past* the middle of the night.

It was a downhill block from Griffiths Hall to People's Park. In the darkness a campfire burned, at the bottom of a shallow pit. Angry voices, perplexed voices, argued from the half-dug wading pool. (Someone had an idea, and the next moment it had been begun. Such was the nature of People's Park.) The argument? "We've got to *do* something?/What *can* we do?", as every 30 seconds a police car roared down Haste Street, the shadowed face within peering out at us.

What to do? What to *do*? A couple of the braver lads climbed the tall pines in the center of the park; it'd be hours before they were discovered. We could see down Bowditch Street to the University; when they came, they'd come from there. More cop cars gunned past, and again and again the rumor flew: *they're coming*. And finally...

It was quiet. I remember that silence. The streetlight fell on their bobbing helmets; they looked like blue bubbles bobbing down the street. Then you could hear their boots. In America we were hearing boots.

CHP – California Highway Patrol. Reagan was leading off with his best troops. They moved in quickly, cutting off the comers, emptying the Park. We faded back to face them across the street, a no-man's-land of asphalt. Quickly done. "Please go home," one officer intoned. And some brave fool, awoken to self-evident truth on the morning of this bloody Thursday, replied, "This *is* my home."

That was me.

For the next couple of hours we stood across from People's Park and watched Reagan's troopers do their thing. I remember a squad of Berkeley cops clambering into the tower of that lovely divinity school after God knows what and God knows who. I remember the commotion when the cops finally found the dudes who had hidden up the pines. They hauled them off to

cheers. I remember, and am still astonished by, a very small young woman who came up to the police line, leading her two children: toddlers clad like urchins in the style of the day. She attempted to take her toddlers across the street, over to their playground. But the CHP line closed in front of them, and while one cop pleaded with her and another squawked, red-faced, a third coldfaced thug unsheathed and held ready his billy club. "Fair's fair," I shouted. "It's three against three!" She didn't get across.

They brought in a bulldozer with a fat, frightened hardhat (non-union, we were told later) at the controls, and he roared about the edge of the park, ripping up bushes and bashing the giant KNOW letters out of the way. A girl wept behind me. A few quick postholes were dug and what came to be known as The Fence began to rise. How much hatred was directed in subsequent months at that cyclone fence? An asshole waved wirecutters at the cops. "Go ahead," I told him. "There's the fence; go ahead!" This was too important a day for such posturing. The Fence, while we watched, was finished.

I went back to bed.

And because I was in bed, I was not there when Dan Siegel, Student Body President, led a quiet march towards People's Park from Sproul Plaza on the Berkeley campus. I wasn't there when the Alameda County Sheriffs Deputies, the redneck brutes known with no affection whatsoever as The Blue Meanies, opened fire on the march, first with tear gas, then with birdshot, then, for God knows what sick reason, with buckshot. I *was* a block away, eyes smarting from the CN fog rising above Telegraph Avenue, naive in my belief that the **boom boom boom** I was hearing came from the explosion of tear gas canisters, and not shotgun blasts.

Yeah, I was a block away, walking towards the campus, a skinny Middle American zero behind horn-rimmed glasses, a scared kid not particularly scared today, a kid becoming not-a-kid anymore in the glare of self-evident truth, at the moment the Alameda deputies took their infamous walk up Telegraph. Someone dropped a beer can onto the street. The deputies whirled and fired blindly at the rooftops. They blinded an artist named Alan Blanchard. They gutted – killed – a guy from southern California named James Rector, whose only crime had been to stand

where one of them could see him.

(They say that as Rector lay there in agony, two Berkeley police climbed up to the rooftop. People asked them to get help. "That's what you get for screwing around," they replied, and left.)

The deputies shot 35 people that day. That night Berkeley went under martial law. The air was rank with acid. Cops everywhere. Daring death – or at least arrest – I went out driving with Steve Elgar, a kid from New York City who lived on my dorm floor. We bought potables. When we returned, I wrote in my diary about how it felt to be under siege.

On Friday, May 16, the National Guard moved in. For a time we felt this was good, because we had a rapport with them, the "clerks and typists" of their division, many of them students from San Jose State out to beat the draft. There was a night curfew, but before sundown students sat and rapped with their khaki contemporaries, and after dark we pointed speakers out the window and broadcast rock music, and some Guardsmen bopped in their boots. We grew used to seeing guys flash surreptitious "V"-for-peace signs behind the backs of officers, and onetime provided loud support when one of the weekend Pattons bawled out a guy for saluting us at our dorm window. True, a squad had careened onto the campus in a jeep on May 15th, spewing CS "peppergas." But when those bozos tried to drill, the pandemonium was too comic for us to think of them as any enemy. I went back to what was, for me, a normal life: lectures from the brilliant Mark Schorer, moping over the beautiful girls; such was Friday.

But for all the normalcy, it was a day of shock in Berkeley. Everyone was astonished at what had befallen us. Tom Collins, editor of *The Daily Californian* (and a fan, I found later), wrote a splendid editorial. A few cops chased a group of us – me included, this time – down Telegraph, clubs swinging. One calm voice on a bullhorn would have cleared the street as easily, if that is what they really wanted. Hysterical with worry, my parents called; I don't blame them now but I didn't need it then. Apollo 10 launched for the moon. Such was the weekend.

Quiet – but tense, very tense. On Monday, coming home from class, I walked through a herd

of Highway Patrolmen gathered on the campus' edge. They were taut as guitar strings ready to be strummed; one whacked his billy club again and again on the grill of his car, drumming up his battle blood. We exchanged a glance; I wanted to see into his eye. He looked away before I could tell what was there. For days we'd endured overflights of gnat-like "pork-choppers" that had been filling the air (and wrecking my nerves) with their drone: Now a bigger helicopter, a huge National Guard monstrosity, dive-bombed Sproul Plaza with tear gas. It blew into the campus hospital and forced one patient into an iron lung.

Some distance from campus a whole streetful of Americans were prodded by Guard bayonets into an empty cul-de-sac on Shattuck Avenue. People I knew were among them; my dorm-mate Edmundo escaped only because a local businessman let people escape through his basement. Those not so lucky were beaten, arrested, hauled out to Alameda County's Santa Rita prison farm, forced to lay face down on gravel for hours on end, allowed to turn their heads once an hour. Anyone giving the deputies any lip were made to lean their heads against poles driven into the ground, which the cops whacked with their riot sticks.

The night at Santa Rita became the most infamous incident to come out People's Park – a *Life* article and several federal indictments came out of it. Although I need not tell you how those worked out. The cop who killed Rector was brought to trial and totally exonerated.

The cop who shot Blanchard was brought to trial and totally exonerated. The guards at Santa Rita were all totally exonerated. They were all totally exonerated.

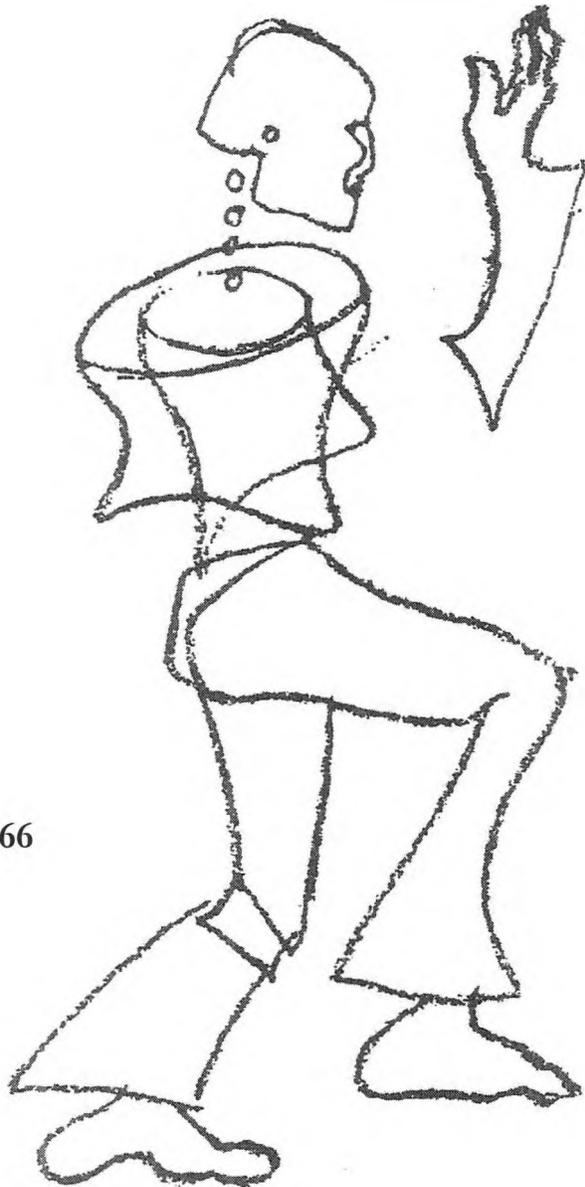
On May 21st, the cops invaded my dorm. Music from the 6th floor was too loud for their tastes. It was only 7PM, far too early for what we called Quiet Hours, and nobody knew who sicced them on. Unis – university cops – they stampeded up the stairs, silenced the stereos, broke into rooms and tore down anti-cop signs hung in the windows, descended to a furious crowd and chants: "PIGS! PIGS! PIGS!" The cops fled.

A spontaneous street festival erupted. Frisbees flew. A jumprope flipped. And then the Blue Meanies roared in. I watched from my third floor window. Clubs whipped "in private arbitrary orbits." A camera was smashed from a student's

hands. (His pictures might not have survived anyway. We'd been told local photo outlets were destroying pictures of cops in action.)

That night the dorm protested. Speakers were hauled to the windows. The William Tell Overture blammed out at full volume, at midnight. On the balconies people beat trashcans against the railings, in solidarity, one with the other. *One-two, one-two-three, one-two-three-four!* Dormies ... left of fraternities, we were the most complacent and middleclass clowns at Cal. And yet there we were, beating out our ragged chant. It had come home to us. Clapping.

Something happened on May 21, 1969 that I did not see. I wish I had.



66

There was a march, by students, street people, on the residence of the gutless Chancellor, a pretty, high-storied house on the opposite side of the campus from People's Park. Cops and Guardsmen rushed there and surrounded the house, gasmasks on, ready for a fight. But when the march reached the house, the people found a hill overlooking the troops, sat down, and began to sing. They sang movement songs like "We Shall Overcome." And they began to talk to their brothers in the National Guard.

It was very simple, what they called to them. They called, "Take off your masks! Take off your masks! You are men, not machines! You are not our enemies. You are our brothers. Take off your masks!"

There's film of it that I saw later on television. I pray to God it survives. It shows the first Guardsman reaching up to his face and, with infinite weariness, removing his helmet, and with infinite sadness, pulling the gasmask from his face. He is young, crewcut, blond. He is weeping. He puts the mask into its pouch on his belt, so slowly, and so tired, and then he replaces his helmet and he stands there, at his post, tears streaming down his handsome young face. An officer runs up, or maybe it's a cop, screaming at the guy to put his mask back on. But the Guardsman just stands there and looks at the man like he was speaking Martian.

All down the picket line gasmasks start hitting the ground.

That night I wrote in my diary, "We're going to win this thing. Reagan will be reelected and [Sheriff] Madigan will still strut. But their time is limited in this life. What [we] saw today is forever. We're gonna win."

Two weeks after the assault on People's Park and the murder of James Rector, the streets of Berkeley began to fill with people. For May 30th a march was planned. Counterculture kids from everywhere under the sun came in. No one knew what would happen, but everyone expected blood. There was anticipation and excitement as well as dread. Thirty thousand people would be marching, we were told. *Thirty thousand.*

Both sides prepared. The student/street community was advised to fly kites – with piano wire, the better to snarl and foul helicopter rotors. In the outside world, the copter gassing of Sproul Plaza was earning shock, not the bland approval Reaganites expected, but there was no indication such an assault wouldn't be tried again. A rumor danced through the crowd that the Fence around People's Park – already an icon of evil to the people of Berkeley – had been electrified. When a friend and I sallied forth from our dorm that Friday morning, we found thick rolls of barbed wire on every corner surrounding the Park.

We skirted the campus to meet the March near the vacant lot they'd dubbed "People's Park II". We met the March just as it got underway. In the forefront, *hnumming* motorcycles, fifty at least, flashed chrome and revved forth choking clouds of exhaust. Behind this line, a thousand thousand Berkeley people, street kids, students, and at least one of my English professors. Slowly but impressively, the March moved forward.

The sky was filled with helicopters and planes. The massive "pork chopper" that had divebombed Sproul Plaza chuggachugged in the distance, hovering like a single scout locust. But few cops were visible until the March reached Dwight Way, the street on which People's Park grew. Then they began to appear, sitting nervously in patrol cars, helmeted heads peeking over rooftops. Heat in the heat, for it had become a blisteringly warm day.

We reached the corner of Dwight Way and Bowditch. The Park within its Fence was filled with National Guard. A suspicious cord snaked up to the Fence ... but that didn't stop the people. They covered the Fence ... with flowers.

Instead of blood on the streets this hot May day, the people of Berkeley rolled out sod and grass: instant lawn. Instead of peppergas sprayed from the back of a jeep, rock music crackled forth from the back of a slow-moving truck. In answer to their flak jackets, cops looked on embarrassed and fascinated at the painful beauty of street girls naked to the waist. (I'm afraid we all gawked. One guy, spying a lovely half-nude lady seated on the turf, threw himself onto the ground near her and snapped photos so recklessly she threatened to don her shirt again. *I* took only *one* picture.) The Fence – barbed wire - entwined with flowers. It was spontaneous and it

was unexpected, this answer of the people of Berkeley, the creators of People's Park, to the brutality and the cynicism that had taken it from them. It astonished me then and it astonishes me now, that the answer our brethren gave to gas and terror was that most delicate of symbols: flowers. Instead of blood ... there was brotherhood.

I was loafing amidst those thirty thousand souls when, suddenly, *she* was there. A lacy white dress over black dance tights, a wilted flower between her breasts, and that fabulous, wonderful, absolute dream that was her red, red hair. She wore huge-lensed sunglasses and, in a photo I took of her that moment she recognized me, a little smile.

Her name was Jerrell. She looked a little like Susan Hayward and a lot like Samantha Eggar. Her hair had that off-coppery tone that shines like fire in the sun, and her hidden eyes were green. I'd known her through high school, alternately amused and friendly, or haughty and aloof. No adolescent male could have had a more terrible or more glorious fantasy feast than watching her strut down a hallway in her phony white fur coat. Berkeley had changed her much more quickly and much more dramatically than it ever would me; there was a tremendous gap between us, but ... here we were, on the same street, under the same guns, beside the same Park.

We sat down on the exposed roots of a tree across from my dorm. A band was playing. Hairy knees danced all around us. Jerrell shook and nodded her head in time. I watched her move to the music, and she saw me watching, a kooky loudmouth pest from high school, and for some reason she smiled. I touched her hand. She wasn't *quite* surprised.

Were this the People's Park story of my dreams, of course, the touching would not have stopped there. In a way it didn't. Jerrell lifted her eyes from our hands where they touched and asked me if I had any friends, any close friends,



people with whom I could really talk. I had to admit that no, I didn't. I could have gone on: it was difficult for me to open myself to others; cruelty and suspicion had driven me inside, and only a caricature dared show its face. When that changes, she said, she wanted to talk with me about what had gone on here, about herself and ourselves and what we had lived through.

It was a challenge, I think. Come find me when you're willing to do that; when you're willing to do that, come find me. And then she was gone.

I wandered about in the throng. Berkeley cops laughed on the street corners, flowers wound through their hair. Still toting their shotguns, as if that proved anything, Alameda deputies smirked behind their barricades, completely ignored. In the center of Haste Street a vast carpet of streetpeople fused into a chanting mass. "OMMMMMMMMMMMMMM ..."

That night, elsewhere in the city, there was an enormous bacchanalia. Jerrell was there and told me her feet got stomped on. Me, I stayed home and wrote an English paper. And a journal entry about a day that still teaches me things.

One photograph I took that day: a roll of barbed wire sits like tumbleweed across an intersection. A Guardsman stands at attention a few steps behind it. In front of the wire a hippy kid looks on, his head bound in a red kerchief. The barbed wire is covered with flowers and draped with an American flag. On the back of the photo I wrote "People's Park, May 30 1969. Barbed wire by the National Guard. Flowers by the people of Berkeley. It's a common flag."

Blood had been shed over People's Park, and that made the area surrounded by Dwight Way, Haste and Bowditch as holy a place as Berkeley could have. For years it was sacrosanct. The University replaced the Fence with a stronger model. Fine green grass was sown there, which grew verdant and pleasant. But few were the footsteps felt by that grass; it was an unwritten Law of Berkeley life that no matter how the University prettified People's Park, no student would touch it. Nor would we use the parking lots set up first at opposite ends of the Park. People who did were reproached, even vilified as "scabs."

I was no different. By now I was in the far less constricted, shall we say, environs of the

Barrington Hall co-op. I had discovered the twin wonders of *women* and *fanzines*. The Park saga gripped me as had no other event in my life. One time I caught myself carrying an egg up to the scab parking lot, intending to dash it against an offending windshield. When I came to my senses, I carefully returned the egg to the Barrington kitchen. But I did argue with people parking there. On one occasion Tom Collins -- then editor of *The Daily Californian*, later my New York roomie and editor of a terrific fanzine, *Apollo* -- talked a nice foreign couple out of using it. I wasn't so successful with a black-suited yuppie (the type was true before the word was coined) I met there after a Stanford game, but the conversation did give me a frightening insight into the icebox that was the middle American heart. "I want my government to *fight* for its property," he proclaimed. "Helluva thing to die for, huh?" he sneered, when I told him how it had. No wonder Ronald Reagan became President.

But the general fervor matched mine. After I graduated, and moved South, People's Park remained a battlefield in the people's war against arbitrary authority. One day, some fifteen years ago, the pavement on the parking lots was literally torn from the ground by angry citizens wielding picks and sledgehammers. The only other word I had of the Park in the years I was away was a disparaging portrait in a detective novel somebody leant me.

Then I went back and saw for myself.

The occasion was Confrancisco, the '93 Worldcon. Leaving the convention at about noon that Labor Day, I crossed the Bay Bridge into Berkeley, and began exploring my old home by auto. Seldom before had I driven its streets. Avenues which seemed endless when I was a footsore youth became quick traverses behind the wheel of my noble Geo Metro. I found Barrington Hall, now called Huddlestone, fully refurbished and protected behind a locked fence. I found Cloyne Court, the ramshackle northside co-op, and found it even more ramshackle than before. I found Griffiths Hall, the sterile highrise where I'd lived in May, 1969... still there, still sterile. I thought of seeking Jerrell, but decided to leave well enough alone.

Because I did find People's Park.

Should you follow me there, here's what you'll find. At the west end of the Park, towards Telegraph Avenue, you will find truck gardens and neat paths. On the Haste side of the block is a clothes bin and a basketball court, on the Dwight Way side a brand new volleyball court with obscenities chalked onto every available surface. East of that, in the area where Tom and I had argued with the foreign couple, where the fire pit had been dug, is an overgrown place now, almost a forest, and amongst the young trees and brush you will find flattened cardboard boxes with the homeless sleeping on them. They gather on benches about weed-swamped paths, and one of them walked past me, and I called to her. *Hey, come take my picture.* She came when I offered her a dollar.

Her name was C.C. and she wore blue jeans and a blue sweatshirt and blue house slippers. Her face was puffy but she had a prettiness to her, and after she took my picture and I took hers, with People's Park as a backdrop, we walked around the Park, as it is today.

C.C. had quite a story to tell. Her husband was a Vietnam veteran and he'd split on her and her kids, and the government had goddamn it taken her kids, and was trying to make her into a *legal drug addict* by feeding her thorazine and so what if they sold a little grass around there, they had to live didn't they? and the people who lived in the Park were "copacetic" with the basketball court but the volleyball was *bullshit*, man, because, because, because this place is holy ground, man ... this place is *holy ground*.

I know, I told her. I was here. She had no idea what I meant. I gave C.C. some money and she said "Thanks, brother," and was off, and so was I.

"Helluva thing to die for, huh?" "This place is holy ground." I drove away and thought long and thought hard about what People's Park meant to me.

Big words came to mind. Community. Creativity. Justice. Brutality. Tolerance. Pity. And *Home*.

For there are places on Earth where I am forever home. The Watts Towers in Los Angeles, and the Three Sisters Islands above

Niagara Falls. The field at Gettysburg. And People's Park. Holy ground.

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*Fandom lost two of its greatest citizens last winter, Bob Tucker and Lee Hoffman. Curt Phillips, friend to both and to **Challenger**, eulogized Bob in our last issue – and now provides both a wonderful anecdote and a classic article, reprinted, Curt assures us, with Bob’s prior permission. Lest we forget ... as if we could.*

A TUCKER STORY ... AND A TUCKER STORY

Curt Phillips

Cincinatti, Ohio – June 1994. Bob Tucker and I are sitting under a shade tree idly watching fans splash about noisily in yet another convention hotel pool while we continue our years-long discussion of fandom and things fannish. Bob has just been telling me about the infamous Tucker Death Hoaxes – which, if you didn’t get a program as you entered the auditorium tonight – refers to an incident in 1934 where a vengeful “friend” wrote a letter to the editor of *Astounding Stories* (a magazine wherein Bob was the leading letterhack of the day) announcing that Bob had died. The Editor printed it with commentary of his own only to find that it was all a hoax. Though Tucker was completely innocent he nonetheless incurred the wrath of the embarrassed editor who banned him from *Astounding’s* lettercol. Several years later, a misguided fan tried the same stunt in even odder circumstances and caused fandom no end of worry and Bob no end of trouble.

Bob thought neither “death hoax” particularly funny. Neither did I, but I observed to him that on that far-off day when he *did* shuffle off this mortal coil, he would probably ensure himself the biggest funeral in all fannish history since everyone in fandom would have to attend the funeral in person.

Bob furrowed his forehead in thought. “And why would they do that, Curt?” he asked.

“Because,” I replied, we’ll all want to lean over the casket and tell you our funniest jokes just to see if we can make you smile. Then we’ll know if we’re really part of the Third Tucker Death Hoax and you can climb out of the box and we’ll all have a shot of Beam’s Choice and Smo-o-o-oth our way out of the funeral home.”

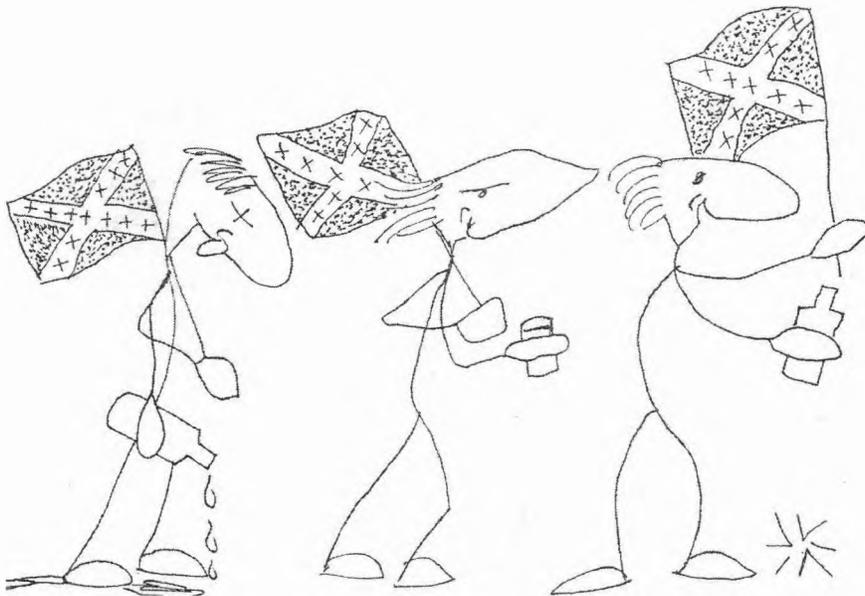
Bob chuckled. “Not bad,” he said. “Not bad at all, but there’s one thing wrong with your plan.”

“What’s that?” I asked.



“If it’s not a hoax, how are you gonna pry that bottle of Beam’s out of my hands?”

That was in 1994, and only 12 years later, Bob Tucker really would be gone, but sitting there by Tucker’s side that June day, it was impossible to imagine that he could ever die. Now it’s 2007 and though he’s been gone for months now, I still can’t accept that he’s not waiting for me at the next convention so that we can pick up our never-ending discussion of fandom right where we left off.



-HOW DULL
WAS MY
WEEKEND

(Reprinted from QUANDRY # 15,
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Illustrations by Lee Hoffman.)

-How I Saved Myself From Falling Flat on my Face. by Quickly Grasping a Pullchain Hanging Nearby. A Confession by Bob Tucker.

All conventions are dull, listless affairs. I discovered that a longtime ago, after faithfully turning up year after year, city after city, card after card at each succeeding clambake. The same haggard old faces -- Bloch, Korshak, Eshbach, Evans -- repeating the same. timeworn old words -- gladtogether, gladtogether, gladtogether -- the same huckstering old professionals -- Bloch, Korshak, Eshbach, Evans -- repeating the same old hackneyed come-ons; buy this, buy this, buy this. It was so dreadfully monotonous, so crass, so crude, so commercial. Weary of heart, I approached one more city and one more weekend, prepared to once again meet the same old beanie-wearing fans -- Bloch, Korshak, Eshbach, Evans -- squirting the same old waterguns -- squishsquish, squishsquish, squishsquish. It was all so boring, so repetitious.

With all this in mind and an ample supply of aspirin in my old suitcase, I checked into the same old St. Charles Hotel on a Friday afternoon and the room clerk repeated the same old question: "Are you with the science fiction group?" I couldn't bring myself to lie, and admitted I was. "Welcome sir," he continued then in the same old vein, "That automatically entitles you to a higher rate. Your Mr. Moore has arranged it. We can give you an eight-dollar-room for ten dollars."

"Don't want it," I answered, swinging at once into the old routine. "Give me a six-dollar-room for eight dollars."

"Oh, I'm sorry sir, but I cannot. Your Mr. Moore did not reserve a block of six-dollar-rooms." This too, was familiar of course.

"Indeed?" I said wearily. "And what did our Mr. Block reserve?"

"Ah, sir," replied the clerk silkily, "in addition to the eightdollar-moore's for ten dollars, your Mr. Block reserved a room of seven-dollar-moore's for only nine-fifty."

"I'll take it," I snapped, tiring of the conversation.

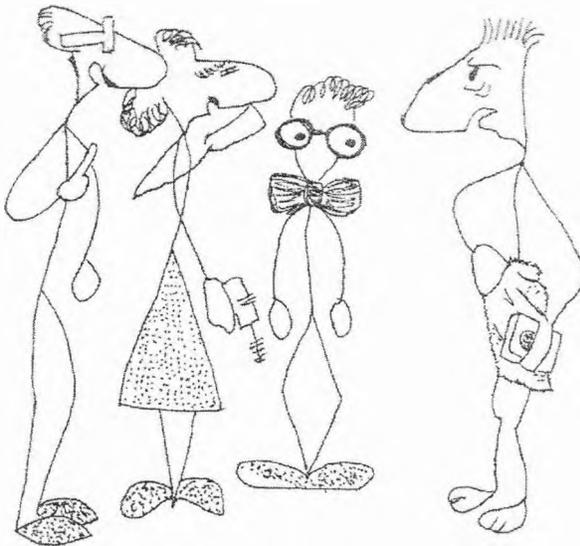
"Do you want a bath?" He was as urbane as always.

"That depends," I hedged, "will it be you, the manager or the house detective? I suppose the maids have a union?"

A motley crew of fans had gathered about the reservations desk as this byplay was going on, eager to learn the name of the new arrival. Other fans were arriving on the run, attracted by frantic wig-wagging and a few smoke signals curling up toward the lobby ceiling. Tiring of this spotlight of unwanted publicity, I turned and spat in the eye of a fan standing behind me. Immediately he whipped out his water-pistol, but of course I ducked and it was the room clerk who took the charge. I snatched the key from his paralyzed fingers and scuttled away.

Tired, weary, disheveled from a long day's drive, I slammed the door of my room, flung the suitcase into a far corner (where it promptly burst open and spilled my cargo of dirty books), stripped off my clothes and jumped into the tub. Three waterbugs, a centipede and a dozing bellboy jumped out. Coaxing water from the faucet drip by drip, I waited until there was a full inch covering the bottom and then lay back to soak in luxury. This was to be my only moment of peace and contentment in sweltering, hurly-burly New Orleans.

There came a sound at the door, the peculiar kind of half-hearted knock that could only be caused by a timid fan getting up nerve to kick the door in. I groaned and realized the same old routine had begun. Stepping out of the tub I reached for my trousers, paused, and dropped them again, knowing it would be the same old bunch -- Bloch, Korshak, Eshbach and Evans -- wanting to start a poker game. I wrapped a towel around my middle, began searching my luggage for a deck of cards, and yelled a bored invitation to enter.



Three strangers trooped in wearing abashed grins, a girl and two men. The girl looked as if she were desperately searching for better company than the characters trailing her. I silently sympathized, and stared at the trio, the meanwhile dripping soap and water on the rug. The two gentlemen stared at the towel and giggled, while the girl looked at the puddle on the rug.

"Hello," one character said.

"Hello," another character said.

"Hello," the girl echoed.

Sadly, I shook my head. The same old wornout greetings.

72 "We're faaaaaans," the tallest character announced proudly.

"The hell you say!" I shot back, astounded.

"Yep." He was wearing a white T-shirt on which had been printed, I AM SHELBY VICK. Turning to face me, he asked: "Know, who I am?"

I gazed at the T-shirt. "Bela Lugosi?"

He waggled his head, vaguely disappointed.

"Richard Shaver," I guessed again. "Claude Degler, Ray Palmer?"

"I am Shelby Vick!" he exclaimed then in clear, ringing tones.

"The hell you say!" I shot back, astounded.

I-am-Shelby-Vick then flicked a finger at his two conspirators. "You know Lee Hoffman, of course?"

Of course. I threw a bored glance at the remaining character and yawned, "Hello, Lee."

"No, no!" contradicted I-am-Shelby-Vick. "Not him...HER!"

Mustering what dignity I retained, I picked up my towel from the floor and stalked into the bathroom, flanging shut the door.

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Knowing full well the monotonous proceedings that would be underwa~ still I wandered down to the convention hall later to let myself be seen and admired by the younger element present. Fighting my way through a flying cloud of paper airplanes, I stumbled over the same old crap game -- Bloch, Korshak, Eshbach and Evans -- were conducting on the platform behind the speaker's microphone. Declining the inevitable but insincere invitation to join them, I picked a precarious path thru a solid mass of whir-ling beanies and tugged at the chairman's sleeve.

Our Mr. Moore looked down at me. "Whatinthehelldoyouwant?"

"You'd better do something about them," I suggested mildly.

"Aboutwhodamnit?"

"A couple of characters up in my room. They fainted."

"Whatinthehellyoutalkingabout?" he wanted to know curiously.

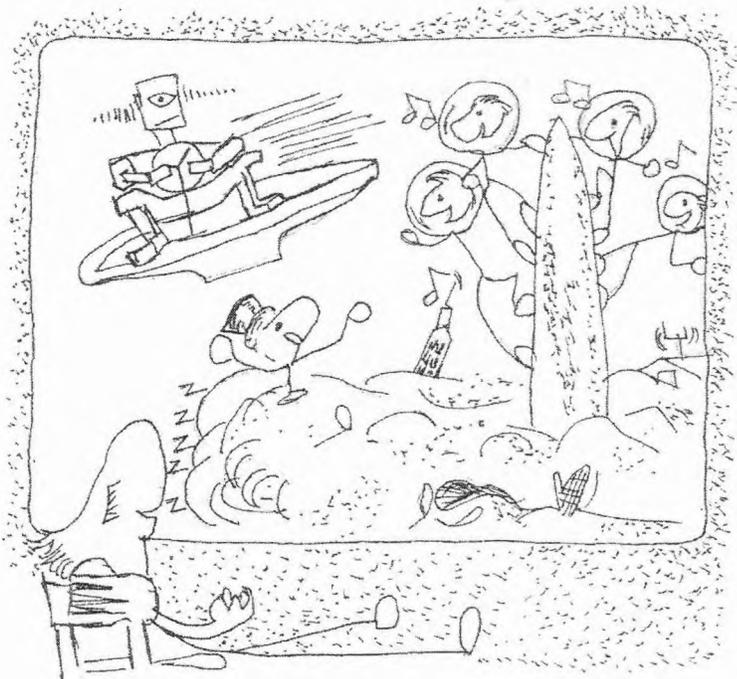
I explained patiently. "A pair of characters have fainted up in my room. Perhaps you'd better send up a bellboy, or something."

"Tohellwiththem," he answered pleasantly. "I'vegotmyowntroubles. Thishereconventionhasgottastartroghtnow."

I said all right, meekly though tiredly, and sat down with Lee Hoffman. Our Mr. Moore approached the microphone, stumbled over the crap-shooters and loudly suggested the floor come to order. Wiping off the simultaneous discharge of a half-dozen water pistols and neatly Side-stepping a

fireball from a roman candle, he opened the convention. The opening was the same old grind. He announced in a bored voice that the conclave had grossed a bit over four thousand dollars, had paid all debts amounting to a hundred-odd dollars, and that the balance would be used to pay the train fare home for destitute fans. After everyone present had put in their claim and received their share, he closed the convention for another year. We all left the hall and trooped back to our various rooms to conduct the annual business sessions.

Wearily knocking on the first closed door I found, I entered, to sit back and listen to the same old arguments - by Bloch, Korshak, Eshbach and Evans - about where next year's convention should be held. No one present really wanted it and the unholy quartet had the very devil of a time forcing it down the throat of a young, unidentified fan sitting off in the corner. Later on nobody could remember who the stranger was nor where he was from so there still remains a small doubt as to where the next convention will be held. Popular opinion - that is, Bloch, Korshak, Eshbach and Evans - held that the stranger would eventually betray himself when he began selling memberships, and that it would only be necessary to read the postmark on his letters to discover the name of the next convention city.



Rapidly tiring of this dull conversation, Lee and I left to wander along the corridor in search of another session. From behind a partly-closed door came the sound of rocketships zooming, accompanied by music in the background. Yawning, I remembered my manners in time to ask her if she wished to see the preview movie, THE DAY THE EARTH COLLIDED, and conducted her inside a dark, smoky room. Pushing aside several enthusiastic fans -- Bloch, Korshak, Eshbach, Evans -- we made room on the floor and sat down. I promptly fell asleep, but she told me later it had been an extremely interesting picture depicting the perils of the first space

flight ... something about a millionaire playboy and his three buddies -- Bloch, Korshak, Eshbach and Evans - building his own rocketship after the governor of Iowa turned down a fantastic request that his state build it. The governor of course was in the pay of the dictator on the approaching planet.

Finishing and launching the ship just in time to avoid a tidal wave sweeping down on them from the New York City reservoir, the four playboys land on the Iowa capitol's big ball diamond and demand that nearby Missouri be annexed to the state. The governor refuses, being in the pay of the Missouri legislature, and a huge tidal wave sweeps him off the capitol steps just as the menacing robot from the invading planet lands in

a flying saucer.

Lee admits to being a trifle hazy as to what happened after that, but in the end four strangers from Mars -- Bloch, Korshak, Eshbach, Evans -- arrive in time to save Iowa's corn.

Tired beyond caring, dazed, bored to death by it all, I allowed myself to be dragged into still another room where the guest of honor and several noted speakers -- Bloch, Korshak, Eshbach, Evans -- were giving out the same tired old phrases on the glory of science fiction fandom, the glory of science fiction magazines and the glory of science fiction books. As they finished speaking their assistants rushed about the room, hawking the wares of these publishers and writers. With a bored yawn I watched one rebellious fan thrown from the window, some upstart who caused an awkward moment by asking if this were a FAN or a HUCKSTER convention.

Rather fascinated, Lee wondered if this were a common occurrence and I assured her that it was. Stretching back into my memory banks, I told her the tale of a dreadful day in Cincinnati when some sixteen such upstarts were dipped in oil, feathered, and then tied to the coattails of sixteen wild bellboys who were sent running pell-mell through the lobby. These revolting sixteen, it seems, made the mistake of getting up a petition to exclude professionals from all future conventions. It was a sad, memorable day.

"What are 'professionals'?" she wanted to know.

"ssssshhhHH," I whispered. They're sensitive."

"But *what* are they?"

"Super fans," I explained. "Responsible people who have outgrown the beanie and watergun stage, outstanding adults with unimpeachable reputations who are saving fandom from itself, preventing it from becoming ingrown. By means of books and dollars these superfans provide fandom with something to think about, other than themselves."

She gave that considerable thought. "I see a flaw," she said at last. "A flaw in that line of reasoning."

I gave her my tired attention. "What?"

"Us ordinary fans can't read."

* * *

The remaining days of the convention were the usual sorry mess. Again and again I chided myself for coming, for using up valuable time that could have been spent more profitably elsewhere. Late one evening I briefly thought I had discovered something worthwhile, something to make-up to myself the time wasted. Avoiding the elevator because mobs of young fans -- led by Bloch, Korshak, Eshbach and Evans -- had taken over the machine, tossed out the operator, and were joyriding up and down, I was wearily climbing the stairs to the seventh floor when a combination giggle - titter reached my ears. Pausing instantly, senses alert, I espied the location of the sound and the cause of it. Someone had a home-movie machine and was projecting family pictures in a darkened room. Half-alerted to this possible saving diversion, I stood on the doorknob and

peeped through the transom, only to have my fondest hopes dashed. I'd seen the pictures before at the last Legion stag.

Unlocking the door to my room, I was mildly astonished to find two characters stretched out on the carpet in a dead faint. They seemed familiar, so rather than chuck them out the window I called the house detective whose joy, upon finding them there, knew no bounds. It seems the blacked-out characters were I-am Shelby-Vick and his sidekick, Paul Cox, who had been missing for three days and the house detective feared they had skipped without paying their bill. He congratulated me on the discovery, saying the manager would give him a raise for this. After he left I locked the door, stepped over the fans on the rug and went to bed. It had all been so tiring.



*And still I dream they tread the lawn
Walking ghostly in the dew
Pierced by our glad singing through.*

