

You're Still on My Mind #5

from Rich Lynch * [rw_lynch \(at\) yahoo \(dot\) com](mailto:rw_lynch@yahoo.com) * January 2024

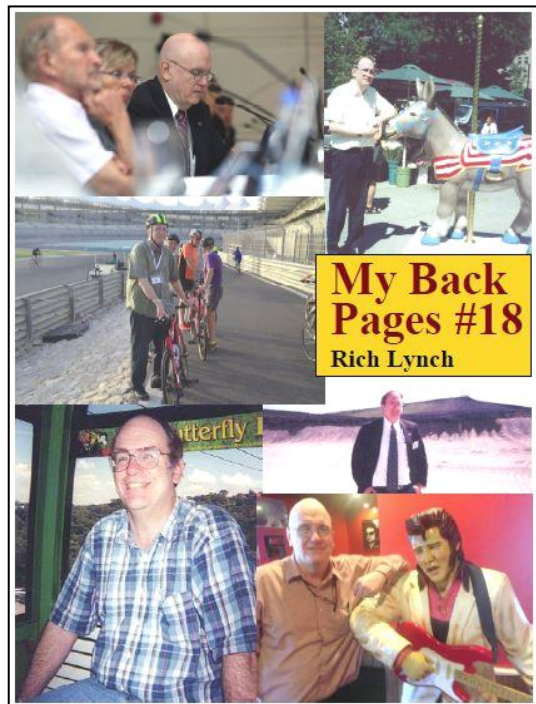
Hello again! This is another in a series of letterzines for belated conversations with fans who wrote me letters of comment about *My Back Pages*, my personal time capsule which impersonates a fanzine. The first four covered through *MBP* 17, so let's see what readers told me about the next several issues...

MBP 18 was published in July 2017 and was bookended by two travel essays – one of them describing a road trip by Nicki and me to Georgia, Tennessee and Virginia to visit friends and attend both a DeepSouthCon and a FanHistoricon, while the other (a business trip) took me above the Arctic Circle in Norway. But two places I *didn't* go in 2017 were to Finland for the Worldcon and Puerto Rico for the NASFiC, and [Lloyd Penney](#), in his letter of comment, could relate to that:

We didn't go to either the Worldcon or NASFiC as well...for us, it is lack of funds, and more and more, lack of interest. Last year, we did go to England (this time last year, we were on our way to Watford to see the Harry Potter exhibits), and with no convention to go to, we had a far better time. We are now saving to go back to London to see more of it and of England; with luck, we will be there in 2019.

With a Worldcon in the U.K. later this year, this would seem to be a good time for another visit to England (as well as Scotland). Not sure that's going to happen, for Nicki and me, though. We'll be going to the NASFiC in Buffalo for sure, but trans-Atlantic travel is not something that we look forward to anymore. (Not yet ruling it out, though.) As for DeepSouthCons, we didn't go to the one this past year in part because it was an add-on to a pre-existing convention. In his letter, Lloyd pointed out a similarity with the Canadian National Convention.

The annual DeepSouthCons and the annual CanVentions are similar in that they are usually held as part of other conventions, in different locations each



year. I think for both, there's been one or two occasions where they were stand-alone cons. Looks like they also share the same problem...the committee works hard to get the right to stage the rider convention with their own con, but then do a poor job of doing the rider con justice in programming. I wish there was a good, non-DragonCon reason to go to Atlanta.

There's certainly stuff to do in Atlanta that's not convention-related. I'm guessing Nicki and I would probably go there more often if it was a lot closer to where we live. Another place that's not very near to us is Chaumont, New York. It's where I grew up and one of the essays in *MBP 18* briefly described returning there for my 50th high school reunion dinner. It turned out that I was only one of four people in my graduating class who attended but as Lloyd described, that was not at all a unique occurrence.

In 2001, I attended the 40th anniversary of the building of my high school in Orillia, Ontario, and it because of a general high-school reunion for all who had ever taken classes there. I graduated Grade 13 there in 1977. How many of my graduating class were there in 2001? Two, and I was one of them. I was told that most of my graduating class still lived in town, but had no interest in attending.

Several of my classmates were still living in Chaumont or nearby, but none of them attended the reunion dinner. The three others who did, like me, now lived far away. I don't think there are any other science fiction fans from Chaumont, but the town where I went to college, a bit farther north, was home to a very famous one – David A. Kyle, who died the year before my reunion dinner. He was a friend and one of my essays in *MBP 18* was a remembrance of him. In his letter, Lloyd offered up a mini-remembrance of his own about Dave.

I miss Dave Kyle, too. He was a guest at a local con some years ago, and I got to talk with him extensively. He tended to repeat himself a lot, too...Dave's daughter thanked me for listening to him, and said he was in the middle stages of dementia. I said Yvonne's mother was there, too, so the best thing to do is listen and react each time. Even in his state at the time, Dave had some amazing memories.

There were a few other comments on the issue, and the one I found most informative was from [Andy Porter](#), who provided some closure on my search for Vernon J. Schryver – who had written his name in a Bob Shaw paperback novel, which had greatly amused BoSh as he went to autograph the book for me. Many years ago I'd made an attempt to locate Vernon and had learned that he lived out in Colorado, and Andy had done a follow-up search only to find that:

I found this on-line:

Name: Vernon J Schryver

Age At Death: 74

Locations: Woodland Park, Colorado, in zip codes 80863 and 80866.

Makes me wish more than ever that I'd gotten a chance to meet him and learn about his interest in science fiction, especially Bob Shaw novels.

There was one other essay that I'd hoped would get some comments but didn't – my OpEd piece (originally published in **File770.com**) that parsed through the continuing controversy about whether either the Leeds or Philadelphia events back in the 1930s should be considered the world's first science fiction convention. It *did* get several posted comments during its *File 770* appearance, though, including one from [Dennis McCunney](#) who wrote that:

I grew up in Philadelphia, and was a member of the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society. Local lore had it that a group of NYC fans led by Sam Moskowitz (who I knew back when) took the train down to Philly to meet with Philadelphia fans led by Ozzie Train (who I knew back when), whom they knew by correspondence through letters to the prozines and fan publications.

What was significant to us was that it was the first time groups of fans from different US *cities* had met in person, and as such was the progenitor in the US of later actual SF cons. We considered the 2011 Philcon to be the 75th anniversary of that event.

Part of the controversy was because the Philly event was held on short notice, most likely as a means by insurgent New York fans to upstage the Leeds gathering (which happened a bit more than two months after that). My conclusion had been that we shouldn't be trying to determine which event deserved the right to be called #1; instead, it was the *idea* for holding the convention and not the actual event itself that was the important part, and Dennis (in a subsequent post) agreed.

If folks in the UK want to consider the Leeds event to be the first one specifically *planned* to be an SF con, I won't quibble.

And there was one other comment posted, from [Steve Davidson](#), who offered his own conclusion.

I think it pretty clear that we have to give "the first" to the Philly crowd, while Leeds can certainly still claim that it was the first convention not held to upstage the first convention.

I'm convinced this topic will continue to be debated by fans a century from now, assuming fandom still exists then.

MBP 19 was published in December 2017 and contained eight essays encompassing an eclectic mix of topics: Broadway shows, the NYC Transit Museum, Alexander Hamilton, Mozart, Elvis, Batman, Martha Washington, Japan, Morris Dancers, *The Outer Limits*, and, inevitably, Donald Trump. The longest of the eight was a description of Nicki's and my January mini-vacation in New York for our annual love affair with the city. And this induced [James Bacon](#) to write me a letter of comment which seemed to indicate he has a continuing love affair of his own with the Big Apple.

I like New York myself, I have visited the Transit Museum in Brooklyn, really enjoyed it and walking around some of the neighbourhoods there. Initially in 2004 I found New York on my TAFF trip, and despite lovely hospitality from the likes of Moshe Feder and others, I felt like I could leave the city. Luckily Jackie (a GF) based in Boston has encouraged New York on me, and now I have some favourite places, be it the Blue Train in Bloomingdales, the High Line, the lovely Pershing Square just outside Grand Central Station, and of course bookshops.

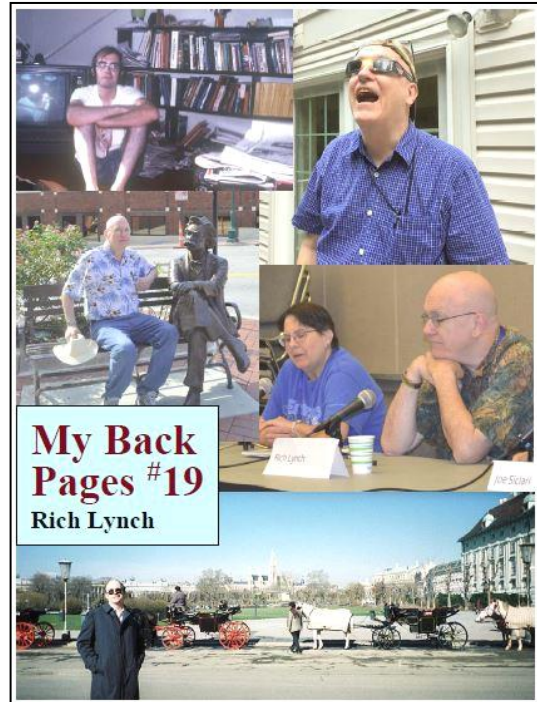
But something that James didn't praise was Broadway musicals. Even one (the *a capella* musical *In Transit*) that was very New York-specific.

I am not really a musical fan, so not sure on *In Transit*. ... Maybe when there is a musical Richard III or one about a piece of Irish History, I will be converted.

For me, it wouldn't really be a New York trip if there weren't a few Broadway shows to attend. Have to say, a musical about Richard III would no doubt pique my curiosity, to say the least!

Another essay in the issue described my surprise on how much I hadn't known about Batman. An omnibus collection of some of the earliest Batman comic book stories showed me that back then he was *a lot* different from the Silver Age Caped Crusader I grew up with. And James had some thoughts on that.

I am enjoying you finding Batman. I knew there were changes, and have read quite a few, but your fresh analysis and comment is great reading. I was always told Gotham and Metropolis were effectively New York. I would



**My Back
Pages #19**
Rich Lynch

recommend the comic walking tour of the city, next time you are there, fascinating.

Hadn't known there was one, though it probably would be more of a thing to do when it's not a frigid January afternoon. If we're ever there in June or July, that'll be something to investigate.

[Lloyd Penney](#) also had a New York-related comment in his LoC on *MBP* 19, a short one about transit museums.

There is no transit museum in Toronto... yet. There's a local transit historian who is trying to get one set up, as most of the ancient rolling stock of the TTC is in a museum in Ottawa, where we can't readily see it.

I liked the NYC Transit Museum because being there was a passage of sorts through the history of the city. As I mentioned in my essay, with a little imagination it was like being in the company of ghosts. Thousands of people, over the years, rode in the railcars that have been preserved by the museum. And each of those riders probably had a story of some kind that would have added to the richness of the history of the transit system. I think it will be a similar experience for anyone visiting the Toronto Transit Museum, once it eventually opens.

One section of the New York essay actually had nothing to do with the city – it described a day trip Nicki and I took down to Mount Vernon to visit the estate of George Washington where we were captivated by the performance of a re-enactor in the role of Martha Washington. She was really good, and my description apparently struck a chord with Lloyd.

Recreationists can be great fun at places like Mount Vernon. I've run into several like her up here, at forts like Fort York in Toronto, and Fort George in Niagara, and you can't trip them up. They know their stuff inside and out, and know how to handle the tough questions.

Almost immediately it had become clear to me that the re-enactor had such a depth of knowledge about her character and the way of life in the late 1700s that she had in effect *become* Martha Washington. I've attended other staged re-enactments of historical people but they were all scripted – this lady was so subsumed into the role that she hadn't needed a script. Have to wonder if it ever becomes difficult for her to keep her Martha character walled off when she's offstage.

Lloyd also gave me a short comment on my essay about being an unpaid intern for Nicki at a craft show where she had a sales table. One of the photos in the essay showed a good sampling of quilts Nicki makes, and this obviously resonated with Lloyd.

Nicki's quilting...looks very good. Yvonne is not a quilter, but her late mother Gabrielle was a master quilter and past president of the Etobicoke Quilters' Guild. And, now that Yvonne and I concluded our 30-year career of being on the committee for local conventions, we have our own little business going as well. Penney's Steampunk General Store sells steampunk jewelry, costume pieces, Hawaiian-style shirts and anything else we pick up along the way that looks interesting. We have two craft shows coming up in March and April, and our big local anime convention in May.

Now that I'm retired I have my own chances for so-called 'side hustles' but I haven't really tried to market myself. And I've just about decided that I'm not going to. My available time has become precious to me, and what money I could earn as a consultant wouldn't make that much difference in our finances. I'm living the life I want to live, and I'm satisfied by it.

[John Hertz](#) also wrote me a letter about *MBP* 19 and he had a lot to say about the issue, starting with the front cover.

In the photo of Rich with a sculpture of Mark Twain on the front cover of *Back Pages* 19, I think Mr. Twain is ingeniously placed at one end of the bench, and posed so he might seem to be listening to whoever sits next to him, or observing the passing parade (gosh, how we all miss Milt Stevens).

The photo also reminds me of my meeting Mr. Twain at ConFrancisco (the 51st Worldcon). It was about two in the morning of Hugo Night; I was in white tie, strolling between parties from one hotel to another. He was a Guest of Honor that year. The street was otherwise empty. We chatted civilly for a quarter of an hour about his writing and whatever else came to mind. Neither of us gave any sign that Jon DeCles who was portraying him, and I, were acquainted.

Lots of good memories about that Worldcon, and it's hard to believe it all happened nearly a third of a century ago. I'm a bit envious of John's one-on-one time with DeCles/Twain. That's one thing I'd hoped to do during the convention but never got around to.

The essay that piqued John's interest the most seemed to be my appreciation of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, who I described in the essay's title as the 'World's Greatest Composer'. I'd probably walk that back a bit if I was writing it today (there are certainly many other great composers who could be in that conversation) but John didn't seem to have any problem with it.

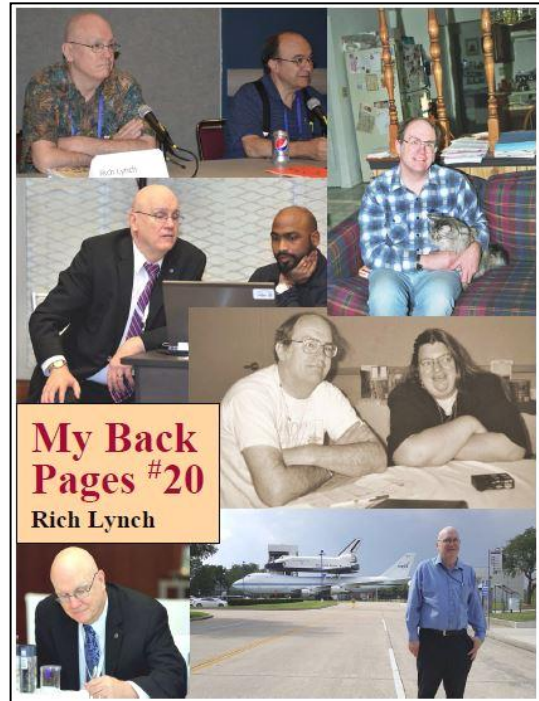
Mozart may well be the world's greatest composer. Dover Publications has a set of his letters. I've used his dances; I'm not alone in finding their quality

superb. I'm sorry you found writing briefly about him a burden or even a degradation of his genius. In Japan for a thousand years the highest form of literature was a five-line 5-7-5-7-7-syllable poem; that wasn't short enough, so it gave birth to a poem in three lines of 5-7-5 syllables. Anyone can throw together a few syllables, but the greatest in these forms are, even in translation, breathtaking masterworks. I recommend Donald Keene's *World Within Walls* (rev. 1999; Japanese literature during the isolation, thus including Bashō and Buson) and *Seeds in the Heart* (3rd ed. 1999; J. lit. from earliest times to the late 16th Century, thus including e.g. Narihira [whom Bruce Schneier quotes] and Saigyō). I agree with those who say the main fault of Bruckner symphonies is that they're not nearly long enough, but Mozart's piano concertos are hardly lesser achievements than Brahms' for being shorter.

I'm not much of a fan of Bruckner – he tended toward the atonal and I prefer the melodic. And I don't consider most of Mozart's orchestral works overly long, at least as compared to those who came later such as Beethoven and Brahms. But what's this about you believing that I found writing this appreciation a burden? Far from it – it provided a good opportunity to listen to some of Mozart's grandest compositions, and I'm never going to be tired of doing that.

I can find only one letter in response to **MBP 20** (published in June 2018) and that was from [Lloyd Penney](#). The first essay of the issue described my business trip to Abu Dhabi for a carbon sequestration conference, and Lloyd had a fairly lengthy comment about that.

It sounds like you were involved in legislation around carbon credits. You might already know that while Canada as a country supports the idea of carbon trading, the province of Ontario, with its change to a right-wing government, is getting ready to get out of carbon pricing credits, and is taking the federal government to court over it. The current provincial government, led by former city councilor Doug Ford, once again shows that left-wing government tend to build, and right-wing governments tend to tear down.



Given you were in Abu Dhabi, you might be aware of the one-sided feud between Canada and Saudi Arabia. A single tweet from a member of our government over human rights in Saudi Arabia unleashed a huge overreaction on the part of the Saudi government. We will lose some but not much, and the rest of the world is standing silent, unwilling to antagonize the sensitive Saudis any further.

I thank the stars I was never involved in any of the policy- or political-related stuff surrounding carbon management. I was the Secretariat of a multinational group of technical experts in the field. But even though they by their very nature were focused on smoothing the way for new technologies to be introduced it still, at times, was an exercise in herding cats. And to my surprise, I became good at it.

Lloyd also commented on my short essay about almost meeting the famed cowboy actor Roy Rogers, who had been doing a PR visit to one of his restaurants a few miles from where I lived. It didn't happen because Rogers was running late. I was with two Australian fans and we'd needed to get to Hagerstown, Maryland to visit Harry Warner, Jr. As I guess I might have expected, Lloyd's comment was about the Warner part of the essay.

I wish I had met Harry Warner, but I did respond to his zines, and he did tell me that he quite enjoyed both the quality and the quantity of my letters of comment. Also, he was a working journalist, and that was my training, so we did have a few things in common.

Even though there weren't any other letters about the issue, it did get a lengthy review in the N3F fanzine *Tightbeam*. The editor, **Bob Jennings**, had good things to say about *MBP* 20 but he also had an observation that had left him wondering.

It's all good fun stuff, and there's more here as well, packed between two full color covers that show, by my count, twelve different photographs of Rich himself at various different ages in various different locations. There may be some kind of deep personal or sociological reason why the covers to all of these fanzines always feature a collection of shots of the editor, but thus far no one has figured out what it might be. I tried to raise the question with editor Lynch last year, but never got an answer. Maybe it's part of some kind of occult Mystic rite that ensures his color photos each issue come out sharp and clear. Running a dozen biographic photos on each cover is probably easier than sacrificing a virgin on an Aztec stone alter anyway.

Nothing so intriguing, I'm afraid. As I mentioned at the beginning of this issue, *MBP* is a personal time capsule that impersonates a fanzine. I use it to collect essays that had originally appeared in other places and in a few instances had not

been previously published. So keeping with the time capsule intent, the covers seemed a good place to collect photos of me that might otherwise not ever see the light of day. Turns out there are a lot of them!

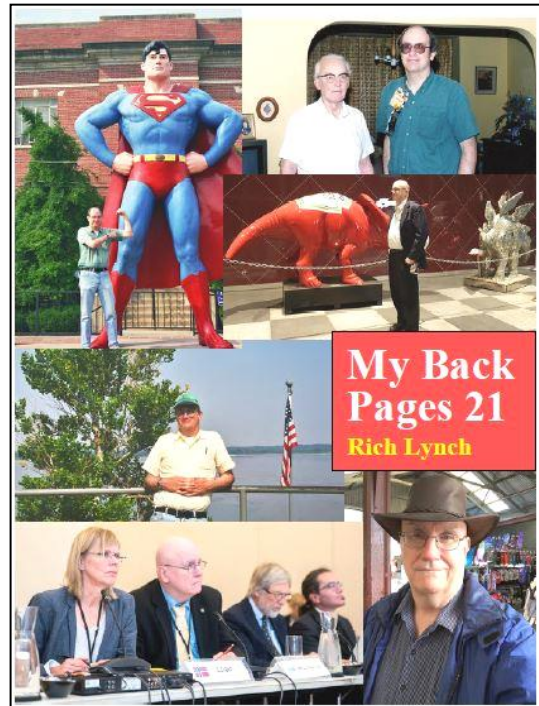
I did a *bit* better for **MBP 21** (published in December 2018) in that I received two letters about the issue instead of just one. [Mark Olson](#) commented on the previously unpublished essay, about an exhibition at the Smithsonian's Renwick Gallery that described and displayed many of the things to be found at the annual Burning Man event in the Nevada desert. And Mark seemed less than impressed by it all.

I suspect that many of the things at Burning Man are beautiful and wondrous, but I can't imagine anything that would get me to go. Quite apart from the comfort issues – I feel as you do – the whole thing looks to me to be utterly inauthentic. Tens of thousands of people telling each other that they're hip. (I will admit that part of this comes from observing who the few fans I know who go are...)

Mark is right that I have neither the stamina nor probably the self-sufficiency to last a week out in the desert. I don't have any opinion about the authenticity of the event, though, and I can only go by what I've read. A pretty good fictionalized depiction of Burning Man can be found in Cory Doctorow's novel *Homeland*, and from that he seems to be a fan of it. But yeah, it appears to be very much new-age in its outlook and a lot of us have moved on from that. If we were ever there to begin with.

The other letter was from the dependable [Lloyd Penney](#), who had comments on four other essays in the issue. And also on the shout-out I'd made in the issue's contents page to one of ice hockey's greatest players.

I sure do remember Stan Mikita...one of Mike Myers' movies mentioned a Stan Mikita Donuts store, as a bit of a stab at the popular Tim Hortons chain here. And yes, the Caps won the Stanley Cup, and well done. I will smile and say that the Leafs look pretty good this year, and should the Leafs ever win the cup again, that might be one of the signs of the Apocalypse. I am not sure if it's so much a big deal any more, but I remember how much fuss there would be



when the Washington Capitals would host or be hosted by the Ottawa Senators, and the rivalry would flare between the two capital cities. Perhaps now that Washington has a cup, and the Senators do not have one yet, that rivalry might start up again.

The Washington Capitals, in the past few years, have been getting older and slower as a team and in my opinion they're no longer a threat to win another Stanley Cup. The Ottawa Senators haven't been a contender, either, though I don't follow hockey closely enough to know exactly why. The Caps' Stanley Cup win back in 2018 probably was just an anomaly. But certainly a welcome one.

For another essay, about my road trip with a group of Italian energy experts, Lloyd's comment zeroed in on me, during a brief stopover in Cumberland, Maryland, serendipitously finding myself on the corner of George and Harrison Streets. And this evoked a recollection of the Fab Four in their heyday.

Beatles...never really grows old. Yvonne can brag about attending the only Beatles concert ever held in Toronto, and now that we are planning a return trip to England next year, we do plan a side trip to Liverpool, and take the grand Beatles tour.

The only times I saw the Beatles perform live was when they were on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, so yeah, I'm envious of Yvonne actually attending a Beatles concert. I hope Lloyd will provide an update on how the Beatles tour turned out. Another part of that essay described a tradition of sorts that seems to have been adopted young men in all parts of the world – attaching padlocks to a bridge railing (in this case, one that spanned the Allegheny River in Pittsburgh) as a means of expressing their love to their sweethearts. This caused Lloyd to ponder:

[Concerning] the bridge with padlocks on it...I also think there is a similar bridge like that in Paris, same reasons as in Pittsburgh and Florence. I wonder where there are others bridges like this?

Well, I know there's another one like that in Cologne, Germany, because it was featured in an episode of *The Amazing Race*. And since one of these exists in Pittsburgh, I have no doubt at all there are many other examples in North America. As well as the rest of the world.

The longest essay in the issue was about our annual NYC early January mini-vacation, where we were caught in the middle of an extreme weather event – a so-called 'bomb cyclone'. We don't get many storms like that in Maryland, but as Lloyd described, they're a bit more common in Canada.

The New York weather bomb you wrote about...we are about to get something similar, some snow, but amazingly cold temperatures even for up here, around

-25C or -13F, cold on either scale. And, it's going to last to the end of this coming Monday. Undershirts and long underwear shall be our friends.

It was actually fairly entertaining, if that's the right word, being out in Times Square in the middle of a blizzard. We had a good time with the Broadway shows and museum visit that year, but the Bomb Cyclone is what I'm always going to remember the most about the trip.

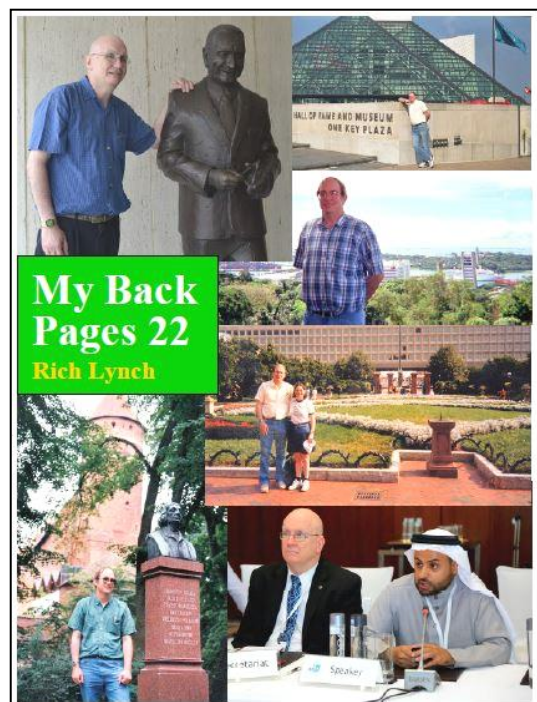
Lloyd's final comment was on the last essay in the issue, about the life and times of Mighty Maxx, our much-missed fluffy orange housecat. Maxx was quite the character, as I tried to show in the essay, and Lloyd reciprocated by sharing a few memories of cats that were near and dear to him.

We have never owned cats...I am mildly allergic, and Yvonne more so. However, we certainly enjoy everyone else's cats when we visit, and they usually spend an evening on our laps. We do have great memories of ChatChat and Chester and MomCat and Tiffany, all cats who are still a part of our memories long after they left this world. (MomCat's picture is still up on a corkboard in our office.) We have thought about getting a cat, and right now say no because our lifestyle wouldn't be fair to the cat. Perhaps when we are older, and are spending more time at home.

Nicki and I are now cat-less, and probably will stay that way. After Maxx died from a severe cardiac event near the end of 2018, I remember thinking that he deserved a remembrance essay as much as any departed friend. As I was writing it I'd had the thought, "Little guy, I am going to make you immortal." And I guess he will be, as long as the Internet exists.

MBP 22 was published in June 2019 and the then-upcoming Irish Worldcon inspired me to give the issue a travel-oriented theme. That apparently didn't resonate very well with readers, though, because I got only one letter of any substance. It was from [Lloyd Penney](#), who began by letting me know that his and Yvonne's England trip had happened as planned.

The Irish Worldcon is temporally nearly here, a couple of days away. We won't be there, we had our trip to England in May and June, so I will have my Irish time by following everyone else.



The longest essay in the issue was my “Up the Coast” trip report about the 2018 Worldcon in San Jose, which included stopovers in Ventura to see our old friends Les and Es Cole, a day in Paso Robles for an epic series of winery tours, and a post-convention visit to the Computer History Museum. It was a very enjoyable week-and-a-half, and my accounts of what happened apparently brought back some pleasant memories for Lloyd of Worldcons he’d attended. But, as he described, he’d moved on.

In some ways, I’d like to return to Worldcon, but in many ways, I am glad I am not there. I am finding life as a steampunk vendor less stressful, more profitable, and certainly interesting. Before my further involvement with fanzines, Yvonne and I were costumers, and we participated in Worldcon masquerades in the 80s. Our steampunk interests bring us back to those costuming days, and we are certainly having fun, and making a few bucks, too.

Just recently, this past weekend in fact, Yvonne and I had brought our wares to the village of Coldwater, Ontario, for the 9th annual Coldwater Steampunk Festival. We made some money, had some fun, saw a number of friends from the steampunk community from Montreal, Ottawa, London (Ontario), and of course, Toronto and area. Always a wonderful time. It was also a reminder that it is difficult to wear a costume when it is warm outside, especially in a steampunk costume of multiple layers. We have a number of smaller shows to go to locally this fall and early winter, especially for Hallowe’en and Christmas shows. Some of them are offering free tables, so we must take advantage of those.

Nicki and I are not as determined to go to Worldcons as we once were. We didn’t attend the Japan Worldcon in 2007 which broke a 19-year string, and after that it’s been hit-or-miss, depending on what our personal situation is like year to year. And that includes this year’s Worldcon in Scotland. As I mentioned earlier, we’re not ruling it out but we’re not yet planning to go.

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Lloyd was also the only person who sent me a letter in response to *You’re Still on My Mind* #4, but there’s not enough room left to reprint any of it. He did mention that he and Yvonne had a spectacular time in London and would love to return. As would Nicki and I, someday.

Okay, all for now. Next issue probably in April or May; I think I’ll be caught up on past issues of *My Back Pages* before the end of the year. We shall see!

[Please note that ‘Worldcon’, ‘Hugo Award’, and ‘NASFiC’ are service marks of Worldcon Intellectual Property, a non-profit corporation managed by the Mark Protection Committee of the World Science Fiction Society (WSFS), an unincorporated literary society.]