

BLUEGRAS no. 41

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If I don't freeze first. But then, if I lived through the first few days of January, and have escaped the wintry north, there's little chance Winter '98-'99 will get a better chance at coating me in ice.

I spent the last ten days of 1998 on Grand Island, New York, visiting family, mother, brother, sister-in-law, great-aunt, nephews. Decent enough time, but I was crawling the walls as January dawned and eager to get out of there. The main reason for my anxiety was, of course, weather. From the southwest, you get to Grand Island ~ which is just north of Buffalo, about 11 miles from Niagara Falls ~ along Interstate 90, which passes through Cleveland and Erie, PA. The road hugs the south shore of Lake Erie and is susceptible to that dreary climactic condition known as *lake effect snow*, a blowing, drifting, blinding horror. In a huge, heavy Grand Prix, I'd scrunched, sweating and swearing, through such a storm in '83; the thought of negotiating such a nightmare in a feather-light Geo Metro was unbearable.



So I resolved to avoid Lake Erie's south shore, and the lake effect. On January 2 I headed forth, north of the lake, through a corner of Ontario, Canada. It was a pleasant drive through farm country ... until I reached Detroit. I had indeed flanked the I-90 problem. But the Storm that awaited me in Michigan had nothing to do with the lake effect.

It was a full blizzard, whooshing, biting, frigid, ground-covering, terrible and impassable. I crunched a few fear-soaked miles southwards along I-75 before deciding I'd rather live with the ignominy of good sense than die in a snowbank, crept into a warm room and a Knight's Inn, and spent the rest of the day watching football. Outside, the winter raged. Ten inches plastered the world.

My brother's basic advice to me on winter driving had been, *Start late and let the trucks do their job.* Invaluable. At 11 the next morning ~ four hours later than I usually get on the road ~ I worked my way back onto I-75. The skies had cleared and the snowshovels and ash-spreaders had been there

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before me. Going slow and sticking to the darkest ~ and therefore, clearest ~ lanes, I somehow made my way far enough southwards to bare pavement. As with most trials, the anticipating was harder on me than the accomplishing. I made Nashville that night and boogied on home the day after.

Where it was a relatively tropic forty degrees. Still, I slept under an electric blanket with both gas and electric heaters blaring. It was a statement: *Nuts* to this winter stuff.

MAILING COMMENTS on KAPA 96

Bluegras no. 40 <me< Mitch missed New Orleans, but it didn't miss much else. What a hideous storm, and what a cruel "choice" of victims: poor countries, poor people. >> I still haven't finished *Darwinia*; its promising first chapters crashed headlong into the rock of the s.f.nal explanation the author gave for the story's weird setting, and my interest vaporized. Not so with S.M. Stirling's *Island in the Sea of Time*, which has a somewhat similar premise. It's good fun, rightfully touted as a worthy Hugo contender. I'd like to have shared the problems of *common* people in dealing with sudden and absolute isolation from the world they knew, not just the take-charge/solve-problems crowd, but at least Stirling's characters aren't the steel-plated fascists Niven and Pournelle would have brought forward. >> I spent a month as a Nielsen test family; they sent me a diary to note my television viewing and I was scrupulous about keeping it. To my dismay I found that although I'm not a fan of network fare, I still watch a lot of TV: A&E, movies, news, *The Simpsons*, *South Park*, *Jerry Springer* ... >> I'll answer my own question: Kurt Russell's *Soldier* was minor stuff, but I'll still nominate it for next year's Hugo, along with *Dark City* and *The Truman Show* ... and *Star Trek:Insurrection*, which was pleasant eyewash if nothing extraordinary in the story department. (Beautiful scenery, though.) For laughs I might list *The Faculty*, the silly but competent high school horror flick I scanned over vacation. And I'm sorely tempted to name the *Star Wars* I trailer, which had me and the rest of the audience howling in our seats. "God," I said, "I don't ask for much ... just next May!"

Vanish with the Rose #57 <Nicki< Listed as #56 in the OO. The annual congratulations on the Hugo! >> I wish I'd attended your worldcon panel on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*; the movie bombed but the series has become a dark, much-heralded hit. *Esquire* even ran a piece praising it, and *Esquire* is holy writ in this house. >> Do you remember the s.f. writers the worldcon committee suggested be honored on postage stamps? I'd argue for Gernsback, Campbell, Heinlein, Asimov, Smith, Bester, Dick, Serling, Kuttner, Brown ... though some of those titans haven't been dead for the requisite decade, and it's doubtful non-aficionados have heard of Phil Dick or Fredric Brown or Doc Smith. >> I thought Michael Jackson failed in his attempt to buy the Elephant Man's skeleton. I hope so ~ if John Merrick must be on display, it should be in the British Museum or a medical society. The poor bastard. >> If my age is in question, I'll be *gurk* 50 in July. As for the McDonald's lawsuit, I find it repulsive that people mock the old lady who was burned by their ill-designed cup as some sort of "whiner." I guess we're all supposed to be Vietnam veterans with bandoleers across our chests, who shave our armpits with bayonets and laugh at trivial annoyances like having our skin boiled off through another's negligence. >> Let's do J.J. Johnson a favor and forget the details of his death. He was a good guy and is still missed.

Sailing the Abnormalcy #28 <Bryan< Good for you for "paying off debt like crazy." Making more than I ever have, and that's still almost impossible for me. Credit your good sense in getting married and staying that way ~ it's an infinitely cheaper and smarter way to live than the bachelor tedium and misery in which I find myself. >> A few vampire kids showed up at the DSC in '96; I mainly remembered how cute the girls were, so serious and so silly in their fangs and capes. Not at all like my generation, which was the veritable picture of sense and decorum throughout youth. Anyway, so what if they think they're cool and actually aren't? Who hasn't? >> I agree with your reading of the Second Amendment, but the original is poorly written. If Mr. Madison had written "The right of the people to keep and bear arms for the purpose of service in a well-regulated militia shall not be infringed" we'd have a better idea of what he really meant. If that is what he meant ... >> Indeed, people aren't that upset with Clinton because he dipped his wick, but it's not because of the economy. It's because of the perfidy of the fanatics who have pursued him, whose actions stink of sanctimonious hypocrisy and a flagrant misuse of state power. The people, wise for once, are saying, *I prefer a man who lies to save his family to zealots who would abuse the law to destroy a political enemy.* Me too. Clinton is no threat to the republic. The wingers are. >> As you see, I survived my plane flight. Of course, I needed a Methodist minister/hypnotist and three screwdrivers to do it, but hey, I did it. And I must say, I enjoyed looking down onto Greensboro, maybe, North Carolina and reflecting on my years there, and watching the RMFs' sailboats sparkle in the Chesapeake like stars in an emerald sky. >> That's a nasty story about the thug gassing the Red Lobster restaurant. I've been trying to figure out just what he could have been charged with, as in, what crime he committed. Whatever, it's too bad he was never caught, but maybe he'll try it again ... >> Love that Pinky & the Brain skit!

Notes from the Club Car #50 <Pat< My major memories of San Diego involve the zoo, of course ~ which was and apparently remains a wonderful place ~ and having to buy a pair of pants there when my own ripped up the backside while walking on the beach. I was 12 and the experience was mortifying. I really envy y'all the boat trip around the harbor; that must have been spectacular. >> Wasn't the IMAX Everest an epic film? It worked on every level, as an eyefest, as a breath-catcher and as a moving human story, especially when Tenzing Norkay's son reflects on his father, the mountain he was among the first to conquer, his duty to both ... and how he came to realize that all of his ambition was unnecessary, that his father's love was something he never had to earn. I hope it wins an Oscar. >> I add fannish terms to my little computer's dictionary all the time; in fact, I filled up my last p.c.'s spellchecker. "Zine" ... "apa" ... "OE" ... "worldcon" ... "egoboo" ... "Molloy" ... "spellchecker" ... all of our *outré* lingo. >> Maybe you're not culturally deprived by knowing nothing of **South Park**, but culturally *depraved*, certainly! Or perhaps it's the other way around: the last **South Park** bit I encountered involved Chef singing an ode to his salty chocolate ... oh, never mind. >> This is the first I've heard of a Huntsville bid for the 2001 DSC. With fond memories of several fun DeepSouthCons there in the past, I rejoice in the news. Now, if DSC '99 comes off here in Nawlins ... be sure to request your room reservations *soon*.

Transitional Nattering 1 <Naomi< Koalas are kool-looking kritters, to be sure. They have one at the excellent N.O. zoo, which I recommend for your next trip here. Loved your Christmas card!

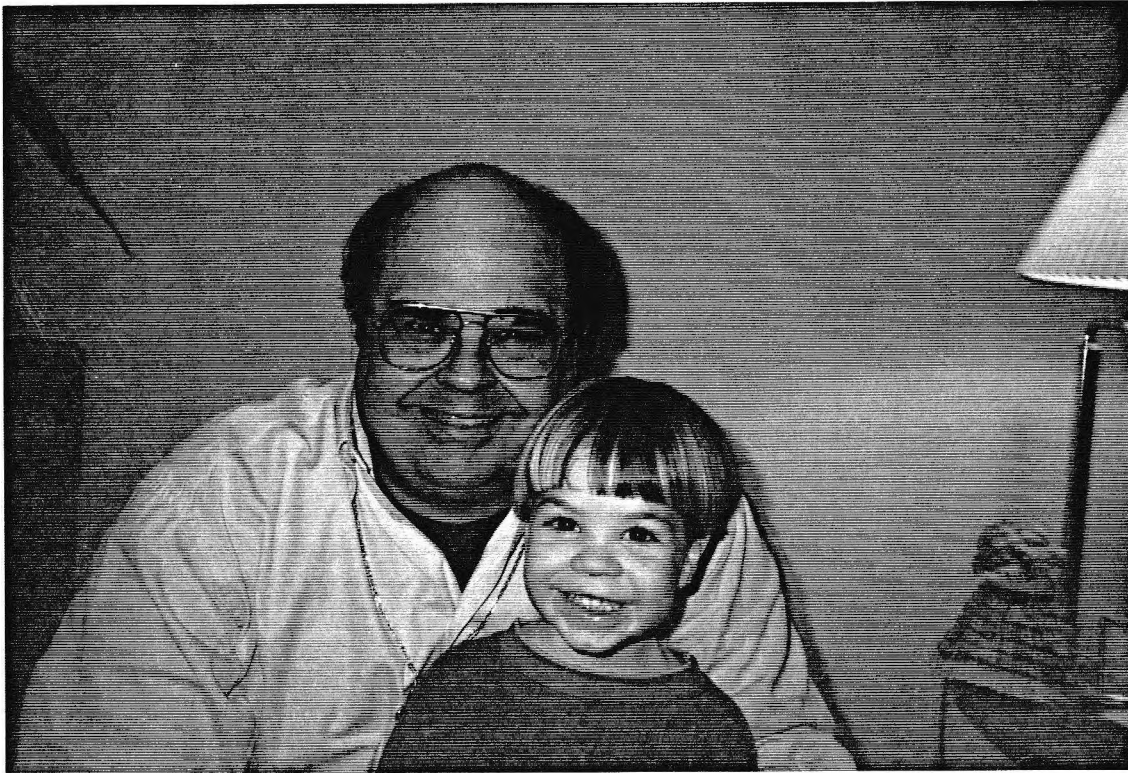
Kentucky Nuggets 53 <Jodie< Chris' piece on "Brain Food" is a tickler. What a talented family you

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have! Hmmmm ... a question for the ages: whose brain would I eat? >> "England Swings" was by Jimmy Dean, wasn't it? Same guy who sang "King of the Road", I know that. –

Some movie notes to end this little issue. **Shakespeare in Love** is nonsense, of course, but it's jolly and happy nonsense which manages to capture the essence of the Elizabethan era and a lot of the juice that ran through early works of Shakespeare. I loved it, but I must say I'm glad I couldn't *smell* it. Elizabethan England was not an antiseptic place. I must hail **Gods & Monsters** for its poignant tribute to the moviemakers of the past. Look for the lady impersonating Elsa Lanchester ~ she's so close in looks to the creator of the Bride of Frankenstein, she's spooky ~ but watch out, if such things bother you, for the lead character's overtly homosexual trash talk. But Ian McKellan's recreation of James Whale is an exquisite demonstration of the actor's art. It should be Oscar bound. I have high hopes for **The Thin Red Line**, but don't expect it to top **Saving Private Ryan** for Best Picture; I found the Spielberg war film treacly in a couple of spots and occasionally hackneyed, but also, occasionally, brilliant. For Best Actress I like Cate Blanchard in **Elizabeth**; she was sensational in a difficult part. But what's truly best about this pre-Oscar season is that there are so many extraordinary films I haven't seen yet, small movies like **Affliction** with Nick Nolte which are being touted for nominations. Heaven for us movie buffs.

Okay, '99 is underway. I hope everyone has stopped writing "1998" on their checks by now and no one has gotten stuck in the snow. Three mailings till KAPA 100! Are we doing anything special?



me with nephew John