

Nolacon II '88
Con report by Evelyn C. Leeper
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Nolacon II, the 1988 World Science Fiction Convention was held September 1 through September 5 in New Orleans. The attendance was approximately 5000. Mark and I went to New Orleans five days earlier and did some sightseeing, which will be covered separately in a travel report (available on request).

Hotels

The convention was basically in two hotels. The Dealers' Room and the Art Show were in the Marriott, the films were in the Sheraton, and the programming tracks were in both. The Masquerade was in the Civic Auditorium. As in Brighton, the film room was nicely refrigerated so all the fans from Antarctica felt right at home. The rest of us risked pneumonia. I suspect the air conditioning

was set for a full room, but the films (at least the ones I went to) were sparsely attended.

Registration

Registration was supposed to open at 4 PM Wednesday (August 31) afternoon. It didn't. The sign said they would open at 8 PM. We walked around the French Quarter some more, then hung around the room. We had eaten a late lunch assuming we'd be busy during the evening, but apparently registration was the only event and it looked iffy.

We went back about 8:15 and registration finally opened about 8:30. The program book was a garish purple, gold, and green thing. They may be official Mardi Gras colors, but they're ugly. There were also some freebie buttons and comics (these tended to vary depending on who stuffed your package and when) and a free copy of *Equal Rites* by Terry Pratchett. Signet is really pushing that series--I've gotten about three free copies already.

(We discovered later that one of the problems holding up registration was that the original badge printer waited until two weeks before the convention to tell the committee that the badges wouldn't be ready for six more weeks. The committee took them elsewhere and got them back six hours before registration was scheduled to start, but just thrown randomly into boxes--all 5000 of them. So the delay was due in large part to the need to alphabetize 5000 badges.)

Normally, the next step would have been to go somewhere and lay out our schedules for the weekend. But there was a problem. There was no schedule. That's right; a collating problem at the printer meant that while we were registered for the convention, we had no idea of what was going to happen. After asking several people we were able to determine that nothing was scheduled until the next day. So we went back to the room, did some writing, and went to sleep.

The schedules finally arrived about 10:30 Thursday morning. We had had breakfast at Mother's and returned to the registration area about 10 AM. So we stood around waiting until they arrived (they did get them distributed quickly, I will say). We then spent some time going through them, drawing up tentative schedules, and checking out the restaurant guide.

Opening Ceremonies Thursday, 11:30 AM

The opening ceremonies were scheduled for 11:30 but (naturally) were late. At about noon, the Storyville Stompers came marching, or rather dancing, in, playing Dixieland and tossing doubloons around. (Nolacon has souvenir doubloons made up, of the type that are thrown during Mardi Gras.) There were the usual introductions and speeches.

Dealers' Room

When the opening ceremonies let out (about 12:30) I went to do a quick reconnoiter of the Dealers' Room (a.k.a., the hucksters' room). There were some very large displays from book dealers but books probably represented less than half of the room. The prices of used books weren't bad (i.e., there were used book dealers as well as antiquarian-type book dealers). I found several books I had been looking for, though *Six Science Fiction Plays* edited by Roger Elwood still eludes me.

The Dealers' Room was large enough to move around comfortably, but not nearly as large as the one in Brighton the year before.

Programming

As I have said in previous con reports, it's impossible to see everything at a worldcon, so I will just

cover the programming I attended. It's by no means complete, but it should give you some idea of what went on.

Panel: Ghosts Along the Mississippi
Thursday, 1 PM
Karl Edward Wagner, Pat Adkins, Glen Cook

This was an extremely disorganized panel; two members, including the moderator, failed to show up. As a result, no one was quite sure what was being discussed. Was it the idea of areas which have an "aura," such as Ireland or Scotland? Was it regional writing, like H. P. Lovecraft or Stephen King do? Adkins eventually pointed out that the title of the panel was from a book of photographs by Clarence John Laughlin. The only real consensus was that whatever they were talking about, Manly Wade Wellman did it. Karl Edward Wagner is the only person I know who talks in "stream-of-consciousness." It may be literary, but it makes him a very poor choice for a panelist because he monopolizes the time without producing any coherent contribution.

Panel: My Ten Favorite SF Films
Thursday, 3 PM
Joey Grillot

This was in some ways worse than the previous panel and in some ways better. Worse, in that Grillot showed up for only ten minutes in the middle of the hour; better, in that the absence of *any* panelists allowed us to do a round-table discussion instead. We were going great guns on what distinguished horror from science fiction when Grillot arrived and basically disrupted the discussion with his list of ten favorite films of any type (he even listed *Citizen Kane*!). When he left, we picked up the discussion (all dozen of us in a huge ballroom) and moved from the idea of classification to the emphasis (and some might say over-emphasis) on special effects. The recent advances in special effects have given us such remakes as *The Thing*, *The Fly*, and *The Blob*--isn't that wonderful? We ended up discussing whether *Them* had deep significance as a commentary on the atom bomb.

Panel: Contemporary Worldcons--The Global Worldcon
Thursday, 4 PM
Moshe Feder (U.S.), Terry Dowling (Australia), Lillian Edwards (U.K.),
Krsto Mazuranic (Yugoslavia), Fred Patten (U.S.),
Kees Van Toorn (Netherlands)

The audience for this was more international than the convention population as a whole--not really surprising if you think about it. A new proposed rotation scheme making Europe a fourth region and assigning every part of the world to a particular region rather than the current "at-large" system was discussed at great length. It appears that the prime movers behind the proposal are Americans, or rather United Statesians, the Canadians present being vocal in their distinct identity. Depending on your point of view, the proposal is either to assure the Europeans their fair share of conventions or to make sure no one North American region gets "frozen out." (A different proposal to avoid this was eventually passed by the business meeting, making this aspect moot.) Also depending on your point of view, either Europe doesn't have enough fandom to support a bid every four years, or it wants to be able to bid any year, not just every fourth year. Last year I commented on this proposal and was moderately in favor of it because, as I said, "as long as voting for a particular region is done at a convention held in that region [i.e., voting is done for the convention three years away in a three-year rotation scheme], inertia will keep a European convention in Europe." Now the newly approved scheme bars that possibility, so I am tending toward the feeling that there may now be enough fandom in Europe to sustain a tetra-annual bid. Only time will tell.

It was observed that the term "Worldcon" was coined to parallel the "World's Fair" held the year of the first worldcon (1939) and, like the "World" Series, is a misnomer. Although Heidelberg was an

attempt at a bi-lingual convention, everyone agreed that all future Worldcons would be in English. While some fans liked the idea of moving the convention to other countries as an excuse to travel there (Lillian Edwards liked having it in the United States for this reason), I think many American fans are afraid to travel overseas. To Sirius they'd go, but Holland is just too far and too different.

For dinner, we went to Mike Anderson's and had seafood in enormous quantities. We also heard Pete Rubinstein's latest tale of woe involving some sort of water leakage in his house--not up to his previous trials with lost suitcases, broken-down cars, or stolen luggage. We gave him an 8.5.

Panel: Is Stephen King the Dickens of the 1980s?

Friday, 11 AM

Susan Casper, Justin Leiber, Joe Straszinski

After listing the similarities between the two (long-winded, prone to digressions, good at writing about children, good at writing "slice-of-life"), the panel moved on to other topics. For example, no one seems to edit Stephen King any more. Dickens was paid by the word, so we know why he rambled on, but King doesn't even have that excuse. On the other hand, it doesn't really cost the publishers that much extra to publish another few thousand words in a novel, so they figure, what the heck. Even King admits to being the McDonalds of writers," emphasizing consistency and quantity ("N billion words sold!") over quality. Panelists accused him of taking the easy way out. In *The Dead Zone*, the man that John Smith sees as bringing on a nuclear war is a psychotic bigot who kicks dogs to death, so his decision to kill him is in some sense easier than if he were a nice guy and a loving father.

Karl Edward Wagner said that "word processors are the worst things a writer could have." Of course, Dickens (and for that matter the author of *Varney the Vampire*) had no word processors. Neither did Wagner on the panel and he was wordy and often incoherent.

I asked about the similarities between King's *Tommyknockers* and Nigel Kneale's *Quatermass and the Pit* (a.k.a. *Five Million Years to Earth*). The panelists conceded the parallels, but claimed King was just doing what science fiction authors have always done--taken an old idea and elaborated on it or given it a new twist. I remain unconvinced.

Justin Leiber gave a long description of his experience with teaching a writing course at a college with a creative writing program. The fact that he was a successful author was bad enough, but that he was a successful *science fiction* author meant he was a total pariah. But as one of the panelists said, "Writing is to be read."

Film: *The Trouble with Dick*

Friday, noon

This film didn't start late; it started early. Arrgghh! It is Gary Walkow's first feature and not your normal "straight-line" film. Richard Kendred (a.k.a. Dick, played by Tom Villard) is a writer who's having problems selling his work. He moves into a room in the same boarding house his old girlfriend Diane (played by Susan Dey) is staying in. Soon he is in demand, not only by Diane, but by the landlady of the boarding house and by her sixteen-year-old daughter as well. This makes it difficult for him to get much work done on his novel, a science fiction prison escape novel set on an arid alien planet. We see Dick's novel as part of the movie; for example, when Diane reads a chapter, we see it. It's obvious why this movie (made in 1987) was not a big boxoffice success, or why it didn't even get a general release. But for specialized audiences--like science fiction conventions--it is an excellent choice. Catch it if you can.

Panel: From the Stage to the Page

Friday, 2 PM

Joe Haldeman, A. C. Crispin

I dropped into this for only about five minutes. I did find out that Haldeman's movie *Mechanics* has been retitled *Robojox*. But the discussion seemed to consist mostly of Haldeman and Crispin complaining that they get no respect for their novelizations. While it may be true that it takes skill to translate a visual or cinematic image into a literary one, my personal feeling is that this is more a craft than an art. It is related (in my mind anyway) to the shared-world anthology--in both cases the author is working inside an already constructed framework. While I enjoy reading shared-world Sherlock Holmes stories, I don't think of them as being as "literary" as an original novel.

For that matter, authors are always complaining that films don't/can't do justice to their stories and are worse than the stories. Why shouldn't the movie makers say the same about the other direction? If the authors encourage the fans to look down on the movie makers for bastardizing their work, why should they object when the fans look down on authors who bastardize films? Yes, there are good novelizations, just as there are good filmizations, but Sturgeon's Law applies.

Art Show

I spent the rest of the afternoon at the art show and dealers' room. The art show was very well laid out, with lots of room to walk around and see the art. (Usually, you're packed in like sardines--well, not quite, but your maximum viewing distance is about one foot, not enough for the larger works.) The quality was mixed as usual: high-quality professional work, some high-quality amateur work, and a lot of low-quality amateur work. There was a preponderance of fantasy rather than science fiction. I overheard someone (David Cherry?) in the print shop discussing this. Apparently, most artists would rather do fantasy but most buyers would rather buy science fiction so some artists are switching over just to be more commercial. I for one could do with fewer unicorns. There was also the usual assortment of bad sketches of your favorite (or not so favorite) television and movie personalities. The latest addition to the television pantheon is *Beauty and the Beast*. (Kate went to a *Beauty and the Beast* party and when she introduced herself to a couple of the women there, one told her, "My tunnel name is Squirrel," and the other said, "My tunnel name is Water-Running-Through-Pipes." Mark later suggested that Kate could take the tunnel name "Small-Brown-Floating-Turd," but Kate decided not to.)

Dinner Friday, 6 PM

Dinner was arranged via the message board, a recent (and welcome) innovation at conventions. It used to be that you just tacked all your messages up on a big bulletin board in some semblance of alphabetic order. The new method (started at Confederation, I believe) is that the entire membership list is posted on a bulletin board. When you arrive, you put a check next to your name so people know you're here. To leave a message, you stick a map pin into the board next to the person's name, then put the message into a box with alphabetic dividers. It makes it *much* easier to see if you have a message. There is still a board for broadcast messages and a party board for party announcements.

Anyway, we had originally planned to have dinner with Lan and Maia, but Lan found himself scheduled for a 5 PM panel and had scheduled a room party for 7 PM, so that ended that idea. However, one of the AT&T club members had invited us to go with a group of Florida fans to Tujague's, so that's what we did. Tujague's has a fixed six-course dinner (you do have your choice of three entrees, which is an innovation--you used to get whatever they were serving that day). We had a shrimp roumillade appetizer, corn chowder, something resembling pot roast with a mustard sauce, the main course (I had blackened redfish, Mark had veal), bread pudding, and coffee. Bread pudding is a traditional New Orleans dessert of which I'm not particularly fond.

Parties

Friday, 9 PM

After dinner we dropped by Lan's room to discuss *Contraption* and decided to meet for breakfast Sunday morning to discuss it further. One idea for a panel was why fans go to Africa, since Mike Resnick (the Guest of Honor) as well as us (the Fan Guests of Honor) will have recently visited that continent.

We also went over to the Readercon party (later described in the daily con newsletter as "dull, dull, dull"). I did get to see the next Progress Report, which listed the panels and program times. Things start at 6 PM Friday, so it looks like we'll have to take a day off. They also promise that Lin Carter will *not* be the butt of the Kirk Poland Memorial Bad Prose Competition.

Film: *Just Imagine* Saturday, 6:30 AM

I had seen clips from this 1930 science fiction musical, but had never seen the whole thing. By today's standards it is pretty bad, but for its time it showed a fair amount of imagination. Its view of 1880 is almost as off as its view of 1980--the streets in 1880 were nowhere as clean as they portray them--but they do predict television and picture phones. Of course, we don't have personal aircars yet and the irony of the 1980's characters labeling 1930 (the midst of the Depression) as "the Good Old Days" is perhaps lost on much of today's audience.

The musical numbers, in the style of the times, stop the action completely while the people sing, but the songs are not bad: "An Old-Fashioned Girl"; "I Am the Words, You Are the Melody"; "Drink"; "Never Swat a Fly"; and a vaudeville number, "Elmer Remingway."

The film makes the point that in 1980 people don't have names, they have letters and numbers. But the pattern is flexible enough to allow the scriptwriter to use letters that form real 1930's names: the main characters are J-21 and LN-18, their friends are RT-something and B-something, and the rival for LN is MT-something.

Since the film started at 6:30 AM, we had plenty of time for breakfast at the Natchez Restaurant before the first panel.

Panel: The Death of Cyberpunk Saturday, 10 AM Bruce Bethke, Eileen Gunn, Tom Maddox

Is cyberpunk dead? The panelists seemed to conclude that it was never really alive. Someone reading William Gibson, Bruce Sterling, Rudy Rucker, John Shirley, Lewis Shiner, et al., decided that they had a lot in common, grabbed the name of a 1983 Bethke story and labeled them all "cyberpunk." Immediately two things happened. One, the term "cyberpunk" began to be applied to the subject matter, the movement, and the marketing as if they were all one. Two, just as with the surrealism of the 1920s, infighting began and splinter groups formed. An example of this is Walter Jon Williams who, it is claimed, has been influenced by cyberpunk, though this is vehemently denounced by the "traditional" cyberpunk authors. As one reviewer put it, though, cyberpunk can't have it both ways; it can't claim to be an influential movement and then object when people are influenced.

At any rate, cyberpunk seems to have degenerated to, in large part, telling the same story over and over in language such as, "The sky above the port was the color of a television set tuned to a dead channel." (Tom Maddox) By now any meaning to the term is being eroded from all sides. Forebears such as Bester, Delany, and even Stapledon are being labeled "cyberpunk" or at least "proto-cyberpunk." Jerry Pournelle, the archetypal right-winger, is assembling (Ghod help us) a cyberpunk anthology. The panelists even talked about cyberpunk lunchboxes and pull-on skinheads--maybe

they were kidding, but maybe not. And cyberpunk even has a half-sibling, cybernerd (typified by Vernor Vinge's *True Names*).

Toward the end of the hour the discussion turned to the question of whether science fiction reflects the present or the future. Cyberpunk seems heavily drug-related, yet there is no mention of bad effects from the drugs. Similarly, science fiction often shows what might be considered promiscuous sex with no mention of AIDS or others STDs. The panelists believe this is due to a lag in writing and publication time and that the concerns of the present will be reflected in science fiction. Yes, you can say that AIDS (or whatever problem) will be solved in the future, but science fiction (good science fiction) is not written to predict the future, but to provide perspective on the present.

Panel: Playing with History

Saturday, 11 AM

Jim Brunet, Sharon Baker, Lloyd Eshbach, Philip C. Kaveny

I thought this would be a panel on alternate histories, especially since Kaveny mentioned at the beginning that he was a Marxist, and that strict Marxism does not allow for the possibility of any other course of history (strict determinism, I guess), but that he was not that strict in his beliefs. When it got going, though, the panel seemed more like one on writing semi-fantasy set in prehistoric or barbarian times (a la Jean Auel's series). Eshbach has a tetralogy which takes place in Sheol (a la "Heroes in Hell"), which he says lets him mix all sorts of mythologies together (if Superman fought Captain America who would win...sorry, wrong universe).

The panelists presented such startling ideas as: you need to do something different, you need to do research, etc. When Sharon Baker said that the best way to avoid getting caught in a mistake was to follow F. M. Busby's advice ("Don't use numbers."), I figured I wasn't going to get much out of the panel and left. (She did say that you should research everything from three angles and gave some examples of this. Eshbach disputed her no-numbers approach--he wanted more details, not less.)

Film: *Midnight Movie Massacre*

Saturday, noon

This movie was, without a doubt, the worst movie I have seen this year. The filmmakers had begun to make a sendup of the 1950s space cadet television shows, but lost their backing because the film wasn't good enough. So they made a framing sequence to go with the parts they had already filmed. The framing sequence is 1950s teenagers going to a movie theater to see this bad film and being attacked by a space monster. It is worse than the film the filmmakers had started to make. There's one sneezing joke which is dragged out about ten times as long as it should be. I forget the actual figures, but I think I calculated that you could feed 300,000 children in Ethiopia for a year on what this film cost. The filmmakers hoped to have a cult classic; what they have is a disaster.

Panel: Living Room Lightning and Tesla's Legacy

Saturday, 2 PM

Peter Miller

Since I had just finished reading *Loving Little Egypt*, in which Tesla was one of the major characters, I figured I'd drop in on this talk. Nicola Tesla was born in Croatia in 1856. (Croatia later became part of Yugoslavia, and currently the United States and Yugoslavian governments are attempting to settle the question of what will happen to Tesla's notebooks.) Westinghouse backed Tesla in his development of alternating current at the same time J. P. Morgan was backing Edison in his work on direct current, so a fairly intense competition developed. As part of this, Edison invented the electric chair, which used alternating current in an attempt to convince people that having alternating current in their homes was deadly. Tesla invented or developed (among other things) X-rays, radar, magnetic resonance imaging, radio, AC, the button lamp, the Tesla coil, and fluorescent lights. he even

managed to create ball lightning in his hand, something that we still haven't figured out how to do today. (Miller thought that maybe some of Tesla's notebooks might have a clue, but many of them are still classified. Those which have been published have been printed by the Tesla Book Company in Greenville TX.) When Tesla heard that the royalties for one of his inventions would drive Westinghouse into bankruptcy, he signed away the rights to them. Westinghouse paid him a consulting fee and provided him with space to work until he died in 1943. The incident in *Loving Little Egypt* in which Tesla hooked a coil to the girders of a building and set up enough resonance to shake it apart (had he allowed it to continue) was basically true; Tesla did this in the Empire State Building shortly after it opened.

For further information on Tesla, see the biographies *Product of Genius* and *Man Out of Time*.

Fan-O-Rama II
Saturday, 3 PM
Maia Cowan, Jeanne Gomoll, and others

Mark and I attended this series of readings to hear Maia read one of Mark's articles, "The Theory and Origins of Hot Food," which she read in conjunction with some excerpts from a friend's diary in which he describes eating various strange seafood in Japan and Korea. We also heard Jeanne Gomoll describe her experience graduating from high school in the nude....

Film: *The Puppetoon Movie*
Saturday, 3 PM

George Pal got his start doing "puppetoons," short films which used stop-motion animation of wooden puppets. *The Puppetoon Movie* is the collection of all of these films. I arrived late because of the above-mentioned readings and missed the introduction, which apparently features Gumby and other characters inspired by puppetoons talking about Pal. This was followed by the puppetoons themselves, of which I apparently also missed "Little Broadcast." "Hoola Boola" was set in the South Seas and, by today's standards, would be considered racist in its depiction of the Black inhabitants of the islands. "Sleeping Beauty" took the old fairy tale and gave it the twist that it was the music of 1939 that woke her up (the film was made in--you guessed it--1939). "Tulips Shall Always Grow" is probably the most serious of the 'toons, showing the Nazi invasion of Holland. In this, the Nazis are called "screwballs" and are little mechanical men who goosestep through the fields of tulips until the rain comes and rusts them (shades of *War of the Worlds* here!). At the end Beethoven's Fifth is brought in to emphasize the victory of freedom over tyranny.

"Together in the Weather" and "Phillips Cavalcade" are throwaway pieces. "John Henry and the Inky-Poo" is a retelling of the American legend. In sharp contrast to the images of "Hoola Boola," the Black in this is the hero and it is he who Pal chose to symbolize the American worker. "Jasper in a Jam" unfortunately harkens back to the negative images, but is interesting in that several scenes take place in a room full of clocks, all with pendulums which must all be moved for each frame shot. The technical work is amazing. "Tubby the Tuba" is the final puppetoon, followed by a return to Gumby, Speedy Alka Seltzer, the Pillsbury Doughboy, Arnie the Dinosaur, Mr. Peanut, and many others to wrap up the show.

The most memorable instant was probably when the projector fell over, but that cannot be attributed to Pal. While watching these one after the other for an hour and a half is not how Pal intended them, they do provide an interesting assortment and an introduction to techniques later used and revised by many, including Will Vinton, the Father of the Dancing Raisins. When Pal made the puppetoons, theaters always showed a short before the film (actually, they showed a newsreel, coming attractions, a short, and *two* films for your admission price), but these days there is not much market for short films--the theaters show ads for the local insurance company instead--and this collection is probably the only way these films would be seen.

Panel: The Electronic Fanzine: Fanzines, Computers, and Communication
Saturday, 5 PM
Arthur Hlavaty, Linda Bushyager, Janice Gelb, Grant McCormick,
Elst Weinstein

The most interesting observation *from* this panel was that APAs and fanzines started out as a way to show off one's printing equipment, and only later did actual content become important. Now with electronic word processing, the pendulum seems to be swinging back as editors print whole columns listing all the software and hardware used to produce the zine ("The Table of Contents was generated using Do-Re-Mi; the illustrations were digitized with the Pictographic Scanner, ...") The most interesting observation *about* this panel was that the members of the panel used electronics in a small way to produce some of their zines, but the people in the audience (Chuq Von Rospach, Saul Jaffe, and yours truly) use computers and networks in a major way. While I admitted that I don't do fancy layout work and digitized graphics, I said that the ability to do proof-reading and re-arranging without having to retype everything was a godsend. The *Mt. Void* may not look very pretty compared to some, but it comes out weekly. I can't spend a lot of time doing layout, because when Friday morning comes, that zine has to hit the mailbox. And then I can start on next week's. Saul is in a similar position, but where I produce basically a paper zine with a few electronic copies, Saul produces a fully electronically distributed zine three times a day (with a current estimated circulation of 200,000!). Chuq does a fancy paper zine with some electronic distribution of a stripped-down version (no graphics). In tabular form:

ZINE	PUBLISHER	FREQUENCY	PRIMARY MEDIUM	SECONDARY MEDIUM	LAYOUT
MT. VOID	Leeper	weekly	paper	electronic	medium
OTHER REALMS	Von Rospach	quarterly	paper	electronic	high
SF-LOVERS	Jaffe	tri-daily	electronic	paper	low

Like they say, "Quick, cheap, good--chose two of the three."

The panelists felt that people like Saul and Chuq weren't included on the panel for fear of intimidating those for whom computers were not second nature.

Masquerade

The Masquerade was held from 7 PM to ? in the Civic Auditorium about a mile away. Special buses ran continuously between the Marriott and the Auditorium and we were able to go in and sit down immediately when we arrived (because of the rain, I found out later). The first run-through ran about two and a half hours, with a short intermission part way through. The list of award winners was almost as long as the list of presentations, which merely reaffirms my belief that the awards are made up after the costumes are seen. The two most notable costumes--at opposite ends of the spectrum from each other--were "Holocaust--The Demon Within" (which won for Most Dramatic) and "A Nostalgic Look at the '60s" (which won for Most Humorous, I think). The latter consisted of "Leonard Nimoy and the Spockettes," a singing group lip-syncing Nimoy's real record of "Bilbo Baggins." The guitar was shaped like the Federation insignia, the drums looked like the Enterprise, the various singers wore the various versions of the Federation uniform, etc.

Silverberg did a reasonable job of hosting the show. Because people could enter and find seats as they arrived, there were none of the problems which plagued the Hugo Awards ceremony (see below). I'm not sure when the Masquerade got over because we, like many others, left after the first run-through.

@ Party
Saturday, 10 PM

After the Masquerade, Mark and I went to the @ party for people on Usenet, Arpanet, and other electronic networks. Nicholas Simicich volunteered his room for the third(!) year in a row. There were about two dozen people there in the time I was there, and more before I arrived and after I left. Last year one hot topic was whether NESFA was being arrogant about Boskone 25 or not; it remained a hot topic this year. Mark left early, but I hung around a while longer (till about midnight).

Contraption Breakfast Sunday, 9 AM

Sunday morning we got up and started getting ready for breakfast. Kate wanted to get some money out of the safe deposit box. Each room has a safe deposit box in the room with a key, sort of like a bus station locker. We couldn't find the key. Mark had had it Saturday, but he couldn't find it in his pocket stuff on the nightstand. We searched his pockets. We searched my pockets. We searched all the pockets in the laundry bag. We searched all the drawers. No key. Well, the box said there was a \$35 charge for a lost key, so we figured we might end up paying \$35 if we couldn't find it. Mark went downstairs to see if anyone had turned in a key at the desk while we searched everything again. He came back and said, "You know how we said that it could be worse? It's worse." Apparently the \$35 charge is really \$60 now and does not include replacing the box if they have to drill into it. How they would *not* have to drill into it wasn't at all clear, but we decided to go to breakfast and deal with this afterwards. We did have money, tickets, and such in the box so we couldn't just forget it.

At breakfast we talked to Jamie McQuinn and Halina Harding, chairs of this year's Contraption (a.k.a. Covert Contraption), as well as Lan and Maia. The Africa panel previously mentioned was pretty much decided on, and Mark offered to write film notes for the films if they wanted. We still need to come up with a couple more panels--alternate histories and golems are possibilities, albeit trite ones.

After breakfast we went back to the room and searched some more. Mark went over to check with convention lost and found. (There wasn't any--lost and found, that is.) While he was gone I checked one more time under the bed and as I did I saw out of the corner of one eye the key, halfway under the covers of the *other* bed where it had apparently rolled when it fell off the nightstand when Mark was rummaging around for his book light in the dark. What a relief! (For the rest of the convention I wore the key on a cord, around my neck, inside my shirt.)

Panel: Twentieth Century Fox and United Artists Film Presentations Sunday, 10 AM Terry Erdmann

Erdmann started by talking about *Star Trek V: The Final Frontier*, neither a Twentieth Century Fox nor a United Artists film. It begins principal photography October 10 and has a 14-week shooting schedule, including three weeks on locations somewhere near Los Angeles. It will have Klingons, Vulcans, and Romulans. Release date is set for June 1989.

United Artists is pushing *Child's Play* about a doll got psycho in a toy store (or something like that), and *Vengeance the Demon* (a.k.a. *Pumpkinhead*). The former is scheduled to open October 28; the latter will open on November 7. (I wonder if they'll play in Nairobi then?) *Child's Play* is directed by Tom Holland and stars Chris Sarandon. It has some interesting motor effects for the doll, but had generally a ho-hum slasher look.

Twentieth Century Fox was promoting *Cocoon II: The Return*, with Dan Petri directing and most of the stars of the first film reprising their roles. I know you thought that the old folks had left Earth forever, but then you also thought that Dracula was really killed all those times too. They also promo'ed *Alien Nation* (a.k.a. *Outer Heat*), due to open October 7. Set in the 1990s, the film assumes

a large alien spaceship has been stranded on Earth and the aliens have been accepted as refugees. James Caan (a human cop) and Mandy Patinkin (an alien cop) team up to solve a series of murders. The set design, done by Jack Hollis, looks inspired by *Bladerunner*. This one I'm looking forward to. (The presentations were somewhat disorganized because the person setting up the slide projector dropped the whole tray of slides--and they weren't numbered.)

Erdmann also mentioned *Dead Ringers* (a.k.a. *Twins*), David Cronenberg's new film, and *The Fly II* (scheduled for release February or March 1989). He then introduced the senior vice-president of production at Twentieth Century Fox, Michael Levi, who answered questions from the audience about various upcoming films. Luckily, none of these was of the "Are we going to have any more neat guts-and-gore sequences in *The Fly II*?" but were more intelligent, which may mean that film studios will take science fiction conventions more seriously as time goes on. Levi said that another film which looked good was *Abyss* (directed by James Cameron), scheduled for release May 1989, and that *Aliens II* (a.k.a. *Alien III*) was still in the planning stages, but that the current working script was by William Gibson.

Panel: Warner Brothers Film Presentation
Sunday, 11 AM
Jeff Walker

Warner Brothers' presentation was preceded by a cartoon, "Kitty Kornered," and was almost entirely on *Batman*. Michael Keaton has been signed to play Batman, a fact which distresses a large number of Batman fans (most of whom probably haven't seen *Clean and Sober*). Apparently Keaton doesn't have the right chin (I don't really follow all this). However, Walker reassured the audience that *Batman* would not be a comedy, but would be a "dark" film, whatever that means. Jack Nicholson will play the Joker. Batman will wear a mask with reflective eyeholes (Batman with mirrorshades?).

Walker talked about how Batman was inspired by the Da Vinci sketches of winged men and showed some production sketches from the film. The audience liked the Batplane but not the Batcar; at a previous convention the audience liked the Batcar but not the Batplane. The set design will have a "retro-futurist" look (a la *Streets of Fire*)--sort of the 1990s as seen from the 1930s. Sam Hamm wrote the screenplay and Tim Burton is directing. Warners is aiming for a PG-13 rating.

Warners also has a script for *Watchmen*, but the entire "Tales of the Black Freighter" subplot has been excised (for reasons of length).

Panel: Unilateral Disarmament of the United States
Sunday, noon
Dean Ing, Greg Benford, Sheila Finch

The panelists began by giving their credentials. Ing is a full-time writer who seems to have dabbled in a bit of everything in his time. Benford is a professor at the University of California and a part-time writer. Finch teaches freshman composition at a junior college. Benford began by noting the extremely high proportion of Oriental surnames at his school these days, which he seemed to think indicated a lowering of American intellectual standards. What he didn't address was the possibility that these people were Americans--that they either were born here, or had immigrated here and were staying after graduation.

Most of the discussion centered on the idea of a voucher system for schools, in which parents got a voucher for X dollars from the government and could spend it at any accredited school. They might have to pay some additional money for some schools, but that was their choice. Basically, this is proposed as the free market system. The big unanswered question is whether the government would guarantee that a child could get an education with just the voucher--what would prevent all schools from charging additional fees?

Another proposal was to change the immigration policy to favor those who would contribute to the United States' intellectual strength, rather than allowing most of our immigration to be relatives of current citizens. I'm not convinced that the two are entirely mutually exclusive, but a convention report is probably not the place to thrash out the pros and cons. (Oooh, I think I made a pun there!)

Ing was very vehement on teaching children the value of deferred gratification: "Never deny your children the gift of struggle." The previous generation of students had been affected (for better or worse) by the Depression in that their parents feel that they struggled and suffered and they didn't want their children to have to go through the same thing. I'm not sure if this is still true, or whether there is some other stronger influence at work here now. Ing also claims that one of the problems of today's society is that "we confer status on the basis of what people have instead of what they do." Why he thinks this is a new problem is not clear to me. In constructing his basic curriculum, Ing listed statistics and scientific method--an idiosyncratic choice to say the least.

Another heated debate sprung up over streaming (or tracks) in which students are placed in fast, average, or slow classes, depending on their ability (according to some) or their perceived ability based on their racial or social group (according to others). Also discussed were the various ideas to monitor teach performance.

One of the problems in this discussion was that all schools were lumped together. People proposing the voucher/free-market system of fixing the elementary schools couldn't really answer the question of why the colleges were messed up too, since they already work on that system.

All in all, this was one of the liveliest and more controversial of the panels at Nolacon.

Panel: Contemporary Worldcons--Reinventing the Fanzine Hugo
Sunday, 1 PM
Mike Glycer, Jeanne Gomoll, Timothy Lane, George "Lan" Laskowski,
Pat Mueller, Leslie Turek

For the record: Mike Glycer edits *File 770*, Jeanne Gomoll edited *The Texas SF Inquirer*, Timothy Lane edits *Fosfax*, George "Lan" Laskowski edits *Lan's Lantern*, Pat Mueller edits something I can't remember, and Leslie Turek edits *Mad 3*.

What is a fanzine? Well, no one really knows. Is a fanzine something which has as its primary content science fiction or related works, or is it something which supposes fandom as its basis (much like a high school yearbook has the academic purpose of high school as a background, but concentrates on the other aspects of the people involved and doesn't actually deal with the academics very much)? So trying to define what would be eligible for a fanzine Hugo in terms of its connection or lack thereof to science fiction/fandom remains an impossibility.

The question of fanzine versus semi-prozine came up. Though this is currently decided primarily on the basis of circulation, this leaves an interesting problem for fanzines of indeterminate circulation (e.g., electronic fanzines). The discussion then veered off into the (now) annual argument about whether an electronic fanzine (like *Sf-Lovers' Digest*) would be eligible for the Hugo for Best Fanzine. The requirement is that the fanzine be "generally available" and this leads to many arguments. I would contend that if *Sf-Lovers' Digest* is read by 200,000 people, that is considerably more generally available than the nominated fanzines which are read by maybe a few hundred people. There are, however, those who claim that the requirement that one have a computer (not a strict one, since most electronic fanzines will provide paper copies if requested) makes it not generally available. *Other Realms* placed sixth on the nominating ballot this year, undoubtedly because of its wide electronic distribution, but since it is primarily available as a paper zine I cannot see that its place could be disputed if it placed higher. Another proposal for the fanzine/semi-prozine split was that a fanzine that won the Hugo a certain number of times would automatically be moved

to the semi-prozine category--sort of the way the novice and journeyman classes are defined for the masquerade. This was not supported by everyone; many felt that a multiple-time winner should be retired. The first suggestion seems a more reasonable one to me.

People were in general in favor of adding a "no preference" vote in addition to the "no award" vote, which they hoped would solve the problem of people who had seen only one or two of the nominees feeling compelled to vote for them.

Panel: Good Editing and How to Recognize It
Sunday, 2 PM
Gardner Dozois, Ginjer Buchanan, Brian Thomsen, Shawna McCarthy

Not a really thrilling panel. There was a distinction made between editing for content and line editing. An example of the former is, "Dale lost her wallet in Chapter 1; where did she get the credit card she used in Chapter 6?" or "Why did Pat suddenly decide to fly to Sirius in Chapter 4?" An example of the latter is telling an author that they've used the word "organized" six times on one page and perhaps they would like to choose a different word for some of those occurrences. One real-life example of line-editing was an editor who got a manuscript in which one character said to another, "Are you hungry? There's beer and cheese and shit in the refrigerator." The editor suggested to the author that the image conjured up by this choice of words was perhaps not quite what the author had in mind.

The panel agreed that book editing and magazine editing were different. Magazines have deadlines to meet and pages to fill; books can be a month earlier or later, and the length is more flexible. Magazine editors are also probably more likely to experiment, since there will be several stories in each issue and one "far-out" story isn't likely to antagonize readers as much as a "far-out" book (as with the one reader who once returned a book to the publisher with the note, "Please return my money. This book made no sense.").

Panel: Fanthology 1987
Sunday, 3 PM
Mike Glycer, Lillian Edwards, Teddy Harvia, Jerry Kaufman,
Christina Lake, Patrick Neilson-Hayden

There was an extremely long list of items suggested for the "fanthology" of 1988 which I will not reproduce here. My conclusion was that people who spent a lot of time keeping up with fanzines couldn't possibly have jobs and keep up with science fiction as well--the sheer volume is overwhelming.

Panel: Hugos Report Card--A Close Look...
Sunday, 4 PM
Harlan McGhan, William G. Contento, Doug Fratz, Jim Frenkel, Peter Heck

Awards have proliferated: there are now Hugos, Nebulas, John W. Campbell Awards, World Fantasy Awards, and on and on. In addition, there are awards for novels, novellas (a term invented for the Nebulas in 1966), novelettes, and short stories. Are there too many? Well, a vote on whether people thought the fiction Hugos should be consolidated down to three instead of four failed, about 40% to 60%. The general question of whether more awards means that you can recognize more people or that each award is diminished in value was discussed but (not surprisingly) not resolved. The question of the infamous "Other Forms" category, pitting apples against oranges and even apples against skateboards, led to the conclusion that there was a need to be able to give awards to things that didn't fit into any of the other categories, but that this wasn't the way. I suggested awards similar to the technical Academy Awards, in which one of three types of certificates of merit are awarded to people for technical achievement. There are no specific categories and the number of awards in a

given year depends on how many people the committee thinks are worthy. For Hugos, there could be a spot on the nominating ballot for "other awards" and anything that got more than a specific number/percentage of nominations would receive an award (or the Hugo committee could make the decision).

The panel then rapidly "degenerated" into Frenkel handicapping the Hugos, as in "Brin won't win for novel because he won a few years ago and everyone knows he's getting too arrogant. Card won't win because he's won two years in a row and he keeps getting fatter each time. Wolfe won't win because we all know that even though he says it's science fiction, it's really fantasy. George Alec Effinger won't win because he has too many names. That leaves Bear and besides everyone knows he should have won last year for *Eon* which wasn't even on the ballot, so I'll pick Bear." And so on.

Hugo Awards Sunday, 8 PM

We skipped dinner and went at 6:45 PM to queue up for the Hugo Awards ceremony. Just like last year, first we got told to queue at one spot, then we got moved to another, and then another. No one knew which door was going to be used to let people in. Because there was no organized line and no ropes, people kept cutting in, etc. They were late letting us in, apparently because the Sheraton had rearranged the seats incorrectly and they had to be done again. When we got in we were told we couldn't sit in the main arena, which was reserved for nominees, pros, etc., but had to sit to one side facing the audio-visual equipment. Then after about half the crowd had been let in, they told the people entering that they could take any left-over seats in the center area. This meant that people who arrived late got better seats than those of us who had been waiting an hour and a half. (The one person who was assigned to security for the room from 6 to 7 included this in her long list of gripes about the ceremony at the gripe session, as well as the total lack of effective crowd control.)

Well, on to the awards:

- | Novel: *The Uplift War*, David Brin (Phantasia/Bantam-Spectra)
- | Novella: "Eye for Eye," Orson Scott Card (IASFM, March)
- | Novelette: "Buffalo Gals Won't You Come Out Tonight," Ursula K. Le Guin (F&SF, Oct)
- | Short Story: "Why I Left Harry's All-Night Hamburgers," Lawrence Watt-Evans (IASFM, Jul)
- | Other Forms: *Watchmen* (DC)
- | Non-Fiction: *Whelan's Worlds of Wonder*, Whelan (Del Rey)
- | Dramatic Presentation: *The Princess Bride*
- | Pro Editor: Gardner Dozois, IASFM
- | Pro Artist: Mike Whelan
- | Semi-Prozine: *Locus*
- | Fanzine: *Texas SF Enquirer*
- | Fan Writer: Mike Glyer
- | Fan Artist: Brad Foster
- | John W. Campbell Award: Judith Moffett
- | Seiun ("Japanese Hugo") for Best Novel in Translation: *Nostrilia* by Cordwainer Smith
- | Seiun for Best Short Story in Translation: "The Only Neat Thing to Do" by James Tiptree, Jr.
- | First Fandom Award: Lloyd Arthur Eshbach, David Kyle, Charles D. Horning, Neil R. Jones
- | Big Heart Award: Andre Norton
- | Special Award: Science Fiction Oral History Association (a.k.a. Oral History Society)

(One got the distinct impression that the number of deaths this year of members of First Fandom has spurred that group to start awarding more than one award each year.)

Resnick filled the gaps between awards with reminiscences of past worldcons: the skinny-dipping in the pool at Noreascon I (1971) which started the great fannish tradition of skinny-dipping, the

roaches in the hotel at Suncon (1977), the police checking all the fans at Baycon (1968) because they looked even weirder than the Hell's Angels, the Scotsmen who were so loud in their bagpipe playing in Cleveland (1964) that the science fiction fans complained that the mundanes were too loud, the hospital bracelets from Midamericon (1976) guaranteed to prevent you from losing your badge, the heat at Iguanacon (1978) which was so bad that several fans who were eating at a roof-top restaurant ended up finishing the meal in only their underwear, and so on. That he was able to keep the audience, who had been kept waiting and shuffled around so much that the last few moves were done to the accompaniment of hundreds of fans mooing, entertained was a tribute to his story-telling skill.

Leaving the Hugos was as much a challenge as getting in. All escalators were directed downwards and fans descending were asked to use those. Unfortunately, many discovered that they could go down to the first floor and catch an up elevator faster than by waiting for one on the fifth floor. This meant that the up elevators arriving at the fifth floor were already full. After standing around for ten minutes, Dave and I decided to walk up to our room--after all, it was only on the 21st floor. We took our time and still beat Kate back by about 15 minutes. (She has a bad leg and had to wait for the elevators.)

Parties Sunday, 10 PM

Kate and I then decided to go to the Readercon party. It took us 45 minutes to get down the elevators in the Sheraton and up the elevators in the Marriott. In the Marriott we had to queue up for an elevator and there were con security guards to make sure people didn't overload the elevators or do other anti-social things. While standing in line, I did get a chance to talk to Joel Rosenberg, whose story "Emigrant" I had praised in *Lan's Lantern*. He recognized my name and thanked me for the good words.

The Readercon party was opposite the suite for the Bridge Publications party, which had all sorts of exotic food (like steak tartare) and attracted large crowds. The Readercon bunch was small, but incredibly vocal. Eric Van and a fan from Finland got into a shouting match over the relative merits of Philip K. Dick, Gene Wolfe, and Jack Chalker. I didn't think it was possible for someone to outshout Eric, but it is. And this person (who's name I didn't catch) was doing it in a (to him) foreign language. He did, however, seem to have a firm grasp of English, shall we say, colloquialisms (or as they said in *Star Trek IV*, "colorful language"). Robert Colby agreed that this was the first time anyone had ever beaten Eric on volume. I'm sure the newsletter would still have called it "dull, dull, dull," but I thought sitting around sipping amaretto and discussing books and authors was a wonderful way to spend an evening. Consider this a shameless plug for Readercon. (Hey, I can plug it--I'm not on the Readercon committee. Anyway, Readercon is on November 18-20, 1988. Write Readercon, P. O. Box 6138, Boston MA 02209 for details. Guest of Honor this year is Samuel R. Delany.)

Kate came back later from another party she had gone to with some astounding news: she had been excommunicated from Star Trek fandom! Now, Kate is the biggest Star Trek fan I know (in enthusiasm, not size!), so naturally we asked how such a thing could have happened. It seems there had been a discussion of the episode "Conspiracy" (a.k.a. "the exploding heads episode"--I love the names these episodes get; "the planet of the naked joggers" is another). Jacqueline Lichtenberg contended that there was no place for horror and horrific stories in the Star Trek universe because Star Trek fans didn't like horror. When Kate admitted that not only did she like horror, but actually went to horror conventions and such, Lichtenberg told her that she obviously couldn't understand the appeal that Star Trek had for people growing up in the 1960s (of which, of course, Kate was one). Poor Kate--first she gets named "Small-Brown-Floating-Turd" and then she's excommunicated from Star Trek fandom. How much shame can one person take? :-)

Film: *The Projectionist*

Sunday, 6:30 AM

This is another unusual film. The main character is a projectionist who sees life as a series of film images. As the projectionist he is able to avoid being totally dominated by the theater manager, played by Rodney Dangerfield in a definitely non-comedy role. We spend the film following the projectionist around as he sees a woman in a park and begins to imagine what it would be like to meet her--in a movie. This film is not easy to explain, or to understand (the beginning and end are done in such a way that it looks as though the projectionist for *this* film started it in the middle and stopped it just as abruptly), and I'm sure would prove more rewarding on a second viewing, but even a single viewing will give you something worthwhile.

Panel: Closing Ceremonies Sunday, noon

The closing ceremonies were similar to the opening ceremonies; the Storyville Stompers came in playing music suitable for a jazz funeral. After more speeches, the convention was officially declared over and the band broke into more festive music as more doubloons were flung at the audience. The force with which they were thrown made them fairly dangerous and there was at least one complaint in this regard at the gripe session. Two people dressed as Alice and the White Rabbit ran in and the Noreascon III committee was present but was never really introduced.

I had a bit of an awkward time of it. I found myself sitting next to an author who attempted to strike up a conversation with me. At first, I didn't know who it was (couldn't see the badge), and was fairly terse in my replies (well, I was really zonked by this point). Then I saw his badge but didn't place the name. When I finally placed the name, I realized this was an author whose books I had panned, so I decided that attempting to revive the conversation at this point would probably be a mistake.

Panel: The Gripe Session Monday, 1 PM

Like so many other items, the gripe session was moved to a different room at the last minute. (One issue of the daily newsletter claimed that the number of panels which occurred precisely as listed in the original schedule was 3.) The room was full and people had gripes. Most of the complaints seemed to be answered with, "Well, there was this big screw-up and A and B and C jumped in at the last moment and through super-human efforts were able to save the day--don't they deserve a big round of applause?" Finally, someone said that A and B and C might deserve a round of applause, but why were there all these screw-ups to begin with. A good question, a fair question, and a question which was never really answered. Apparently no one had done any programming until four weeks before the convention and then the "Floating Worldcon Committee" consisting of Mike Glyer and others jumped in to salvage what they could. The badge fiasco and the schedule book problems were described earlier. The crowd control problems were brought up. There was an enormous shouting match over why there was no in-room video. There was no good explanation of how the Sheraton could give function space contracted to Nolacon to another convention (except, apparently, that Nolacon didn't want to jeopardize relations with them by taking them to court). The pocket program was not very readable and, of course, grossly inaccurate. The daily newsletter was always very late, apparently due to lack of on-site printing facilities.

My guess was that New Orleans won the bid on the basis of their bid parties (a not uncommon occurrence) and then discovered they had to put a convention on. The fact that their competition was Cleveland (not the most viscerally exciting city, as even Clevelanders would probably admit) and the S. S. Norway (considered by many a hoax bid, and by others as too elitist in that it would be very expensive--people couldn't expect crash space, stay with friends, etc.) made the New Orleans victory less than a total surprise to everyone except them apparently. Had it not been for all the non-New Orleans fans who pitched in at the last minute, it would have been a much bigger disaster. As it was,

I would rate Nolacon II as the second most disorganized worldcon out of the thirteen I have attended (only Constellation was more disorganized). I realize that Suncon had its problems (many of the films were shipped to California by mistake), but on the whole I remember it as being more smoothly run than Nolacon.

For the record, I suppose I'll list the worldcons I've attended and rank them, best to worst (the middle four are pretty close together):

- | Noreascon II
- | Noreascon I (my first worldcon)
- | Midamericon (on the basis of the film program, perhaps)
- | LACon (I don't fault them just because they avoided bankruptcy!)
- | Discon II
- | Seacon
- | Confederation
- | Chicon IV
- | Conspiracy (mostly due to hotel problems)
- | Iguanacon (partially done in, in my opinion, by politics)
- | Suncon (the location change from Orlando to Miami didn't help)
- | Nolacon II (see this report for details!)
- | Constellation (they over-extended themselves)

Miscellaneous

The hotels were right across the street from each other. This was good, except that it always seemed to be raining when I wanted to cross the street. The elevator situation was no worse than usual, except perhaps after the Hugos. The fact that items were in two hotels with no time gap between them (i.e., the panels were scheduled for a full hour rather than 50 minutes) meant that you stood a good chance of missing the end of one item or the beginning of the next.

The con suite was well-stocked with food: popcorn, raw vegetables, fresh fruit, and other such munchies, with occasional forays into ice cream or red beans and rice. Apparently some people objected that there was no alcohol; I didn't even note its absence until it was pointed out later.

There were plenty of eating places nearby, both cheap and expensive. It was more a question of time. As usual, I got to meet some of the people I was hoping to see, but not for long enough, and I missed others entirely. Chicago won the bid for 1991.

Next year in Boston!

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